



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Public Hearings

Calgary

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1:30 p.m.

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## **Legislative Assembly of Alberta**

### **Electoral Boundaries Commission**

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## **Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Calgary**

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Jayne Martin  
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Colton Nickel, Senior Planner and Intergovernmental Liaison, Town of Okotoks  
Lizette Tejada, MLA, Calgary-Klein  
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1:30 p.m.

Monday, January 12, 2026

[Justice Miller in the chair]

**The Chair:** Well, good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to our second half-day session of the January EBC public hearings. By way of background, I'm going to be more brief than I have been in the past because I think if you're here, you are fully aware of what we're doing and what we are asking of you as presenters.

Of course, we're an independent commission established by the Legislature of Alberta, and the bios of each of us are on our website. You can feel free to check those out if you haven't already.

We've got two tasks before us as an electoral boundary commission, deal with the substantial increase in population in Alberta over the last eight to 10 years and allocate boundaries for 89 electoral districts rather than 87.

Voters in each district elect their respective member to sit in the Legislative Assembly. As you'll notice from the graph before you, the population has increased substantially, and we estimate just over 800,000 since the last report of 2017. Surprisingly, all that population increase did not move evenly across the province. That's what makes our job a little bit of a challenge. Back in 2017, when the last report was done, the average population per electoral division was 46,697, with a variance plus or minus 25 per cent as you note on the slide. This time around with our population of 4.8 million between 89 different electoral districts the average population is just under 55,000, and the 25 per cent variance up or down, as you can see, ranges from 41,000 to just over 68,000.

The task of our commission is to hear from Albertans how best we are able to draw the boundaries to provide for effective representation. That is a key word that you will see throughout our interim report, and it will be no doubt contained in our final report as well. Effective representation is the Canadian standard, and it's not one person, one vote or rep by pop as is prominent in the U.S.

We were established in late March, early April as a commission, and over that period of time we did several things. First of all, we spent a lot of time agreeing on the standard of population for the demographics for the province, and that explanation is noted in our interim report; we reviewed hundreds of written submissions that were given to us as a commission; and we held public hearings throughout late May and virtually all of June, and we travelled the province to do that. After that we worked closely with staff from Elections Alberta, basically creating maps and creating boundaries for 89 proposed electoral districts. That culminated in our interim report, and you'll see that was submitted to the Speaker of the Legislature and tabled in late October. In completing our report, we covered all the legislated criteria that give us authorization to create electoral districts. We had as our focus understandable and clear boundaries, taking into effect the principle of effective representation.

After our interim report was submitted to the Speaker, we opened it up for public submissions, and we got a lot of them from November 3 to December 19. We're wading through those publications. Some of them are short and brief, some of them are more extensive, but we certainly have heard from Albertans across the province.

Now that brings us to the stage we're at today. Today, Monday, January 12, is our first day of two solid weeks of public hearings. As you may know, we're in Calgary for two and a half days, then we move to Edmonton for a couple of days this week, and we're going to go virtual next week and hear from Albertans. We made the decision not to travel in winter although the weather may have been amenable to us. Maybe we should have travelled, but we decided to stay in Calgary and Edmonton and catch the rest of the

province virtually. So that's our task this week and next week. We have a fairly full agenda this afternoon, so I'm going to go to the list, to the first presenter, Mr. Colton Nickel.

As you come forward, please identify yourself, tell us what area you live in, and what electoral district or districts you're commenting on. It's nice to know if you presented before, and tell us if you presented in the first round, which I think you did.

**Mr. Nickel:** No.

**The Chair:** No, you didn't?

**Mr. Nickel:** I must have a look-alike. No, it wasn't me.

**The Chair:** Okay. It was your twin brother.

**Mr. Nickel:** We're just pulling up a presentation here, but just in the meantime now, my name is Colton Nickel. I'm the senior planner and intergovernmental liaison with the town of Okotoks. I'll be speaking on behalf of the town of Okotoks as a municipality this afternoon. I'd also note that we did submit a written submission collaboratively with our partners at Foothills county, as well as the town of Diamond Valley; however, I'm not speaking on their behalf this afternoon. I'll stick to the town of Okotoks' perspective.

Good afternoon and thank you for taking the time to listen to this submission on the draft electoral boundaries. As I noted, I just want to acknowledge that we did our written submission to the commission with the town of Diamond Valley and Foothills county as well. I'll be speaking on the existing Highwood riding, for which the current boundaries encompass the town of Okotoks, portions of Foothills county, and the town of Diamond Valley. The revised boundaries proposed in the report for the Calgary-Okotoks riding include the town of Okotoks, portions of Foothills county, and then a portion of southwest Calgary. The southwest Calgary portion includes many building-out new communities such as Silverado and the other ones named here.

I want to provide a bit of background and explain why the current boundaries generally work well, and why the proposed revisions to the boundaries should primarily look at keeping these communities of interest together – Foothills county, Diamond Valley, and Okotoks – rather than creating a hybrid division that includes the city of Calgary. I will say that it does say something when you can get all three councils to sign on to one letter. That is no easy feat, as some from previous regional work may be aware.

Oh, jeez. This is a little trigger happy here.

**The Chair:** Common enemy does that sometimes.

**Mr. Nickel:** Yeah. Not an enemy, just – okay. There's a significant number of region-specific important capital projects that Okotoks, Diamond Valley, and Foothills county town councils work on with our elected MLA to advance through provincial funding and advocacy. Examples for this include a new regional water pipeline, which we worked on together, continued advocacy for a new interchange at 338th Avenue and highway 2, as well as other general infrastructure grants. With the town of Diamond Valley we also have a lot of shared services and community connections with them as a municipality as well as lots of shared service arrangements with our partners at Foothills county.

Overall, the existing electoral district incorporates individuals and families who utilize the same area school districts, recreation centres and programs, attend similar geographic community events, and rely on the same key pieces of infrastructure. Your report notes that municipal boundaries as well as school district boundaries are

key items of importance when looking at electoral divisions, and we do have minimal overlap with south Calgary in these areas.

The south portion of the city of Calgary is simply not as integrated into the overall electoral division from an infrastructure or social-connection standpoint. It has fully different school jurisdictions, different key pieces of infrastructure that are used, and different recreational programming options. Typically, for example, hockey programs end at that border, so you don't see that overlap and, kind of, integration with different communities.

**1:40**

Having an MLA cover both Okotoks, south Calgary as well as the rural aspects of the county would be very challenging and have an impact on the effective representation of the communities within the riding. It's already, as the report notes well, I think, incredibly challenging for rural MLAs to attend the range of events and listen and hear the priorities of citizens in a rural area, and when you add that onto the vast diversity of communities within the city of Calgary as it builds out as well as the town of Okotoks, it definitely creates concerns from the town of Okotoks' standpoint on the effective representation piece.

The next kind of key point I want to make is on the population breakdown. When looking at the city of Calgary portion alone, there are approved-area structure plans in place that will bring the population to over 64,000 people. When you're looking at the average of an electoral division and the build-out rates of the city of Calgary over the past few years and what's projected into the coming years, it's very likely that the electoral divisions will need to be significantly redrawn at the time of the next electoral commission. So this wouldn't be a long-term electoral division, which makes it challenging for that relationship creation with the MLA's office.

We then look at Diamond Valley's population growth. It's looking at continued growth, and it's recently updated its municipal development plan and recent applications definitely look like it will be moving forward with at least a 2 to 3 per cent growth rate. The portions within Foothills county are the highest growing portions of that municipality. Then finally, the town of Okotoks, as we're starting to see a regional waterline likely come on in co-ordination with Foothills county later in 2026: that will further accelerate the population of this riding. When looking at this holistically, it seems that adding in the city of Calgary to the overall riding would result in this riding not remaining within that population average for very long, and as noted, the city of Calgary likely becoming its own electoral division very shortly.

We then looked at option two, the alternate electoral district that was proposed by the commission. The town wishes to note appreciation for the consideration of this alternate district, recognizing that not every proposed district had an alternate. While this map is preferable to the Calgary-Okotoks map, it does still result in challenges in terms of further dividing our neighbour, Foothills county, into the additional Banff-Jasper riding. Portions of the county would then shift into Banff-Jasper with this option, leading them to have additional MLAs to work with. There are fewer commonalities between these mountain communities and the Foothills county municipality, which is why the town and county as well as the town of Diamond Valley worked together on proposing an alternate map with our submission that looks to follow municipal boundaries more clearly.

For your consideration, I'll pull up the alternate map here on the screen. This generally incorporates the areas that we feel would make the most sense for provincial electoral divisions that meet the legal requirements outlined in pages 6 and 7 of the electoral commission's interim report. Primarily, this map focuses on

incorporating areas with a shared sense of community, ranging from shared services to other key community boundaries such as school divisions, key roadways, and national geographic boundary features.

As noted in the report, other provisions in the act allow for considerations of impacts to adjacent ridings, such as Banff-Jasper, in terms of population variances or size changes that may be required. Allowing these potential variances, if needed, would allow the foothills region to stay largely intact while keeping the very different mountain regions of Banff-Jasper in a separate riding that respects municipal boundaries and has more commonalities and shared funding priorities. The riding sizes and distances of what we propose are also more manageable for an MLA to effectively represent all constituents.

In closing, the town of Okotoks just wishes to outline our interests in not having the city of Calgary incorporated in an electoral division that encompasses our town as well as Foothills county and Diamond Valley. In our three communities we have many interconnections from a servicing, infrastructure, and advocacy perspective that would potentially be negatively impacted by expanding the riding to incorporate the city, which has very different funding priorities and reduced community connections.

I want to thank you for your time today and am happy to take any questions that you might have.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you, Mr. Nickel. Can you go back to that map, please? I'm going to take the prerogative to ask the first question. Do you have a population for your proposed electoral division?

**Mr. Nickel:** Yeah. I can only speak to Okotoks-Diamond Valley today. I don't have the population for High River-Vulcan. We worked with the GIS team of Foothills county, Diamond Valley, and ours, and we are about 60,000 people for Okotoks-Diamond Valley based on what we proposed here. That top one. Yeah.

**The Chair:** Okay. Good.

Mr. Clark?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you. I don't know who exactly to give credit to for this. As far as I'm aware, this is the first time an Electoral Boundaries Commission has proposed an option B, and I think that really reflects our struggle in trying to square the circle – right? – for a lot of the reasons that I think you've outlined. Essentially, it was us putting out to the public that we're not sure, so we've given you a couple of different options. I appreciate that you've come back and given us another option.

The other thing, I guess, I would just say is that you're exactly right. It is not entirely unheard of but it is noteworthy that Okotoks and Foothills county and Diamond Valley are coming together in agreement on a submission. That certainly carries some weight.

I did want to ask you about – and you may not know, and if you don't, that's okay – Eden Valley, the two Indigenous reserves down towards Longview and west of High River. Can you speak at all to that connection, of those Eden Valley reserves with either Okotoks or the region generally? Our thinking was to connect those with other Indigenous reserves within Banff-Jasper. That was at least the sort of rationale that we had in mind. Maybe if you know much about it, feel free to speak to it, and if not, that's okay, too.

**Mr. Nickel:** Through the chair, that actually did come up in our council discussions on this. There was that thought that maybe that's why the commission had put that area with the other, and I definitely respect that viewpoint and that perspective. I can't speak on behalf of the county, but I do believe there are some relationships

and work that does take place with the Eden Valley reserve. But, like I said, I can't speak on behalf of the county, just peripheral knowledge.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you, and thank you for your presentation. The first question is: are you going to leave it behind so we can review it again?

**Mr. Nickel:** Through the chair, yeah. Happy to leave it behind.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. Thank you. I have a very particular question. Looking at your map, up in the northwest corner, does that include Bragg Creek area?

**Mr. Nickel:** Through the chair, no. It doesn't stretch up into Bragg Creek. That falls within Rocky View county, and this just wants to follow the Foothills county municipal boundaries.

**Dr. Martin:** Oh, I see.

**The Chair:** Actually, Bragg Creek would be more east, wouldn't it?

**Mr. Nickel:** Yeah. It's more north and east.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. I'm sorry. In the very far northeast corner of your blue, the proposed electoral district, is there a village up there, a town of any kind?

**Mr. Nickel:** Through the chair, it's just within the Foothills county. I'm not sure if there's . . .

**Dr. Martin:** That's just the county.

**Mr. Nickel:** Yeah. That'd be part of the county.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. Thank you. That's it for me.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** No questions. Thanks for the presentation.

**Mr. Evans:** No questions from me. Thank you.

**The Chair:** I've got a question that was slightly touched on by Mr. Clark. We really wrestle with several things. One of them is hybrids. The overall one is effective representation. As Mr. Clark has said, we just said that we're not sure. You know, we want public feedback. We certainly got it, which is good, and I think it's overwhelmingly in one direction.

This report was a catalyst for your municipality and others. How did you kind of get to this? How much time did you spend coming up with this?

**Mr. Nickel:** Through the chair, for sure. It definitely involved multiple council meetings across and working closely with Foothills county's administration and council as well as Diamond Valley's administration and council. We also utilized our intermunicipal committee, which the town of Okotoks has with Foothills county, to bring forward this presentation and have these discussions. We also worked closely with our school divisions that we have within the area, Foothills school division and Christ the Redeemer Catholic school division, which I believe you'll be hearing from after me. We wanted to make sure we're all on the

same page of understanding. Everyone had largely the same general opinion. We definitely all worked together to come to the report.

**The Chair:** Okay. Good. Well, thank you very much. It's much appreciated, and this presentation will be left with us, and that will be helpful.

1:50

**Mr. Nickel:** Thanks very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you. You're excused, but please if you can stay for the rest of the presentations, it would be helpful.

Our next presenter is Michael Kilcommons.

**Mr. Kilcommons:** Hello.

**The Chair:** Good afternoon. Make yourself comfortable, and tell us where you are from.

**Mr. Kilcommons:** Well, good afternoon. My name is Michael Kilcommons. I'm coming in from Okotoks today, and I am representing Christ the Redeemer Catholic school division. I'm an associate superintendent there. We have about 10,000 students in seven communities stretching from Canmore practically on the B.C. border to Oyen on the Saskatchewan border, but I'm speaking more so towards the Highwood electoral division right now.

**The Chair:** Okay. Where is the headquarters for Christ the Redeemer? Where is your office?

**Mr. Kilcommons:** Our main centre, about half of our population, and our central office are in Okotoks.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Kilcommons:** Good to go?

**The Chair:** Yes, please.

**Mr. Kilcommons:** As I just said, our largest population representation is in Foothills county, which includes Okotoks, High River, and Diamond Valley, and then several other smaller communities within those boundaries. Wishing to speak to the proposed changes, right now Okotoks, High River, Diamond Valley, and parts of Foothills county are in the Highwood electoral district. One of the proposed changes, labelled Alberta Overview, Option A, represented the creation of the new Calgary-Okotoks district, adding a portion of southwest Calgary to our riding. Very egocentric to think they were added to us, but combined.

An argument for the change has been presented that it balances population and maintains clear boundaries, but from our point of view, just speaking on behalf of the Catholic school system, it does raise some serious challenges. The MLA for this district would have to juggle two major urban centres plus rural areas, making effective representation harder, and with Calgary's projected growth, 60,000 new residents in the next decade, this boundary will likely need to be redrawn again soon.

Christ the Redeemer Catholic schools is deeply invested in this process as we serve students and families across a broad and interconnected geographic region. We provide transportation for many rural students who travel daily from surrounding areas into these school communities. This regional service model requires careful co-ordination across municipal boundaries and reflects the lived reality of families who depend on integrated rural-urban education systems. From an education perspective, we are concerned that the first model of the proposed realignment would place our communities within a hybrid riding connected to the city

of Calgary. Such a configuration would not reflect the shared community identity, service relationships, or governance realities of our region.

The rural and small urban sensibilities that shape our communities, including approaches to infrastructure, transportation, and education, differ meaningfully from those of a large metropolitan centre and would risk being diluted within a Calgary-focused electoral division. Our school division operates within a distinct rural-urban context where community connections, shared services, and collaborative planning are essential to student success. Families often live in one municipality, attend school in another, and rely on regional transportation and services that span municipal lines. Maintaining cohesion among the town of Okotoks and Diamond Valley and larger portions of Foothills county within a single electoral division better supports effective advocacy, clear communication, and strong working relationships between MLAs, municipal councils, and public institutions such as school divisions.

We're also really concerned about the potential downstream impacts of electoral boundary changes on school division ward alignment. Our school division's ward structure has been intentionally designed to balance geography, representation, and community identity. Any shift that increases the likelihood of our wards being annexed into a metro-based school division would significantly affect our ability to respond to the needs of rural and small urban families. Metro school divisions operate at a different scale and under different pressures, which do not align with the approaches and sensibilities required to effectively support education in our communities.

Our review of the documentation provided to us suggests a second alternative district that excludes Calgary and keeps Okotoks and Diamond Valley and parts of Foothills county together. That was option B. This option better reflects our shared services and community connections, though it has a slightly higher population variance.

Our school division, representing students and families in Okotoks, High River, Diamond Valley, and Foothills county, is advocating for a third option: keep our communities together, avoid hybrid districts with Calgary, and align boundaries with municipal borders. This approach supports effective representation for our school divisions and long-term stability.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** Currently, in terms of your school divisions, do you have multiple MLAs representing your configuration, and if so, who are they, and how would it change in terms of what we proposed?

**Mr. Kilcommons:** Well, taking a look at just in the Okotoks area, yes, we have R.J. Sigurdson. The proposed change would have us looking at somebody for Calgary-Okotoks and somebody for the points further south.

**Mr. Evans:** So right now you'd have one MLA.

**Mr. Kilcommons:** Yes.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay.

**Mr. Kilcommons:** For this region, yes. We've got other ones down in Oyen and Brooks and whatnot, of course.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** No questions. Thank you.

**Mr. Kilcommons:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

Thanks for coming. I just want you to repeat, I think, what you had said, that your domain, as it were, as Okotoks – I mean its footprint is Okotoks, Diamond Valley, High River.

**Mr. Kilcommons:** Correct.

**Dr. Martin:** Is that, roughly speaking, the catchment area for your school?

**Mr. Kilcommons:** That is the one that we're addressing right now, yes.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. Do you have a lot of planning associated with the High River component that you didn't otherwise speak of?

**Mr. Kilcommons:** We do, on a regular basis, yes.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. All right. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much. No, I think I got my question out of the way on the previous presenter. But really, genuinely appreciate your submission, and thank you for coming.

**Mr. Kilcommons:** Yeah. Excellent.

**The Chair:** As you can appreciate, probably from your review of our report, hybrids are a challenge for us, how we implement them. We gave you an option. But you've used a word that I don't think has been used often: metro. Now, historically it's been urban, rural, Calgary, Edmonton, the rest of the province. You've injected the word "metro." What do you mean by that?

**Mr. Kilcommons:** Great question. It's an education term. It's widely used within Alberta education. The metro school divisions are Calgary Catholic and Calgary public and Edmonton public and Edmonton Catholic. Everybody in education refers to those as the metros. They have – I don't even know the number – half or 60 per cent of the province's student population.

**The Chair:** Students. Okay.

**Mr. Kilcommons:** And they do run differently than we do.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you for that. I'm going to refer to that word from hereon in.

**Mr. Kilcommons:** It's not a slur.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Any questions arising from what I said? Okay.

Thank you very much, sir. I'll excuse you to the gallery, and please stay if you can for the rest of the presentations.

**Mr. Kilcommons:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Oh, sorry. Jayne?



**Mrs. Martin:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. Sorry. Mrs. Jayne Martin, please come forward. You were here first this afternoon, but you ended up having to wait till the third spot.

**Mrs. Martin:** No worries. Thank you. Yes, I am Jayne Martin, and I'm in Calgary-Glenmore, and I was also here for round 1.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mrs. Martin:** Thank you. I have lived in the community of Palliser for the past six years, which is in the riding of Calgary-Glenmore, and prior to that I lived in the community of Kingsland for 32 years. I would like to thank the commissioners for listening to me during my initial testimony. When asked which communities I would include to increase the size of Calgary-Glenmore, I suggested Kingsland and North Glenmore Park. In your proposed boundaries for Calgary-Glenmore I was very pleased to see the addition of the community of Kingsland and the portion of the community of North Glenmore Park that is located south of Glenmore Trail southwest.

During a 2010 boundary review, Kingsland was included in the Calgary-Glenmore electoral district. Following the 2017 Electoral Boundaries Commission, Kingsland became part of the Calgary-Acadia riding. Calgary-Glenmore would welcome back Kingsland.

2:00

I agree, as per your interim report, that your new proposed boundaries will be easier to understand. Glenmore Trail would then become a distinct boundary for the northern end of the electoral district of Calgary-Glenmore. To me, it makes perfect sense to include the portion of the community of North Glenmore Park that resides south of Glenmore Trail. It is located just east of Lakeview, which is already part of Calgary-Glenmore. Furthermore, the community of Kingsland also borders Glenmore Trail SW and is adjacent to the communities of Kelvin Grove and Chinook Park, which are currently in Calgary-Glenmore.

Kingsland itself could be considered very self-sufficient, with a mixture of commercial and residential properties. There are a number of strip malls, two motels, gas stations, liquor stores, coffee shops, restaurants, and a brewery. In addition, there are medical buildings and pharmacies. There are three Christian churches, a separate elementary school, an out-of-school care club, a daycare centre, and a supportive living centre.

There is a substantial Jewish population residing in Calgary-Glenmore, which is home to three synagogues, a Jewish seniors residence, a Jewish recreation centre, Jewish Learning Institute, Calgary Jewish Federation, and Calgary Jewish Academy. Given the current global tensions, I think it is even more important that we strive to keep our vibrant Jewish community together in Calgary-Glenmore.

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, the Paperny

Family JCC community and recreation centre, 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 tennis and pickleball courts, a racket club, and off-leash dog parks. By including Kingsland, Calgary-Glenmore would also benefit from the addition of a twin arena, a toboggan and sledding hill, baseball diamond, and an off-leash dog park. Adding the southern portion of the community of North Glenmore Park would further enrich Calgary-Glenmore with a golf course.

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. Your proposed boundaries for Calgary-Glenmore are very fair. It would be very challenging for an MLA to be expected to properly represent the differing needs faced by constituents living both inside and outside of urban areas in a hybrid scenario.

Thank you also for recognizing the rapid rates of growth in Calgary and Edmonton. I would like to see another additional seat added to both Calgary and Edmonton. Given the population growth of both of these cities, they are currently underrepresented.

As part of the boundaries 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 to prevent gerrymandering through a fair and democratic process. I thank you all for your time this afternoon and your careful consideration throughout this ongoing process.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mrs. Martin.

Mr. Clark, any questions or comments?

**Mr. Clark:** No questions at all, no. But with our thanks. Yeah. It's nice to hear that some people feel that the boundaries have worked out.

**Dr. Martin:** You stole my line.

**Mr. Clark:** Again, thank you.

**Mrs. Martin:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Okay.  
Susan.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Martin:** You're welcome.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you. It's so rare that we, you know, get it right.

**The Chair:** Well, I have a question.

**Mrs. Martin:** Certainly.

**The Chair:** You mentioned that the large cities are underrepresented.

**Mrs. Martin:** Yes. I think that's where the largest population growth has taken place, in Calgary and Edmonton.

**The Chair:** Okay. Even in our proposed interim report, you still think that is the situation?

**Mrs. Martin:** I do. I think what happened in Edmonton, for instance, was one was eliminated and another one created, so really, they didn't get any additions, right? We got two. Well, I think probably Calgary's population growth has been even larger than Edmonton's. But yes, I would still like to see one more additional one in Calgary and in Edmonton.

**The Chair:** If we were looking at the province purely through the population lens and had a one person, one vote principle, you'd be very accurate.

**Mrs. Martin:** Oh, okay.

**The Chair:** I hope you appreciate that population is not the only factor that we have to deal with.

**Mrs. Martin:** Certainly. You've got your work cut out for you.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Squaring that circle is a challenge, certainly.

Thank you for your comments and your commendations. I'm going to excuse you now to return to the gallery, but please stay if you can and hear the other presentations.

**Mrs. Martin:** I will. Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** We may have some dialogue after. Thank you. Okay. Our next presenter: Mr. Dan Williams.

**Mr. Williams:** Well, good afternoon, commission.

**The Chair:** Good afternoon. Thank you for coming. Just take a moment, get comfortable, and identify for the record what electoral district you're from.

**Mr. Williams:** Sure. Thank you. I have not been to one of these before, so I'm grateful for the opportunity. My name is Dan Williams. I'm the MLA for the constituency of Peace River in the northern stretches of the province. I'm hoping to present to you orally and, if you guys see fit, maybe have a short conversation surrounding your proposed draft boundaries.

Can you guys hear me okay? That's fine? Okay.

I think you guys understand the task cut out in front of you, as you mentioned with your previous presenter. I think I made comments, coauthoring a letter on October 29 that we sent to the commission, hoping that you could see some of the concern that the northern MLAs had, myself included, surrounding the elimination of a northern constituency. I think your predecessors put it very on the nose in their final report in the previous boundary redistribution, that if we just simply removed one northern riding every cycle we went through, we'd very quickly end up with very few northern ridings left.

Inevitably, as you guys know, the challenge is that that effective representation is an essential piece to what it looks like to do this job in a fair, objective, and above-board manner, and I appreciate very much that you have a difficult task in front of you.

The current draft that you have – and I'll spend just a minute or two speaking to that before I speak to what I hope we can move towards – has either eliminated the constituency of Peace River or Lesser Slave Lake. Depends on how you want to frame it, look at it, but we are one short in the north, and the very large new riding of Mackenzie has a number of challenges along with it.

Fundamentally, the nature of what it means to represent a riding is one that is tied to the physical geography of the place. If you

know Roger Scruton, an English philosopher and public thinker, he says, speaking of the nation at this point, but it applies equally to our constituencies, it is "because we are able to define our membership in territorial terms that we in Western countries enjoy [elemental] freedoms that are . . . [foundational in] political order." He contrasts that with defining your identity in religious and ethnic and racial terms, which, obviously, we think is a challenge.

2:10

Fundamentally, trying to create ridings based on place is an extension of this principle, that we are people of place, and that the job of the representative at the provincial and federal level is to represent a people who live there. I know that you guys have a difficult challenge. But the riding where Calling Lake and Indian Cabins are in the same constituency: they may share common ethnic backgrounds, but nonetheless, whether or not a riding arena or a cul-de-sac is paved or a new water treatment plant is put in in Calling Lake has absolutely little benefit, despite similar ethnic backgrounds, to those in Indian Cabins.

It is fundamentally a question: what binds us together? When I say "we" in the Legislature, representing my constituents, it is not a question of religious or cultural or ethnic identity that makes us "we." When I represent the people of Peace River, I say "we" as a people of place, connected to a geography, and that inevitably is going to create physical limitations on how we can fairly represent them and say "we" in a meaningful way and have a connection between us. So when we are talking about a community where the southern half of my constituency is closer to the U.S. border by drive time than it would be to the northern half of the constituency of Mackenzie, then that would be a real challenge to have a sense of "we" connected to a place.

The fundamental argument that is made by the northern MLAs is that, yes, there needs to be a consideration, as the legislation puts out properly, surrounding proportional representation on population, but it also importantly allows deviation of 25 per cent as the norm. We highly suggest that you use that opportunity to use the 25 per cent deviation to achieve effective representation so that those who are represented are represented with a connection to a physical place, to their neighbours, and can have common interests across that riding.

Also, of course, the exceptions, the four that are allowed within the legislation, surrounding the 50 per cent variation: those are also an important consideration. It needs to be there under those criteria, when met, for having populations that deviate beyond just the 25 per cent. If we cannot make those accommodations – I understand the need in Edmonton and Calgary to make sure we have representation, and I want to rob none of those citizens of their important electoral voice, but the fact remains that if we continue to eliminate, as the point you made previously, Justice Miller, to your previous interlocutor, we will not have effective representation in the north or many rural parts of this province despite them being an absolutely integral part of our common heritage and, importantly, our economic future across the province.

Marrying those would be our hope, to replace the riding in the north that was lost, and find accommodation through the variations allowed within the legislation. My general rule of thumb as a conservative – I think I can say with my hat on – is be conservative. Those constituencies that have been around since 1909, as I noted in my letter for Lesser Slave Lake, or since 1905, Peace River, those political associations originally built around watersheds – when there was no highway, it really was the Peace River itself that brought the vast majority of those who were homesteaders to Manning, to Peace River, and to La Crête and Fort Vermilion

through that natural community, economic, social, and since 1905 and 1909, politically.

Keeping those as much as possible in place is honouring the legacy and the institutions built up around those ridings that have existed far beyond any of us being in the province. I think that is going to make it easier and more intelligible for local constituents to continue organizing along those same lines. Obviously, there needs to be variations within that. I appreciate that there will be tweaks and changes, but wholesale upending of these constituencies that have been a part of our fabric since the creation of our province, I think, would cause more consternation and would reduce the ability to effectively represent for a number of factors, and I'll refer you again to that coauthored letter from October 29 as an important submission.

Happy to take any questions. I think I've chewed up more than my fair share of time, knowing you have others.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you. We always appreciate hearing from those people that knock on doors and drive house to house representing constituents in the Legislative Assembly.

I will hold my questions off. I'm going to start with Mr. Evans first. Any questions or comments, John?

**Mr. Evans:** I just want to make sure I understand. You're in Mackenzie? You would be in the new Mackenzie, or you are in the ...

**Mr. Williams:** Well, my constituency would be divided into multiple, but a large share of it would be the new Mackenzie, the northern half. The hometown I live in is La Crête, but I also represent Peace River, with my extended family in Peace River and Grimshaw, which would now be in what was Central Peace-Notley. I'm not sure if it keeps the same name, but it extends north. It takes Manning, Keg River, et cetera, all the way up to Paddle. So my current constituency would be divided into, I think, three technically, but the lion's share would be in those two. I was largely referring to Mackenzie as that one that is sprawling across that diagonal from northwest down towards southeast.

**Mr. Evans:** So do I understand that there's a community of interest connectivity that we haven't taken into consideration sufficiently?

**Mr. Williams:** If I read the report, there was a big consideration based on ethnic background as well for the creation of Mackenzie, and it becomes so large and unwieldy that it becomes very hard to find common interest in spite of any ethnic common background was the point I was driving at.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay.

**Mr. Williams:** A community of interest is, to me, local and territorial, and if you can find common threads between people demographically that don't live near each other, it becomes very, very hard to truly, effectively represent. In the end, part of my job is getting money for a road widening on 697, and that matters a lot to the folks that live around highway 697. It does not matter to folks that live down on highway 2. So when it gets very, very large, it gets very, very hard to have common interest.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Can you help us by telling us where the communities of interest do lie?

**Mr. Williams:** When you say communities of interest: the ones that I think ought to remain together?

**Mr. Evans:** Right.

**Mr. Williams:** Sure. I'd say the threads within my current community would be Peace River through to Manning, High Level and that area towards the northwest of the province, and La Crête. There are many challenges – I include Fort Vermilion historically in that as well – because I understand when you get ...

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Hold on. Slow down. Peace River to ...

**Mr. Williams:** Peace River, Grimshaw, Manning, High Level, La Crête, Fort Vermilion would be the large centres that – I say large; some of these are very small.

**Mr. Evans:** Peace River, Grimshaw, Manning.

**Dr. Martin:** High Level.

**Mr. Williams:** Fort Vermilion, La Crête.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay.

**Mr. Williams:** I understand that there may be need to trade at times.

**Mr. Evans:** Why?

**Mr. Williams:** Why? Well, first off, because it is that way, and I don't think that's an unfair argument. I think that historical political relationships have existed with almost that physical geography since the creation, and inevitably when people start to align that way, those relationships don't stop. I think that is the easiest reason to say why. I think it's natural because the watershed – as I said before, the highway did not exist meaningfully until the 1950s, so those communities did organically grow up along the river meaningfully, like, until very recent in memory. Post World War II was when we started to see many of the current highways be in place. So I think that makes sense because it follows the flow of the river.

**Mr. Evans:** So the water flow.

**Mr. Williams:** I say that's the easiest historical argument, but if it were some other historical argument, I'd still say because it is. I don't think that's unfair, and I'm not trying to be cheeky.

**Mr. Evans:** It's like defining "white" by saying the definition of "white" is white. But I understand what you're saying.

**Mr. Williams:** No. I think it's saying that because we've set up those relationships, those relationships – politically, social, economic – will not be changed because of the very important work that five members on the commission do.

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah. It's historical based and developed over time.

**Mr. Williams:** And based out of that are things that are not – even though it started off as a political organization in terms of the constituency, it's now taken on other immutable qualities that are not related to your decisions, unfortunately, so you have to consider them now as facts that are not within your control. I'm sorry. That seems a bit abstract, but I hope it makes sense.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Anything other than the water flow and the historical foundation?

**Mr. Williams:** Yeah. I think that if you look at the economic relationships that you see, there are similar – forestry would be the common thread throughout those communities. I'd say, more than forestry, you even look at the mills themselves. The ecosystem of by-product and use is inevitable. The oil and gas service industry is

also connected for sure. Our sports leagues are connected with the north Peace sports league. Now, there are obviously some exceptions to that where you will connect into a few other communities, but by and large those communities play on the same minor sports teams. I think that it's broad in terms of the details that folks have integrated with each other socially, economically, politically.

2:20

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. If the chair will allow me to ask one more question. If you were redrawing – may I?

**The Chair:** Yeah. Succinct.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. I was just going to go ahead with the question. I probably should get an answer.

If you were going to redraw the boundaries, where would you redraw them?

**Mr. Williams:** Well, I'll say that from the current boundaries there will always be a need to consider population, of course was the point. If you needed to extend south or east or west on the edges to include or exclude certain populations, immediate neighbouring – for example, if you looked at Peace River, there's a continuity of community going down through Berwyn and Brownvale and Fairview that are very closely connected to Peace River. Of course, they're also closely connected to Fairview and Spirit River and other areas towards Sexsmith. So there are lines that you must draw, and I appreciate that.

I'd say the same could be true of Red Earth Creek, could be included or excluded. Hypothetically, though, that does have a lot more of a connection towards Slave Lake and High Prairie, but it's plausible that could happen. As well, you could move the boundaries surrounding where Reno is or down towards Falher. Those are also possibilities. Keeping the lion's share of the same population where you need to move boundaries on the edges to me seems like it's your task. I won't, you know, pretend to know what that looks like. You guys have many moving parts.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for coming out today. I really appreciate the time to be here with us. You missed the introduction here. We got 1,100 submissions since the interim report came out, and we have felt a very big push-back against the decision we made to redraw the north, so we are going to look at it.

Some of the more positive things that had come out in those submissions were that the Indigenous population was kept together within one riding. Some large Indigenous groups wrote in and said that they really like the idea of them having one voice in one electoral district. Can you shed some light from your perspective on that?

**Mr. Williams:** Sure. I mean, I don't know which groups spoke, and I'm happy to take their position at face value and appreciate that. My position as the local MLA is that fundamentally I have a job to represent the whole province, not just one constituency. I have to look for the common good of every single Albertan, but inevitably part of my job also is going to be bringing attention to ministers, making, you know, suggestions in debate within legislation that are relevant to our local experience.

I think that, independent of whether or not someone has a shared Indigenous background, my experience in community is that they have stronger associations based on whether or not their kids play in the same sports teams, based on whether or not they shop at the same grocery stores, based on whether or not their parents work in

the same mill. Those things matter far, far, far more than any ethnic or racial or demographic connection that you can make.

As a local MLA I care about the welfare of every single one of my constituents as I do every Albertan, but my constituents are those who send me there, and it is so very hard for me to be concerned with many of these First Nation communities who struggle with a lack of infrastructure, a lack of resources in their communities. It becomes very diffuse. As a local MLA, when I go talk to ministers, when I make speeches in the Legislature, I am not choosing between all options on the table. I'm choosing between the best options I have in front of me, so inevitably, with limited resources, I sometimes cannot argue as hard for some projects as I do others. That becomes almost impossible to achieve if my physical geography – almost all of these services in the north are physical deficits of services.

Like I said, it does me no good if I widen a highway in the northern half of my riding or the southern half of my riding, for example, but that widening of the highway is, by drive time, closer to Montana than it is to my constituents in the northern half. They just don't care that much about something that far away. They could be very happy for us as a province that they got that. That doesn't change the fact that my job is about allocation and argument for physical resources, and when you spread it out too large – even those First Nation communities I think will be more poorly served if it's about some ethnic identity rather than a geographic, territorial cohesion around a service hub where they prefer those services. That's my argument.

I think in all charity I want to better serve, for example, all of my communities, including First Nations, and I feel like I can do that better when there's a common project that all the neighbouring communities agree with along with them. Paving 58 east, for example, towards Little Red has been a priority of mine for many years, and I think we're making progress on it. That's harder if half of my constituents say: I've never heard of Little Red or 58.

**Mrs. Samson:** Exactly. Good. Thank you. That was a very good answer.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.  
Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

Minister Williams, thank you for coming. I wanted to ask you some questions about transportation and just preface them by saying that it's pretty obvious, by looking at the map, that the Peace has been a transportation route for hundreds and hundreds of years. The legacy we have of that are at the Indian nations along the river valley, including the very large Métis settlement, a sort of testament to the fur trade era, where the river was, of course, more heavily traversed than anything in the rest of Alberta as it came to be.

I want to ask you about modern transportation. First of all, when you leave the Legislature, what route do you take to get to Peace River?

**Mr. Williams:** Well, Peace River in the southern half of the riding ...

**Dr. Martin:** The town of.

**Mr. Williams:** Yeah, the town of Peace River. I would head out on 16, then head north on 43, and then head north on 2 through Valleyview, and then make my way to Peace River. It depends on

where I'm going in the Peace area. It's four and a half to five and a half hours from the Legislature.

**Dr. Martin:** I've travelled highway 88 myself. I don't like it. And from what we heard in earlier . . .

**Mr. Williams:** When did you travel it?

**Dr. Martin:** Summer.

**Mr. Williams:** Okay. But it was paved?

**Dr. Martin:** No.

**Mr. Williams:** Okay. Well, it's paved. You'll love it now.

**Dr. Martin:** Well, it was good gravel, but I didn't like it.

We heard in our first round of presentations, not least when we were in Peace River, from people who live in First Nations east of the town of Peace River, and they were saying: "Oh, yeah. Yeah, it's dreadful. We never use that. We always come into Peace River and then go south and then cut along the bottom side of Slave Lake and go through Kinuso and the town of Slave Lake and so on." So you really don't have many transportation routes. You talk about an infrastructure deficit. This is an infamous one.

Right through the middle of this proposed footprint is a very dodgy road.

**Mr. Williams:** The 686.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. Up through . . .

**Mr. Williams:** Peerless.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah, through red path, is it?

**Mr. Williams:** Red Earth then to Peerless and then over to Fort Mac.

**Dr. Martin:** Bad road.

**Mr. Williams:** Yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** And lousy in winter, I bet.

**Mr. Williams:** I mean, not passable often, yeah, meaningfully.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. Not passable is a real fact in our deliberations because, of course, transportation and obvious roadways are a significant consideration for this panel. You don't have one, not through the middle, at any rate.

**Mr. Williams:** In the current boundary if I'm going to the northern half of my riding – Fort Vermilion, High Level, La Crête – I take a different path; I go up 88. Inside the constituency it's cohesive. I can take 35 all the way down or the ice bridge, and it works very well. Going in and out is very choppy. To your point, it depends on where you're going on that 88 corridor. Now, it is the aspiration of our government to pave that 686 through Red Earth and Peerless, but I don't know what timeline we have. I'm sure Minister Dreeshen could give us more on it. These things, you know, we hope to ameliorate.

But right now that is one of the problems. Realistically, if this riding were to take place, there'd be a big chunk where, if I were to be elected there, I may not even stay within constituency for most of it – right? – which is not true right now. Once I'm in the constituency of Peace River, I stay in it physically almost all the time. It's coherent within itself. Now, getting to and from

Edmonton depends on where I'm going. It's very vast. Fair enough. But this would have a problem. I would often want to leave and head into what would be Central Peace-Notley, if that's what it's called, the one to the south.

**Dr. Martin:** I have one subsidiary question, if I might, and that is that when you are travelling in your constituency, you're doing it by car or truck, and presumably you do a lot of your office work, so to speak, by wireless cellphone, right?

**Mr. Williams:** Yes.

**Dr. Martin:** Do you have adequate cellphone coverage?

**Mr. Williams:** Oh, no, but that's a bigger problem that I don't know if you can address. I'd love if you could.

2:30

**Dr. Martin:** Well, again, it bears on what constitutes effective representation. If your area becomes huger and huger and your cell phone coverage becomes sparser and sparser, then we have a problem.

**Mr. Williams:** Yeah. I think that is a concern, the drive time. People ask me, "where you been, Dan?" I say, "I've been between towns, mostly driving." Just the time consumed. Happily, the folks at the Legislative Assembly Office have done what they can to help me around virtual access at times with cell phone boosters, et cetera, in an attempt to fix it.

When I go to a grocery store within my constituency – well, I'll tell you that my wife doesn't send me out to go get milk because every single person knows me, and I'm humbled by it. I'm their voice. I'm the big deal, right? I mean, there's the cell phone consideration. There's the time consumed in driving within the constituency. For example, I was in the constituency last week. I had three days of over 10 hours of driving, which is not uncommon to have. I'm getting to and from and then within the constituency. You try and make the most of that time. I wouldn't trade it for the world. I love my role. It is just a different sort of representation.

I've worked in political offices representing urban centres. It's very fulfilling work. They have a hard job as well, but it is very different. The hardest thing is the ability to effectively meet constituents who are territorial. They want to see you. They're face-to-face people. They're concerned about those intimate things around how the salting is working on the 88 connector road or whatever it is. Those are the kinds of concerns that they have, the kind of things that municipal politicians in Edmonton and Calgary rightfully have to deal with around snow clearing after the dump. Those are often provincial responsibilities on these provincial highways. It is very earthy. It's a corporal sort of work in rural Alberta that is not the same in urban. I'm not ranking them; I'm just saying that they're different by nature.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you. I think just maybe through you to your constituents and your colleagues and other folks in the north, we hear the submissions. They were not just a significant number but very thoughtful.

**Mr. Williams:** Those are my constituents.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Speaking just for myself and not on behalf of any of my fellow commissioners, I'm not convinced we got the borders

right in the north. It's an intractable challenge of: okay, well, what gives? Certainly your input on the specific boundaries today has been really helpful. The letter you wrote with your colleagues is really helpful, that sort of on-the-ground information.

If the Justice will allow me, I have a couple of questions. Tell me a bit about your staff. I guess what I asked a previous presenter: would it be at least not a complete fix if you had even a substantially higher budget where you could have even more, right? I mean, in terms of, like, what you're talking about just now, in terms of the scale of the vast geography of what you represent, do you feel you have enough staff, enough budget to have enough offices, enough people that aren't you but could maybe bridge a little bit? Would that help?

**Mr. Williams:** Yeah. It would for sure. It's something that I've been advocating for when I sat on the Member Services' Committee. It's a formula that's derived there. I have two offices, one in the north, one in the south, which since my predecessor, Ms Jabbour, has been normal. I think that is appreciated by constituents because of the large drive times that exist between. I think that they're used to making the trips and it happens, but as a matter of effective representation it's good to be able to meet them in a hub community around where they're from.

I have one staff that is from Grimshaw that works out of Peace River. I have another staff that I'm looking to replace that is from the Fort Vermilion area and works out of La Crête. That's what it is now. I think that that would be the single best use of an increased budget for me. I understand that there are different costs for rental space with real estate in Edmonton and Calgary, for example, that are meaningfully different, but having a physical presence there is probably the best value for the taxpayer to fund. The vast majority of the things – and you know this well, Mr. Clark – that you deal with as a constituency are not partisan and political in nature. They are services. They're getting people access through provincial programming, social support networks, dealing with, you know, especially in rural Alberta, all sorts of environmental considerations surrounding use of land and land-use planning, et cetera. Those are the nitty-gritty, tangible things that you do in an office, and I think more staff helps.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah, and we don't have control over that, unfortunately.

**Mr. Williams:** No, you don't.

**Mr. Clark:** I know that previous commissions have made exactly that recommendation. Maybe we'll ask, pretty please, that that gets addressed.

The other massive challenge we have in this province and what we're grappling with as a panel has been this incredible population growth we've seen in the province. Almost all of that has happened in Calgary and Edmonton, not 100 per cent but almost all of it. When you look at the data for the north, the growth is flat or in some cases actually negative. It makes it really quite challenging even with the variances to kind of balance all that out. So, I guess, do you feel like the percentages that existed in 2017 between sort of the north and the big cities: was that an appropriate percentage, or do you feel like they got it wrong as well?

**Mr. Williams:** Yeah. Well, maybe I'll start with a question, and I'll answer as well. I'm just wondering. Your data: I just want to understand what you use for the population data. I think I meant to look into it but I never found out. How do you guys . . .

**Dr. Martin:** It's July 1, 2024.

**Mr. Clark:** July 1, 2024.

**The Chair:** And Statistics Canada 2021 updated by . . .

**Mr. Williams:** Municipal censi, et cetera.

**The Chair:** . . . Alberta's Treasury Board department of OSI.

**Mr. Williams:** Okay.

**The Chair:** If you look at pages . . .

**Mr. Williams:** I'm sure you had it, and that's why I was asking that again.

**Mr. Clark:** Four million, eight hundred and eighty-eight thousand, seven hundred and twenty-three.

**Mr. Williams:** Ok. Good. I just want to make sure because I know that when it comes to StatsCan data, First Nations don't have very high response rates, which myself and many of my colleagues do represent. I don't know if that has more than some negligible statistical difference on it. And the municipal data for sure: I'm not sure when, but La Crête is one of the fastest growing communities in the country. It's a hamlet, and I just want to make sure that those sorts of things are considered, but I don't doubt at all, to your point, that we've seen disproportionately higher growth in that Edmonton-Calgary corridor.

I'll stipulate it: agree that they need representation, especially in the large cities. Like I said, I don't want to deprive anyone of their ability to have a voice and a say. As the Minister of Municipal Affairs, with the different hat I wear, we don't have the same stipulation of the 25 per cent and 50 per cent variation. In fact, there's next to no barrier on this beyond the decisions that a local council makes. There are some wards that are disproportionate hundreds of times different. Now, sometimes those get out of control, and it's up to the local elected officials to readjust those, but we have yet to put a firm rule on it because there are extraordinary circumstances in this province.

I mean, I'll note that Mackenzie county is 14 per cent of the land mass of the province and the lion's share of my constituency. Inevitably that's going to have a different sort of solution than Forty Mile or, heck, Red Deer, and there needs to be a certain ability to, in extreme outliers, find an Aristotelian mean. We cannot have one rule across, and I think that there need to be those variations put in place.

Inevitably, I mean, many of my northern colleagues would like to see us replace a new constituency into the north, and I understand the challenges of what that would be, but to remove another constituency from the north, I think, is very challenging because the economic lifeblood and so much of our history is centred around the north, especially when you look at people that have disproportionately not had the same influence in society. That's true economically. It's true historically. We talk about First Nation communities as well, and I think that the best thing you can do for making sure that this bargain of Alberta continues to exist is use your judgment, allow nuance where it's needed, stick to a rule as best you can, but if we continue to remove one northern riding every single cycle, then we've got eight cycles before there's one riding in the north.

Inevitably, I mean, our great Alberta advantage is based on the territory itself. It's based on the resources that come out of our communities. I think there has to be some consideration for how that works politically, long-term, as an agreement between the north and the south, between big cities and rural communities. There needs to be an accommodation. That's why the 25 per cent variation

and the 50 per cent exemptions need to be employed, I'd say, very liberally.

**Mr. Clark:** I appreciate it, and I'll just end by saying this: I absolutely agree. We talked about this a lot. How do we accommodate? Just for reference sake, the seven northern constituencies on average in this report are 10 per cent under the average, which is actually better than 2017. It was 8.4 in 2017. That's not everything, and it doesn't change the geography. I tell my family in the U.K. that the northwest corner of Alberta is larger than the country of Belgium and it has 40,000 people in it. That blows their mind. Having said that, it's not just a data spreadsheet exercise; it's a very real, physical exercise.

2:40

**Mr. Williams:** I take your point that you continue to see higher growth, and flatlining population in the north will continue to present challenges. You see disproportionate growth in the south. I think that what's happening: obviously, we tried to create an independent commission for the purpose of trying to create a nonpartisan – and the presenter who went before me used the term “gerrymandering,” and, of course, we don't want to see that. That is political interference in what should be an above board process, but there is a political accommodation that all sides are making all the time.

Like it or not, this is a politically accountable process that will be voted on in the Legislature, so if in the end we don't calibrate that right, over time – I'm not saying this commission, but I'm saying over decades – disproportionately the north will feel isolated and alienated, and that, I think, is not a recipe for MLAs like me to say: I believe in the common interest of the whole province. Inevitably there will be a politics of trying to aggravate territorially a division between north and south, and that, I think, is to Alberta's detriment.

So if anything I truly think that getting the calibration right now and tapping the breaks before we go too hard on a population-alone consideration and really making sure that the north in particular but all rural Alberta feels like they have a legitimate and fair seat at the table for what they contribute in all aspects of Alberta's public life: I think that will be a better recipe for cohesion as a province than if we allow ourselves to become statisticians. I know that's not what you're doing, but I just really emphasize that those variations allow you that flexibility, allow you to do what municipal counties do every single year when they decide how to realign their boards in a really nuanced, localized way. This is that only tool that you have.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mr. Williams, I've got several questions and comments.

**Mr. Williams:** Okay. I'll keep my answers shorter, then.

**The Chair:** Did I understand you correctly to say that some of your colleagues are saying that maybe we should add one more riding rather than take one away?

**Mr. Williams:** I'm certain somewhere around the government cloakroom that's been mentioned.

**The Chair:** If that was the case, then maybe we should have had more than 89 ridings to play with. I just make that comment.

**Mr. Williams:** I'll take that back. It's very charitable of you to put it that way. Very charitable of you to put it that way. Duly noted.

**The Chair:** Okay. Just a couple of factual questions. Are you saying that on average it takes you five hours from the Leg to get home?

**Mr. Williams:** No, it takes me about seven and a half hours to get home because I live in La Crête.

**The Chair:** Okay. Sorry. So five hours to get to Peace River, and how far is La Crête from Peace River?

**Mr. Williams:** Well, I would take a different route. As I said, two different routes: I would go up highway 88 coming out of Edmonton or Calgary, anywhere in southern Alberta, and that's about seven hours of just pure drive time. Then between the two communities, I'd say sort of the La Crête, Fort Vermilion area down to like the Peace River area, if the ice bridge is operational then it's a simple three-hour drive, but if there's no ice bridge in or if the ferry is not running then I'm going around and we're going to talk 4.5 hours. This is not an episode of *Ice Road Truckers* on History Channel. This is the day-to-day in our constituency.

**The Chair:** Okay. This is a naive, stupid question: why don't you fly?

**Mr. Williams:** Well, that same committee that Mr. Clark and I know well, Members' Services, has many limitations surrounding that. I'm allowed to fly from two points within my constituency if there's no other means of access, and there are only three or four northern constituencies that have this variation and I can charter a flight.

So, for example, when I go to another one of my communities, that is because it's fly-in, fly-out for much of the year when the ice bridge isn't in – a second ice bridge; sorry, this one's over by Fox Lake – then I can fly to that. I have once or twice before, but by and large flying leaves vehicles stranded at random, small municipal airports. There are not scheduled flights for the vast majority of this, so chartering is not allowed according to the rules, and then I end up in the middle of somewhere without a vehicle of my own, and I'm probably not going back to that airport afterwards. I'm probably going to another community, so we just drive. We're all used to it. That's what we do.

**The Chair:** Okay. Comparatively, by the way, since you're a bit of a history guy I sense, the 1991 Legislative committee that dealt with electoral boundaries did a fairly extensive study of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and then came up with several recommendations, and that was the basis for some of the Court of Appeal references in the early '90s. Looking at Saskatchewan, and I wish I had come prepared with the longitude or parallel, it's my understanding that northern Saskatchewan is just very simply divided into two electoral districts. I want to say it's about what we're looking at on the map right now. They take a third of the province and just say: okay; there's north Saskatchewan west and north Saskatchewan east. Have you looked at or have you thought of a model like that?

**Mr. Williams:** I don't know Saskatchewan well. My understanding is that the Canadian Shield does continue up into northern Saskatchewan. There are fewer road transportation networks, and there's not the same river basin that would have historically built it. I think they're largely fly-in, fly-out with a couple of connecting roads that don't have a long history with river basins. I'm not going to speak to that in detail, but that's what is a grade 4 memory of the geography of northern Canada. Effectively, the planes continue all the way up into Bistcho, like, in the lowlands. It's just a different geography. But I'll defer to someone who knows better.

**The Chair:** Okay. One more question. I'm not doubting your suggestion at the beginning, but can you just confirm what you said,

that the bottom boundary of Mackenzie is closer to the U.S. border than the northern boundary?

**Mr. Williams:** By drive time my understanding is that Calling Lake down to the U.S. border is faster than going from Calling Lake up to Zama City or N.W.T. I'd have to check my exact calculations again, but you're into a ballpark where it's a grey zone and it might depend on the weather. Yeah. It's massive. The transportation network isn't obvious all the way through once you get up to that far corner.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you. Please stay, if you are able, to hear the other presentations, and maybe there can be some conversation.

**Mr. Williams:** I'll stay as long as I can. When I'm not here, I'm watching online feverishly. Do you guys have this streamed, or did I make that up? Okay. Good. Yeah. I'm watching it nonstop.

**The Chair:** I can comment, Minister Williams, that you're the first person that has quoted Roger Scruton.

**Mr. Williams:** Wow. The fact you know who Roger Scruton is makes my heart sing.

**Dr. Martin:** And Aristotle.

**Mr. Williams:** I did invoke Aristotle and his meme, as everyone should in politics on a daily basis.

Thank you, everyone.

**The Chair:** Okay. We'll proceed to Mr. Williams' colleague from the Legislature, Ms Tejada. Welcome. Have a seat and make yourself comfortable. I recall very clearly your presentation last time.

**Member Tejada:** Do you? I'll take that as a compliment. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Well, it was your riding, you know, the way you described your riding. I always thought that maybe you should be the minister of transportation because of the nature of your riding.

**Member Tejada:** There's a lot of driving that happens in Calgary-Klein. Yeah.

I'm just going to get my notes together here. Looking at all of the maps, these are great. Okay. All right. Thank you so much. Lizette Tejada here, MLA for Calgary-Klein. I'm very, very pleased to be back here and wishing you all a Happy New Year. I'm hoping everyone got a good rest, and I'm just really thankful for all of the work that's been done through the commission and for the opportunities that Albertans have been given to give their feedback, for your careful consideration of the submissions, and for this detailed and well-reasoned report and recommendations. I can only imagine the many hours of work and deliberation, and I'm grateful for the engagement and the communication on all of your parts with Albertans in service to our democracy and to ensure effective representation.

Just in referencing the last time we spoke, I know that there was a lot of discussion there about what effective and fair representation looks like, especially in my case as it relates to municipalities and being an MLA within a municipality and how important it was to keep communities together, how the boundaries might also impact advocacy efforts around services, infrastructure access as well. We discussed the importance of keeping municipalities intact. I spoke a little bit about the role that I fill not only as a local MLA but as a shadow minister of immigration and multiculturalism and the idea

of how folks access the services that also help them integrate. I can share that when the report was released, I opened it with great anticipation. I felt like I was back at school.

2:50

**The Chair:** Did you read the first 60 pages before you got to your description?

**Member Tejada:** Well, before? Maybe not, but I did maybe, like, a little bit of selective reading. I felt like I was digging into it like a kid in school and thoroughly enjoyed how I could see that the conversations and the feedback of Albertans had informed the overall map. I got to read some of the submissions as well and, of course, looked at mine with great interest. And I'm grateful to have been able to witness some of what Mr. Williams was talking about as well and just learning about how all of these boundary changes can impact different ridings in different ways. When I look at the map as it is presented to us through this report, it seems to meet the spirit of a lot of the submissions that I was able to read and also the feedback that I received from constituents.

As it relates to Calgary-Klein, the changes are significant. It seems that any MLA for Calgary-Klein, if we're looking into the future, might not get to boast about representing three quadrants in the city of Calgary should these changes come into effect. I can say without a shadow of a doubt that it's been an absolute honour to represent all of my constituents and all of their communities. I built a lot of meaningful relationships with residents in all of the communities and have delighted in the work that they do, the community organizations, the services that are offered there. I have the Centre for Newcomers currently as well as places like Cornerstone Youth, and lots of the services that people access all over Calgary are focused in Calgary-Klein. Also, congratulations for having both hearings in the constituency of Calgary-Klein; the last ones we did and these ones. So I get, maybe, a little bit of bragging rights. No. I know I had nothing to do with that.

If you'll indulge me for a moment, I did feel a twinge of sadness at the idea that the riding of Calgary-Klein would no longer include the wonderful communities of Mayland Heights and Albert Park Radisson. The engagement that I see with our office, between neighbours, is truly an inspiration. Both communities have strong community relationships. They help each other. They're involved in a lot of advocacy. They're very, very active, and I've heard from them on everything from housing to public safety. Now, because we are in the riding of Calgary-Klein within the city of Calgary, a lot of those issues extend regardless of how the boundaries are moving.

I'll say that an argument still could be made for keeping Mayland Heights in the constituency of Calgary-Klein. I see, when I'm looking at the report and the numbers that are proposed, that we're looking at 49,666 that would be represented in the new boundaries, and the community of Mayland Heights has roughly about 5,000. We did talk about keeping like communities together, and the Community Association of Crossroads represents both Vista Heights, which is on the other side of the Trans-Canada, and Mayland community. So an argument could be made that way; however, I am also representing one of the communities in Triwood, so I'm used to sharing as I share one community association with my colleague Dr. Luanne Metz. Should these changes actually be confirmed, and, of course, if I'm fortunate enough to represent Calgary-Klein in the next election, I would be pleased to work collaboratively should additional representation happen and can promise that I'll still visit.

I'll add that the rapid population growth that we've seen in recent years – I know that this boundary reflects the numbers for 2024. We



saw the biggest spike in population in 2023. It's still growing. I also have the community of Midfield Heights, which used to be a mobile-home park. That land is slated for mixed model growth and an increase in housing, so I can see how these boundaries still make sense within that context.

In terms of the addition of Mount Pleasant, that was also a surprise but a very reasonable choice and very welcome, and I see that the rationale given was that this community bears a lot of similarity to the neighbouring communities of the riding as a whole. It neighbours on Tuxedo, Winston Heights, which is where the Midfield area is. Those are all on 16th, and also Highland Park. So not only is that accurate, that they access similar services, but Calgary-Klein currently already includes about a two-block swath of Mount Pleasant, so having that as an additional community to Calgary-Klein makes a lot of sense.

In general, I think that this particular boundary is in line with keeping communities together. If I think about Mayland Heights, Albert Park, and Radisson moving into Confluence, that also makes a lot of sense.

**The Chair:** You know, your presentation is ideally suited for being up at the map and showing us some things.

**Member Tejada:** Okay. Sorry. Yeah, sure.

**The Chair:** If you wouldn't mind, I'd like you to maybe go up there, just a bit of a recap, and especially as it relates to Mayland Heights. Show us where that is, and Aaron will get you a microphone so that we can hear you and record you in that regard. So keep going and repeat yourself if you wish by directing us to these areas.

**Member Tejada:** When we were talking about the loss of some of the communities that are reflected in this change, two of the communities that I currently represent would move into Confluence, and that's the new riding that's been added to Calgary.

**The Chair:** So that's south of you, then.

**Member Tejada:** This is 16th Avenue. On this side we have Vista Heights, and on this side we have Mayland, and then further east, I believe, are Albert Park and Radisson, which are also bordering on Forest Lawn, which I think is currently part of Calgary-East. When I'm talking about the representation of Vista Heights and Mayland Heights and how – at least the community association is in Mayland. Yeah. While I would be sad to lose those, I'm used to also sharing community associations. I think more representation is better, especially in our cities, and we've seen a lot of growth in the northeast.

I have northeast, southeast. I have northwest. This is the northwest. We have Nose Hill up here, and we're seeing a lot more of that concentrated growth in the northeast. It would be in other ridings like Calgary-North East, Calgary-Falconridge. This dividing line here of 36th Street is the C-Train line, right? So the boundary doesn't change there, and that's great. We still have lots of access. I still have lots of thoroughfares, so that's great.

Then I would say that, you know, I was looking at the history of the riding, and the boundary redraw actually more closely reflects a previous version of Calgary-Klein, right? I believe Mount Pleasant might have been part of Calgary-Klein previously. I know Winston Heights still was. So, basically, the biggest change that I saw was the removal of a couple of the communities into Confluence, but we also see an extension where 2nd Street was the dividing line. It is now 10th Street and including all of Mount Pleasant, so because I already represent part of Mount Pleasant, it

makes a lot of sense to include Mount Pleasant. It's that central, northwest, northeast area, I think, that's where we're going to see the concentration of growth in population, so it still makes sense looking at the boundary map. It's a fair map.

I would say that given the growth in some of the other ridings, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall, Calgary-North East, Calgary-Falconridge, seeing – I can't remember exactly where the numbers were at, and I know that we don't have parity across ridings – the large population growth there, I think Calgary actually could stand to have another constituency added to Calgary. So I will say that.

I think that's all I have to do with the map right now, so I will go back to my seat.

3:00

**The Chair:** Okay. You mentioned a mobile home park. Where is that? Describe that again. Is that being built up with apartments or what? What's happening there?

**Member Tejada:** It looks like mixed-model housing will go there. To point out where exactly that would be, we have 16th Avenue and the Trans-Canada here, we have the Deerfoot here, and Midfield park is right here. The mobile home park was actually removed many years ago. There have been lots of plans for development, and we're starting to see a little bit more movement there.

From the plans that I've seen, it looks like mixed-model housing, so we'll have some apartments; we'll have some town homes. There's a mix. There's already the infrastructure of the larger Winston Heights community, so it makes a lot of sense. We're going to see growth there. We're going to see growth just on the side of 36th Street as well by the C-Train. I've already seen conversions of industrial to residential, and we've seen conversions even of places like hotels as you get closer to the airport on Barlow. I represent a seniors' home which was converted from a hotel previously, right? We're seeing a lot of those conversions happening. I would say, all over the city.

I know that I hear from lots of constituents that transportation is a big concern, especially where we're seeing conversions where the bus routes don't exist yet, right? Usually you hear about that in the more suburban areas as we sort of increase our sprawl, but we're seeing real issues with that right now, especially with aging populations – right? – being able to access transit. I know that's a municipal issue.

Yeah. Any other questions for me while I'm up here?

**The Chair:** No. I think you can come back down. While I make use of the time, you say that Mayland Heights is only about 5,000 people, so you could take that back and just get up to the average then. Is that what you're saying?

**Member Tejada:** Yes, very possible.

**The Chair:** And you want it back. Politicians don't want to give up the great people they represent.

**Member Tejada:** I mean, I know my colleague, if he's still here – oh. I have my other colleague Court here. Of course, right? You develop those relationships with your community associations, and when I'm at Crossroads, I don't differentiate between who's in Vista and who's in Mayland Heights. I would love that for reasons that, you know, it's already represented. It's represented by the same community association, and it makes sense if you're talking about just, like, the services, the roads, everything that people access from those two neighbourhoods. They're very interconnected. But it also makes a lot of sense, the changes that are happening right now.

I haven't done a count yet on how big Mount Pleasant is. I know that it's quite dense. I'm fortunate enough to have worked for an MLA before becoming an MLA, and I helped represent exactly that area, Mount Pleasant, through the work that I did with the MLA for Calgary-Mountain View, and it makes sense. I've gotten to know both of those communities. That makes a lot of sense to have those included in the boundaries of Calgary-Klein.

**The Chair:** Okay. I actually just looked at my watch. I've been lousy at keeping time.

**Member Tejada:** I was going to say.

**The Chair:** I've been dialoguing with you.

Mr. Evans, I'll throw it open for questions.

**Member Tejada:** But I learned a lot from the last presentation, too.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans, any questions, comments?

**Mr. Evans:** No. Thank you.

**The Chair:** I was just waiting for voter turnout.  
Go ahead, Susan.

**Mrs. Samson:** We did hear about Mayland Heights in the ridings after the interim report came out, so I'm glad you addressed that. That is something I think we'll have a further conversation on.

So moving Mayland Heights doesn't tie us to Albert Park Radisson? There's not a connection there. It's more the other way, into Vista.

**Member Tejada:** Right. It's more connected with Vista. Now, Albert Park and Radisson: the commonality that they would have then with Mayland Heights is Memorial as the dividing line as well and access to the C-Train line because the C-Train line goes from 36th and then switches into Memorial, right? So they all access the same transportation.

**Mrs. Samson:** I can't see considering both based on where you're sitting in the big picture.

**Member Tejada:** That's true.

**Mrs. Samson:** But if there was one, it would be Mayland.

**Member Tejada:** Right.

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay. Thank you.

**Member Tejada:** That makes the most sense, I think.

**The Chair:** Okay.  
Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you. Thank you for your presentation and its level of detail. It's always fun. I want to quote you, your own characterization of your riding, when we saw you in the spring. Well, my crappy notes: "This is a very highly diverse district. We have residential all the way through to industrial zones. We have lots of major road arteries. We have LRT. We have bus lines. There are lots of new residential units throughout. Also, we have affordable housing in the eastern light-industrial areas." Those are the things I picked out from your characterization. Has anything at all changed about that characterization with the new interim story?

**Member Tejada:** I don't think so.

**Dr. Martin:** I posit that the same story would be told, right?

**Member Tejada:** Yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** The difference is about – well, it's a loss of community of people you know and love, but it's about population rather than anything that is a significant characterization of the district.

**Member Tejada:** Right. Absolutely. Yeah, I don't think anything has changed in that respect. Happy to represent all of those communities. That was a little bit of a sentimental addition.

**The Chair:** It's amazing how sentimental MLAs are. I've noticed that.

**Member Tejada:** It is. I'll be quick. Mayland Heights, specifically the young people in Mayland Heights, are very, very community minded and active. A lot of the cultural communities gather in Mayland Heights at Crossroads Community Association, and some of them are classmates of my kids, so they attend the same schools. We know that we need more. But yeah, they're great communities. I think if we're looking at the riding of Calgary-Confluence that's been added to Calgary, those communities being together still make a lot of sense.

**The Chair:** Okay.  
Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. I will just say thank you for being here. Our GIS magic tells me that Mayland Heights is 6,600.

**Member Tejada:** Oh, is it? Okay.

**Mr. Clark:** According to what we have, anyway.

**The Chair:** But I think she still wants them.

**Mr. Clark:** It's clear that you would be happy to have them back if we were to move them back in. Yeah.

**Member Tejada:** At the same time, though, having that additional riding and having those communities together makes a lot of sense, too. Like I said, I already share a community association with another MLA, and I feel like more representation is better with all of the population growth that we've seen. We hear about it in the news all the time. I think it's great to have more representation.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, Ms Tejada. Very much appreciate it.

**Member Tejada:** Thanks so much.

**The Chair:** Please stay if you can because I think we might have time for dialogue.

**Member Tejada:** I will.

**The Chair:** We're running way behind time, I noticed. We are now supposed to be at 2:30, I think. So readjust your clocks, everyone. It's 2:30.

Mrs. Angela Aalbers, are you present? Good afternoon. Have a seat, and make yourself comfortable.

**Mrs. Aalbers:** Aaron does have a copy of the presentation, all the materials, but if you would like a hard copy, I brought them. I cut a few trees down. So if you'd like them, then that's possible.

**The Chair:** Sure. Give them to us before you leave or now. Yeah. We don't want to waste.

3:10

**Mrs. Aalbers:** While Aaron is getting stuff ready, anyways.

Okay. Well, good afternoon, commission members. Thank you very much for having me. My name is Angela Aalbers, and I'm the reeve of Mountain View county. This is my fourth term as an elected official and my fifth year as reeve of the county. I'm here today to address two matters, first on behalf of my council and the residents of Mountain View county and secondly on behalf of rural Alberta more broadly.

Mountain View county is currently in two electoral divisions, Rimby-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre and Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. This representation has worked extremely well and has served our community fairly and effectively. The current provincial boundaries reflect the needs of our residents and align with the type of representation our county requires.

Importantly, the current provincial boundaries also align with our municipal governance structure, which recognizes significant differences between the eastern and western sides of the county. At the municipal level we have four elected officials representing the west and three representing the east. I've provided a map of our electoral boundaries at the municipal level.

This distinction is intentional and necessary due to fundamental differences across the county. These differences include agriculture. The eastern portion of the county is primarily focused on cropping and confined feeding operations while the western portion specializes in livestock and forage production.

Crown land and recreation. Crown land and associated recreational activities occur exclusively in the western portion of the county.

Emergency response. Fire departments in Sundre, Water Valley, and Cremona require very different training than those in Olds, Didsbury, and Carstairs. Western departments must be equipped for forest fire response and backcountry and river rescue.

Renewable energy development. Provincial focus on renewable energy is most likely to occur in the eastern portions of the county, where open priority landscapes are more suitable. This continues to be a contentious issue for rural Alberta.

Infrastructure and economic development. The western portion of the county relies on the highway 22 corridor, including communities such as James River, Bearberry, Water Valley, Sundre, Cremona, and stretching out to Rocky Mountain House. The eastern portion relies on the QE II corridor, including Carstairs, Didsbury, and Olds.

Water and waste-water services. Eastern communities such as Olds, Didsbury, and Carstairs have access to regional water and waste-water systems. In contrast, western communities, including Cremona, Sundre, and areas north to Rocky Mountain House, rely on stand-alone infrastructure such as lagoons, reservoirs, and local treatment facilities.

Forestry. A western-aligned electoral division preserves this cohesive forestry community of interest and supports effective representation by aligning boundaries with forest management areas.

While we understand the commission's rationale for proposing a single riding encompassing all of Mountain View county as outlined on page 71 of your draft report with the creation of the Mountain View-Kneehill riding, we believe there is far too much diversity across the county to be adequately represented by one MLA. Representation should reflect common interests and shared realities, not solely municipal boundaries or population counts. We

believe we've clearly demonstrated why the existing east-west division of ridings is both logical and necessary.

Although the commission has noted agriculture is a dominant industry in the proposed Lacombe-Rocky Mountain House riding as outlined on page 67 of your draft report, we respectfully submit that the type of agriculture matters. There is a meaningful distinction between cropping-based systems and livestock- and forage-based operations, and these differences drive policy priorities and representation needs.

We also ask the commission to give significant weight to the following factors: economic development and access to major transportation corridors being the highway 22 corridor and the QE II corridor; water and waste-water infrastructure, particularly the differing needs of communities accessing regional systems versus those on stand-alone systems; access to Crown land and recreation, which represents both opportunities and challenges unique to our western side of the county; emergency services, including wildfire response and the extensive need for municipal and provincial collaboration within the forest protection areas; and, finally, the forest industry. This needs aligned municipal and provincial advocacy.

Mountain View county respectfully requests that the commission revisit the proposed boundary alignment and, based on the information provided, revert to the current structure of representation that our ratepayers deserve, naturally being a more westerly alignment and a more easterly alignment.

I know that I'm close to the end of my time. However, I would be remiss in not taking the opportunity to address the reduction of rural ridings in Alberta. The reduction in rural ridings proposed in the draft report reflects a dynamic that Canadians already are familiar with at the federal level. Just as population concentrations in eastern Canada have long resulted in western Canada having a diminished voice at Parliament, population growth within our urban centres is now reducing the relative voice of rural Albertans in our own Legislature. Rural regions are geographically large – sorry. I lost my place now.

While representation by population is important, it cannot be the sole measure of fairness. Rural regions are geographically large, economically significant, and face complex responsibilities related to agriculture, resource management, emergency services, and infrastructure. Fewer rural MLAs representing larger and more diverse areas risks undermining the principle of effective representation, which requires that the geography, community interest, and regional realities be meaningfully reflected at the table where the decisions are made.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mrs. Aalbers.

Mr. Clark, any questions or comments?

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you. I appreciate your presentation, and I also appreciate you sharing the written presentation with us, so we've got that. Yeah. I mean, I think you've really hit on one of the big challenges, and if you've been kind of listening to some of the previous presenters, we really struggle with the significant population growth that we've seen, the massive influx. It's all – not exclusively, but almost all of it – in Calgary and Edmonton. It doesn't mean that Mountain View county hasn't grown at all relative to the big cities and the surrounding areas. It hasn't grown as quickly, so it makes for a challenging exercise.

What I'm curious about is that you've mentioned Clearwater county, the pieces of Clearwater county that are sort of part of this. Can you tell me about the sort of connection or not with Clearwater county?

**Mrs. Aalbers:** Yeah. There's a large connection with Clearwater county. Things like the forest management programs, how we look at tourism on the west country. Mountain View county works with Clearwater county on their Sasquatch program, which is really trying to bring more awareness of how to use the west country in a more sustainable and effective way. We have regional mutual aid agreements with Clearwater county on fire services.

The other big one that I know I've mentioned is the forestry industry. Probably twice an election cycle we try to get together with Clearwater county. They have the big LDF plant; we have West Fraser Mills in Sundre. So the sharings of how we can best lobby on behalf of our forestry. We did this when it came to the mountain pine beetle, when we had the outbreaks. We worked very, very closely with Clearwater county to lobby on behalf of the forest industry through our Rural Municipalities of Alberta and through our MLAs. So it's been a great collaboration with Clearwater county.

**Mr. Clark:** Did you say that was the Sasquatch program?

**Mrs. Aalbers:** It's called the Sasquatch program, yes.

**Mr. Clark:** Is that named after the actual sasquatch?

**Mrs. Aalbers:** It is, and they've got a lovely logo. They've done great work in trying to raise awareness for the west country and keep it pristine.

**Mr. Clark:** Great. Beautiful. Thank you.

**Mrs. Aalbers:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you and thanks for the handout. Lots to chew on there, but the key for me is your distinction on many different themes between the east side and the west side of your county and why that's of significance to us because of the way our interim map was presented.

3:20

Again, you and your colleagues do see a very clear distinction economically as much as culturally between the east and west side, and that's key to the different types of agricultural production and resource management issues that east and west severally have to look after, and they're very distinct. Is that something that's baked into the policy of the council? You've got to have several of your councillors from the west side and several from the east and you from the west as well. How do you prioritize issues?

**Mrs. Aalbers:** I guess in how it would impact provincially and how we lobby provincially, things like the issues right now with canola, for instance: that very, very much impacts the eastern side of the county. So we're very thankful that we can have an MLA who's very focused on the canola production. It doesn't impact the west as much, so it gives us an opportunity for our MLA, who's very focused on that type of agriculture, to look for that, whereas, you know, when things like wildfire seasons come to fruition, unfortunately, every year, we're focused more with our MLA in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. It's a mouthful; I'm sorry.

**Dr. Martin:** No. We apologize. Our predecessors stuck that label on.

**Mrs. Aalbers:** We're focused on that. Things like when the mountain pine beetle comes through and impacts our forest

industry: then we can work directly with that MLA, where the other MLA now is focused on issues like canola and export.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Aalbers:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Aalbers, you are heading up a very interesting county.

**Mrs. Aalbers:** We are very, very lucky.

**The Chair:** If I said to you that you are going against the grain of most other municipalities, what would you say to that?

**Mrs. Aalbers:** Probably not unusual, but we think we do have a very strong case for why we're bringing this forward. We're not bringing this forward for the sake of being difficult.

**The Chair:** That's not what I meant.

**Mrs. Aalbers:** When the federal riding came through and we went from being represented by two MPs to three MPs, we thought that was going to be a complication but realized that it was a huge opportunity. The more voices you have representing your communities, the more opportunities you have for access to ministries, the more time you have as focused items.

Again, I appreciate very much what the commission is trying to do and that you may see one MLA as a positive. However, we believe that we're so diverse and there are so many issues coming up, and they continue to come up – renewable energies is a very large one for rural municipalities. It will be very focused on the eastern side of the county, not so much on the western side. So having those two MLAs that we're able to give those key differences in those issues to is extremely important for Mountain View county.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.  
Susan.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you, and thank you for your presentation. It was most interesting. Am I correct to understand that the eastern edges that are now new to your electoral district, Trochu and Three Hills: would you suggest that they fit in well with those that are bordering on highway 2, like in terms of agriculture?

**Mrs. Aalbers:** Yes, very much. We do have a very large distinction between the QE II east and the 22 west.

**Mrs. Samson:** Right.

**Mrs. Aalbers:** And then we have kind of the grey zone and kind of it fits all between the 22 and the QE II corridor.

**Mrs. Samson:** Right. I see the same thing occurring. Like, when the map was redrawn and it took more to the north towards the North Saskatchewan, there weren't any large municipalities or towns in there. We felt that it might be easier to be absorbed in there. What are your thoughts? I know it's new to this, but is that acceptable?

**Mrs. Aalbers:** To move more east?

**Mrs. Samson:** We're talking west now, because now you go all the way. Before you stopped at Sundre, and now you move farther north, taking in the North Saskatchewan. Is that not new, that far?

**Mrs. Aalbers:** I thought it was condensed west to west.

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay.

**Mrs. Aalbers:** Oh, I see. You're going – that's the . . .

**Dr. Martin:** Clearwater county.

**Mrs. Aalbers:** Clearwater county.

**Mrs. Samson:** Yeah. We took more of Clearwater county into that riding.

**Mrs. Aalbers:** Yeah. Taking more of Clearwater county into the riding, I think it fits very well with the whole area between sort of Clearwater county and Water Valley. That whole area there is very distinctive. I think that would fit very, very well.

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay. Great. Thank you.

**Mrs. Aalbers:** Yes. You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** What kind of working relationship does your county have with the city of Red Deer?

**Mrs. Aalbers:** We have very little to do with the city of Red Deer as Mountain View county. We are part of a waste-water commission that feeds waste water into the city of Red Deer, but Mountain View county is a very small portion of that because we don't actually have any lines. We just have, essentially, a dump into. So we have very little to do with the city.

**Mr. Evans:** Are you in any discussions with respect to annexations or anything like that?

**Mrs. Aalbers:** No. We went through a big annexation probably eight to 10 years ago with our towns, our current towns, mainly Olds, Didsbury, Carstairs, and Sundre, and they haven't yet reached the potential of the growth that was in those annexations.

To Mr. Clark's point: I understand that the urban growth is great. The concern that rurals have is that the more focus and the more representation we have in the urban centres, the more we're going to stagnate the growth in the rural opportunities. We need to find a way as a province to really generate some of that growth in the rural, and the less representation we have, the more the growth will even slow down.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much, and again thank you for your written presentation. As you know, we are dealing with mountains of information here, and this is helpful and interesting perspective. I won't drive up highway 2 between Calgary and Edmonton without thinking of this presentation.

**Mrs. Aalbers:** Well, please come visit us. Come visit us in the west country. It is something beautiful to be seen if you haven't already been there.

**The Chair:** I haven't been to the Trochu museum yet.

**Mrs. Aalbers:** The gopher museum? You've got to go.

**Mr. Clark:** To Torrington.

**Mrs. Aalbers:** To Torrington. Yeah.

**Mr. Clark:** Our U.K. relatives: it's absolutely a big part of the tour.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you so much.

**Mrs. Aalbers:** You are very welcome.

**The Chair:** We are now at break time or well past break time. Mr. Ellingson is here. I'm not sure other presenters are here. Okay.

If we don't change the boundaries, maybe you need an MLA that knows the county well.

Let's have five minutes only, okay? Five minutes only. Thank you.

[The hearing adjourned from 3:29 p.m. to 3:35 p.m.]

**The Chair:** Okay. I'm going to have to call the commission to order. I've just looked at the time, and we have a very limited opportunity to hear at least four presenters. We can reconvene.

Mr. Court Ellingson, MLA for Calgary-Foothills, as it's now named.

**Member Ellingson:** Currently named Calgary-Foothills.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Member Ellingson:** So you have obviously read my letter.

**The Chair:** Yes. It was a very helpful letter, by the way.

I think we're going to be a little bit more strict with the time limits now because we've got bleed into the evening, et cetera, et cetera. Thank you.

Mr. Ellingson, please proceed.

**Member Ellingson:** Thank you. I will not exceed my six minutes. I'm used to putting a timer on so that when I'm in the House, I know that I'm getting close to the end of my speech.

First of all, I wanted to really thank the panel for the work that you have already done. I wholeheartedly recognize just the volume of data that you guys are going through, qualitative data and quantitative data. I know that in the first round you had a ton of letters and presentations and that you incorporated all of that into your work. I note that in the second round now you're getting another large volume of data and that you're going to do your very best to incorporate that into your work as well. I just wanted to say that I really – I want to honour that. It is a lot of work, and I think you guys are really taking that on. I really appreciate that.

I wanted to thank you in your initial round of work for acknowledging the population growth on Calgary's northern edge and northeastern edge. That obviously factored into the first cut of draft proposal that you sent us, noting kind of, like, the changes that you had proposed were clearly taking into account that very high level of population growth on the north and in the northeast. As part of that, I also wanted to acknowledge that with what is currently named Calgary-Foothills, it is proposed to remain an urban riding. I do think that that's important.

I think I talked about in the first boundary commission submission the diverse nature of what is Calgary-Foothills. I think it is important that it remains an urban riding because I think that you will see, like, there are significant demographic differences between the communities of Calgary-Foothills and the rural communities that are north of Calgary. In Calgary-Foothills those suburban communities are very ethnoculturally diverse. I think you will find that if you go north of the city into the rural area, you'll find very different demographics, and you'll find very different approaches to what is important and the work that they're trying to do and what they would expect from representation from their MLA. So I wanted to recognize that, to me, that's important, that it

did stay urban and that that draft proposal noted that it would stay urban.

I also wanted to talk just very briefly about, like, the attachment to the constituency. You've heard that from a lot of MLAs. I will say that it's interesting for me because I only moved to the constituency four months in advance of the election in May of 2023, so the last three years have been a real growth and opportunity for me to come to know the neighbourhoods and the constituency, the relationships between different parts of the constituency, where they go to gather, how they come together and gather.

I wanted to use that as a little bit to talk for a moment about that proposed name change that I threw out there. I wanted to say that just one of the things that I've had the real honour of is spending a lot of time with the communities of Kincora, Sherwood, Nolan Hill, and Sage Hill as they work together in addressing the recreational needs of the communities of northern Calgary. They're all working together on a combined proposal to build something called Symons Valley park, which would be physically located in Kincora, but it's a collaborative effort of four different communities, and it would be absolutely accessed by the neighbourhoods of those Symons Valley communities. Now, the newer kind of Symons Valley communities that are coming along like Glacier Ridge would all be kind of working together for that park, which would benefit all of them.

I also wanted to talk a little bit about, like, the gathering points. There is one really important gathering place. I'll talk a little bit about, you know, the potential of us losing Arbour Lake and how much that means to us, that we would be losing Arbour Lake.

Symons Valley United church is a critical gathering point culturally for faith groups, for just different communities, where they come together and are using Symons Valley United church. One of them is the Al-Makkah Islamic Society, that also has a prayer group that prays on Fridays at Symons Valley United church. That place is a gathering place for all of those communities coming together at Symons Valley. It's a Christian building, but it's a place of gathering for both Christians and for Muslims. That's just kind of representative of how those communities in Calgary-Foothills are coming together.

Yeah. I see that I'm at five minutes and 40 seconds. I'm going to throw in one thing that I didn't put in my letter and I didn't talk about in the first round, and that is that while the draft change would put Evanston together, because Calgary-Foothills currently represents a sliver of Evanston, maybe there's an opportunity here for the new map to keep Citadel together.

We have Citadel Green and Citadel Grove east of Nose Hill Drive, but that little sliver of Citadel: their membership gives them access to the Citadel Community Association. The community news comes in the Citadel community newsletter, not the Hamptons community newsletter. If, for example, as an MLA, as the MLA representing that little sliver of Citadel, you were representing Hamptons but you also had that little sliver of Citadel because it's west of Nose Hill Drive, you're going to pay to put your stuff into the Citadel newspaper. So you're incurring that. Just to reach those few hundred people, you have to go through the Citadel Community Association and the Citadel newsletter. It may be of interest. Like, it's a matter of a few hundred people, but it might make sense to keep it with Calgary-Foothills instead of the proposed Calgary-Beddington if that makes sense.

I've gone over my six minutes, so I'm going to stop.

**The Chair:** Okay. Can you go right up there and tell us where Citadel Green and Citadel Grove are? As you're there, I'll open it up for questions as well.

**Member Ellingson:** Sure.

**The Chair:** Just point to where they are.

**Member Ellingson:** Oh, actually, I guess it's Sarcee that I'm talking about. Nose Hill was down here.

**The Chair:** Oh, good.

**Member Ellingson:** Sarcee is what I'm talking about. Sorry about that. It's this little piece off of Sarcee Trail. Just east of Sarcee Trail. It's got no physical road connection to the Hamptons.

**The Chair:** Okay. Good. Thank you.  
Questions?

**Mr. Clark:** I found it on our map here. I see it, and we'll make a note of it.

**Mrs. Samson:** So it's just Citadel you're looking for and the Hamptons?

**Member Ellingson:** I mean, I went over time, so I didn't go into my argument about how, as I said in the first round, with Arbour Lake we have only two community associations with halls where we can go and, like, book that hall and use it as a place of gathering. Arbour Lake is one of them, so by losing Arbour Lake, we lose one of our critical gathering, meeting places. Yeah. It leaves us with only Citadel, or then we have to go outside the riding to bring people together.

**The Chair:** So getting back Citadel gives you a meeting place.

**Member Ellingson:** Well, keeping Citadel. Your proposal does include Citadel, so it does leave us with one community hall.

**The Chair:** Okay. Questions? Very quickly.

**Mr. Clark:** I don't have any questions, but thank you very much for coming. I appreciate it.

**Dr. Martin:** I recall our previous conversation about gravel pits and the like. A large part of your footprint is not residential.

**Member Ellingson:** There's a ton of industrial, and as I have commented with my colleagues, there are almost as many prisons and now recovery centres as there are schools.

**Dr. Martin:** Right. And then the area north of the gravel pit area is undeveloped, large acreages. Are they acreages or are they farms out towards the city boundary?

**Member Ellingson:** They are, like, a mix of some of them, kind of practising farms like acreages. But there are practising farms there just north of the city boundary.

**Dr. Martin:** You mean working farms, not attempting to be a farm.

**Member Ellingson:** What I will say is that I think because of the activity of the gravel pit, I'm not sure that that area is designated to ever be kind of, like, more fully developed residentially. I think there are plans to keep a buffer zone between the gravel pits and more dense residential, if that makes sense.

3:45

**Dr. Martin:** It does. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** No questions. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** No, thank you.  
I appreciate your presentation.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much. We did read your letter and it stood out and we're considering that.

**Member Ellingson:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Oh, I'm sorry. We cut you off too soon, but are you in agreement that you wanted Calgary-Symons Valley?

**Member Ellingson:** Calgary-Symons Valley is what I would propose as the name.

**Mrs. Samson:** S-y?

**Member Ellingson:** Why Symons Valley?

**Mrs. Samson:** No, the spelling is s-y?

**Member Ellingson:** Oh, the spelling is s-y. Yeah.

**Mrs. Samson:** Because I had some people who said: s-i-m.

**Member Ellingson:** The spelling is s-y. Yeah.

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** There are 293 people in that little part of Citadel.

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay.

**The Chair:** You can absorb that.

**Member Ellingson:** Well, then maybe I would be close to the 55,000 target, because you noted that I would be slightly under.

**The Chair:** You want to be one that's right on, right?  
Thank you very much.

**Member Ellingson:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** The next presenter is Mr. Bakaraju. Please come forward. Have a seat and get comfortable and please correct me if I was wrong on your pronunciation.

**Mr. Bakaraju:** Yeah, no worries at all. It's Pranav Bakaraju.

**The Chair:** Bakaraju. Okay. Thank you.  
Tell us where you're from. You presented last time.

**Mr. Bakaraju:** I did present earlier.

**The Chair:** You work in a constituency office?

**Mr. Bakaraju:** I work for the gentleman who just finished presenting.

**The Chair:** Oh, so you're tag-teaming. Okay.

**Mr. Bakaraju:** You'll find this presentation is, if not identical, very similar to what you just had, so I will also be brief. I'll say the same thing that Court did. Thank you so much for the work that you're doing. We do understand it's a lot of data that you're taking in and a very important process for our democracy, so much appreciated.

My name is Pranav Bakaraju. I'm MLA Court Ellingson's constituency manager in Calgary-Foothills. I do live in Calgary-Buffalo in downtown, but I regularly go to the northwest to work, and I'm very familiar with the riding and, sort of, do that case work within the office. I'll kind of high-level cover some of the comments I did in my previous presentation, but I won't go into too much detail because you already have that info.

Similar to what the MLA just said, I will echo our thanks for the acknowledgement of the growing population of the northern part of the city, and specifically our northwest area, along with the fact that the proposed boundaries remain within the city of Calgary. We do hear from constituents. I hear directly from them often about how, you know, sometimes the Calgary suburbs are seen to be very far away from the city core, and they don't like that perception. They want to be a part of the city, so having a provincial boundary jurisdiction within the city of Calgary boundaries, having that aligned is very valuable for them. I've heard that both anecdotally, and it makes sense objectively as well when you think about community associations and how they interact with representatives both municipally and provincially. It's just helpful to have that alignment, so thanks so much for that.

Around the kind of cultural connections, as the MLA also pointed out, there is a very diverse demographic within Calgary-Foothills, within the boundaries that currently exist and that are proposed whereas if you start heading a little bit more west into Cochrane or a little bit further north into more of that rural area, the demographics are quite different. The sort of shared values of the communities would be different. If there was any kind of advocacy that was being done, you would almost have two elements of people who live more in the urban area of the riding versus the rural area of the riding. In this manner that you've proposed it, we avoid that problem, so that's very appreciated as well.

As Court mentioned, we have a very strong Chinese community, a large community of African-Caribbean Black communities that live in our area, Muslims, and Hindus as well. So it's very, very rich in its diversity, and they're all represented through these various community associations. We brought up one of the challenges in the previous presentation with Evanston being sort of split off. I see in this proposed map that Evanston is now removed from our riding, and of course, we'll be sad to not represent them anymore. That being said, it makes sense from a logical sense. So thank you for that.

Secondly, I will echo what the MLA was saying around Citadel. We were just looking at the map and identified those streets as being east of Sarcee Trail, the ones that he was mentioning. Moving that to be part of the Citadel Community Association group would be very helpful within the riding.

I think that last time you sort of joked about whether we should change the name or not, and I said that I like the name Calgary-Foothills for the aesthetic. But as you can see, I have lost that fight internally with our office and with some constituents who have said – and I do agree with them completely in the constituency office. Sometimes I get e-mails that are intended for the Foothills hospital, or I get e-mails for the Foothills federal riding, which is south of the city, and I have to remind them and kind of share that difference. So if we do change this name, it would make a lot of sense to avoid that. Calgary-Symons Valley – it is Symons with a Y – I think that's an apt name considering the neighbourhood communities.

Actually, I learned a little bit more about the history of Calgary-Symons Valley. I did not know that was the original name quite some time ago, so I think that it goes back to . . .

**The Chair:** For the electoral district?

**Mr. Bakaraju:** Not the electoral district, just that neighbourhood, that area of communities. There are some people that were quite passionate about that is what we learned.

I'm just going to quickly check my notes here, but I think that kind of covers everything. I don't want to repeat too much.

**The Chair:** Okay. Quick question. If we were to take in the area east of Sarcee . . .

**Mr. Bakaraju:** That's Citadel Grove.

**The Chair:** Citadel. What would the boundary be on that little sliver?

**Mr. Bakaraju:** The boundary would remain Sarcee Trail, but there would be a bit of a cut-off, so we have to describe that cut-off almost.

**The Chair:** Yeah. We have to describe that cut-off, so what would that be?

**Mr. Bakaraju:** Got it. I mean, do you mean just . . .

**Mr. Clark:** I've got the city map there. It backs onto a park. So it's one just little . . .

**Mrs. Samson:** Citadel Green.

**Mr. Bakaraju:** Citadel Green N.W. and Citadel Grove N.W. There's only two streets, and it would kind of be almost like a triangle kind of angle.

**The Chair:** I get that, but Sarcee Trail couldn't be the boundary, right?

**Dr. Martin:** You'd have a bump-out.

**Mr. Bakaraju:** Yeah. You'd have a bump-out. Exactly.

**The Chair:** Yeah, so how do you describe – what street is that?

**Mr. Clark:** That's Citadel Green. It's actually a park.

**The Chair:** So we just need a name for that.

**Mr. Clark:** We'll figure that out.

**The Chair:** Okay. We'll leave brighter minds to figure that out.

**Mr. Bakaraju:** No worries. I'll echo the point that the MLA mentioned, that Arbour Lake has been our primary meeting spot, so that is a bit of a loss for us. But we understand that, you know, you've got to do what you've got to do. In the north there's just a lack of community association meeting spaces, which is a bit tough, but we'll have some events out of the riding, I guess, is what that means.

**The Chair:** Okay. Questions.  
Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** No, I don't have anything.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

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

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Even I have nothing more to add.

**Mr. Clark:** There is a first time for everything, but I think it's fair to say that Calgary-Foothills has been well represented this afternoon. So thank you very much.

**Mr. Bakaraju:** Thank you. Much appreciated. Thanks for your time.

**The Chair:** I thought it was Calgary-Symons Valley.  
Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. Carra, make yourself comfortable. Identify yourself and what area of the city you represent.

**Mr. Carra:** Hello, everyone. My name is Gian-Carlo Carra. I am a private citizen right now. When last we spoke, I was presenting when you were setting everything up. I think I took some time out for my son's soccer game and was sitting in my car talking to you. At the time I was the city councillor representing ward 9 in east Calgary, which involves a number of MLA constituencies.

I bestirred myself to speak to you because I think I was talking about how we were organizing the city and what we've experienced in terms of the city's electoral boundaries and growth trajectories and the importance of trying to skate to where the puck is going, and I'm standing before you today to say congratulations. I think you did a good job with what's proposed. I imagine there are probably people who are happy with it and people who are unhappy with it, and I thought I would lend my voice to people who are happy for it.

**The Chair:** Are you referencing any particular riding?

3:55

**Mr. Carra:** No. I'm referencing what you did.

I mean, you know, the fact that we're under a water advisory right now has a lot to do with decisions made by our representation and investments and things like that.

The argument I was making to you is that we are becoming a much more urban province. Our cities are growing very quickly, and they have to balance investing in accommodating that growth with also maintaining the very expensive and extensive infrastructure systems that we had. And we got into a conversation that dealt with that.

You know, I want to thank you for creating an extra urban riding. I think what we've heard from the MLAs that have presented is how important it is to keep cultural communities and communities of interest intact, and I think you did a very good job of balancing that. Creating an extra seat really helps. I do think that we are going to continue to grow very quickly as a city. We need to invest in that city, and we need political representation to do that.

I think that you guys have done a very good job of balancing all interests in this. I just wanted to take time out of my private life right now to thank you for that work and to encourage you to hold the line, you know, in the event that there are more political forces trying to push you back to certain status quos. I think that this is an important change. I feel like my comments were very much heard by this commission.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much.

Dr. Martin, any questions or comments?

**Dr. Martin:** I was just looking in my notes to find out the conversation we had in the spring, but I can't . . .

**The Chair:** I remember it was out of Edmonton. We were in Edmonton, and you were . . .

**Mr. Carra:** Yeah, I was phoning in from my car next to a soccer field.



**The Chair:** Yeah.

Well, Mr. Clark, any questions?

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah, please. I'll come back if I find . . .

**Mr. Clark:** So you were on council when the blanket rezoning discussion was happening.

**Mr. Carra:** I was.

**Mr. Clark:** I don't mean to sort of poke at potential – I mean, that's obviously an ongoing topic. As a private citizen, though, someone who has got a lot of background in this area, do you have any sense of where that might end? Like, what's the upshot of all that going forward? If we don't have blanket rezoning, do we have targeted density? Does that whole idea go out the window and we sprawl on the edges? What do you feel is a most likely scenario?

**Mr. Carra:** I believe that our conversation went in this direction, and what I talked about was how in 2009 the city passed a municipal development plan that very clearly identified that we couldn't continue sprawling endlessly and that we had to strike a better balance between outward growth and upward growth.

In 2010 I became a member of city council. My professional expertise was really in helping cities across North America achieve better balances in terms of how they grow. So what we tried to do was affect what the MDP was talking about. What the MDP was talking about was that over the 60 years of the municipal development plan's life the intention was to strike – instead of 100 per cent growth occurring on the city's edge, you wanted to do 50 per cent of the growth on the city's edge and 50 per cent within the established areas. So over the next 15 years it was really sort of a battle to move from a regulatory system, a marketplace that was focused on outward growth to a system that better accommodated both.

What we tried to do at first was really sort of go community by community. We basically split the city into 41 multicomunity areas, and we attempted to work with every community to figure out where their share of the growth would go. What we found was that every time we had a conversation about that, the derailing conversation – you know, not: "Where do we put the parks? Where do we put the rec centres? Where do we put the main streets? Where do we put the transit stops?" It was: how dense is the area right around my house going to get? That was always a derailing conversation.

I think in an attempt to get back to the more meaningful conversation, which is, "Where are the major receiving areas supposed to be?" let's establish a new floor for density across the city, and then we can roll up our sleeves and have the more important, more thoughtful conversations. We did that knowing that there would probably be political backlash, but we were sort of stalling out.

From 1999, when we first identified that we couldn't continue to grow the way we were growing, to 2009 the city's growth was 103 per cent on the edge, minus 3 per cent in the established areas. Two thousand and nine to 2019, which was sort of the heartland of the work that I did as a city councillor, we managed to go 10 per cent redevelopment, 90 per cent growth on the edge, which means that over the next five decades in order to hit a cumulative 50-50, 58 per cent of all growth has to take place in the established areas and 42 per cent has to take place on the edge. Now, that 42 per cent number reflects, I think, the natural limits of growth. While we do live in a prairie and we're not bounded by mountains and oceans, we do bump up against municipal neighbours, and there are limits to growth. The established places where you can continue to grow

really represent 42 per cent of all growth possible, so that means 58 per cent has to take place in the established areas.

I think that the universal upzoning was intended to create an environment where about 30 per cent of that 58 per cent would take place, and then the other 70 per cent would have to take place in major receiving areas for growth, things like the East Village, things like the bridges, things like the University district, like Truman's West District. You know, I think we need 40 or 50 of those over the next five decades, and that's really the planning challenge. You need to have representatives both at the municipal level and the provincial level who understand that and understand the role of public investment in helping provoke the necessary private investment to get those outcomes.

**Mr. Clark:** Great. That's really helpful. Thank you.

**Dr. Martin:** I found my notes. We were talking precisely about this in the spring, and I just want to press you a little further.

**Mr. Carra:** Happy to opine.

**Dr. Martin:** You offered some more granular information on that. What we were discussing then and what you outlined, really, is what I understand to be quite classic modern urban planning theory. It's key to high-transit nodes, collector nodes for populations that can use high transit so you can go up. Absolutely classic. What you've just described about the relative proportions of the building isn't consistent with that, is it? I mean, there's an awful lot of struggle to get the densification along the LRT nodes.

**Mr. Carra:** Yeah. I would say that there are a number of barriers to get the kind of development we want to see along that, and some of it – I mean, whenever I'm talking about change to people in cities, I always sort of use the example of London as a food city, right? You know, London has been famous for hundreds of years as being an imperial capital with the worst food culture imaginable considering the breadth of their empire, and in the last 30 or 40 years London has gone from the laughingstock of the culinary world to one of the great food cities of the world.

There's a tipping point that happens in that situation where you need to get a critical mass of people who know what good food is and want to buy it, you need to have a critical mass of restaurateurs who know how to produce that and can cater to that clientele, and you need to have an entire supply network of suppliers who can bring high-quality ingredients to the table. Until you get that critical mass, you're not over the hump. I would say that the transition that we are seeking in cities across North America – and, you know, I would say that Calgary is an exceptional example of that transition – is to move from the postwar city of the automobile to the much more multimodal city and the polycentric city. It's a very difficult thing because you need customers who want to buy, you need developers who are willing to develop, and you need a regulatory system that supports that.

If I've learned anything in my 15 years on council – I think when we arrived at council, there were a number of councillors who were very interested in negotiating a new deal with the development industry wherein growth would pay for itself. If I've learned anything in 15 years, it's that there is no growth any time in the history of the world where growth has exclusively paid for itself; it's always been creating as beneficent a relationship between public investment and private investment. I think when it's done wrong, it's a public subsidy in private profits, and when it's done right, you are creating, you know, as sustainable – economically, socially, financially from a jobs perspective – a city as possible. It's really important, backing up to the job of this commission, to create

political representation that has a fighting chance of being cognizant of that in their representation of their constituents.

4:05

**Dr. Martin:** I want to do one follow-up if I may. That's that in your description of the relative percentages over the last couple of decades between growth in the central part of Calgary and on its periphery, the percentage change has moved, yet there's still going to be considerable growth on the periphery going forward. I don't want you to speculate. I understand there's been a complete changeover in the city council's thinking around this whole matter, which could only, I suppose, accentuate growth on the periphery.

**Mr. Carra:** I would say that most councillors and mayors who come in might have a more, I will say, suburban mindset, a more traditional or conventional approach to growth in mind, and as they spend time in the seat and they look at the numbers – I mean, let's take a look at the water system. Like, our expert panel just came back and said, you know, "You have 15,000 kilometres of pipe inside city limits," which is a ridiculous amount of pipe for our relatively low population, right? We have way more pipe in the ground, we have way more lane kilometres of asphalt road, we have way more curb and gutter than our population would – we're out of whack. We're significantly more than Edmonton, and then we're oceans more than places like central Vancouver and Montreal.

**Dr. Martin:** You're kind of like Denver.

**Mr. Carra:** We are, but the difference, of course, between us and Denver is that Denver is a metropolitan region and the city of Calgary is one jurisdiction, right? Like, anywhere else you go in North America and you have an urban agglomeration the size of Calgary, you're dealing with multiple city councils and mayors, you're dealing with multiple tax bases, you're dealing with multiple fire departments and police departments. Our unicity model, which was bequeathed to us in the 1950s by the provincial McNally commission, you know, really did us a favour in terms of creating as maximally efficient a governance environment for that postwar, automobile-scaled city. That gets back to the work of this commission, which is that it is our job to create a regulatory and governance environment that maximally sets us up for success as we move into the next city we have to build, which is a much more mixed-use, multimodal, and polycentric city.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Samson, any questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** No. Thank you for coming out.

**Mr. Carra:** My pleasure.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** No questions. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Thank you very much for coming again and in person.

**Mr. Carra:** Well, it's really important. If I've learned another thing in my 15 years, it's that governance is really important, and the work that you do has, you know, repercussions that echo through history. So I appreciate the work that you've done, and I just wanted to say: good work and please hold the line.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Michele Moore, the next presenter.

**Ms Moore:** Good afternoon. I'm sort of keeping my distance because I'm afraid I might be getting something, so I will do my thing and then I will leave. I did a written submission to you in the first round, so I will just bring up my comments for this round. First of all, I'd like to say thank you for the work you did. I've read your interim report. It seemed to be quite good all around, and I appreciate you guys all stepping up to do the job you're doing. It's not an easy one, so thank you.

I come from Calgary-Glenmore, and everything we've seen in the Calgary-Glenmore plan looks pretty good. I'd like to thank you for preserving the particulars of that riding in that it's, you know, definitely a very cohesive community of interest.

I noticed in your interim report that you gave very serious consideration to the comments you received in the first round. Clearly, there was a consistent theme on the need for bringing effective representation to this growing province or to continue to provide that. I saw in the report that you also recognize the importance of redrawing the electoral boundaries to recognize that increase in population, so thanks for the additional seats to Edmonton and Calgary.

Really what I'm here to do is talk to you about the proposed hybrid riding of Calgary-Okotoks. The reason I'm here to talk to you about that is because I lived in the county of Foothills for many years, decades actually. Raised my family, ran a business, and owned land there right up to a few years ago. I was also an elected representative for the county of Foothills. In those days it was called the municipality of Foothills for division 6, which is exactly the area being proposed to be included in the Calgary-Okotoks hybrid riding.

I wanted to speak to that because, you know, if you refer back to my notes for my first submission, I was talking generally about how I saw the differences between rural and urban experiences of life. Of course, I've been living in Calgary now for 15-plus years. I said, as many other people did and it was really reflected in your interim report, that there is a very significant difference in general between urban and rural life. We all know that, and it was recognized in most of what you proposed. I'm concerned about the Calgary-Okotoks riding as a hybrid proposal because of my experience out there, and I'm still very strongly connected to people out there. I just don't think it's a good place to try out a hybrid riding.

Now I'm going to try to go straight to my notes and stay within that six minutes. I'm speaking against creating that Calgary-Okotoks riding, but I'd like to first say that I understand there are instances where hybrid ridings really can work. Fort McMurray seems to me to be the best example that I could pull from what I was looking at in the report. Knowing Fort McMurray as I do, which is not personally but through my work as an elected person and beyond that in some political science work, it's evident that there's a lot of commonality between the people who live in the periphery of the city of Fort McMurray itself and the Wood Buffalo municipality. Basically, that's because everyone more or less works in the industry, right? There's a lot of commonality there, and I can see how a hybrid riding could work there, but the same cannot be said for the Foothills county and the city of Calgary residents.

If you were to drive south on Macleod Trail and it becomes highway 2, you'd pass Calgary's Legacy neighbourhood on the east side of highway 2 at 210th Avenue, and you'd pass the Belmont and Creekside neighbourhoods on the west side. These are all typical high-density urban neighbourhoods – right? – tons of shopping centres and so on. The opportunities and expectations in those neighbourhoods are what every dense city neighbourhood has, and people expect certain things there. But once you're south of 210th Avenue, you're going to see the landscape change dramatically, like very abruptly it changes.

Some of those acreages that you see right from the highway were there in the '70s and '80s; they haven't even changed. They have not been subdivided. Of course, there's the odd one, but generally it looks very similar. And that's just what you see from highway 2. You continue south along highway 2. You hit the corridor to Dunbow Road, which is where I lived, or you can keep going to 552, and both of those corridors run east into the countryside. You'll see, at the very beginning of both of those corridors once you turn east off highway 2, some of those kind of classic two-acre parcels with the big nice cut grass and the huge house planted in the middle of it. But that is not really the nature of the vast majority of that area that's proposed to be included in this hybrid riding.

Most people out there truly do live a rural life to this day. Even the people that are on five-acre parcels are raising chickens or they have a couple of horses. A lot of the larger parcels, 40 acres, used to cut oats when I was there. We did it ourselves. I think there are still some of them, lots out there, that are 40 acres when you get further east sort of to 80th Street, when it really begins to change into those larger farm parcels, where people are quite serious about what they're doing even though it's not their main living. Then you hit 128th Street East, and it's big agricultural operations.

4:15

It's as you quoted Ms Littlewood in your interim report. She said that many of these rural residents belong to agricultural societies. They volunteer for the fire department. They eat a lot of hot dogs to raise funds for local things like they have out there: Foothills hospice, the Seaman Sports Park. That was brought in after I left. That is still the lifestyle out there. It is not a bedroom community by any sense of the imagination. Differences in the lifestyles were well described in my previous submission and by others.

What I'd really like to address specifically in this area with your report is the suggestion that hybrid ridings can lead to greater understanding and less division between urban and rural populations. My experience as an elected rep in the county of Foothills tells me that this is not a likely outcome and that it would be – if you got any of that, it wouldn't be pronounced enough to ensure effective representation.

In the interest of time, I'll give you one example from my experience as a councillor. Of course, on a council like in the county, it's seven divisions. I was the representative of division 6. We had to represent our constituents. We had effective representation, in my view, out there at the time. My division 6 took in all of Dunbow up to 80th Street and 552 to 80th Street. Beyond that, it was the big farms, and when I first came out there, there weren't a lot of five-acre parcels. There were some. We bought 40 acres ourselves. It was at the beginning of the subdivision process into smaller parcels.

As farmland was being subdivided right at the very west end of highway 552, just east of highway 2, people there who were occupying those acreages wanted the speed limit reduced on highway 552, but the farmers, large and small, from 80th Street on did not want that. They weren't even happy that there were acreages being developed on that land, and they certainly didn't want anyone telling them that they couldn't drive 100 kilometres an hour to go to the feed store.

Fortunately, I didn't have to represent both those voices, because division 5, Mr. Groeneveld – I don't know if anyone here knows the Groenevelts from out there, but Flores was my co-worker at the time. He and I were able to talk about this as two different councillors within the framework of the council committees that we had, right? Farmers won out on that one, but my constituents understood that I had represented their interests and made arguments for them and that, you know, the county council as a

whole voted to support the arguments of councillor 5 from division 5. If I'd had to represent both, I would have had one group very mad at me, and I wouldn't have been able to show up in local shops. I would have had them on my back. Trust me. I had that happen to me in other matters where I was having to deal with two conflicting opinions within my same constituency.

It's really important to recognize that we have these structures for a reason and that the biggest reason is that we learned hundreds of years ago that people really operate on emotion; they don't operate on logic. The best outcomes for collaboration and finding understanding between urban and rural is when their representatives are speaking to each other in a structured environment. I really believe that. I experienced it.

MLAs already have to deal with conflicts between constituents that are based on far more discrete differences than what I was describing. The understanding between rural and urban populations comes when representatives for each distinct community of interest consult within semiformal or formal structures created for exactly that, structures like the Calgary metropolitan region board or the various government committees or, if we're very lucky, in the Legislature itself. Those frameworks provide the parameters within which different viewpoints can be presented and policies can be hashed out with civility between MLAs and put to a vote where appropriate. Our entire government structure has evolved to provide a place where different communities of interest can be represented effectively and mitigate the inevitable conflicts that arise between different populations.

I think it's really important to remember that when you're looking at hybrid ridings and to imagine what it would be like for an MLA, never mind for the people who are being represented. Somebody is going to be left very disappointed, but the MLA as well is going to be in trouble. They're going to be attacked when they go to businesses inside the constituency. I've experienced it. It does happen. Nothing has changed. People have been this way forever, you know.

To summarize, I would agree that there are certain geographic areas where hybrid ridings can work such as Fort McMurray, but this cannot be said at all, I don't believe, for Foothills county and the south city of Calgary residents. They're distinctly urban, distinctly rural. Very different expectations, and I would encourage you to maybe not go that route on that proposal.

Thanks again for allowing me to share my views. I would like to congratulate you and thank you for the tremendous work you're doing. I agree with the people that spoke before me. Overall, it's just been excellent work, and I appreciate everything you're doing.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms Moore. We'll mark you down for option 2, then.

**Ms Moore:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you. Well, because you've read it, you realize that it was not easy. We threw it out, and we welcome what you just said.

**Ms Moore:** Yes. Absolutely. I really appreciated it. I felt that your interim report was extremely balanced and realistic and encompassing of all the different things you have to think about. I do really appreciate the work you're doing.

**The Chair:** Any questions from Mr. Evans on it?

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah. If you've had a chance to look at appendix F of the interim report, there would be 18 existing hybrid ridings that

aren't ones that are proposed hybrids. That's in the next column over. For example, Airdrie-Cochrane, Airdrie-East. You mentioned Fort McMurray. Brooks-Medicine Hat, Cypress-Medicine Hat, Leduc-Beaumont, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, Grande Prairie-Wapiti, the riding named Grande Prairie – there are 18 of them.

I was interested that you chose Fort McMurray because Fort McMurray isn't really representative of anything else in the province in that the city itself runs as a municipality.

**Ms Moore:** Yeah. Wood Buffalo, right?

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah. So what I'm suggesting is that that wasn't a really great choice in terms of your argument. I understand what your argument is. You know, taking your argument and the important points that you've made, how would you apply them to Grande Prairie, for example? The other one that I think would be an interesting one to examine from your perspective would be Medicine Hat.

**Ms Moore:** Yeah. The reason I spoke specifically to this hybrid riding is because I'm very familiar with both. I'm not familiar enough – I played slo-pitch in Medicine Hat. I interviewed the mayor there once when I was working for the Canada West Foundation. I've driven through Grande Prairie, but I don't feel that I can speak to them.

The reason I felt I could speak to Fort McMurray is because I also interviewed the mayor of Fort McMurray back in the day and learned a little bit about that area and came to that conclusion on my own. Of course, the fact that it is one municipality: to me, that just sort of inherently gives you some of that structure already, right? You're going to have wards or divisions. But I acknowledge that, you know, it may not have been the best choice.

I don't think I can comment enough on the others because I really don't know how people live on the outskirts of Medicine Hat. There's lots of farming – right? – lots of oil and gas on the farms. Medicine Hat seems to be an urban town, but it's certainly not urban to the extent that Calgary is. That's about all I could say. Yeah.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** A very quick question. You've given us a written report or submission earlier on. You've obviously done a lot of work on this. Have you come across any academic material that coincides with what you're saying? Like, have you researched that far into academic journals and things like that?

4:25

**Ms Moore:** You know, I couldn't name something directly now, but I can say that I've studied political science at the university level. I read extensively, so when I made that sort of broad statement that our democratic system has evolved over time for the exact reason that I said, to avoid conflict, I think I've just absorbed that. I've come to that conclusion from past studies, but if you like, I would definitely look through my material.

**The Chair:** Hybrids are a real option and one of only three options that the history and the jurisprudence gives us. That's probably the biggest struggle we have in terms of: how do we best utilize all three options?

**Ms Moore:** Where they apply. Yeah.

**The Chair:** Yeah. The courts have said historically that you've got to do more hybrids if you're wanting to avoid losing rural support. It's a real conundrum, and you've touched on a very – I don't want

to say "sensitive" – really raw issue that we have to struggle with. If you come across anything academically, please send it.

**Ms Moore:** I'll send it.

**The Chair:** Okay. Good. Thank you.  
Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** No. Nothing from me.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** No. Just thank you. That's a fantastic submission. I made very careful notes. I thought it was a really good example about the speed limit issues.

**The Chair:** And thank you for following us throughout. Like, written at the first stage . . .

**Mr. Clark:** Tell your friends.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Evans:** Can we mark you down as a fan?

**Ms Moore:** Absolutely. Or maybe I'll just wait to see what you do with the final report.

**Mr. Evans:** Good call. Don't commit too much.

**Ms Moore:** All right. Thanks, folks.

**The Chair:** Okay. It is now 4:30, a half hour past the time we were to close, but we have one more presenter.

Ms Eremenko.

**Member Eremenko:** Thank you so much. Nice to see all of you once more. I realize I'm the only thing in the way of dinner, so I won't take up too much of your time here. Hopefully, the exceptional presentation from the constituent of Calgary-Glenmore and then the former councillor, Councillor Carra, took all of your tough planning questions so that I can deliver and extend my thanks and talk a little bit about the riding that I am very honoured to represent in Calgary-Currie.

Good evening, everyone. Good afternoon. Nice to see all of you again. I'm Janet Eremenko, the Member of the Legislative Assembly for the riding of Calgary-Currie. I appreciate this opportunity very much to participate in the second round of consultations led by the Electoral Boundaries Commission. I'm here to support a fair and effective electoral map for Calgary, one that reflects how our city is growing, respects municipal boundaries, and ensures that residents continue to feel heard and represented as their communities change in really unprecedented ways.

I want to thank the commission for the thoughtful work reflected in the proposed electoral boundary changes. I'm heartened to see that Calgary-Currie remains a cohesive, intact riding under the proposal, and that matters deeply to residents of my constituency. I encourage the commission to ensure Calgary-Currie's boundaries remain the same as they're currently proposed. Calgary-Currie is a diverse inner-city riding with a mix of long-established communities like Scarboro, Bankview, Sunalta, and Glendale alongside rapidly evolving areas such as Shaganappi and Currie Barracks. About half of the households rent and half own, and housing ranges from beautiful century-old homes to new multi-unit developments. This diversity is a defining feature of the riding.

What unites these communities is shared infrastructure, shared schools, transit lines, and a strong sense of place. Natural and built boundaries such as the Bow River to the north, Glenmore Trail to the south, and Sarcee Trail to the west help residents understand where they belong and how they engage civically. When boundaries align with how people live their daily lives, participation in community and trust in each other are strengthened. Disruptive boundary changes can often have the opposite effect, which I know is something that you have wrestled with, I'm sure, in the most meaningful of ways. I regularly hear from residents who say that they are just getting used to the school trustee, to their representative, to their community, and they don't want to see that change again. Stability matters for civic engagement, especially in growing and changing communities, so thank you once more to the commission for proposing that Calgary-Currie remains intact.

I also want to thank the commission for respecting existing municipal boundaries wherever and whenever you could. Thank you for drawing a fair map and upholding the important democratic principle of effective representation by not creating hybrid ridings that straddle urban and less urban or rural communities frivolously. It sounds to me like great consideration was made in what is truly a challenging decision that tries to forecast and look into the crystal ball of population growth that none of us particularly know a hundred per cent. Although this is not something that directly impacts Currie, all changes must be, of course, considered as a whole.

I want to acknowledge the commission's recognition of Calgary's rapid growth with the addition of an extra seat. This decision reflects the real population pressures our city is experiencing and will help ensure representation remains fair and balanced as Calgary continues to expand. While the additional seat is welcome, Calgary's growth is far from slowing down, and to truly reflect this reality, I urge the commission to consider adding another seat in Calgary based on population growth. We know that across all sectors – schools, roads, health care, public safety – population growth influences funding allocations. As such, I encourage the commission to add an additional seat in our province's largest city to adequately address its population growth. Calgary-Currie is a clear example of how population change is accelerating. In my riding it is not just because of sprawl but because of intensification and redevelopment.

For example, since the last redistribution in 2017 my riding has seen significant brownfield development, including the redevelopment of the Viscount Bennett school site, which alone will eventually add over 1,200 housing units; ongoing development to Currie Barracks, where Canada Lands corporation projects roughly 2,000 new households over time; increased transit-oriented development supported by four C-Train stations, a north-south BRT route along Crowchild Trail, and a main street development master plan on 37 Street; and widespread infill in multi-unit housing, replacing single detached homes with multiple-titled units and secondary suites. These changes mean thousands of new residents will be added within existing neighbourhoods, placing pressure on numerous public services and programs.

I'm going to cut to the end here. I just want to sincerely thank you for your time, your care, and your public service. You have put a lot of miles on in the last year or so. Your work has real impact on how people experience democracy in their everyday lives. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this process and to provide feedback in support of a fair, forward-looking electoral map that continues to serve Calgary's growing population well.

Thank you so much for this opportunity. I'm happy to take any questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Everyone wants me to ask the same question I've asked everybody else. What are your feelings on the eligible voter numbers as it relates to an electoral district in addition to the general population numbers that we're using as factors to determine proper representation?

**Member Eremenko:** May I just ask, so that I'm clear on what you're wondering about: what is the percentage, particularly in inner-city ridings, of ineligible voters?

**Mr. Evans:** No. Eligible voters in conjunction with the population that we're using: in this case was it 58,000?

**Member Eremenko:** Fifty-eight.

**Mr. Evans:** So looking at that and then looking at also, as a factor, determining adequate representation of the electorate in that area.

**Member Eremenko:** Yeah. I understand that we're roughly at about 4 per cent over the average relative to other ridings, which I think is well within that window of what is acceptable. It seems as though the new map has certainly balanced that out significantly in terms of bringing some of those much higher ranges down to a realm that is more legislatively in line with what is required. I'm not sure I totally understand your question or if I've answered it; I apologize.

**Mr. Evans:** The population is everybody that exists, that's alive – right? – in the riding. The eligible voters would be only those that are 18 and have citizenship such that they can vote. Those two numbers are not going to be the same. So, then, which number would you say is more important, the general population or eligible voters, or should eligible voters be a factor that should be considered? If so, how much should it be weighted?

4:35

**Member Eremenko:** Oh, that's a great question. Yeah. I don't mean to be taking the political answer out by saying that it should be a combination of the two.

**Mr. Evans:** But it probably is the right answer.

**Member Eremenko:** It really is. I would expect that for a riding like Calgary-Currie, for example, that's experiencing tremendous pressure on its public programs and services, recreation centres, roadways, schools, those individuals are accessing those services and programs regardless of whether or not they're voters. I would expect, as a result, that the decisions that I need to be making as an elected representative are not exclusively for the people who are actually able to cast a ballot. It is in fact for every member of every community. So when it comes to some of those challenging funding decisions around whether or not services and programs are actually rising to meet the demands of a community, whether or not they are eligible voters or not doesn't really play into whether or not it reflects the demand. A percentage: you know, I suppose it's going to vary riding by riding based on the demographics and based on the rate of newcomers that are coming in who are eligible or not to vote.

Thank you for the clarification; I understand that far better. I think ultimately my job is to serve the constituents of Calgary-Currie whether or not they are voters. As such, it is a number that I would weight more heavily than the eligible voter figure.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for coming out and the kind words. I appreciate it because we're not done yet. At least we got some things right. Thank you again.

**The Chair:** What's acceptable for Calgary-Currie? You're at 58,000 now. Could you take some more as the MLA?

**Member Eremenko:** Well, I think we already will. We know with some of the forecasted growth that those numbers are already going to be coming up. I appreciate that this is a domino effect, so what happens in Calgary-Currie . . .

**The Chair:** "Cascading" and "domino" are words we use a lot.

**Member Eremenko:** I would imagine so. Of course, whatever is going to be impacting in Calgary-Currie and whatever changes to the boundaries may be impacted there, I think less so than the number because clearly we're still, you know, we've got a lot of wiggle room as far as what the number is. Less so than that, it's, I'd say, community integrity, and it is adhering to and following the natural boundaries that already create some kind of psychological integrity for the sense of community and where we spend our money, where we send our kids, where we frequent, you know, the third spaces in the riding. Less so than population, Hon. Justice, I would suggest that it is more about respecting the integrity of the communities. If we were to grow – I think we likely could – let's not cross over Sarcee Trail. Let's not split up Rutland Park. I think that that would be of greater priority for the individuals on community associations and for neighbours than anything else.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Dr. Martin, any questions?

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you. I was looking at the old map and the current one as well as this interim map, and they're the same.

**Member Eremenko:** Yes.

**Dr. Martin:** The boundaries are identical. Lucky you, because I think there are only two or three places that we haven't tinkered with, and this is one of them.

I wanted to come, though, to a remark you made characterizing Calgary as a whole and its growth. You said, and I'm paraphrasing: thank you very much for the additional seat, but I'd like another seat. What I would like to suggest to you is: where would you put it? This is a trick question.

**Member Eremenko:** I know. I was worried you were going to ask that. I have to see what other representatives are in the room, so I don't upset anybody.

**Dr. Martin:** I think you're safe.

**Member Eremenko:** It is indeed a very challenging dilemma. I think given some of the work that you've done in the inner city, for example, where you've split Buffalo and Confluence into two . . .

**Dr. Martin:** See, that's the trick because you've already got a second riding.

**Member Eremenko:** Yes, of course. Of course.

**Dr. Martin:** Really, I want to ask you where in your mind's eye as a Calgarian – you travel around; you talk with all your colleagues, not only other MLAs but everyone else that you know around the city – do you think, you know, the growth warrants another riding?

**Member Eremenko:** Yeah. I realize that it would require some significant readjusting on all the fronts if it was to be on the edges of town, where we would expect there's going to be significant growth. But, of course, that would have significant ripple effects for all of the surrounding areas as well.

You know, the individual here was speaking to the riding of Calgary-Okotoks. I drove down south into Okotoks just the other day, and the growth is phenomenal in and around the South Health Campus and in and around Seton. I think that given what the forecasts are likely demonstrating in terms of demographic growth in those areas, I would expect an additional riding could certainly be accommodated.

**The Chair:** In the south.

**Member Eremenko:** Whether it be in the south or in the northeast.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Interesting. I've just looked at it. Currie is currently the 15th largest, 15 of 87, by percentage of variance. So you're already pretty big; 6 per cent over. I don't know if we would necessarily want to give you a whole lot more. I won't ask what you would give up because that's unfair, so I won't ask that.

I am actually interested in some future development. You mentioned the Viscount Bennett development, Currie Barracks, but you didn't mention Westbrook LRT, so that's a big blank space. I know there's been a bit of to-ing and fro-ing on that. I recall there was some change recently. Is there a plan to build something, I mean, that's transit oriented? It feels like a real opportunity. Is it real? I mean, where's that at? Do you know?

**Member Eremenko:** You know, the only reason I've excluded it from the report is because there's nothing really specific that we can yet point to. The big change that was announced probably about 18 months ago now is that the city bought that land back. The developers had been sitting on it for a long, long time, probably upwards of about a decade, and the city finally got fed up and said: you know, we can't just leave this absolutely prime piece of real estate sit vacant any longer, particularly, of course, given the stresses on the city and given its proximity to the C-Train station. So it's back in the hands of the city, but as far as I am aware, there has been no specific development in terms of what's actually going to go there. Once upon a time, I think probably two councillors ago, they talked about putting some soccer amenities on that site. So for that reason, I haven't included it in my comments here simply because whether it be residential or something else is to be seen.

**Mr. Clark:** Great. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Sorry to be in a rush. We have to have something to eat in the next 45 minutes and be back here.

Tell me you're happy with the name.

**Member Eremenko:** With Calgary-Currie?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Member Eremenko:** Oh, sure.

**The Chair:** Good.

**Member Eremenko:** Of all the things, no problem at all.  
Thank you so much. Nice to see you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.  
We'll be back at 5:30.

[The hearing adjourned at 4:43 p.m.]















Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Public Hearings

Calgary

Monday, January 12, 2026  
5:30 p.m.

Transcript No. 31

## **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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David Cloutier  
Keira Gunn  
Lindsay McLaren  
Robert Miller  
Kris Moen  
Denys Robinson  
Tiffany Saxton  
Jean Stewart  
Inam Teja  
Jenny Yermiy





5:30 p.m.

Monday, January 12, 2026

[Justice Miller in the chair]

**The Chair:** Okay. Good evening, everyone, and welcome to our first evening presentation of the second round of public hearings for the Electoral Boundaries Commission of Alberta. By way of introduction you'll see all of our commission nameplates, and for bio data please go to the website.

Our task here as a commission is to deal with two issues. One is the expansion of the number of electoral districts in the province from 87 to 89, and the second one is to deal with a significant population increase in this province over the last several years, particularly since the 2017 Electoral Boundaries Commission.

A rough approximation of the population increases: over 800,000 new people, as of 2024, since the 2017 report. The commission that reported back in 2017 dealt with these figures: a population of just over 4 million people divided by 87 electoral districts. That left an average population per riding of 46,697. That's what the commission in 2017 based their report on, with a variance of between 35,000 to just over 58,000 per electoral division.

Fast-forwarding to our Electoral Boundaries Commission, the change in population results in an average of 54,000, just under 55,000, based on a 4.8 million population in the province, divided by 89 electoral divisions. That variance, then, is obviously from 41,000 to as high as almost 69,000. That's the targeted range of population per electoral division in order to meet the test of effective representation.

If you've had a chance to read our interim report, we spent a lot of time talking about effective representation and distinguishing that as a Canadian concept versus the American concept of one person, one vote. We do not have one person, one vote in Canada or Alberta. In fact, no jurisdiction has ever operated on that principle. Rather, we as Canadians operate under the term of "effective representation."

Our commission was established back in late March, early April of last year, and we spent our time doing these four things, basically. We spent a lot of time discussing the basis for the population assessment of the province, and you can read about that in our report as to how we arrived at the figures we did. We also spent a lot of time reviewing hundreds of written submissions that came in to us in terms of suggestions, ideas, and proposals. Then throughout May and June we had the privilege – and we all would say it was a privilege – to travel across Alberta and hear in person from Albertans from north to south ideas and suggestions and proposals for the future electoral map of 89 electoral divisions.

After we did those things, we spent an awful lot of time with the staff at Elections Alberta, the map people there, dealing with drawing proposed boundaries that allowed for effective representation across the province. That then resulted in our report that was submitted to the Speaker of the Legislature in late October. We have produced some printed copies of the report, and if you're interested in receiving a copy, unfortunately we don't have any here, but just see Aaron Roth, who will wave so you can identify him. If you want a written copy, he will ensure that one is mailed to you. It is online on our website, so you can read it there as well.

As we went through the process, we considered all the factors that are enumerated in the legislation, and our goal was to take those factors into account, make sure that there was effective representation throughout the province, and come up with 89 electoral districts that provided understandable and clear boundaries. After we submitted our report to the Speaker and that was tabled in the Legislature, we then opened up a portal on our website for the public to respond to our interim report. From early

November to December 19 we received more than 1,100 written submissions.

That was the first several months of our tenure as a commission. Now we go into the second round of submissions. If you noticed, we said: round 2. It sounds like a bit of a boxing match. We are here in round 2 hearing responses to this interim report. Today is our first day in Calgary. We had a busy morning and a very full afternoon – we just grabbed a bite to eat – and we're here for a very full evening session.

Given that background, we've got a list of about eight people presenting this evening. I don't believe the first two people are here. I'm going to call on Dr. Jean Stewart – is Dr. Jean Stewart here? – to come up and present. Take a seat at the table, make yourself comfortable, and please identify yourself and tell us what area of the province you're from and what electoral division you're commenting on.

**Dr. Stewart:** Okay. Can you hear me? Have I got this right?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Dr. Stewart:** I'm Dr. Jean Stewart. I'm a psychologist. I am going to talk about the hybrid urban-rural ridings, and I will address these boundaries first from a personal perspective and then from a professional perspective. I grew up on the Klondike Ranch east of Crossfield. In our rural community we relied on our neighbours to share natural resources such as water. When the beavers dammed our creek, restricting the water to our neighbours, my father shot the beavers and blew up the dam. We share and we help each other out. When the party line rang constantly with no break, we would run to listen, and we would rescue whoever had been injured. Rural communities have common values and rely on mutual assistance.

I also lived in Rosedale, in Calgary, where urban communities value privacy and independence, with many more services. When our garage was robbed of expensive equipment, no one came forward with any information. That was a big surprise.

In my professional life as a psychologist I worked for 30 years in a rural area. Families who chose to raise their children in the country had advantages such as room to roam, fresh water, large gardens, animals, and quiet. They struggled with transportation; power outages, when their water pumps wouldn't work; and limited services, but their taxes were very low.

Urban and rural communities have little in common, in my opinion. The urban-rural hybrid model proposed cannot fairly represent south Calgary or the riding I live in, which is Calgary-Shaw. Your report suggested that the area of Foothills, Okotoks, and south Calgary be considered a rural electoral division. However, urban life is very different, especially in a city of 1.5 million, like Calgary. We choose urban life, with transportation via the C-Train and buses, employment opportunities, colleges and universities, hospitals and specialist clinics, theatres, and restaurants. Rural areas do not have any of those or very few of those. Urban and rural cultures are not even similar. When my rural cousins attend concerts with me, they must arrive and leave quickly in order to feed the cows and the horses.

5:40

The commission report emphasizes the importance of "the availability and means of communication and transportation" on pages 9 and 23. An urban-rural hybrid riding that spans two municipalities such as Calgary and Okotoks as well as Foothills hinders effective representation and accessibility, and I'm thinking about accessibility to our elected representatives. Those municipal boundaries are crossed, and the maps as they were presented ignore natural dividers. That's counterintuitive and confusing. I'll just

point out that one of your maps suggested that Calgary-Shaw extend over the Bow River and east into what is now Calgary-East. We don't go that way. We would have to get out on Stoney Trail and drive 100 kilometres an hour. I don't know. Maybe you're used to it, but it's quite a big deal for us, so that's why I'm raising this.

I'm saying that Calgary-Shaw's boundaries should be Stoney Trail on the north; Spruce Meadows Way on the west; 222nd Avenue on the south, which is the Calgary city limit; and the Bow River on the east, which is the major boundary that you had mentioned in your report. This ensures that the riding is compact and geographically coherent. As it stands now, Calgary-Shaw includes Somerset and Shaughnessy. I'm suggesting that they be moved to Calgary-Lougheed, which will bring down the increase in population in Calgary-Shaw. So the Calgary-Shaw that I am suggesting would be, if you can see this with my dreadful pen, a coherent, compact space that I think people would be able to recognize and we would have access to our MLAs.

That's it. Questions?

**The Chair:** Okay. Yeah. Can you tell me on your proposal for changes to Calgary-Shaw what the population of that electoral division would be?

**Dr. Stewart:** Do you know? I'm sorry. I don't.

**Mr. Clark:** If you leave it with us, I can do some drawings on that.

**Dr. Stewart:** Okay. Part of the reason that I'm mentioning this is that it makes sense geographically, because this up here is the area that is Somerset and Shaughnessy. The other reason that I'm mentioning this . . .

**The Chair:** Actually, while you're talking, I'm wondering if that could be presented to Mr. Clark and he can manipulate the map.

**Dr. Stewart:** You can have this. Thank you. I'm sorry; it looks like I drew it with crayon.

**Mr. Clark:** That's okay. I'll do my best. I may ask some questions along the way.

**Dr. Stewart:** What I was going to point out is that in preparation for the first round we formed a little committee in my area. One of the members of that committee is an active realtor, and she provided a really deep-down look into those communities. One of the things that she pointed out is that in Somerset and Shaughnessy there may be – what did I say? – eight houses to a block or something, but she said that in many of those houses those are immigrant families, and there may be 10 to 12 people living there. That is a very dense area. Part of the reason those people move to that area is that they have access to the C-Train so they can get on the train and go to whatever employment.

Thinking that way, I think it makes sense, not just me but the little committee that we had decided that it would make sense, that we suggested that Somerset and Shaughnessy be removed, which would bring us back down, because our population in Calgary-Shaw was increasing. So we tried to take care of that by suggesting that those areas be moved. We also suggested very briefly that they be added to Calgary-Lougheed because they're adjacent to Calgary-Lougheed. They're next door to Calgary-Lougheed.

Now, more questions?

**The Chair:** Okay. Yeah. Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** No, but thank you, Dr. Stewart.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** No. I'm good, but thank you for coming out. I appreciate that.

**The Chair:** I heard you say that you are very – were you commenting on the Calgary-Okotoks riding?

**Dr. Stewart:** Yes, I am, sir.

**The Chair:** So you'd be much more in favour of option 2 that we presented in our report.

**Dr. Stewart:** Yes. I think, if I had it correct in my mind, it was called option B in the report, but yeah, that's what I'm trying to say.

**The Chair:** Yeah. You're right. Thank you.  
Okay. Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Well, that's really what I was going to ask about. Thanks for that. So the blended riding, so to speak, is a no go for the reasons you suggested. Also, your preferred Calgary-Shaw footprint is the old footprint less the Shawnessy component?

**Dr. Stewart:** Shawnessy and Somerset.

**Dr. Martin:** Quite. Everything that's north . . .

**Dr. Stewart:** Of Stoney Trail.

**Dr. Martin:** . . . of the Spruce Meadows Trail would go somewhere else.

**Dr. Stewart:** Yeah. I didn't ask this: do you want a copy of my presentation today? It's all written down here.

**The Chair:** Sure. Yeah. Leave it with Mr. Roth here, and he'll make sure we all get a copy.

**Dr. Stewart:** Any more questions?

**Mr. Clark:** If I'd done what I think you want me to do, the numbers would work: 58,158, which is pretty much the same, so that's really helpful. Yeah. That's good. Thank you. I'll give this back to you.

**Dr. Stewart:** Well, I can't take sole credit. There was a little committee. Thank you for listening. I really appreciate your time.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Sorry, Mr. Clark. That was 58,000?

**Mr. Clark:** According to our magic map, 58,158, so call it 58,200 for round numbers.

**The Chair:** Okay. Our next presenter: Mr. Inam Teja. Good evening. Please identify yourself, make yourself comfortable, and tell us what electoral division you're in.

**Mr. Teja:** I'm Inam Teja, and I'm speaking to the proposed Calgary-West-Elbow Valley.

Good evening, commissioners. Thank you for the opportunity to appear today. My name is Inam Teja, and I'm here to speak about the proposed boundaries for Calgary-West-Elbow Valley, where I currently reside. I'm participating because I care deeply about fair representation in my city and province and because my own experience running for city council has given me a very practical understanding of how electoral boundaries shape whose voices are heard and how effectively.

I want to begin by sincerely thanking the commission for the work reflected in this report. I recognize the difficulty of balancing population growth, geography, legal principles, and competing regional needs. Overall, I want to be clear that I view the proposed map as thoughtful and well reasoned. The population of Calgary-West-Elbow Valley is extremely close to the provincial average, which aligns strongly with the principle of effective representation as articulated in the Carter decision. I also appreciate that the commission has acknowledged Calgary's rapid growth and has already taken steps to add additional seats in the city. I think that recognition matters.

That said, I want to focus my comments on one specific concern, the move toward hybrid urban-rural districts and why I respectfully believe that, where possible, Alberta should instead prioritize adding seats rather than blending fundamentally different communities of interest. In the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act you are directed to consider both communities of interest and effective representation. Those concepts are closely linked in practice. Communities of interest are not just lines on a map. They reflect how people live, work, move through their city or region, and engage with government.

Running for city council taught me how difficult it is to represent even a single urban constituency well. Within a city, constituents can already have vastly different priorities: transit, housing, affordability, the opioid crisis, public safety, or infrastructure investment. These issues require constant engagement, policy fluency, and importantly, proximity. These issues are at least all connected by an urban fibre. Many of the most pressing issues for the residents of the current Calgary-West are things like investment in public transit, inner-city housing supply, and urban infrastructure, and these are not especially relevant to rural or acreage communities. Conversely, rural residents quite reasonably expect their representatives to understand land use, access to services, transportation distances, and the realities of lower density living.

5:50

Hybrid districts risk placing MLAs in an impossible position. An MLA may feel pressured to allocate time based on geography rather than population or based on population rather than geography. Either way, someone can lose out. There's also a real risk that smaller rural populations of a hybrid district could feel deprioritized, while urban voters may feel their concerns are diluted by issues that fall largely outside of the provincial role in cities. This is not a criticism of rural communities; it's quite the opposite. I think rural MLAs already face significant demands due to travel distances and dispersed populations. Combining rural and urban areas may unintentionally weaken the representation for both.

I really appreciated the commission's candour when they were outlining the three options identified by the Alberta Court of Appeal – increasing the number of seats, redistributing rural seats, or creating hybrid seats – when trying to deal with the decline in the relative rural population. Of those options I want to state clearly and respectfully that the first option, increasing the number of seats, is the approach that I most strongly support. I think adding seats recognizes Alberta's population growth without asking representatives to stretch themselves across communities with fundamentally different needs. I also believe that it is most effective at maintaining relative parity of voting power while protecting access to representatives who can meaningfully serve their constituents.

Calgary continues to grow rapidly, and that growth has real consequences for schools, roads, transit, emergency services, and housing. Electoral representation influences how effectively those

needs are raised and addressed at the provincial level. While the commission has already taken important steps in this direction, I would encourage you to go further when feasible. I also want to emphasize that keeping communities of interest intact strengthens democratic engagement. People are more likely to vote, participate, and bring forward concerns when they feel their districts reflect who they are and how they live. When boundaries feel arbitrary or complex, trust and engagement suffer.

In closing, I want to reiterate my appreciation for your professionalism and public service. I understand that no map will ever be perfect and that trade-offs are unavoidable. My comments are offered in the spirit of supporting your work and strengthening effective representation in Alberta, especially as it continues to change. Thank you for your time, for listening carefully to public input, and for the seriousness with which you've approached this responsibility.

I'd be happy to answer any questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Susan, questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** Thanks.

Thanks for your comments. I want you to know that we have heard a lot about hybrids, and I would have to say that if we were counting numbers, more people are concerned or unsure of them than they are supportive of the ones that you particularly refer to where it's joining onto an urban centre. So I thank you for those comments. You said you lived in Elbow Valley?

**Mr. Teja:** I live in Calgary-West. I live in the community of Springbank Hill.

**Mrs. Samson:** Yeah. So you saw that that is considered a hybrid now.

**Mr. Teja:** Yes.

**Mrs. Samson:** What are your thoughts on that? Has that changed at all, if you look specifically at what we joined in to Calgary-West?

**Mr. Teja:** Yeah. If you look at what's added to Calgary-West, I feel like it's quite a different – I don't know – for lack of a better term, vibe from what currently exists in Calgary-West. My concern is that the issue sets that an MLA would have to navigate are quite different. You know, hearing about some of the challenges in Calgary-West when I was running for city council in that area, a lot of them are what I would consider more urban issues whereas I suspect that's a very different mix of issues for folks who live a more rural lifestyle there.

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** I'm wondering what your thoughts are on – you know, one of the factors under 14(b) of the legislation is of course communities of interest, and it identifies "including municipalities, regional and rural communities, Indian reserves and Metis settlements." Would you agree that when we're looking at the dichotomy between rural and urban issues and how that would interplay in a hybrid constituency, are we just balancing community interests? Isn't that exactly what an MLA does all the time in every riding that you have an MLA?

**Mr. Teja:** Yeah. I think the job requires you to balance a lot of issues. Speaking from my experience of running for city council,

that's really hard to do. It's one of those things that I think – you know, you hear such different issues just from different doors on the same street, and you have to balance those. But I think we do our public servants a disservice by making that job even harder. Just thinking about how much reading I would have to do to just understand two issues that are both very linked in an urban context, like transit and infrastructure planning, having to consider that now in a rural context where the water system is completely different and you have to learn about water licensing and some of the other challenges there, I think, demands a lot more of an MLA than I would want demanded of my MLA.

**Mr. Evans:** I mean, are we not really deluding ourselves pretending that we can create an electoral district that's homogeneous in Canada? It's impossible.

**Mr. Teja:** Sure. I don't think you're ever going to have a homogeneous district, but I think there is a divide there.

**Mr. Evans:** You can have competing interests, whether they're religious or race based or whatever the case is. Whether it's a community-identifiable community interest like rural versus urban or one religious group versus another religious group or a cultural identity versus another cultural identity, these are all things that have to be balanced by an elected representative who understands that when they run for office.

**Mr. Teja:** Yeah. I agree. I think that that balance is something that elected officials do sign up for. I think the point I'm trying to make is that we should be making it easier for the elected officials as much as possible considering how difficult it is. I think balancing, you know, different factors such as maybe the income of a community might be split along certain lines and stuff is tough, but when you look at different jurisdictions, you add what I would call a significant level of complexity. When you're talking about the issues that are within the boundaries of Calgary versus boundaries elsewhere, to me, I would say that adds a level of complexity, and that just makes it easier for things to slip between the cracks.

**Mr. Evans:** You would say that that was more complex than religious dichotomy and cultural distinguishing factors? I mean, we say in Canada that multiculturalism makes us stronger, but it also makes it more complex. Why is it not the same in this instance?

**Mr. Teja:** I think the difference I would say there is the jurisdictional challenges in working with different governments, right? If you're a city councillor, you work with an MLA, who works with your MP, but when you're now looking at, "Okay; I have to work with a mayor and a reeve," and because you're crossing a jurisdictional boundary, you don't have that same easy access to a counterpart that you understand that framework. You have to learn all these different frameworks.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you. I'm just pondering this. First of all, both you, sir, and a previous speaker allude to a dichotomy between urban and rural in precisely this sense, but I want to put the case to you that it's not a dichotomy. There is a range of exurban forms of life from out here at the farm, classic rural, if you will, right through to skyscraper world in the middle of a city. There's a huge range of communities and forms of life, and to think merely in terms of a dichotomy is an injustice to the reality on the ground.

Now, you know, there are lots of places on the fringe of Calgary – always have been, I think – as well as around Edmonton and other places that are small acreage plots, and they are not rural.

**Mr. Teja:** Yeah. It is a spectrum. Sure.

**Dr. Martin:** You know, they live in these plots. They have the luxury of a large chunk of land, and they have lots of toys to play around on it, but really they work in an urban environment. They share the same issues about local budgeting priorities, infrastructure issues, representation issues, access to services, and so on. There's not much different going on, and so the notion that one can make an easy dichotomy is, I feel, false. Some of your remarks are perfectly sound, yet they don't encompass the reality on the ground, which is like a city like Calgary, which has grown so spectacularly within its boundaries. It's now like a fat man wearing a small belt. What are you going to do? You're just going to continue to have the bulge, or are you going to loosen your belt? Hybrids are like loosening the belt.

6:00

**Mr. Teja:** Yeah, I mean, I certainly appreciate that it's not just a one or the other, urban or rural, and there's a whole spectrum of communities. I think maybe one way of looking at this is to look at land slated for annexation, and I think that that's maybe a good predictor of where the city boundaries may overlap that belt, as you put it.

**Dr. Martin:** I'm sorry. It's a bit of a crude metaphor, but it's late at night.

**Mr. Teja:** Yeah. I totally understand that there is this mix, you know, an acreage community. I know that in this new map, I think, it includes the Pineridge golf course and all the houses there. I know that a number of folks who live on that golf course do work in downtown Calgary, and so there is this blending, and you have the tough job of making those distinctions and cuts, but I do think that we ask a lot to have a whole bunch of different priorities with the same voice. I don't think it's easy to say, "There's a clean cut here; there's a clean cut there," but I do think that having a sense of the city boundaries and also where the city might expand as a guiding principle is helpful.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah, thank you very much. It's a really interesting discussion. I mean, as we get into, you know, how we define communities of interest in the legislation, it makes me think a little of the old saying of: I can't clearly define it, but I know it when I see it. Like, I know what it is and I know what it isn't, and I choose to live in Calgary, or I choose to live in Springbank because it's not Calgary. Right? And so it may actually be no more complicated than that.

What I wanted to ask you about, though, is what – the first presenter today, actually, earlier this morning, was from Elbow Valley. It has made me think a bit about: well, are there certain situations where a hybrid actually makes sense? Right? I think, clearly, around the province there are areas where we've traditionally had hybrids, but they tend to be the kind of mid-sized urban areas where the math just doesn't really work if you don't have some sort of rural-urban, but this is the first time that we're able to do it with the big cities.

I look at somewhere like Elbow Valley, and her perspective was like yours. She doesn't like the idea of too many hybrids. However,

as a resident of Elbow Valley sharing underground infrastructure – so a sanitary sewer comes to Calgary – the urban forum is quite dense. It's really nowhere else to be. There are no stores. Everybody comes to Calgary. So it really may not technically be Calgary, but, boy, it sure feels like it compared to a Springbank or a Bears paw or other places. Would you agree with that, that that's maybe one example where it makes sense to have a hybrid?

**Mr. Teja:** I guess I question the inevitability of hybrids a little bit. My alternative would be to just add more seats, and I know that that's a challenge for you folks to debate and comes with its own challenges to make that happen. I think in an ideal world, for me, that's how I would do it, is actually to say: "Yeah. You know what? You have a community or a set of communities that sort of use a lot of the services of Calgary but don't really consider themselves Calgary and have different jurisdictional challenges. Great. Let's have that be represented separately from the issues of a bunch of university students who live in Calgary and have a different issue set." Noting that can't always happen, I think you have a lot of tough options, and if you have to do the hybrids, you know, eat, shop, and play in Calgary makes sense, but that only makes sense if you have to do the hybrids.

**Mr. Clark:** Great. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Mr. Teja, it's obvious that you read the report and you know the three options we have. Unfortunately, we were not given a legislative pen to say: no, we don't want 89; we want 97 ridings. We're stuck with the 89, so that one option is very, very limited. Then we're stuck with the two other options, take more seats out of the sparsely populated rural areas and just give them to the city. You know, I wish we had a budget to make all the city presenters come to the rural areas to present and all the rural presenters come to the cities to present so that there was that cross-pollination a bit. Can I summarize your presentation as saying that you're not really in favour of hybrids, but in some situations you recognize they're necessary?

**Mr. Teja:** Yeah, if we're not able to do the option 1. That's mostly what I want noted, that I do like the option 1 the best. If we're not able to do the option 1, we should be very thoughtful and hesitant to use hybrids, but I do think that you probably need them.

**The Chair:** They are a legitimate option, right?

**Mr. Teja:** Yeah. The constraints of having to go across a very large district for an MLA are tough, and that's one I can certainly empathize with and understand. If you're trying to represent an area that covers 13 different townships that are all an hour drive away from each other, it's not going to lead to effective representation either.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, thank you very much. You'll be pleased to know that we had a government minister present this afternoon and we kind of chided him a little bit about why we only had 89.

**Mr. Teja:** Well, I'm certainly pleased that that's on your mind.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much for your thoughtful presentation. Please remain, if you can, to hear the other presentations.

**Mr. Teja:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Our next presenter is Denys Robinson.

Please identify yourself, and tell us where you're from and what riding you're referencing.

**Mr. Robinson:** Yeah. It looks like staff are just pulling up the PowerPoint. My name is Denys Robinson. I reside in Calgary-Varsity, and I'm here to talk primarily about Calgary-Varsity.

**The Chair:** You're wise to have a PowerPoint at this stage of the evening for us. Thank you.

**Mr. Robinson:** You're welcome. Okay. Folks can see the presentation all right? Excellent.

Calgary-Varsity is too large. I'm going to talk a little bit about why that is and what my evidence is for thinking that's the case.

Sorry. I'm just getting the notes onto the screen here.

I'm going to go briefly through some of the population growth methodology.

**The Chair:** Can I ask you: is it too large populationwise or geographically?

**Mr. Robinson:** Populationwise.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Robinson:** Yeah. It's a fairly small urban riding by geographical.

I'm going to talk a little bit about the population growth projection methodology that's used, explain why I think this means you're underestimating the current population and future populations of both Calgary-Varsity and Calgary-Bow, speak a little bit about some of the geographic and historical connections between Bowness and Montgomery, and also talk about the general geography of the area. You discuss in your report the way the river provides a natural boundary between the two ridings, and I'll explain why I think that's not the right way to think about the area. Then I'll suggest a couple of proposed solutions.

First of all, you can ask me questions about this because I don't have time to go through all of it. Basically the statistical methodology used by the OSI to calculate the current and projected populations – well, the current population is probably fine mostly – does not take into account growth from exogenous variables, specifically changes in housing policy and zoning. I'll walk through some of the ways in which both of these areas are undergoing massive change in zoning and projected housing starts, and this is simply not captured by the models you're using or are being used by the OSI, which from my understanding of your report, is your primary reference source. Yeah. If you want me to articulate more on that, you can look at the slide or ask me questions, but I'll run way over the six minutes if I walk through all of it.

**6:10**

Just to briefly kind of go over some of the details of it, this is a heat map of row house development in Calgary. This was the city ward, so it's a little hard to see, but you'll notice the high area in yellow – that's Bowness and Montgomery – and you'll notice some of the areas in red and yellow are in areas like Banff Trail and Brentwood, Charleswood, areas that are in Calgary-Varsity. These new row house developments substantially increase density and they're not going to be caught by the OSI methodology, so you're not catching those increases in population. I think it's also worth noting that they're largely entirely outside Calgary-West, with the exception of a little bit in Glamorgan in the corner there. No, pardon me. Glamorgan is in Calgary-Elbow, so they're entirely outside Calgary-West.

Additionally, Calgary-Varsity is just generally booming. I believe other presenters have spoken about this, but you're not fully incorporating the numbers in the University district, which is a huge

master-planned area that, once again, the OSI methodology is not going to catch. There are macro factors. The very large employment centres right in the middle of Calgary-Varsity, the hospital and the university, are huge employment hubs that will continue to cause an increase in housing demands. You should expect in the long term that population growth will be more intense there. You could argue with the details, but it doesn't seem to me that the OSI methodology captures those increases.

I'm sorry, I'm having a little bit of trouble seeing my slides from here. Oh, yes. The University of Calgary is undergoing substantial residency expansions. I don't have the numbers off the top of my head, but they're not even able to currently guarantee all of their first-year students a resident spot, and rents are quite high in Calgary. So they have extra land on that university campus, they've recognized a need, and they're building substantial additional housing there. I expect they'll be in, you know, more than one tranche, so over a decade you might see several projects.

Then finally, the current city council, the majority of members explicitly committed to increasing transit-oriented development in the most recent election, and as I'm sure you know, the northwest Red Line passes right along Varsity, so it is very likely to be the case that there will be an increase in transit-oriented developments near University, Brentwood, and Dalhousie stations, which most if not all of that development would fall within the riding.

Calgary-Bow is also booming. The West District is the most significant source of this. That is a large development sort of east of 85th Street in the riding. It's, I think, a little bit less than half done. You can see from this picture. It's just their promotional material, but I've spent a lot of time walking around the neighbourhood and it's quite accurate. It's just huge. There's a ton – an absolute ton – of housing. I believe the estimates are over 10,000 residents when the area is completed. You know, that's slightly less than a one-sixth increase in a population area. Now, some of that will be accounted for already, but once again, not all of it. It will cause a kind of spike in the graph in terms of population growth in that area, and that will not be captured by the kind of backwards-looking projection methodology that's being used. Then there's another West District S. development that's smaller, called Medicine Hill, kind of down the hill from West District, which is also in the mid-stage of being built out and filled in.

Okay. This is the point about the river. You can sort of see that there's a river going through, but there are two additional significant geographic factors that sort of split up this area. The first is the Trans-Canada Highway, which acts as a bit of a divider between communities in some of those areas, and I think the more important one, though, is the escarpment. It's true there's a river – the river separates Bowness and Montgomery – but there's a bridge over it and it's flat ground. You can bike, walk, drive between Bowness and Montgomery. There's a bus line connecting the two, so they're actually quite connected communities. But if you try to go up the hill from Bowness and Montgomery into Cougar Ridge or Paskapoo, any of these areas kind of up the hill in Bow, it's actually quite a long way around. You simply cannot walk or bike that route unless, you know, you have 45 minutes to an hour and the willingness to go up a fairly steep hill. Even a car trip will be four or five times longer than just transitioning across the river.

I think you were correct to say that the river to some extent is a natural geographic divider. But what I would say, really, is that there's not one side of the river or the other. There's on top of the escarpment on the south, on top of the escarpment on the north, and then the river valley, and those three areas: none of them should be carved up separately. They should be left as part of the same area. They're the same communities historically. Bowness and Montgomery were – probably some of you know this better than I

do – separate towns that were incorporated into Calgary as Calgary spread out and have their own history and community and are closely connected in that way.

That brings me to my next slide, which is pulling this all together. We've seen that Calgary-Varsity and Calgary-Bow are booming. You know, like, my basic idea is that these numbers you have for Calgary-Varsity and Calgary-Bow, 57,000 and 55,000, are underestimations and will increase at a faster rate than is projected. I think, especially in Calgary-Varsity's case, what you're likely to end up with over the 10-year period is like the situation you end up with in Calgary-Buffalo, where there's a population boom, presumably because of increased development in the downtown and the central Beltline areas. You're going to have a similar boom in Calgary-Varsity as that intensification spreads out from the core to the ring suburbs in Calgary-Varsity. As you know, I've laid the case that we can already see the areas that are going to increase a lot, and we can also see the kind of basic case for broad increases. So that 57,000, which is already above the average, is going to go much, much higher. I think that's a little bit unbalanced.

Now, the obvious solution – right? – is to not add that section of Bow, Montgomery into Calgary-Varsity, but that creates the problem of, I think, the same thing that is going to happen in Bow. Then, you know, I'm just sort of saying to my neighbours in Bow: okay; well, you guys get the two larger ridings. Then you have to go to the next step, and I think the two obvious places to look at are Calgary-North West and Calgary-West-Elbow Valley. I don't have a strong view about which part is appropriate. These are sort of suggestions. I think Crestmont in the west of Calgary-Bow is less geographically connected and less connected on transportation corridors to those areas up the hill in Bow or the areas down the hill in Montgomery and Bowness, so you could add it to Calgary-North West. In fact, at the city level the ward 1 councillor represents those areas as well as the areas north of the river. So at that other political level, those areas are connected. You'd have to talk to somebody from there as to which area they feel closer to.

This is an area I do know a little bit better. Like I said, I spend a lot of time along 85th Street. There's an area west of 85th Street sort of near the West District development. Google Maps thinks it's called Wentworth. I sort of think of it as west West Springs, so west of 85th Street and just north of Bow Trail. You could simply tack that onto Calgary-West-Elbow Valley instead of going and tacking on a rural area which, as many presenters have suggested, is not as aligned or not as maybe integrated. The reality is that although Bow Trail is a bit of a separator, at 85th and Bow, you know, it's not a huge barrier. It's not like an interchange where no pedestrian traffic can cross. The two areas north and south of Bow Trail are geographically and culturally pretty contiguous. They shop at the same areas. They're probably mostly shopping at the same grocery store, in fact. So I think it's an appropriate connected area, and it would help balance out those population areas.

To make the final point of the argument, Calgary-North West is down, at 52,000, so if you added a couple thousand there, you'd be less at risk. Calgary-West-Elbow Valley is not experiencing the same level of growth as Calgary-Bow and Calgary-Varsity are. There is growth there. There certainly is. But my reason for suggesting is that the vast majority of the neighbourhoods in the east end are 10, 20, 25 years away from their kind of redevelopment turnover and densification whereas the areas down in Bowness and Montgomery or in Varsity are about, you know, 20 years older. They were built more in the '50s rather than the '70s, and they're turning over and densifying with the new R-CG and H-GO style developments, which have a much higher unit rate.

6:20

Okay. Just to recap, we should expect Calgary-Varsity to grow more than your report currently predicts. We should move things over to Calgary-Bow, but Calgary-Bow should expect the same level of projections, and it would be more appropriate to trim a couple of areas off into Calgary-West and Calgary-North West. Finally, I just recommend that you take into account the escarpments-roads-rivers combination when considering geographic continuity, and in Montgomery and Bowness specifically I think it's appropriate that those areas be part of the same riding.

Yeah. Happy to take any questions.

**The Chair:** Okay. I'm going to start with the questions. You've obviously spent a lot of time, sir, on the population. We have Calgary-Varsity pegged at 57,166 according to the OSI stats from 2024. On your analysis what is the population now? What have we got wrong here?

**Mr. Robinson:** Yeah. That was a larger endeavour, and I only have access to the description of the model, not the full data sets to run it myself, so I couldn't answer that question. I would tweak a little bit...

**The Chair:** Could I interject and say that you're not sure?

**Mr. Robinson:** I'm sure directionally, but I'm not sure with a fixed number.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Robinson:** I am certain that – sorry; I should caveat this. If their descriptions of their model are fully accurate and correct and they didn't sort of underexplain a part of the detail, I am certain that they have no variable which can or does take into account rezoning or housing growth. They're going down to the plot level, but they're doing it by pulling from the land title data set. As you may know, the land titles do not include information about zoning. All they're doing is saying: ah, these properties changed hands. Basically, what the model says is: we looked at our provincial data sets, and we had these people move in and these people move out. We had these people get...

**The Chair:** Sorry. I'm going to interject here. I'm not sure you're accurate that that's how OSI came up with their numbers. They have a very sophisticated system, and it's not only land titles. My question is: you think the number is higher than 57,166, correct?

**Mr. Robinson:** No. Sorry. I said two things. I said that I suspect that it could be a little bit higher, but...

**The Chair:** So you think it's higher?

**Mr. Robinson:** ... the primary point I was making was that it should be growing a lot more. It says in your report that Calgary-Varsity's population is expected to be fairly stable, and I just don't think that that's an accurate assessment of what's going on.

**The Chair:** Okay. That's a different challenge, though. What you're saying is that our projections may not be accurate. You're critiquing the model, but you can't say with any certainty what the number should be different than 57,166, right?

**Mr. Robinson:** I can say directionally. I can't give you a number.

**The Chair:** Yeah.

**Mr. Robinson:** Let me make it really explicit. It is not 2024 anymore. There has been, you know, a year, a year and a half from whenever they did it. There have been a disproportionate number of developments and move-ins in Calgary-Varsity since then.

**The Chair:** Agreed.

**Mr. Robinson:** So it's got to be higher than 57,000. Additionally, my suggestion is that the rate at which it's higher than 57,000 should be a larger increase than other areas for all the points I made about development. So that's the one point. I can't give you that exact number. If OSI ran their model again, I would expect that they would get a very accurate number. My suggestion is that you should expect that that difference – you know, say there is an average of 1,200 added. It probably would be 1,500 or 1,800 in Calgary-Varsity. That difference, the delta would be there.

The second piece is that in the current version of the report, it's my understanding – I believe that's what I read – that you say that Calgary-Varsity's population has been stable and should be expected to remain stable. My point is that that should be what the OSI model tells you, that historically Calgary-Varsity, that area's population was reasonably stable, but we're entering into a period of substantial growth. So that claim in the report, that it's a stable population, from which I inferred you thought it was reasonable to have that slightly above average, that 57,000 and a bit number: you can't draw that inference. You should in fact think that the OSI model, as I believe I demonstrated, is not going to take into account the projections of increased population growth from variable – it doesn't calculate the zoning changes in these major projects, which...

**The Chair:** Okay. I think I get your point.

I'll open it up to other commissioners. Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** Yes. Okay. You know, whether you don't have access to the data – frankly, I probably have access to the data, but I don't understand it. The models work in the manner that they function, but they do provide a standard upon which we have anchor points that we can look at.

For example, in the census numbers the OSI data that was used to generate the previous data set was 2016, and it had this riding, Calgary-Varsity, at 49,000. Now, we can move forward to the data set that we're using, which is 2024, and it's at 57,166. Whether those numbers are exactly right or not I don't think, from my perspective, is all that important. It's more important the spread between the two and looking at that and assessing whether or not that is representative of the growth you're talking about or whether it's more representative of the growth that we've been relying on and using that to predict into the future whether the historic growth that we can see there is going to continue or not.

The other thing that's very interesting is that if you look at the eligible voter numbers – and I think that's probably a data set that may in this circumstance be very valuable in determining whether what you're predicting is likely to happen or what we're saying, based on our numbers, is likely to happen. Just to give you some numbers, eligible voters in 2019: 27,466. Then in 2023 eligible voters increased to 32,700. I didn't run it, but if we looked at the spread there and we compared it to the 2016 and 2024 numbers, perhaps we'd have a better idea about whose projection is high or low.

You seem to be a numbers guy. Just sitting here right now, would you say that those numbers that I've given you would be more representative of what you are predicting?

**Mr. Robinson:** No. I want to be clear. My comments were on what we should think directionally about the methodology. I did not run an original set of numbers. I'll point out one thing that you said or that you seem to be suggesting that I strongly disagree with, and that's that eligible voters were more relevant than the total population.

**Mr. Evans:** No, no. It's simply a factor. It's just another data set.

**Mr. Robinson:** Okay. I think that I would be deeply concerned about focusing too much on eligible voters, and I'll tell you why. Children are not eligible voters, but they have very, very substantial political and moral interests in our society.

**Mr. Evans:** But their voice comes from an eligible voter. Don't forget that.

**Mr. Robinson:** That's absolutely true.

**Mr. Evans:** So they're not speaking for themselves. They speak through their parents.

**Mr. Robinson:** Absolutely. I don't have children, but it seems, to me, unreasonable that if there's a riding with, you know, a bunch of families – say we have two neighbouring streets and you have 20 couples with no children and on the other street you have 20 couples with two children each – we sort of say: oh, well, because there are 20 eligible voters on each street, they get weighed the same. There are a lot of benefits to not having children financially. I don't think you also get to then say: oh, I get to cut the kids out of the equation. I think that, yes, the parents do speak for the children. You can argue about what age or whatever, but I think that's roughly how it works in our society. I think it's a pretty good system, and I think that means that you should pay attention to the full numbers.

That may seem like a quibble, but I want to bring that back to Calgary-Varsity. Calgary-Varsity has a number of neighbourhoods in which, basically, baby boom era families are now moving out and it's transitioning to Millennial or Gen Z families, and it's a lot of young families and parents. Once again I would suggest that disproportionately over the next 10 years in those areas you're going to see those noneligible voters, but it's important that they have a voice.

6:30

I think you guys both made the same kind of counterpoint to what I was suggesting, which is: hard to know exactly what's happening here; the statistical model is pretty good, so we'll go with it. I think that that's mostly fair. My suggestion is just that the statistical model – this isn't me saying that I know better than the OSI. The OSI, my understanding of their documents, is that they say themselves that this statistical model is not appropriate for projecting. It's not appropriate for projecting at the micro level, and it will not take into account changes in housing policy. The components growth model that the OSI's model is based on from StatsCan: in the guide to it they explicitly said what I just said. You can see the citations in the slide.

**The Chair:** Okay. I'm going to stop you there because we've got a lot of questions still to ask.

Susan, any questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** I just wanted to mention to you that the suggestion you make for Montgomery to move over into Calgary-Bow is a good one. I have read that in other submissions. I think the way you presented it and the way you showed it on the map: it's very clear

that there's an easy connection there that we have disrupted. Thank you for bringing that to my attention.

Just as an aside, what do you do for a living?

**Mr. Robinson:** I'm a policy adviser by training and trade. I worked for the Ontario government for a number of years, and I married a woman from Alberta, so I'm here now.

**Mrs. Samson:** Yeah. Lucky us. Thank you.

**Mr. Robinson:** Well, that's very kind of you. Thank you. Yeah. Lucky me, I usually think.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you. I'm just very interested in your comments on the methodology. We don't want to prolong it. I don't think any of us in this room would disagree with the notion that, you know, one can presume in your heart of hearts that the number is bigger than the number on July 1, 2024. I think any statistician involved in census work would agree with that hands down all the time. No census is bleeding-edge accurate ever. Never has been, which is why the minute a census is done, they immediately start issuing reassessments. A census is a huge quilt of probabilistic factors, each of which has a different probability weighting. It's like a huge linear equation. They are the first people to acknowledge that it can't be empirically accurate. A lot rides in government. OSI is a department of the treasury which is intensely interested in the distribution of monies to the right number of populations across the province, across the country.

The whole business of doing a census is to establish a baseline – this is the important part – all the factors of which can be deployed in each district of the province. That's the terrible truth of it. Some of the factors that you probably quite rightly see as distinguishing Varsity from other areas can't be replicated across all the districts, so they don't get included.

**Mr. Robinson:** I mostly agree with you. I think that it would be a lot of work, but you could replicate it. I have at a broad level – the differences are so enormous and stark on the size of these developments. It could be the case that the developments in Bow I talked about add, you know, not just 1,000 or 500 but, like, 10,000 people, right?

**Dr. Martin:** I don't disagree with that either, but as a commission we have a legally imposed and certainly a self-imposed future restriction. It's what I call the Tyvek rule. If you can't show me Tyvek on the building, I'm not going to count it.

**Mr. Robinson:** Okay. What I'm telling you is that there are buildings that the Tyvek is now off that aren't counted yet, and those disproportionately exist in Bow and Varsity. I believe that, you know, my slides and references on them do a good job of demonstrating that. If you were to tell me, "Denys, you actually haven't been paying attention to the subdivision development in Rocky Ridge, and there are 8,000 homes there," I would say: "Fair enough. I didn't go up and measure the subdivision." You could look at the D-map yourself and see. It would be quickly apparent what was going on. I didn't check that myself. Yeah.

I'm reasonably confident. I ran a municipal campaign in Calgary in ward 6, so Calgary-West. I knocked, like, 10,000 doors in this neighbourhood. I've been by foot and dropped another 10,000 doors. I spent the whole year doing it for a good friend of mine, so I'm deeply familiar with these areas. And I live in Calgary-Varsity and I've walked all over and biked all over. I also follow housing



policy quite closely as a partly professional, partly personal interest. So just the raw number of D-map applications, review of the local area plans, what's actually going on with the building in these areas: I'm just very familiar with it.

I didn't do the kind of, like, reverse modelling – I do have a day job – that the OSI is able to produce, but the OSI is explicit that they don't take into account the variables that I presented some evidence on. I think the evidence I presented is just so stark that I think it's pretty robust.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** I promise to be quick.

**The Chair:** Sure. Yep.

**Mr. Clark:** I guess I have some good news. We're using the OSI data as it exists at July 1, 2024. That's it. I mean, there's no sort of quibble. That's just the way it is. But what I'm interested in is two things that you've raised, that the relevant data set for us is population as defined by OSI that we have access to, not elector roles, not eligible voters, not voter turnout. It's population, and that's been pretty clear for boundaries commissions across the country, you know, for a long time. So that's our data set.

If I could maybe just summarize what I heard from you, Varsity is growing quickly, Bow is growing quickly, so you've got a couple of specific suggestions. What you're not saying so much is that we need more seats. You're saying, listen, these places, Bow and Varsity: one, Montgomery belongs with Bow, and two, it's going to grow more than we've accounted for, so allow some headroom for that; specifically, move Crestmont and Wentworth out to adjacent constituencies. Is that sort of a summary?

**Mr. Robinson:** Yeah, I think that's fair. I guess there's implicitly a question about what I think about the broader distribution. I think it's very concerning that the gap between the ratio of electors in ridings is pushing at both ends on the rural-urban spectrum. I mean, I think it's well understood in Alberta that it's deeply unreasonable that the Senate numbers cooked up in 1867 give Alberta inadequate representation in the Senate. I mean the federal, the Canadian Senate.

I think the same intuition about the importance of maybe not a strict, you know, one person, one vote but that principle of equal representation is quite central in democracy. I think you're starting to strain it in Alberta with some of the ratios. That's particularly concerning when there is so strong a political divide, right? If you had a situation where there were five Conservative rural ridings and three Liberal rural ridings and two NDP rural ridings, it would be far less concerning. But you have a stark divide where one set of ridings votes a certain way and the other set of ridings votes another way, and then there's this gap in the thing.

I mean, I take seriously the comments of the previous speaker, who suggested that these rural areas require a different sort of representation. But, you know, just as Dr. Martin suggested to that speaker, there isn't a clean dichotomy between "Okay, rural, so it's got to be smaller." There has to be a balancing of the two factors. It's my understanding that the UCP in the last provincial election had a slight disadvantage in the popular vote, so the rural riding advantage for the smaller population numbers wasn't as distorting. But by baking in an acceptance of a distorted ratio over time, that efficiency could change, right?

6:40

It was thought for a long time in the United States that the Republicans were always going to have a more efficient vote. Then,

you know, one time it switched. I think in '16 or maybe in '12 it switched and everybody was very surprised, but electoral coalitions switch over time, and issues become different. If you end up in a situation where a new party system emerges, there's whichever successor party of this or that 10 years down the line dominates in rural areas and their vote is more efficient, you could end up with situations where somebody forms a majority government after losing the popular vote to the other party by six or eight points. The more you push on that line, the more you risk setting up a situation that strains the democratic legitimacy a little bit.

**The Chair:** Mr. Robinson, I'm going to have to bring this . . .

**Mr. Robinson:** Yeah. Fair enough.

**The Chair:** Just in terms of context, though, just so you know, Calgary-Varsity is number 9 on the population level of all 28 Calgary ridings, so there are eight ridings that are higher in population than Calgary-Varsity. I would make one recommendation. Save your presentation for eight years from now because you may very well be proven a hundred per cent correct for the next Electoral Boundaries Commission. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Robinson:** Fair enough. Yeah. You're very welcome. Thank you for your time this evening.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mr. David Cloutier.

**Mr. Cloutier:** Good to go? Fantastic. Great. Thank you, commissioners. My name is David Cloutier, and I'm a lifetime resident of south Calgary. I'm an educator and a parent of two children, aged four and six. I'm grateful to be here again to share some feedback on the future of the electoral boundaries in south Calgary and just want to express my gratitude in hosting these forums, I think in a lot of ways incorporating feedback from the last time we had these consultations.

I have a few things to speak to tonight. The first one I know it's been reflected on here. You know, for the record I know we're bound by the 89 ridings. That makes this work incredibly difficult. Again, thank you for taking that on. But as a member of the public, just want to express my perspective that that really constrains without any flexibility there, I think, a few challenges that have been faced in this boundary drawing process.

To that effect, tonight I'm here to share some thoughts and concerns around the hybrid riding approach in particular in Calgary-Okotoks, instead hoping to urge the commission to adopt a plan B or some iteration thereof. You know, echoing Dr. Stewart's comments, there are things that, if we had more seats, certainly would want to open up more conversation. I think there's really good merit in the idea that the Bow River and the separation between the communities in the south Calgary is significant, but in context of the two options in front of us plan B seems to be a better fit.

I want to talk a little bit more about that just in the context of those communities. When you look at the Calgary-Okotoks proposed riding, there would be my neighbours in the communities of Belmont, Yorkville, Creekstone, and Silverado. Those would be the communities that would be isolated in their representation from Calgary in a Calgary-Okotoks riding. Many of those folks are young families, many new to Alberta. They work in a variety of sectors, but they live in a community with a relatively common experience and way of life.

In south Calgary a lot of our lives revolve around Macleod Trail and not the highway south of the city. When you look at things like schools, when you look at things like recreation, when you look at

things like social circles, those are often integrated for those communities into the communities across Macleod Trail, including Walden, Legacy, and Wolf Willow. There are shared infrastructure resources between these communities, including public transit and the major hub that exists directly north of those at Shawnessy Station. My belief is that merging these high-growth, diverse, and urban communities with the town of Okotoks in the rural Foothills county significantly dilutes the effective representation of those interests and the way of life in those communities.

I think there is a solution that works for both communities. I want to draw particular attention to the commission's report. On page 32 you spent two paragraphs talking about struggling greatly with the map of south Calgary and then proposing two options, you indicated, "with humility and a desire for thoughtful feedback." So that's what I'm just hoping to share in this process.

There is that alternative map that addresses a number of these challenges. I want to talk a little bit more about the municipal boundary. I think that's really going to be important for effective representation when you have a Calgary MLA that can talk about urban infrastructure, that can talk about transit, that can talk about education and other needs that are unique to the city.

And likewise for south of the city, many of those folks in Okotoks. Okotoks is one of Alberta's largest towns. They're neighbours with Diamond Valley and have a close relationship with the formerly Turner Valley and Black Diamond as well as Foothills county. There's shared infrastructure in these areas. They share a lot of natural heritage, including their parks, and then that shared experience in living outside the city.

The commission did note that it would move boundaries around in the city. Again, I think we get into this place of: there is no perfect map, there is no perfect solution to this. But my perspective, and, again, with gratitude for all of the perspective that I think was captured last time, is that the effective representation comes from the preservation of those municipal boundaries and representation in the south.

So my ask for the commission today is hoping that you'll move forward with plan B or a variation of that based on feedback that you receive through the course of these hearings. I'm happy to take any questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** No questions.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** I'm good, but thank you for coming out. I appreciate that.

**The Chair:** Thank you for your very brief and succinct presentation. You're not the first one to have taken that position, I can assure you.

**Dr. Martin:** I just wanted to ask you: which particular riding do you live in?

**Mr. Cloutier:** Great question. I have lived in Shaw. Currently I live in Calgary-Lougheed, and I believe the new map would still have me in Lougheed.

**Dr. Martin:** All right. So, really, you're obviously very familiar with these neighbourhoods.

**Mr. Cloutier:** Correct. Yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**Mr. Cloutier:** Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah, thank you, and I apologize. While you were presenting, I had my nose in my computer, but it was because I was working on the map and trying to kind of slice and dice and see, you know, where we can move things around in south Calgary. It's hard.

**Mr. Cloutier:** Absolutely. I would love, you know, when we come around to the next boundaries commission, to have a hand at that tool. It would be amazing. The government of Alberta has published a lot of those ArcGIS resources. The public can go on and access that. It would be really neat to crowdsource some of those maps next time around.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah, it's good. But we're not giving up.

**Dr. Martin:** In 10 years' time we're going to come and ask really difficult questions.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Cloutier.

**Mr. Cloutier:** Thank you very much. Have a great evening.

**The Chair:** We kind of caught up on time a little bit. Let's try to get one more in before a break: Mr. Kristoffer Moen.

Good evening. Please identify yourself and tell us what riding you wish to comment on.

**Mr. Moen:** All right. Hello. Thanks, Hon. Justice Miller and the rest of the panel. My name is Kris Moen, and I'm a resident of Citadel in northwest Calgary. My home constituency is in Calgary-Foothills. Thanks for the opportunity to present my views on the electoral divisions, areas, boundaries, and names for Alberta.

My main interest in the Electoral Boundaries Commission report is as an extension of my volunteer political canvassing activities. In the last eight years I have door-knocked over 30,000 doors across dozens of campaigns from school board to municipal to federal and, of course, provincial elections. Ninety per cent of my activities are concentrated throughout the northwest quadrant of Calgary. I will be mainly focused on the current and proposed Calgary-Foothills and Calgary-Nose Creek areas. I will also briefly touch on Calgary-Beddington and Calgary-Edgemont.

6:50

I just want to take an aside and say that I'm grateful that this commission decided to keep the constituency names relatively consistent. To the average constituent and the average voter and average Albertan, that's very much appreciated.

The biggest change to Calgary-Foothills is the transfer of Arbour Lake to the constituency of Calgary-Edgemont. I have resided in Citadel for the past 17 years with my wife and my daughter. Throughout this time Citadel and Arbour Lake have always been joined together in district boundaries at all three levels of government. Our kids go to the same schools throughout their academic career, and our communities have joint activities. I would suggest that Arbour Lake should not be transferred to the constituency of Edgemont.

To maintain a balance of 55,000 constituents, I would propose that one or more communities north of Stoney be transferred to Calgary-North such as transferring Sage Hill and the communities of Glacier Ridge and Escher Park, which, for those of you who haven't been around, is the old Symons Valley Ranch, just north of

Beddington Boulevard and 144th Avenue, currently under construction. This would help to provide this balance.

Now, I know that Mr. Clark over here has got his fancy-dancy computer system. I didn't go that route. That's why I am proposing one or more communities just sort of taking the district of north and moving it just sort of farther west until we reach our magic numbers.

As well, I would also suggest that transferring Kincora to Calgary-Edgemont from Foothills along with maintaining Hamptons in Edgemont would provide a population balance this esteemed commission desires. As an aside, a similar transfer for the community of Kincora occurred during the federal electoral district boundary changes, and maintaining consistency between federal and provincial electoral districts keeps things simple for the electorate.

For Calgary-Nose Creek I have extensively canvassed the Calgary-Nose Creek communities of Coventry Hills, Harvest Hills and Country Hills for all three levels of government. There is a strong desire from the residents to be split apart from the northeast residents of Redstone, Cornerstone, Skyview Ranch, and Cityscape. These residents want their own electoral district. Just as a further aside, during the municipal campaign, the Redstone, Cornerstone, and Skyview Ranch residents want the same thing. Both communities want their own residential district, primarily because they're just distinct. Like, Deerfoot Trail really divides those two communities culturally, where they go to work, where they go to school, where they go and see their neighbours.

Looking at the interim report, I noticed that Nose Creek is only a .4 per cent variance from the provincial population average. Given that the communities north of Stoney are largely unbuilt, I would suggest that the new electoral district should be among the smaller districts, much like what is being proposed for Calgary-Hays and Calgary-Lougheed, where they're much smaller in terms of the overall Calgary variant.

To achieve the desired outcome of allowing for population growth, I would suggest transferring the south edge of the Nose Creek constituency to Beddington. This area would be south of 96th Avenue and is currently scheduled to be the Aurora Business Park. However, the city of Calgary has recently rezoned this to a residential and mixed-use area in order to adapt to housing affordability and city densification. This would provide Calgary-Beddington with a natural growth, that the two previous presenters have been desiring, in terms of densification.

Then in terms of Calgary-Beddington – and permit me to square the circle regarding Calgary-Beddington – and maintaining its average of 55,000 constituents, I just proposed maintaining Hamptons in the Edgemont electoral district, and maintaining the average of 55,000 constituents for Beddington can be achieved by keeping the communities of Country Hills in Beddington rather than transferring to Calgary-Nose Creek, as currently proposed.

Additionally, transferring Hanson Ranch into Beddington as well as splitting up Panorama Hills, which is the southern part of the whole Panorama community, in two would maintain the 55,000 population while giving Calgary-North more room to expand. Again, Mr. Clark, I haven't mapped this thing out because I don't have access to your fancy little computer spreadsheet.

In conclusion, my tour of the northwest quadrant is complete. Hopefully, I didn't go over time. Thank you again for the opportunity to share my thoughts. I'm pleased to answer any questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. Please leave a written copy of what you presented with us.

**Mrs. Samson:** Because it was very complex.

**The Chair:** Yeah. And it was rapid. So don't take my not taking notes as an affront.

**Mr. Moen:** I've always got a second copy here.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Good.

Any questions, Mr. Evans?

**Mr. Evans:** I want to know what Mr. Clark's fancy computer stuff is.

**Mr. Clark:** Oh, man.

**Dr. Martin:** You've got access to it as well. You could choose to use it.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. I'm going to need to read your submissions, actually, because you packed it in. So thank you. I appreciate it.

**Mr. Moen:** I hope the transcribers can transcribe it.

**Mr. Evans:** Oh, yeah.

**The Chair:** They can do anything.

**Mr. Evans:** They're more amazing than Mr. Clark's computer.

**Mr. Clark:** That's undeniable.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Susan, any questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your time and the detail you put into your presentation. I think probably what will happen is that we'll have a look at all the suggestions and see what works in the big picture and the cascading effect.

**Mr. Moen:** Okay. Thanks.

**The Chair:** What are your thoughts on changing the name of Calgary-Foothills to Calgary-Symons Valley?

**Mr. Moen:** To Calgary, what?

**The Chair:** Symons Valley.

**Mr. Moen:** It would not work for the majority of the area. Symons Valley is a very small section, and maintaining Calgary-Foothills, considering they're – essentially, all that you're proposing right now is removing Arbour Lake and then, way far to the north, removing Evanston. But if you're currently in that community – it's primarily because Calgary-Foothills has grown substantially. I think we're close to double in size.

Again, it's more of the average, everyday voter. Like, somebody who says: "Oh, look. There are a lot of election signs going up, and maybe I should think about who I'm going to vote for." And that's like a week before they get in there. Or in the municipal campaign what we found is that it was, like, literally 48 hours before they went to the polls. That type of voter is looking for consistency. They don't want to be tossed around in terms of: oh, I was in this community; I was in that community.

That's what happened during the last boundaries commission. Up until the 2019 boundary redistribution I was a part of Calgary-Hawkwood. Well, what ended up happening was that the community of Hawkwood went over to Edgemont, and they took the Foothills name that was in Edgemont and gave it to us and then

just sort of swapped us back and forth. Massive amounts of confusion for the average Joe electorate. You know, as I said, I door-knocked almost like a second job, but I was having my neighbours just simply coming up saying: “Okay. So what’s going on, Kris?” That level of confusion to the average, everyday voter is what turns people off elections. It’s like: “Well, maybe, okay. It’s a good day in May. It was a really hot day. Maybe I’ll cook barbecue and not cast a vote.” That’s something that we all don’t want to see.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.  
Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** I failed to follow along with your presentation on the map. I was trying. I grabbed one map here, one map here, and a different map on my phone. Trust me; I was trying to follow along. I’m glad you’re leaving a piece behind.

Largely, your discussion is about: this neighbourhood should be nipped and tucked over here and this one should be altered over here. I’m glad that your unit of discussion is neighbourhoods.

**Mr. Moen:** Yes.

**Dr. Martin:** That’s great. I look forward to reading your piece. Thank you.

**Mr. Moen:** Thank you, Dr. Martin.

**Mr. Clark:** I was just going to say that I really appreciate your detailed engagement. I mean, I think it’s reflective of every single presentation that we’ve had all day and, frankly, this whole process. People genuinely care about this stuff, and what’s so helpful for us is people who live in the neighbourhoods and in those communities. Even if you live in the city or you think you may have some passing idea, it’s so helpful when someone comes and tells us: well, here’s how it actually is on the ground. Yeah. Do leave that, please, and we’ll read *Hansard* as well. Thank you.

**Mr. Moen:** Okay. Yeah. For sure. Thanks.

If I could just sort of say that in my day job I’m an accountant, so we’re all about variances and minimizing variances. What I would suggest to this commission, particularly for north Calgary, is to expand out the variances. Like, most of the variances are under 5 per cent. Maybe the solution is involved with sort of the very north, the very suburban areas that are still being built-out, making those have a much lower variance and then expanding out the inner core, which, in regard to the two previous presenters, I would say both areas are going to expand but demonstrated between 2019 and today Foothills doubled in size. I don’t think the inner city has doubled in size in terms of population. Again, I don’t have the fancy-dancy computers to bear that out.

7:00

**The Chair:** Well, you could look at our report, and that’ll answer it.

**Mr. Moen:** Yeah. Exactly.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Moen.

**Mr. Moen:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** I think we’ll have a five-minute break for the panel and come back promptly at 7:10.

[The hearing adjourned from 7:01 p.m. to 7:07 p.m.]

**The Chair:** Okay. We’ll reconvene the commission hearing.  
Is Mr. Andrew Bos present?

**Mr. Bos:** I am.

**The Chair:** Okay. Please come forward. Have a seat at the table.

**Mr. Bos:** All right. Well, thank you very much for having me present tonight. My name is Andrew. I’m from the constituency of – I’m going to get it wrong. I was Calgary-Cross for all these years, but now I’m Chestermere-Strathmore. I’ll be short and sweet and get you really back on time. Let’s wait for the map to maybe show up. Maybe not. Either way.

**Mrs. Samson:** Chestermere-Strathmore.

**Mr. Bos:** Yeah. Number 53, I believe, on the current . . .

**Mrs. Samson:** The new number is 57.

**Mr. Bos:** Fifty-seven. Okay. Here we go. All right.  
I can wait for you. Do you want me to wait till you find it?

**The Chair:** No, no. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Bos:** No? Okay. Sorry.

Yeah. I’m pretty much really wanting to address your mandate to include some more hybrid ridings. Right now I would propose that option A and B, as on the screen, get tossed out the window. Thank you very much for putting that all together, but I would really like to propose that the boundary kind of stay exactly the same, on the east side of the boundary anyway, so it would go all the way to highway 817, just a little farther east of that. I realize the riding is a little large from the population data.

I would like to also propose that perhaps now is the time to split Chestermere. Yes, the riding name is Chestermere-Strathmore, but the west side of Chestermere is very, very new. I know this. I used to work for the city of Chestermere. When I left there in 2022, there was not much development west of Rainbow Road, and now with the higher density, the way they’re developing communities right now, I think the population is – like, it could easily double. When I left Chestermere in 2022, there were about 21,000 residents, maybe a little more. I drive through on the highway now into work; their sign says 31,000. That’s 10,000 more residents in the last three and a half years.

I know we’re talking a lot about hybrid ridings, so however you want to work the numbers, I’ll leave that up to your expertise, but I think this is a great opportunity for hybrid ridings, say Calgary-Cross, Calgary-East, Calgary-Peigan. All those current constituencies could probably come all the way east. Like, they kind of touch Chestermere already.

I think if there are approximately 10,000 more residents now on the west side of Chestermere, on the west side of Rainbow Road, it may make the most sense for the commission to say: “You know what? Maybe now is the time to split Chestermere.” Even the south side of Chestermere, on the south side of the lake, there’s a whole development in there now as well. Somehow split that up. I’ll leave that to your discretion. I’m not going to blow your minds with maps and community names and all that.

The main part is that the way the current boundary sits right now, on the very south of the previous riding, which would now be High River-Vulcan, is the community of Carseland. Anybody that’s from Carseland: love them; they’re great. But there’s nothing going on south of the river. Like, the next little community is Vulcan, so anyone from Carseland is not going to cross the river south unless you’re going to go to the campground for a weekend. They’re going north to Strathmore.

I think it's very important to keep Carseland in the riding. Like I said, how the boundary currently sits . . .

**The Chair:** Okay. I think we need to clarify. When you say "current," and we've got this map – this is our proposed map.

**Mr. Bos:** This is your proposed, yeah. The current, how the current riding sits.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Okay.

**Mr. Bos:** Yeah. So like I said: option A, option B. I think this is both. I think Chestermere didn't have much variance between option A and B on the commission's report.

**Mr. Clark:** No, I don't think so. Let me just see here.

**The Chair:** I'm not sure there's an option A or option B relative to this one.

**Mr. Bos:** Oh, yeah. Sorry. There probably wasn't, and that's why when I was on the website and you click option A or option B, there isn't much change.

**The Chair:** So this particular electoral division: can I hear from you what your comments are with respect to this?

**Mr. Bos:** This as it sits right now?

**The Chair:** Yeah.

**Mr. Bos:** I'm not much of a political person, but I think it's garbage.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Bos:** It doesn't represent the riding. It represents the riding, but, like, you're losing all of Wheatland county.

**The Chair:** Yeah. That's the point. What are we missing?

**Mr. Bos:** You're missing all of Wheatland county, which Carseland is a part of. Wheatland county is a major part of how the boundary currently sits. It's a major part. Plus there's De Havilland airfield going in. Chestermere, Langdon, Strathmore: it's like a tripod. We rely on each other.

Chestermere is very close to Calgary, obviously. However, for your numbers it would have to work to keep current Chestermere in there, in the riding, you know, to pop up the numbers a bit. But the amount of development going on on the west side of Chestermere, between Chestermere and Calgary: like, 10 years from now you're going to be splitting all that up even more. It's going to explode, the economic development in between the two cities right now.

How the current proposal sits as well: High River-Vulcan wraps around to the north side of township road 250. There are a few communities up in there that right now have the ability to go talk to their MLA. She's in Strathmore; it's real quick. They're going to feel cut off. If High River-Vulcan is the community name, chances are the MLA will have their office in one of those two little towns, perhaps.

**Mr. Evans:** Are you talking about 65B?

**The Chair:** Okay. Now we're moving to 65, right?

**Mr. Bos:** Yeah. Well, now I'm just, I guess . . .

**Mr. Evans:** Maybe if we put up 65B it'll make more sense.

**Mr. Bos:** If we could put up how the current constituency sits, it would make even more sense then, I think.

**The Chair:** Well, this is what we've proposed, so we're happy to hear critiques about what we've proposed.

**Mr. Bos:** Yeah. Okay. I would put, again . . .

**Mr. Evans:** Let's put up 65B. I think it'll help you. It'll be appendix H, page 208.

7:15

**The Chair:** Sorry, sir. This loss of time is not going to be counted against you.

**Mr. Bos:** It's all good. I guess my confusion was the difference. Yeah. I'm thinking of how the boundary currently sits whereas you've been living in the proposed boundaries, which is the current boundaries, right? I'm talking the existing, how the 87 currently sits.

**The Chair:** Right, but we're – yeah.

**Mr. Roth:** This is the proposed, sort of a larger area here.

**Mr. Evans:** Yep. That's the one.

**The Chair:** Okay. If it helps, sir, for you to make your point, please grab the microphone, go to the screen, and point out the changes that you'd like to see made.

**Mr. Bos:** Yeah, I could.

**Mr. Evans:** Can you explain the Carseland connection again? You said that Carseland doesn't cross the river except for the campground kind of thing.

**Mr. Bos:** Yeah. Carseland is – let me go here. I'll try not to stand in your way, but I kind of have to. Okay. Yeah. Like, Strathmore is obviously up here. All right. Yeah. The river. Carseland is down in this corner right here. There's about, I'd say – I have the numbers. It's part of Wheatland county. I think there are probably 220 houses there. I don't know; four residents per house? I don't know. You do the quick math. I counted them last night in Google Maps, how many houses are in Carseland.

Anyway, so these residents here – right? – there's nothing more going on down here for them. They go all the way up to Strathmore, or they'll take 22X into Calgary and then same as up here. There are a few communities up in here. Lyalta. Yeah. There's one of them, anyway, right there. Obviously, you know, the current residents – it's rural population, so obviously you have to go quite large, but I think you could honestly make a case to kind of split Chestermere in half. Keep the Strathmore boundary how it currently is: follows the river, kind of comes up here, goes around Namaka, up at Strathmore, and then it kind of goes up and around.

To incorporate all these residents that live in here again, keeping them in Chestermere-Strathmore, if you nipped off the west side of Chestermere, there's your 10,000, 15,000 people right there, and then the residents that live on this side of town – Calgary-Cross, Calgary-East, Calgary-Pegan – however . . .

**Mrs. Samson:** They belong to Calgary, you're saying.

**Mr. Bos:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** So put west Chestermere into . . .

**Mr. Bos:** Into the hybrid. Yeah. Into three or four hybrid ridings that you would be able to do.

I'm going to give you guys feedback, so I'll put this down. I hope that kind of helped.

**The Chair:** What I understand you to say is: take the eastern part of the riding, expand it towards the existing makeup of the riding, cut Chestermere in half, and put the west half into Calgary ridings.

**Mr. Bos:** Correct. Yeah. I think that would benefit the residents there.

**Mr. Evans:** And the east half goes to Strathmore.

**Mr. Bos:** Yeah. If you've got the existing riding maps, not the proposed riding maps, you could keep the east side of the riding exactly the same. Then on the west side of the riding...

**The Chair:** And you live in that riding, sir?

**Mr. Bos:** Yes. I'm a resident of Langdon.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Bos:** Yeah. Right now I kind of did the quick – you guys have it, too, right? Chestermere: 28,000, but their sign says 31,000 right now. It's not official, but that's what they have. Strathmore is at around 16,000. Langdon is at around 5,500, and then Carseland is about 226 houses. Lyalta is 200 houses. Cheadle is a whopping 35 houses, right? They're smaller communities, but they're all hamlets within Rocky View or Wheatland county, and they all rely back and forth. To have representation from, you know, one MLA, especially with De Havilland going up, Langdon, Chestermere, Strathmore: it's going to blow up. Figuratively, not literally.

**Mr. Clark:** Hopefully not literally.

**Mr. Bos:** Not literally, right?

Again, De Havilland: like, 1,500 employees directly involved with it, let alone all the other economic development encouraged with it.

I guess to quickly sum it up, I think we're doing a disservice to the residents of Wheatland and the east side, like Wheatland county and kind of east of Strathmore. They live, work, breathe Chestermere, Strathmore, Langdon, and to keep them kind of close together – it's almost like it's a hybrid community of itself with Chestermere, Langdon, Strathmore as your urban and then you have all the rural all the way around it. Then the same as the other, like I said: Calgary-Cross, Calgary-Falconridge, Calgary-East, Calgary-Peigan. I'll leave that up to your minds, however you want to divide those up to kind of come all the way across to the boundary.

**The Chair:** Okay. Good. Thank you, Mr. Bos.

Any questions, Mrs. Samson?

**Mrs. Samson:** I have one question. When you talk about De Havilland, is that the same thing we heard about with Shepard Logistics? Is that the name of it?

**Mr. Bos:** No.

**Mrs. Samson:** What is that?

**Mr. Bos:** The Shepard Logistics park? I believe that is the Prairie Economic Gateway.

**Mrs. Samson:** And that's a big deal, too.

**Mr. Bos:** That's a big deal, too. De Havilland is strictly planes.

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay.

**Mr. Evans:** I can see where the Wheatland county boundary is, but then the other county that you were saying was important or municipal district...

**Mr. Bos:** Yeah. Right now it's Rocky View county and Wheatland county.

**Mr. Evans:** Rocky View is on...

**Mr. Bos:** Right now, how that presents, that square right by 270 is the Wheatland county boundary pretty much.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Then on the other side of that is Rocky View.

**Mr. Bos:** Yeah. It is Rocky View. Then it kind of cuts in towards Strathmore.

**Mr. Evans:** So if I understand what you're saying, your concern is that if you give these guys one MLA, they're not going to get the type of representation they could get if they had two or three MLAs representing them in Edmonton. Is that right?

**Mr. Bos:** I'd say the opposite. Yeah. If we lump them all in together with the current MLA, I think they would get better representation with one MLA than the poor individuals almost all the way up there by highway 9. Like, way up there you're almost in Drumheller, and your MLA, you know, may have a constituency office in Vulcan or High River. I get it. Ridings have to get big at some point, but perhaps not this one, please.

7:25

**The Chair:** Okay.

Dr. Martin, any questions?

**Dr. Martin:** Well, I'd just like to say that of all the presentations we've heard today, this is the boldest, I think. I commend you for thinking this through. You know, the notion of cutting the town of Chestermere in some fashion hadn't actually occurred to any of us. It's just intriguing enough that we will want to think about it some more. The net effect of doing that, of course, would be – logically it would reduce the overall population of whatever the remaining riding was, whatever the boundaries. It would be 10,000 people fewer. Have any of your rough-and-ready calculations accommodated that?

**Mr. Bos:** I believe Chestermere-Strathmore is currently over your – what's it? – 55,000. I think it's at 58,000.

**The Chair:** No, it's actually...

**Mr. Clark:** It's almost exactly perfect.

**The Chair:** Yeah, it's almost right on the money. Yeah.

**Mr. Clark:** Right on the pot. Yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** Mind you, if you return to the older boundaries that include Langdon and Carseland in the south, go along the river that much further, perhaps you make up the difference. I don't have any particular critique of what you suggested, but I have to sit and chew on it.

Thank you.

**Mr. Bos:** Yeah. You do this every 10 years?

**Dr. Martin:** Well, don't expect us.

**Mr. Bos:** No, not you but the commission.

**Dr. Martin:** I'm not going to be here in 10 years.

**Mr. Bos:** If it's right on the money now, you're going to be way over in very, very short – so the commission should probably take that into consideration now and do something with, again, like I said, the development between Chestermere and Calgary, divide that up into some of those hybrid ridings. Anyway, sorry.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. I mean, it's really interesting. That's exactly where I was going to go, the development, especially the De Havilland stuff. Super exciting. Like, it's a massive opportunity for our province and this region and the same thing for Prairie Economic Gateway. To borrow a phrase from my esteemed colleague, the Tyvek test is always the one – you know, it's tough, right? I do wonder if on some of this you're living 10 years in the future. In a good way, right? You're right. It's coming. We need to think about that. At the same time, we're trying to solve today's – we have enough problems today rather than borrow some from the future to apply to, not to say that we don't think about that. There are certainly a lot of cases where we have skated to where the puck is going to be and left some space. That's definitely what I'm going to think about here.

**Mr. Bos:** Yeah. I believe De Havilland is actually actively involved in building houses, like not a developer but partnering with developers. They're building in the east side of Strathmore to accommodate. That's also one of the reasons I bought in Langdon. I'm looking in my crystal ball as well. Like, my house is worth this much now. De Havilland shows up. There are 800 engineers showing up to De Havilland. They're going to want a house. I'm on a quarter-acre lot in the middle of a hamlet right now. It's going to grow.

**The Chair:** Where is the De Havilland plant?

**Mr. Bos:** Right in the corner. Right by, again, the 027. If you go up highway 9 from Langdon and you cut right on highway 1...

**The Chair:** So it's right in between Chestermere and Strathmore.

**Mr. Bos:** It is pretty much dead centre between Langdon...

**The Chair:** I drive that from time to time, and I don't...

**Mr. Bos:** Yeah, you won't see it yet.

**The Chair:** Oh, okay. So nothing is constructed.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. It's a ways off.

**Mr. Bos:** You'll see a fence if you look. If you drive that area quite often – yeah – there's a truck stop right past highway 9. There's a Burger King that I don't know if it's even open.

**The Chair:** Oh, yeah.

**Mr. Bos:** It's going right in behind that.

**The Chair:** Oh, yeah, I know where it is. Okay.

**Mr. Bos:** Yeah. Again, I encourage the commission to look in the crystal ball and see how it's going to expand in the future. You're going to have to make room for population in the riding. Maybe it's underrepresented now, but it's going to grow. Langdon itself: the communities are growing.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Bos.

**Mr. Evans:** Rocky View surrounds Calgary on the north, on the east, and on the west, so your point about having one MLA represent Rocky View and Wheatland: that's not really possible. In light of that, is that problematic for you? Have you thought through that?

**Mr. Bos:** Yeah. Well, Rocky View county is huge.

**The Chair:** Part of Rocky View and all of Wheatland: is that what you're saying?

**Mr. Bos:** Not even all of Wheatland. That's how it currently works. MLA de Jonge does represent half of Rocky View, a bit of – not even half of Rocky View; just that eastern side of Rocky View and Wheatland county and Chestermere and Strathmore and Langdon.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Bos:** It works well now. But, yeah, you're not going to incorporate all of Rocky View and all of Strathmore or even half and half.

**Mr. Evans:** So there are going to be multiple MLAs in any scenario for Rocky View, for certain.

**Mr. Bos:** Correct. I'm speaking just on the economic development, essentially centred on De Havilland and the big circle around that.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Bos.

**Mr. Bos:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Our next presenter is Keira Gunn.  
Good evening.

**Ms Gunn:** Good evening. Thanks for having me. The short intro: my name is Keira. Thank you again. I live in Calgary-Varsity. I moved there about nine years ago to attend the University of Calgary and just kind of stuck around since. I'm really close to the community of Varsity and the neighbouring ones. I've talked to all sorts of people in those neighbourhoods, so I have, you know, a really good chance to get a feel for the different areas.

Before talking about Calgary-Varsity specifically, I did want to express a huge appreciation for the amount of work that went into the whole first draft of the project and everything that you all have been doing. I also want to give a huge appreciation that, by and large, it has preserved municipal boundaries. I do think that that is really important. I think, especially in the last few weeks dealing with the water main catastrophe again in Calgary, it does highlight the need to respect those municipal boundaries. We do know that provincial and municipal issues are closely intertwined, and it's pretty important that our MLAs represent just one municipality wherever possible.

It's not just about, you know, lifestyles and livelihoods; it is about resource allocation and how those decisions are made. Municipalities compete with each other for resources that are granted by the provincial government, and I do think that if you have one MLA representing multiple municipalities at the same time, that can create conflicts within the same district association just of how those decisions are getting made and then representing different interests at the same time. I do really hope that final draft will maintain that preservation as much as possible.

**The Chair:** As it relates to Calgary.

**Ms Gunn:** The bigger cities, by and large, right? I mean, we're seeing it right now, the big demands for responding to these emergency situations. There are different interests for different municipalities. Yeah.

Second, I want to address the proposed change in Calgary-Varsity, which I think the gentleman before probably spoke a lot to as well. That is that there's the proposition of bringing Montgomery into Calgary-Varsity. I did miss, I think, most of his presentation. I just saw a little bit of the back and forth, but I have a guess that what he was largely speaking to was population. I know that in the previous election Calgary-Varsity probably was one of the smaller districts in Calgary. Based on the mid-2024 numbers you did sort of say that it wasn't the biggest, but it was above average for the other districts in Calgary. Again, I'm not going to beat the horse dead. I think he probably largely talked about this. Even with the developments that are happening right now in Calgary-Varsity and probably even since that mid-2024 estimation, it has grown pretty substantially.

I know that we can't have any sort of, like, uniformly populated ridings, but I do think with just the circumstances of Calgary-Varsity, where it is a fairly urban riding but at the same time it's currently not nearly as dense as it could be and it's potentially being positioned to be sort of a mega populated riding, we need to kind of be mindful of where it's going to be in five years.

Just touching on things, University District itself still has massive development. I think it's still got a 10-year plan in place, and throughout that whole time there will be more high-density developments going in place. We've also got, for example, Banff Trail and Capitol Hill. They've just had two fairly large developments that are, I think, just finalizing right now. When people start moving in, we can see also the multiplexes that have been previously approved all going in those two neighbourhoods, and there's plenty more room for growth. There are all sorts of bungalows in those areas right by the C-Train. Triwood area hasn't been hit with the multiplexes quite yet, but it's, you know, continuing to have growth with higher density homes being turned into a lot of student housing still.

7:35

I think another really big issue that's fairly unique to this is that it's a major C-Train corridor, so massive public transportation. There are three train stations in or on the boundary of Calgary-Varsity and another one just outside. You know, I think there are some other districts that have similar numbers as far as the C-Train, but Calgary-Varsity is also complemented by having one of the city's biggest economic drivers, the University of Calgary, so that's going to drive both more population growth and traffic throughout the area.

We know that the city has just changed its strategic plan for how population growth and housing is going to be managed. It is moving towards a strategic targeting of neighbourhoods with an eye towards infrastructure, so that is going to mean more targeted growth near the university. If you follow any of the really successful models across the country – I used to live in Burnaby – it's a very successful model. It's aggressive, dense growth near train stations. I think it's realistic to expect that we are going to see that happening very, very quickly and very high density in those areas, and there's a lot of room for it, too.

Even just last week I received a notification in my mailbox alerting me that there was a multiplex proposed around the corner from me. I live in the Varsity neighbourhood of Calgary-Varsity, and we haven't had any of that yet. We've actually kind of escaped

it, but it's now going to start happening, and it is a good thing because that's not a very dense neighbourhood despite its location, and I would expect it's going to pretty aggressively grow as soon as they start coming in. And it needs it, right? People need to live somewhere, and it's a great neighbourhood.

I think those factors – oh, I lost my sheet here. I do think that those factors mean that it's very uniquely situated for very aggressive population growth, so I think that we are going to see Varsity on its own grow really quickly. Of course, Montgomery itself is growing very quickly right now as well. It's getting, I think, a lot of the holdover from the growth that's happened in Bowness previously. It's starting to come into Montgomery. Those two added together, I think, are really going to make an exceptionally populated area in fairly central Calgary.

I think I already touched on this. Aside from population, I also want to add that they are very different populations, Montgomery compared to the rest of Calgary-Varsity. Calgary-Varsity is very, very deeply connected through the university as well as the C-Train and being that channel. Most of the people in Calgary-Varsity: their lives do somewhat revolve around the University of Calgary, be it through employment, education, or just the community services provided. Even though Montgomery does have this physical proximity to the university, it's not connected by train, and I do think that that makes a really big difference. I think that Montgomery is better defined by its proximity to the river and also ease of access to downtown. That's very different from much of the rest of Calgary-Varsity.

Actually, Montgomery, for comparison, is really similar to Bowness. There are a lot of parallels there. It's a town that was annexed by the city in the '60s, and you can kind of see that in the way that the neighbourhood still exists. The people in Montgomery very largely rely on parks, paths, river for their amenities versus what's offered by the university. It's got its own little downtown, a leftover from being its own municipality, a downtown with sort of, like, thriving small businesses, and none of the neighbourhoods in Calgary-Varsity have, really, anything like that, so it is a very different economic interest.

Just to kind of add to that, in the federal redistricting project they had originally proposed to take Brentwood out of Calgary Confederation, and I think – if you know, there's Triwood, right? – there's Charleswood, and Collingwood. I'm guessing some people complained, but they did go back to their decision and decide, you know, that Brentwood is very similar to these two other neighbourhoods that should stay together as far as a constituency. I think the same kind of mistake might be made with Montgomery with how similar it is in sort of demographic and lifestyle to Bowness and just the other neighbourhoods in Calgary-Bow that do rely on and have that proximity to the river. Like, it is just very different. I think Montgomery would get really lost in Calgary-Varsity amongst the interests that are very focused on the university, when it's just not as much down in Montgomery.

Yeah. To bring my presentation full circle, I'm going to talk about the water main just briefly. We also can see just how much that impacted Montgomery and Bowness. You know, up in Varsity I'm not really impacted any more than anybody on any other side of the city whereas there's that very different interest for the people that live close to the river compared to those that don't.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Clark, any questions?

**Mr. Clark:** I mean, you referred to the previous presenter, and I guess what I'm – I don't have any sort of big questions. I guess it's



really more just interesting context for us as we start to kind of – even if you’re from the city and you know the city, you look at a river and you think it’s probably a pretty good boundary.

**Ms Gunn:** Yeah. It’s true.

**Mr. Clark:** So we used the river, and the numbers then sort of work, but I think it’s just really interesting to hear that, you know, local perspective. I just want to thank you for coming. I know that that’s something, speaking for myself, I’ve definitely heard. I’m going to think a little bit about what the implications of it might be if we start to shuffle stuff around.

**Ms Gunn:** I just think they’re very similar. Yeah.

**The Chair:** You helped put a microscope on this probably.  
Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** No. Nothing to add, but to echo my colleague’s remarks, we need to look at this area again. It seems to me, you know, if one looked around, you would find seemingly anomalous neighbourhoods in other parts of town and in Edmonton and whatnot, so the question really is about our gut feel for future growth.

**Ms Gunn:** Yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** That’s something we’re burdened with. We try to constrain it by not getting too reckless about what might happen. You know, developers will tell you anything about the growth potential, which may very well be true, but the actual growth: who really knows? Your points are well taken, but they do key on expectations of growth at a rate comparable to what we’ve seen in the past two years. I have to ponder that because I doubt our rate of growth is going to be like that anymore. But it might be for this district.

**Ms Gunn:** Yeah. Most of the neighbourhoods in Calgary-Varsity have not had that aggressive growth that you see in, like, Sunnyside or, you know, more urban or Bowness, for example. They just haven’t had it, and because they haven’t had it, I am willing to put money that they will get it very quickly.

**The Chair:** It’s coming is what you’re saying.

**Ms Gunn:** Yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. It might be. I don’t doubt you, but you see what we have to . . .

**Ms Gunn:** Hindsight will be 20/20.

**Dr. Martin:** We have to chew on that.

**Ms Gunn:** No matter what you do, someone is going to come back and say: I told you so.

**Mr. Clark:** We can hardly wait.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mrs. Samson, any questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** No, I’m good. Thank you for your presentation. I appreciate your time.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah. When I look at the growth rate over the eight years, there was a population growth, assuming that the trend is

accurate even if there’s some question about the OSI data, to 8,166 in terms of population growth, which is a 16.67 per cent growth over an eight-year period.

**Ms Gunn:** Sorry. Was that for Calgary-Varsity?

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah. That’s for this electoral district. So my question to you is: has there been in the last year or two a huge increase in noticeable growth?

**Ms Gunn:** I think where it’s hit is Banff Trail and Capitol Hill, and that’s where it started. I think it’s had largely to do with the process of getting approvals for municipal developments. We know that that area has been hit particularly harder with the blanket up-zoning. But now that they’ve shifted to a more targeted model – again, we’re all making guesses.

7:45

I lived in Burnaby when they were doing the aggressive growth along the SkyTrain, and basically, if Calgary doesn’t do something like that, I will be very upset with Calgary. For how successful that model was, I would really hope that they follow that and do that aggressive growth. That is going to hit three stations in Calgary-Varsity. There’s room for it, probably more than, you know, any other area that has that many train stations in it.

**Mr. Evans:** That growth rate is only 1.95 per cent per year, though. There’s a disconnect in terms of – what I hear is, “The sky is falling; the sky is falling,” and I run the numbers and I go, “But it’s 1.95 per cent growth rate per year.” If that’s the sky falling . . .

**Ms Gunn:** No, it’s not happening there yet. I think where you would have seen much, much larger growth is in more of, like, the Mountain View area. That riding would have probably had much more aggressive growth over the last 10 years whatsoever, but it’s hitting a breaking point. Some of those other neighbourhoods are hitting that carrying capacity where unless you do start building apartment buildings, high-rises, it’s not going to get any more dense, and they’re going to push their way out. Now, when it pushes its way out, it’s going to follow the C-Train corridor. That’s Calgary-Varsity.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, Ms Gunn. Appreciate it.

**Ms Gunn:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Our next presenter is Mr. Grant Van Kammen.

I guess he is not our next presenter.

Jennifer Yermiy. Please identify yourself. Tell us what electoral division you’re speaking to.

**Ms Yermiy:** Jenny Yermiy. I’m in Calgary-Bow, and I’m going to speak to four districts: Calgary-Bow, Calgary-North West, Cochrane-Springbank, and Airdrie-West.

He has a presentation he’s just bringing up for me.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Ms Yermiy:** I appreciate you guys wanted to see the new maps, so you’ll have to bear with me because I have old maps, but then I’ll build to the last slide. The last slide of the four that I’ll show will show the new maps, how I got where I got.

The three of us are speaking from the Recall Nicolaides group. We’ve been on the streets in Calgary-Bow for the last three months working hard to understand the neighbourhoods and understand people within it. It’s been a very rewarding experience.

Next slide, please. What I've got up here on the left is the Calgary-Bow map as it was in 2023, and on the right is what I'm proposing as the change to the boundaries. Appreciating that Calgary-Bow is too populous, so it does need to have a component come out of it, what we are recommending is to keep Montgomery within Calgary-Bow and instead move Valley Ridge into Calgary-North West. So that's our first recommendation.

**Mrs. Samson:** Sorry. Which one into Calgary-North West?

**Ms Yeremiy:** Valley Ridge.

**Mrs. Samson:** Valley Ridge. Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** It's at the top left there, right underneath the words "north west."

**Ms Yeremiy:** That's right. Yeah. My logic for that is the highway. Valley Ridge is on the north side of highway 1, easily accessible to a constituency office, for example, in Calgary-North West. There isn't a school or anything in that community, unfortunately, so there's no risk to losing a public school whereas Montgomery would cause that.

If you could just go to the next slide, please. For Calgary-North West I'm suggesting that, as I said, Valley Ridge be added to it, but I'm also suggesting that Bearspaw and Lynx Ridge could come out of Calgary-North West. My logic in that is – again, I also have had experience on the ground in Calgary-North West. Lynx Ridge is a very different demographic than the rest of the constituency, and it's also on different water. It's on municipal water there from what I understand, as is Bearspaw, so to me, I think it's just a logical cut-off to have that where the municipal water is going out that way, to move it into what is now being called Cochrane-Springbank.

Next slide, please. On the left is the 2023 map, and on the right is the 2026 proposed. I understand you're trying to balance the population, so now that I've offered to put more population into Cochrane-Springbank, I'm suggesting that Airdrie-West could be expanded to the west so that there is a balance between Cochrane-Springbank and Airdrie-West.

Just on the next slide is that other – yeah. I'm suggesting that Cochrane-Springbank change to accommodate that population increase in Calgary-West so that you have a balanced amount in each of those four.

**The Chair:** Okay. But you're not contemplating our recommended ridings in our report here, are you? You're using the existing map from 2017, actually, and then your new proposal.

**Ms Yeremiy:** Yes. I'm saying for Calgary-Bow to keep it as it was in 2023 but release Valley Ridge instead to Calgary-North West. Calgary-North West didn't change in your proposed 2026.

**The Chair:** Okay. Yeah.

**Ms Yeremiy:** So in this case it would be adding to Calgary-North West, and then I'm saying to alleviate that, allow some of that to go into the Cochrane-Springbank riding that you've created, as I said, to then accommodate. I was trying to also do a little bit of work for you there to help understand how to balance those two.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Ms Yeremiy:** Okay. I'll just let Lindsay speak.

**Mr. Clark:** Sorry. I just want to make sure I understand. I recognize the map on the right is the interim draft that we've come up with.

That red line right down the middle of the words "Cochrane-Springbank": you're suggesting that's the new Cochrane-Springbank, and then to the east of that Airdrie-West shifts a bit and bites that chunk.

**Ms Yeremiy:** Correct. Yeah.

**Mr. Clark:** And that's not a massive population area?

**Ms Yeremiy:** Well, I don't have that information for you, but I'm just looking at the numbers. I looked at the map loosely, and it didn't look like it was a ton of population in there.

**Mr. Clark:** I don't think there's a massive population.

**Mr. Evans:** You're carving a piece out of the west is all you're doing there.

**Ms Yeremiy:** That's right. Yeah. If you swing back to the last map, it'll show you the other . . .

**Mr. Clark:** Oh, I see. Yeah.

**Ms Yeremiy:** I'm suggesting to expand Airdrie-West because it's only got 48,000 members of it, just to balance those two. Again, I did try to reach out to somebody who might have more information, but I don't know that area well, so I can, you know . . .

**Mr. Clark:** That's fair.

**Ms Yeremiy:** Whatever makes logical sense.

**Mr. Clark:** I just wanted to make sure I understood.

**Ms Yeremiy:** I just appreciated that I was putting more population in Cochrane-Springbank, so I wanted to do a little work for you as to what made sense to me to accommodate that.

Okay. I'll let Lindsay speak to some of the rationale behind this. Thank you.

**Ms McLaren:** Hello. My name is Lindsay. I also live in Calgary-Bow.

**The Chair:** Could you give us your full name, please?

**Ms McLaren:** Lindsay McLaren. I also live in Calgary-Bow, specifically in Montgomery, so I'd just like to say a few more specific words about that. The commission recommends removing – oh, please advance the slide. Thank you. Yes. Great.

The commission recommends removing Montgomery from Calgary-Bow and moving it to Calgary-Varsity, and based on the interim report, this seems to be based on two reasons. One is the desire to make the population of Calgary-Bow smaller, and the other is to have all of Calgary-Bow south of the river. I think that latter one would make sense if one simply looked at a map but didn't go there or didn't talk to anybody there, so I'd like to make a few comments about this.

7:55

Our recommendation, as Jenny just said, is to keep Montgomery in Calgary-Bow and instead move Valley Ridge to Calgary-North West. We have a number of points to support this recommendation.

Firstly, it would respect that the Bow River is not, I would argue, the meaningful boundary in that area. Bowness, despite being south of the Bow River, is well known as a northwest community, and it shares the Bowmont, which is Bowness-Montgomery, geocultural identity with the neighbour of Montgomery, so splitting those two up I don't think makes good social sense.

Secondly, removing Montgomery would result in Calgary-Bow losing public schools. It would lose Terrace Road school, which would be very detrimental to the Calgary-Bow constituency. In contrast, moving Valley Ridge out of Calgary-Bow would not result in a loss of public schools because Valley Ridge, unfortunately, doesn't have any. This would be made even worse if Wildwood were also removed from Calgary-Bow, which I understand was subsequently suggested and would result in the removal of a second public school, reducing the number in Calgary-Bow to just three.

Thirdly, even though the interim report is clear that population parity is not the only consideration, we note that swapping out Valley Ridge rather than Montgomery would also approximately equally well achieve the goal of bringing the constituency population closer to the provincial average. It also makes more sense in terms of socioeconomic similarities based on the 2021 census.

A final point, which I believe Rob will talk more about, is that there is currently an active recall campaign in Calgary-Bow.

**Dr. Martin:** We can't talk about that.

**Ms McLaren:** Not at all?

**Dr. Martin:** No.

**The Chair:** No, we're not interested in that.

**Ms McLaren:** Okay. So I can't say that . . .

**Dr. Martin:** No, you can't.

**Mr. Clark:** Well, you can say whatever you want. We can choose to consider it or not.

**Dr. Martin:** No, you can't, because we can't entertain purely political interventions.

**Mr. Evans:** You can talk about facts you have gathered, just not necessarily how you gathered them.

**Ms McLaren:** Okay.

**Dr. Martin:** We know what's on your mind, but we can't hear it.

**Ms McLaren:** Okay. Let me give this a shot. At the last provincial election the Calgary-Bow riding was very close. The outcome was very close between the two leading political parties, and of the voting stations in Calgary-Bow that recorded more votes for NDP than for UCP, all of them were located in either Montgomery or Bowness, so to remove Montgomery feels politically motivated.

**Dr. Martin:** Well, thank you for that, but we're not going to comment on any of that.

**Ms McLaren:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Okay. Anything else?

**Ms McLaren:** That's good. No. I will turn it over to my colleague.

**Dr. Martin:** Well, again, my stricture holds.

**Mr. Miller:** Yeah. No worries.

I'm Robert Miller, and I live in Calgary-Bow.

**The Chair:** Robert Miller?

**Mr. Miller:** Miller, yes. Hi. No relation.

**The Chair:** Cousin Bob?

**Mr. Miller:** Yeah.

What I wanted to express as a concern today was the proposal to include Springbank in Calgary-Bow. That proposal was put forth by the MLA for Calgary-Bow, which I find inappropriate.

**Dr. Martin:** But again: be careful.

**Mr. Miller:** Yes. That's all I'm going to say about that.

**Mr. Clark:** Sorry. Point of order.

**Dr. Martin:** We're just an electoral commission, and we want to keep away from the raw policy.

**Mr. Clark:** I appreciate, Julian, that that is our remit. What people come before us to say is up to them. We can choose to consider it or not. Ultimately, it's up to the folks who have come to present to say whatever they wish, and we may or may not consider it.

**The Chair:** Okay. Let me interject.

**Dr. Martin:** But I still have registered . . .

**The Chair:** Okay. Julian, we've heard your point.

**Dr. Martin:** . . . a rubric about how much conversation we can have about policy.

**Mr. Miller:** This is just my concern.

**The Chair:** Julian, we've heard the comment.

Now, sir, maybe a little bit of context would be helpful.

**Mr. Miller:** I have that, yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. Let me ask you this: are you addressing a proposal by an MLA to this commission?

**Mr. Miller:** Commenting on it, yes.

**The Chair:** Did that MLA make his proposal to this commission?

**Mr. Miller:** Oh, yes, he did. Yeah.

**The Chair:** Okay. And the proposal included Springbank?

**Mr. Miller:** To add Springbank and remove Wildwood, yes. That was the proposal.

**The Chair:** Was that subsequent to our interim report?

**Mr. Miller:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. So tell us why that's a bad idea.

**Mr. Miller:** Okay. In terms of Wildwood I feel that that could be appropriate. It's fairly split. It's a nonpartisan riding, so I think as a choice it's a nonpartisan choice for making a change. It could be moved out of Calgary-Bow, which was the proposal. However, the Springbank riding basically was not a very balanced riding. It was 2 to 1 votes in favour of . . .

**The Chair:** Springbank riding? Terminology is important here.

**Mr. Miller:** Sorry. The Springbank area within the Calgary-Bow riding. Yeah. You're correct. That is the area that's being proposed to move into Calgary-Bow.

**The Chair:** From where?

**Mr. Miller:** From Banff, Cochrane. Yes. Thank you.

That's being proposed to move in, and I just don't think it's appropriate because the Calgary ridings should be kept intact within municipal boundaries.

**The Chair:** So this effectively is a hybrid, then, a proposal for a hybrid. Is that what you're saying?

**Mr. Miller:** It is. Yes.

I think the needs of urban voters are very different from rural voters. I think that for reasons of commonality the urban area should not be brought into Calgary-Bow.

I also wanted to comment on Montgomery. As a resident of Bowness for 25 years, I feel that there is a lot of commonality between Montgomery and Bowness. These communities share parks, businesses. They have common issues with transit, zoning bylaws, emergency services, et cetera. I can't think of many neighbourhoods that are more common than Bowness and Montgomery. They shared the same train line for the old commuter train that used to go out to Bowness, so there's a shared history. These old riding boundaries worked before, so we shouldn't be creating new boundaries that might create confusion amongst the residents there when they're voting, amongst the electorate.

I don't think we should be dividing communities with a lot of commonality. I do understand that you need to balance the numbers, but I think there must be better choices than that.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Miller.

Now, in the previous slide there was something about how it's inappropriate for an MLA to do this. We've had lots of MLAs that gave us recommendations. I mean, there's nothing unique about an MLA making a proposal that may advantage him or her. I just want to make that point.

**Mr. Miller:** Ah. Okay. That was my point. Thank you.

**The Chair:** That's the nature of our business. We got a lot of that from all sides.

Any questions or comments from our panel to any of the presenters? Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** I just want to understand Montgomery.

Aaron, could you maybe go to Calgary-Bow.

**The Chair:** Before you go further, can I just get a clarification? Were you here when Mr. Robinson presented?

**Ms Yermiy:** I missed it. No. I don't think the three of us were.

**The Chair:** So you can't answer my question whether you're saying the same thing as he is.

**Ms Yermiy:** No. Not that I'm aware of.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Continue, Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** And Keira Gunn, kind of the same sort of thing.

I really want to know where Montgomery is. Everyone talks about Montgomery. You're going to be shocked. I have no clue where Montgomery is, but it sounds like a great place.

**Ms Yermiy:** It's right in here. It's this area here.

**Mr. Evans:** Which area?

**The Chair:** You can go up to the map and point it out. That might be helpful.

**Mr. Evans:** I'm going to draw it on my map.

**Ms Yermiy:** As Lindsay was saying, there's a bridge that brings – Bowness Road goes right through Bowness and Montgomery. Montgomery is this area all through here. I forgot to mention this. This is Shaganappi. When you think about putting it in Calgary-Varsity, that's a challenge for Montgomery folks to get to their constituency office, for example. It's right here.

8:05

**Mr. Evans:** Could you point to where you would consider to be the end of Montgomery? Up there, okay, and then it goes all the way down.

**Ms Yermiy:** Just to the river here. Yes. So it fills this space.

**Ms McLaren:** It goes south of that 16th Avenue, and it goes south to the river.

**Ms Yermiy:** And then appreciating that . . .

**Mr. Evans:** It goes south to the river?

**Ms Yermiy:** It's north of the river here.

**Ms McLaren:** And south.

**Ms Yermiy:** Oh, and south. Sorry.

**Ms McLaren:** Not of the river, of 16th Avenue.

**Ms Yermiy:** Of 16th Avenue. So there's 16th Avenue.

**Ms McLaren:** This is Montgomery.

**Ms Yermiy:** And that's Montgomery as well.

**Mr. Evans:** Just that portion there?

**Ms Yermiy:** This wedge here, yeah.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay, not above? It doesn't go above 16th?

**Mr. Miller:** Yeah, it does.

**Ms Yermiy:** It does, yes. It's here, and then it goes all the way up here, to here.

**Mr. Evans:** And then back along . . .

**Mr. Miller:** Shaganappi.

**Ms Yermiy:** Yeah, and, like, from Bowness, this is the bridge that brings them together. So it's not like the river is a barrier between the two communities because of those bridges.

**Mr. Evans:** And they're pedestrian bridges or vehicle bridges?

**Ms Yermiy:** Vehicle bridges.

**Ms McLaren:** Both.

**Ms Yermiy:** Both. There you go.

**Mr. Evans:** There are two? Somebody was talking about history: how long have they been there?

**Ms McLaren:** A very long time.

**Mr. Evans:** Beyond everyone's lifespan.

**Ms Yermiy:** Yeah. I don't even know how long it's been there.

**Mrs. Samson:** The Hextall Bridge is, I think, 100 years old at least. It was the old train bridge for the trolley car that is now a pedestrian bridge.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. So then there's a substantial connection between – and then Bowness would begin and end where?

**Ms Yermiy:** Bowness goes all the way to the ring road.

**Mr. Evans:** On one side of the river?

**Ms Yermiy:** It's all here. This is all Bowness, this whole area. Like, Bowness is massive. It goes from here all the way to there.

**Mrs. Samson:** Can you show me where Wildwood is?

**Ms Yermiy:** Wildwood is right here. The other thing I was going to mention is, like, Wildwood is – we take our dogs there. I'm in Cougar Ridge, so there's a big connection with Wildwood in this way. My kids could have gone to the Wildwood school. They don't have a designated school in Cougar Ridge. So this is an important area for families to send their kids to school. Big connection between Wildwood in that case as well.

As we were saying, the one that we're suggesting – because we understand and we would prefer not to lose anybody, but we understand somebody has to go, and that's where Valley Ridge seems like the most logical.

**Mr. Evans:** Where did you . . .

**Ms Yermiy:** Valley Ridge is here, right? Where am I?

**Mr. Evans:** North of 16th.

**Ms Yermiy:** North of 16th, yeah. Like this is Valley Ridge here, and it's quite spread out, like it's not super dense, so we think it's a similar trade-off to Montgomery in terms of its population.

**Mr. Evans:** Does Montgomery go beyond that, where it says Calgary-Varsity?

**Ms Yermiy:** No. It stops here, again. Yeah. The thing about it is it's a massive hill. It's like a little San Francisco in Calgary, right? So there's a very logical break here. This is where the mall is.

**The Chair:** And it doesn't come through on a map like that.

**Ms Yermiy:** That's right. It doesn't show you, but this is a . . .

**Mr. Evans:** I'm going to check out Montgomery.

**Ms Yermiy:** It's quite spectacular. Yeah. It's like a little San Francisco.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Susan, any questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** No, I'm good. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Did I understand that one of you presented that you're going to lose a public school? How do you lose a public school? I guess I don't have a context for that.

**Ms Yermiy:** Well, we have 11 communities in Calgary-Bow currently, and we have five public schools. So we have a lot of area with a very limited number of schools. This is part of the reason why we are doing the work we're doing today.

**The Chair:** Okay. I've just betrayed my own ignorance of what's going on here.

**Ms Yermiy:** Yeah. No, no, no.

**Mr. Evans:** I had the same question.

**The Chair:** Okay. So who's losing the school? Is it Calgary-Bow or Calgary-Varsity?

**Ms Yermiy:** If Montgomery leaves, Calgary-Bow loses a public school.

**The Chair:** Okay, but the province doesn't lose a public school, does it?

**Ms Yermiy:** No, it doesn't. But what I'm saying is our ability to have access to schools, to be able to speak to our MLAs about, you know, trying to – I mean, it would be lovely if . . .

**The Chair:** You know what? Could I get you to put that in writing? Because I'm having trouble understanding, and the hour is late here.

**Ms Yermiy:** Yeah. Sure.

**The Chair:** I'm having trouble understanding how a public school vanishes.

**Mr. Clark:** Can I ask a clarifying question?

**The Chair:** Yeah.

**Mr. Clark:** I think I understand, but I'm curious. Are you saying that people who currently live in Calgary-Bow have kids who go to Montgomery school, and so now that you live in this constituency, you cross the invisible line, you go to that school, and so it's sort of lost, quote, unquote, to the constituency?

**Ms Yermiy:** That's essentially what I'm meaning, yes.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. It's still there, kids still go to the school, you cross the bridge, but you're saying that it's a natural connection because it's part of the school catchment.

**The Chair:** Oh, okay. I'm getting it now.

**Ms Yermiy:** Yeah. I'm thinking of a balancing between all of your districts. I think it would be logical to make sure you were considering the public services that are available within those constituencies.

**The Chair:** Got it.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. School catchment as a consideration.

**Ms Yermiy:** Yeah. So we considered the municipalities. Like I was saying, Lynx Ridge: the water is not served by the city of Calgary; it's served by Rocky View county, as is Bearspaw. To me, those do not make sense as somebody who's been on the ground in Calgary-North West. Those are not logical communities to be

included in with Tuscany and with those. So to me it just makes another thing, like looking at all of those socio factors.

**The Chair:** Could I make this request? As a non-Calgarian, you've blasted me with a lot of data that I'm having trouble with. I will have a conversation with my colleague who knows Calgary much better, I'm sure, but if you could reduce it to a two- or three-page submission to us in the next few days, it might be helpful.

**Ms Yeremiy:** Absolutely.

**The Chair:** It would be helpful for me to digest, I can assure you.

**Ms Yeremiy:** Greg, was it clear for you? Can I just confirm?

**Mr. Clark:** Absolutely. I understand. That's sort of what I thought you were saying.

**Ms Yeremiy:** Okay. But the suggested boundary changes and stuff, it all made sense?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah.

**Mr. Evans:** Can I ask one question about the school? Because the schools are going to be governed by the school boards, what are the boundaries for the school boards for the schools that we're talking about that are swinging one way or the other?

**Ms Yeremiy:** I am not familiar with that. Does somebody else want to take a stab? I'm not sure.

**Ms Saxton:** We have different public school trustees in Bowness.

**Ms Yeremiy:** Oh, we're talking about wards basically versus . . .

**Ms Saxton:** That's the wards, because that's the municipal government.

**Mr. Evans:** Right, so I'm talking about the school trustees.

**Ms Yeremiy:** Yeah, you're right; that's more municipal.

**Mr. Evans:** If you give us the names of the schools, then we can overlay that.

**Ms Yeremiy:** Yeah. You bet.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Dr. Martin, any questions?

**Dr. Martin:** No. Actually, I just want to say that I do know Montgomery. It's one of the few parts of Calgary I do know. Maybe I'm an old hippie.

**The Chair:** Maybe?

**Dr. Martin:** I recognize the cohesiveness of that community. Thank you.

**Ms Yeremiy:** Yeah. Thank you. Appreciate it.

**Mr. Clark:** My only question was around the school, which I think we've sorted out, so I appreciate that. Thank you.

**Ms Yeremiy:** Okay. Thank you all for your time. So we'll summarize to a two-page submission.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Just check with Aaron, and he'll give you the contact information.

**Ms Yeremiy:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

Now, I believe that takes care of everyone on the list that we have. Is there anyone that is here that wanted to present and has not been able to yet and saw some of the presentations and wants to chime in? Going once. This includes former commissioners as well. Going once, going twice, three times.

Okay. We'll close the hearing and reconvene tomorrow at 9 a.m.

[The hearing adjourned at 8:15 p.m.]









Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Public Hearings

Calgary

Monday, January 12, 2026  
9:10 a.m.

Transcript No. 29

## **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 – Calgary**

### **Public Participants**

Amanda Chapman, MLA, Calgary-Beddington

Stephani Clements, President, Alberta Teachers' Association, Local 38

Judy Heynen

Gord Lawlor, Mayor, Town of Stettler

Julie Pithers

Cynthia Wagner



9:10 a.m.

Monday, January 12, 2026

[Justice Miller in the chair]

**The Chair:** Good morning, everyone, and welcome to our very first 2026 public hearing of the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission public hearings. I realize that the room is not near capacity at this point, but I still think I'm going to proceed with my formal introduction and presentation. As you can see, there's five of us as commissioners, and our nameplates are in front of us. If you wish to learn more about our background, our biographies are on the electoral boundary commission website.

Our task, when it was given to us back in late March, early April of 2025, was to redraw boundaries in Alberta because of two changes, the high increase in population in the province and the expansion of the Legislative Assembly from 87 members to 89. As everyone is aware, voters in their electoral district elect their MLAs to the Legislature. In terms of population you can see the increase of Alberta's population has been quite significant since the last Electoral Boundaries Commission report that was issued in 2017.

As best estimates we have that somewhat over 800,000 more people live in Alberta or have moved to Alberta, expanded to Alberta over the last nine years. What that means is that if you take the total population of Alberta, which we estimated at the beginning of our electoral boundaries was 4.8 million people, and you compute that over 89 ridings, it's an average population base of 54,929. Of course, population is not the key or only factor in dealing with electoral boundaries. Our task as a commission is to recommend boundaries that provide the magical term of "effective representation" for Albertans.

In terms of the history of what we as a commission have done since our formal appointment in early April of last year, we have worked hard to come to an agreed-upon data source for our population, and you can read more about that in our actual interim report, but we're satisfied that that is the best assessment of Alberta's population for the work of the commission. We arrived at that figure I just showed earlier of 4.8 million. We reviewed hundreds of written submissions leading up to our initial report in October of last year, and we sat around the province and had public hearings all across the north, central, Edmonton, Calgary, and the south. It was a very busy month of May and June for us, and we saw a lot of Alberta in conducting those public hearings. Throughout all that time we worked closely with Elections Alberta and their map and cartography people in terms of where the best place for the boundaries should be, given the new population that we have to deal with.

All those things led up to our interim report, which was released to the Speaker of the Legislature in late October of this last year. This report: every one of us has it. For those of you who are presenting, you don't have to worry; you will not be grilled on whether you read every last word of this report. But we are looking forward to feedback on that report in terms of changes, friendly amendments, things that we can do better in terms of the final report, which is due in March of this year.

We went through all of the legislative characteristics in arriving at this report, and our ultimate goal was to provide effective representation with understandable and clear boundaries. That has proven to be somewhat of a challenge, and any aspect of the challenge that we face: we're looking forward to help and encouragement and possible changes through this process of suggestions for our final report.

We will be meeting and having public hearings from today onwards. Two and a half days here in Calgary, the rest of the week

in Edmonton, and then virtual or online submissions throughout next week out of Edmonton.

So that's a bit of a summary of how we arrived at today's commencement of the public hearing process, and we have close to a full morning this morning. Given those initial comments, I'm going to call on our first public presenter. While we have probably informed the presenters that we've got strict timelines, we are somewhat flexible and happy to not necessarily keep the clock and provide extra time if needed, and we are happy to engage in dialogue and conversation with the presenters as well.

I knew if I dragged this out long enough, we'd get our full commission sitting for our first presentation. Welcome, Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you, sir.

**The Chair:** I'm going to call on our first presenter, Ms Julie Pithers. Please come forward and have a seat at the table. Take a moment and get your presentation ready. Tell us your full name and where you're from and what particular riding or electoral district you wish to comment on. Advise us as well if you've presented before on our first go-around because my memory is not that good. If you did, we're interested in that as well.

**Ms Pithers:** All right. My name is Julie Pithers, and I did present here before when it was just more of a broad discussion about the approach to the boundaries for Albertans as an Albertan. I guess I'll just start off by saying that I am a big supporter of every Albertan having equal weight to our vote, so riding numbers are important to me rather than, you know – I'm in the country, and we live in a time when you can talk to anybody online, so I could talk to my representative at any time, unlike in the past where it would be arduous to go and talk to your MLA. That was my big thing then. Just so you know, I live in Elbow Valley, which is one of the boundaries that's being considered for change. Right now we're part of Banff-Kananaskis, and Calgary-West is what is the proposition for us to join up with.

One other thing: I'd like to really thank all of you for taking this time because it is such an important part of our democracy, of having representation that represents us equally, and I appreciate it. Thank you very much.

Just to begin, I have lived in the Elbow Valley area on and off for 50 years, when highway 8 was called Richmond Road and it was gravel. Now I live in Elbow Valley proper, the community called Elbow Valley Estates, which was developed, I think, in the early 1990s and then finally got built out starting in 2000. It's an unusual neighbourhood for Rocky View. The whole thing is about 1,000 acres, and of that thousand acres 700 of it is green space, which is lovely. I'll get to that later on in my piece.

For the most part we're a community of young families. I'm an exception to that rule. That's why I have time today to come here on the northeast side of the city. These families: the parents typically work in the city. Their children are students. If they're older, they're definitely in the city, and even some of the younger ones are bused to city schools.

We all use Calgary's infrastructure, like roads, schools, sports facilities, medical facilities, but one somewhat interesting thing is that our sewer system is a luxury that goes to the city, which is rare for a rural community. We are hooked up to the city's Bonnybrook system. We pay Rocky View directly and then they pay the city. That's one of the main infrastructure things.

9:20

Therefore, our daily household concerns are aligned with the city more so than Canmore, Banff, and even especially Jasper, and it's become even more of a visual attachment since the southwest ring

road has been finished off a few years ago. On top of that, there is a little chunk of Calgary that darts into our community. It's a park called Clearwater Park. It crosses the typical Calgary boundary right into Rocky View, where we're officially a part of. Because of all of this, some residents in Elbow Valley feel so connected to Calgary that when they have an issue, they incorrectly phone a councillor in Calgary to complain about it, forgetting that they're part of Rocky View.

Probably the biggest reason for me coming here today goes back to the layout of our neighbourhood, which is very much forested. It's green space. It's beautiful, and it's a fire hazard, particularly for the people who live downwind of us, which is Calgary-West. On my way here today, coincidentally, I heard the story that Alberta safety has taken up a very big problem in our community, that we have a private company that provides us all with water. That water is expensive. You know, that's another issue. But we have fire hydrants, and they have so far said they don't need to supply the water pressure required for those essentially decorative fire hydrants. Rocky View has gone to battle with them, saying, "Well, you really should," and they've said, "Well, you've never made us do it before, so therefore we don't have to do it," so now it's gone on to the next step.

Our neighbourhood is exactly that. We do not have fire suppression coming out of those hydrants, so if push comes to shove and the droughts that keep being predicted happen, we're going to be a problem for Elbow Valley. Even if a drought doesn't come or isn't as bad, that private water company pulls water directly off of the Elbow River before it reaches the city of Calgary, before millions of people get their water out of the reservoir. Calgary-West has a direct interest in sharing the same MLA with us for this particular reason.

We're in Rocky View, a different municipality. I'm sure the city doesn't really want to annex us, and I know that Rocky View doesn't want to give us up, so this is kind of a really nice way for those two communities that have so much in common to have at least one group that we can all go to and find a good compromise to whatever's going on.

**The Chair:** Can I just interject here, ma'am?

**Ms Pithers:** Absolutely.

**The Chair:** I'm wanting a visual of Elbow Valley, and I've asked Mr. Roth. Can you just – is it north of the Bow River?

**Ms Pithers:** We're southwest of the city. The community actually is on both sides of that highway, but everything is south of the Elbow River, and we're just north of the Tsuut'ina Nation.

**The Chair:** North. Okay.

**Ms Pithers:** So that's our south border.

**The Chair:** Oh, and that's highway 8. Okay. Yep.

**Ms Pithers:** Yep. And then the ring road, of course, sort of follows the border.

**The Chair:** And you have a golf course in there?

**Ms Pithers:** We do. Yeah. It's called Elbow Springs. It's not really part of the neighbourhood, but it's there.

**The Chair:** Okay. Sorry for that.

**Ms Pithers:** Oh, no. That's all right. I mean, it used to be a racehorse track, and it used to be a trout farm. It used to be a bunch of things, but it was bought by Rob Peters back in the 1990s and finally developed.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Ms Pithers:** Yeah. I mean, it's quite suburban in its nature compared to the rest of Springbank in particular. Springbank: the smallest lot they have is two acres, and they don't want to go anything below that. Everybody else is on wells and septic systems. We're one of the only neighbourhoods – there's a couple of other smaller ones, but we're the biggest one.

**The Chair:** Okay. So am I correct that right now you are, under our proposed maps, in Banff-Jasper?

**Ms Pithers:** We are, yeah. I mean, it's a big, big riding, and we're a fairly big chunk, but then you've got the major towns of Banff, Canmore, and I think it's a little bit of Jasper now. But I think the new boundary would include all of Jasper.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Okay.

**Ms Pithers:** You know, they're lovely. I would imagine there are a number of people in our neighbourhood that have a secondary home in Canmore in particular.

**The Chair:** Really?

**Ms Pithers:** Yeah, it's a pretty well-to-do place. We're in a duplex. You know, whatever is going on with them is fine, but their day-to-day livelihood really is more attached to Calgary.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Ms Pithers:** All right. So I'm for it.

**The Chair:** You're for?

**Ms Pithers:** For the boundary change: that we are taken out of Banff-Kananaskis and put into the joint Calgary-West-Elbow Valley.

**The Chair:** Okay. And just for everyone's benefit . . .

**Dr. Martin:** Calgary-West.

**The Chair:** Is what?

**Mrs. Samson:** Are you looking at 141?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah, it's page 141.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Okay.

**Mrs. Samson:** Calgary-West-Elbow Valley.

**The Chair:** Number 29.

**Mrs. Samson:** There we are.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Questions from the commission?

**Mr. Clark:** I guess, the only thing that I find interesting – and you raised it and spoke to it a little bit. Maybe I'll ask you to expand a bit. What I'm hearing is that you've got a commonality with Calgary because you've got infrastructure shared, the nature of the housing, a little bit more density, that it kind of orients towards Calgary in terms of where you shop and kind of live and even some

schooling and things even though you're not physically within the boundaries of Calgary.

**Ms Pithers:** Right.

**Mr. Clark:** But that's quite different than Springbank, as you say, right?

**Ms Pithers:** It is.

**Mr. Clark:** You'd say that Springbank kind of orients, you know . . .

**Ms Pithers:** A little – I wouldn't say "rural" because . . .

**Mr. Clark:** No, it's not.

**Ms Pithers:** . . . really, so many of the large ranches have been subdivided down to two- and four-acre lots. I would imagine that most of those people work in the city as well. But I would say that it's the sewer line and also just the way our neighbourhood is designed. I mean, it is very treed. It looks like Kananaskis. It's beautiful, but it's one of those things that is considered a fire risk. What do they call it? A WUI, a wilderness-urban interface?

You know, we do have FireSmart. We do allow beaver activity so that we have a lot of wetland in there to stop fires. But the water situation is tough; having a private company selling us our water and not having to provide the fire suppression that's required, especially for a treed area like that. And large homes; I mean, you know, we're all made out of petroleum-based products, all of our homes. It'll go up pretty fast if they're out of control.

We do have a fire department just on the other side of – I can't see it here, but on range road 31, which is pretty close. But if they do come to Elbow Valley and try to hook up to our hydrants, they won't work. They'll have to bring a bladder, fill it, try to fight the fire, and then keep refilling that bladder.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Okay. Thank you.

**Ms Pithers:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thanks.

Do you think that your situation vis-à-vis infrastructure is unusual in the periphery of Calgary?

**Ms Pithers:** Very much so. Very much so. In fact, there's a neighbourhood to our west called Elbow Valley west. I'm not sure if it's going to be part of the boundary. It might be. Anyway, they were supposed to be hooked up with sewer just like our neighbourhood, but Rocky View and Calgary got into quite a fight, and the mayor at that time of Calgary literally poured concrete into that pipe to put a stop to it so that there would be no sewer. It's since been lifted, and they have shut down – they had big giant septic tanks that they had to pay for for 10 years, and only recently have they been allowed to have the sewer. There's a constant discussion about allowing Rocky View to take advantage of more Calgary infrastructure, sewer in particular. But Rocky View so far hasn't allowed the kind of density that they allowed in Elbow Valley.

9:30

**Dr. Martin:** Right. I want to pursue that a little further. The infrastructure is an obvious constraint on the growth . . .

**Ms Pithers:** Of Rocky View.

**Dr. Martin:** . . . of the population in the whole Elbow Valley, and it therefore is a constraint on developers and so on because of risk and the like.

Now, could I ask you to speculate a bit? If you went north of the Elbow River into Springbank per se – you suggested that they're rather different because they have somewhat smaller lots – is it your expectation that they, too, are going to share Calgary schools and bus routes and work and the like as you characterize your own neighbours as doing?

**Ms Pithers:** There is a strong and vocal group that wants to stop any kind of development there. In fact, there are big chunks further out highway 8, still on the south side of Elbow River, but are owned – they bought out the ranches there – and they're waiting and hoping for that infrastructure to come out highway 8. I don't see any appetite for it between highway 1 and the Elbow River. I know that there are ranchers on highway 1 that are not happy with the two- and four-acre owners fighting them against development. They're not able to develop.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you for that, but I was more interested, really, in the other point. Do people in this far eastern part of Springbank, if I can put it that way . . .

**Ms Pithers:** Yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** Do they, too, typically work and go to school and shop inside Calgary?

**Ms Pithers:** They do. Yeah. Probably the rarest of the rare would go to Cochrane, but nearly, I would say, 90 per cent, 95 per cent would do all of that except the school. Like, there's Springbank school, where most people go. But there are private schools on the western border of Calgary that I know – there's a hockey school; there are a couple of high-end private schools – that they go to.

**Dr. Martin:** All right. Thank you.

**Ms Pithers:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Susan?

**Mrs. Samson:** I don't have any questions. It's a good presentation. Thank you. I want you to know that we had quite a few people making presentations along that same theme. Thank you for coming in person and adding that detail about the utilities. I appreciate that. Thank you.

**Ms Pithers:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** John?

**Mr. Evans:** I don't have any, but thank you very much for your presentation.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much, and thank you for being our first presenter on our second round . . .

**Ms Pithers:** I'm breaking the ice.

**The Chair:** . . . and giving us encouragement in this area. Thank you so much.

**Ms Pithers:** All right. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Please stay for the rest of the morning.

**Ms Pithers:** All right. Thanks very much.

**The Chair:** Okay. Our next presenter is Stephani Clements.

Please have a seat at the table and introduce yourself and tell us where you live and what electoral district or districts you're commenting on.

**Ms Clements:** My name is Stephani Clements, and I live in Calgary-Bow, but I'm also the president for Calgary public teachers local 38. Part of my presentation is in reflection for all of Calgary because those are the 251 schools for the teachers where my representation matters.

**The Chair:** Just out of curiosity, did you present at the first round?

**Ms Clements:** No. No. This is my first kick at this kind of can.

**The Chair:** Okay. Please precede.

**Ms Clements:** Thank you and good morning and thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Stephani Clements, and I live in Calgary-Bow. I'm participating in this process because I care deeply about fair and effective representation for Calgary and Alberta as a whole. Electoral boundaries shape how communities are heard, how accessible MLAs are to residents, and how well government can respond to rapidly changing realities on the ground.

I want to begin by acknowledging the complexity of the work you do and to offer positive feedback on the interim report while also advocating for additional representation for Calgary. It reflects the scale and pace of the growth of our city. Since the last electoral boundaries review in 2017 Alberta's population has grown by approximately 1 million people, and that growth has not been evenly distributed across the province. Calgary has absorbed a significant share of that, and that increase continues to grow at a faster rate than many other regions. This is something that we see specifically within our schools.

The new provincial average riding population has risen almost to 55,000 up from 48,000 or so in 2017. While this interim map generally keeps ridings within an acceptable population range today, the reality is that urban Calgary ridings will exceed that target far more quickly than rural ones based on the growth that we represent.

For that reason, while I appreciate the commission has proposed additional seats in Calgary, I believe that data clearly supports adding one more additional seat in Calgary to ensure that representation remains fair and durable over time, not just at the moment that this map is finalized.

Representation affects more than elections. It influences how population pressures are addressed in areas of school, health care, transportation, housing, and public safety. When representation lags behind growth, urban voices are diluted and services become harder to advocate for at the legislative level.

I also want to thank the commission for largely keeping Calgary ridings within the municipal boundaries. This decision upholds the democratic principle of effective representation and respects communities of shared interest. Calgary is an urban city with distinct infrastructure systems, delivery service models, population density, and those challenges. Urban residents rely on shared transport networks, schools, emergency services, and municipal planning structures that differ significantly from in the surrounding areas.

Hybrid or rural – there's a word – rural-urban, ridings risk blurring that accountability and weakening residents' sense of connection to their representative. I appreciate that the interim report limited the number of these hybrid ridings, and I strongly encourage the commission to avoid expanding them further.

I also want to note the commission's decision to keep Lethbridge urban ridings intact, rejecting the proposals to carve the city into sprawling rural constituencies. That decision demonstrates a clear understanding that cities function best when represented as cohesive urban communities. I believe that same principle should continue to guide the decisions in Calgary.

In Calgary-Bow, where I live, and across the city we have seen substantial changes since 2017, increased density, new housing developments, shifting demographics, and growing cultural and economic diversity. As someone deeply connected to my community through my professional and volunteer work, I see how growth places increasing demand on public systems, especially schools, and how it is important for our residents to know who represents them and how they can engage.

I want to note my strong support for keeping Calgary-Bow in the current boundaries as set in 2017. My riding now reflects a stable, cohesive urban community. Changing it would disrupt well-established community connections without really improving representation. When boundaries align with real communities where people share the schools, the services, the transit routes, neighbourhood identities, people are more likely to participate, vote, and be involved and know that their voice matters. When they don't, engagement suffers.

In closing, I just want to thank everyone for your thoughtful work in public service. The interim report reflects careful consideration for competing pressures across the province. It's not an easy job. I respectfully urge the commission to continue recognizing Calgary's sustained population growth and unique urban character by adding one more seat to Calgary and preserving fully urban ridings where possible. Doing so will ensure fair, effective, and enduring representation for years to come.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Clark, any questions?

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you. Thank you for being here. I appreciate your submission. I guess maybe I'll just ask you to expand a little bit. I don't know if you were here for the previous presenter.

**Ms Clements:** I was not. I just arrived. I apologize.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. Perfect. That puts you at a decided disadvantage because I was going to ask you to comment on some things that Ms Pithers had to say. You know what? I won't even actually put you in that position if you didn't hear it. It's like giving you a test on something that we didn't teach in class, so we won't do that.

**Ms Clements:** That I didn't study for. Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** Anyway, I'll just thank you for coming, and I appreciate your comments.

**Ms Clements:** Thanks, Greg.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin?

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you. I want to ask you something wearing your hat as not a member of Calgary-Bow but as the president of the Calgary teachers' association. I want to ask you specifically about your understanding of the forward planning for schools.



**Ms Clements:** I attend all the trustee meetings that occur for the Calgary board of education, which all of my teachers are employees of, and I understand how their capital planning works and how their requests to put forward for growth ...

9:40

**Dr. Martin:** Good for you.

**Ms Clements:** It's a fun job, and I know that it is seriously lagging and has been lagging for years and that we need 90 new schools in Calgary to fit the growth, but that's not reasonable or doable. I believe there are 13 schools that have been fast-tracked, but that's still – Calgary schools are filled at 95 per cent as an average. Now, 85 per cent is workable. That is like you're still using the gym for class and the band is on the stage at the same time, which doesn't really work. That is one of the key reasons why effective and appropriate representation for the population is so important, because it is the voice for those schools and those teachers trying to do what they do in such limited space.

**Dr. Martin:** Can I push you a little further on that, a little more granular? We're all about the granular here. Where are those new schools? I mean, obviously they're prioritized in some fashion or another, so the priority is to put them in the areas of the most screaming need. What part of Calgary is that?

**Ms Clements:** I mean, basically if you look around the outer areas in the northeast of Calgary, they're building schools in Redstone, in Skyview, and there's a new high school coming up in that area as well. Down south we've got a school in Seton, but now we need something on the southwest corner because we have that growth in Legacy and Walden, and we just keep growing and we keep not keeping up. Evanston, I think, is slated to get two new schools, an elementary and a middle school, and that's still not enough because then you have Carrington and Livingston and all of these other places. I can't even remember the names of them all. It's just that the growth has been so huge.

The problem is that when you don't get those schools built in time, then you have kiddos who are in Redstone travelling all the way to Forest Heights and Keeler to get to an elementary because that's the only space that there's left. So knowing that we have to be able to plan forward is really important.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Susan.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation, and thanks for coming out today. I wanted to just make a point more for your own information that we received 1,100 submissions to the interim report, and we heard over and over again that cities like Calgary and Edmonton need more electoral divisions. We only got two extra divisions to work with, so the request: I can't help you. You know, you really can't, so I think I want to make it ...

**Mr. Evans:** How do we get a soft landing? Well done.

**Mrs. Samson:** No problem. It's early. It's early, and I'll do better on the next one.

I guess what I'm saying is that that's something you should engage with your MLA because that's where the seats came from. It's a decision of the government how many seats we get to work with.

That's one point, and the other thing is that we heard often in the submissions on Calgary-Bow from residents who live there. Are you familiar with the district Montgomery?

**Ms Clements:** Yes. I actually live in Montgomery.

**Mrs. Samson:** How do you feel about the placement of Montgomery in Calgary-Bow?

**Ms Clements:** You know what? It fits. In 2017, when I wasn't really aware of, you know, a lot of this, just trying to do my work in a classroom and then to be joined with Calgary-Bow, which is mostly across the river – but I do a lot of my shopping and a lot of my connections are in those spaces, are in that northern part. I have good friends, a lot of the schools that I work at, so for me I think it makes sense. I think if we were to be smushed back with Calgary-Varsity in the change, which I think has been suggested, I feel connected to the places that I'm connected now. To go back in time then I have to reimagine and do all of that work again to connect with other communities. I think it was a good choice in 2017, and I recommend keeping it going.

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay. Thank you. Any comments? We also heard some comments on the district Wildwood. Are you familiar with that one, and how do you feel about its placement?

**Ms Clements:** I find it really similar to Montgomery in a way. Like, it's a wonderful community with schools that are connected. Some of our students end up going to a Wildwood school from our area. There's a lot of interconnectivity already. I mean, I can't speak for Wildwood because I don't live there, but I think things as they are should stay. You have better chance for representation.

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay. Thank you very much.

**Ms Clements:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Okay.

John, anything?

**Mr. Evans:** Yes. First, thank you for participating. Susan normally would be very gentle in how she would have phrased that. I would have said it like she said it, but maybe we're going to switch roles. I'm going to be good cop this time.

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay.

**Mr. Evans:** Now you said that you were a representative. Was that for the ATA?

**Ms Clements:** Yeah. ATA is all the teachers in public schools, and I represent the teachers in Calgary public schools.

**Mr. Evans:** That's why you're engaging with numerous schools. You're not in one particular ...

**Ms Clements:** We have 251 schools.

**Mr. Evans:** But I mean you specifically.

**Ms Clements:** I have teachers in 251 schools and interact with all of them, barely.

**Mr. Evans:** But my question is: you don't have a school that you teach in?

**Ms Clements:** No. I'm seconded. Sorry. I work 100 per cent for the ATA, and that gives me the time to go to many of those schools.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Then I don't know how familiar you are with the legislation, but I'm going to take you to section 14. What I want to know is: in regard to what you've told us today, I'm going to ask

you about the various factors and where you would put them in terms of weight, you know, so that I can understand better your submissions today.

Under 14, which is the portion that gives us the authority to determine the area to be included in the boundaries for each proposed electoral division, the first one, 14(a) is “sparsity, density, and rate of growth of the population;” (b) is “communities of interest, including municipalities, regional and rural communities, Indian reserves and Metis settlements.” Between (a) and (b), which, in regard to your submissions, would you say is more weighted, more important?

**Ms Clements:** I think that the growth of population – I mean, fully representation by population, which might mean some horribly far distance for rural MLAs to get that 55,000 people. But I think it’s important because you . . .

**Mr. Evans:** Let me take you then to the next one, which is geographical boundaries.

**Ms Clements:** Okay.

**Mr. Evans:** If we have sparsity and density and rate of population growth and communities of interest, now we add to it geographical features. How important would that be?

**Ms Clements:** Well, I see the communities of interest really aligning within those boundaries. I mean, our rural areas are a lot more similar to itself than say, you know, Okotoks or areas that are urban, as I like to say.

**Mr. Evans:** I’m thinking more in terms of, say, a river dividing or, say, major thoroughfares dividing an electoral district.

**Ms Clements:** You know, I don’t think that’s sparsity. I mean, other than the road being cut up right now across the space because of water issues, it’s just as quick to drive there as it is to go all the way up into Varsity.

**Mr. Evans:** Then the next one is availability of the means of communication and transportation between various parts of Alberta, which probably isn’t all that applicable in terms of what you said today. But then the next one is the desirability of understandable and clear boundaries, maybe connected somewhat to geographical features. How important would that be? Where would you weight that?

**Ms Clements:** I don’t think it’s as important. I think of the map as drawn. I look for the lines. I don’t look for the geographic features. You show me where my area is, and I can clearly see those lines. That makes sense.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay.

Then the next one and the final one is any other factors the commission considers appropriate, and that’s a bit of a catch-all. What I’d like to ask you on that one is: where would you weigh voter turnout in each electoral district?

9:50

Let me give you an example. You have electoral district A and you have electoral district B. Both of them are more or less within the population range, but one has a voter turnout significantly lower than the other. How would you say that impacts effective representation?

**Ms Clements:** I would say that lower voter turnout is actually a sign of ineffective representation. Again, as I said in my

presentation, you know, if you feel connected to space and place, you feel like your voice is heard, you are more likely to be lining up to make that vote. If you feel disconnected because there is no – someone has to make it happen. It’s not just instinctual.

**Mr. Evans:** You’re assuming every individual in a constituency is a voter. That’s not the case – right? – yet all are factored . . .

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans, I’m going to have to cut you off here.

**Mr. Evans:** All are factored into the demographics, all are factored into the population as a general.

**Ms Clements:** You know, I can’t speak to that.

**Dr. Martin:** I just wanted to say that Mr. Evans is just enrolling you in our dilemma.

**Mr. Evans:** Welcome to my world.

**The Chair:** He’s the lawyer on the panel, ma’am, so surprise, surprise.

**Ms Clements:** I don’t wish that I was on that side of the table. I do really appreciate the work and the effort of all of you because it is important work and it’s not easy. I appreciate it. Thank you.

**The Chair:** I know we’re running a little over. I’m going to take my prerogative as Chair and just ask you a question.

First of all, thanks for coming. Your role as kind of an overseer of Calgary as a city is very valuable. Have you submitted a written submission at all?

**Ms Clements:** No. We had a strike, so I was a bit busy.

**The Chair:** I heard that. I heard that. Yeah.

The question I have is – you gave us a lot of information on Calgary, but all of a sudden Lethbridge popped up. I’m curious about that because we have a lot of written submissions from Edmonton, and every once in a while, Medicine Hat pops up. Why did you focus on Lethbridge?

**Ms Clements:** Two reasons. One, again, to use it as an example about, you know, something that has been suggested that I would not want to see in Calgary, the Okotoks, the Diamond, so using that as an example. But the other thing is that there are 55 local presidents across the province that support the communities within their areas, and in conversation with the local presidents from the Lethbridge and area, just having conversations: that’s the second line.

**The Chair:** Good. That’s very helpful. Thank you. Thank you very much.

**Ms Clements:** You’re welcome.

**The Chair:** We stretched your presentation out, Ms Clements. You were grilled.

**Ms Clements:** Hey, I’m sure these people are like: get her off the stage.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much. I’ll excuse you, and please stay for the rest of the presentations.

I guess we’re only about five minutes behind time. Ms Amanda Chapman, good morning and make yourself comfortable.

**Ms Chapman:** Good morning.

**The Chair:** Introduce yourself and where you're from and what riding you are commenting on.

**Ms Chapman:** You bet. My name is Amanda Chapman. I am the MLA representing the riding of Calgary-Beddington, and I also live in the riding of Calgary-Beddington.

**The Chair:** Okay. For the keeners, what number is that?

**Mrs. Samson:** Two.

**The Chair:** Two? So you beat Calgary-Acadia here today in terms of presentations, which is number one.

**Ms Chapman:** Oh really? Okay.

**The Chair:** Good. Please proceed.

**Ms Chapman:** Thank you. I'm just going to watch my clock. Even though I don't think I have six minutes of content, now that I'm a politician apparently I can just talk endlessly.

**The Chair:** Don't worry. You're looking at five clock-watchers.

**Ms Chapman:** First, I'd just like to start by thanking you folks for all the really great work that you've done. Even just listening to you ask questions of Ms Clements right now, it's clear that what you're doing is very complex work. And I know that when you have a province as big as Alberta, where you've got growth that's really centred, like a population that is growing in your cities and your rural areas with declining population, as you say, you had two new seats to work with. So the balance that you had to find here, I suspect, was probably very difficult. I also would not like to be sitting on the other side of this table. So thank you for your work very much. I appreciate it.

When it comes to the riding of Calgary-Beddington, it's largely the same. I feel a lot of gratitude that Nose Hill park got to stay in Calgary-Beddington. It is one of my favourite places in the city. I can walk to it right out my back alley. Essentially, the change that was made is that you have just kind of shifted the riding. We used to have that little tip there, the little wing of Country Hills. Now, I did say I used to think the riding looked like a penguin and Country Hills was his little flipper sort of coming up at the back. So you cut off the flipper and you've extended out to the west – maybe you can remind me because I left my boundaries stuff in Edmonton – and it increased the number of residents in the riding by 5,000 or so.

**Mr. Clark:** It's 56,024 now. And Beddington – sorry; let me just do a sort here. Calgary-Beddington before was 56,209 as of 2024. From 56,209 it's basically the same.

**Ms Chapman:** Oh, it is basically the same.

**Mr. Clark:** And 56,024: like, that's about as good as it gets.

**The Chair:** It's in the sweet spot.

**Ms Chapman:** Yeah, that's interesting. Okay; that's interesting to me just from knowing Country Hills and knowing the Hamptons a little bit. I thought we would have increased a little bit.

I think all the things that I said in my first presentation are really well reflected in this boundary redraw. We've got really natural corridors in Calgary-Beddington. The riding remains largely unchanged except for the swap of those two communities. So in terms of where people access services in Calgary-Beddington, where the rec centre, the library, the grocery stores, the way the road network works, you have kept a riding together that I think works

really well. It fits really naturally. Probably a little bit of a shift in terms of, like, socioeconomics of the population, of the folks who live in Calgary-Beddington, but nothing significant.

I think that we'll see, like, a lot of similarity in the population, how they move around. In terms of representing them as the MLA – again, because I think that we've got some pretty similar populations here – it definitely makes my job a lot easier, certainly a lot easier than when I think of, like, when we're talking about changing ridings to include both parts of the city and parts of rural. I see a lot of complications with trying to represent those types of population mixes simply because the needs of the communities are very different. But with this kind of, you know, right smack in the middle of the city riding, you have kept it to a place where I do think that it will be easier for me to be able to represent the needs of the constituents.

There you go. That only took me four minutes to say. I do think that's all I want to say other than, I mean, I do wish that we could have added some more seats to the cities simply because of the population growth that we're having in our cities. But, again, you know, difficult choices had to be made by you folks, for sure.

**The Chair:** Thank you for your presentation and thank you for your understanding. That comes through clearly.

Any questions or comments from the panel?

**Mr. Clark:** Maybe I'll just ask if you can – you've talked about Beddington and kind of communities of interest and things. One of the things we always grapple with a bit – and I don't know if you were here for the very beginning. This is the second time I've had a round here at Ms Pithers' kind of comments about Calgary-West-Elbow Valley. I don't know if you heard that.

10:00

**Ms Chapman:** No.

**Mr. Clark:** I'll take a run at it. I think, if I can paraphrase, there's a connectivity in Elbow Valley, if you're familiar with that part, just north of Tsuut'ina. The sort of urban form. There's some higher density housing. There's an infrastructure, like utilities connection, into the city of Calgary. That's different than Springbank, for example, which is, like, two to four acres larger, not rural, and there's some connection there into Calgary, but it's sort of decidedly not Calgary. I guess maybe more just a general question on your view on hybrid constituencies as a tool that we could use or not. How you define kind of, you know, connectivity in communities of interest.

**Ms Chapman:** I do think that I can see how hybrid communities could be very difficult. I've never had to represent one, right? I live in the suburbs, in a particular part of the suburbs. Honestly, even if you're looking at Calgary, you see a lot of differences between your inner city – I mean, Beddington is almost inner city at this point with the rate that the city is growing – but I kind of think of it as concentric rings, right? You've got your very inner city, and then I would be in the first level of doughnut. Maybe I should have said onion because then we've got layers, right? I think you do see a lot of differences in terms of the population. Who wants to live there? Who wants to live in the inner city versus who wants to live at the outer edges of the city?

Those same differences apply when we're looking at not just rural areas but even smaller towns. People choose to live in, well, I was going to say Airdrie, but gosh, I mean, Airdrie is basically a big city at this point. Growing up, my mom's best friend lived in Airdrie. Airdrie was a small town at the time, of course. They lived there specifically, right? They made a conscious choice to move out

of Calgary because they wanted to live, you know, at a different pace. They wanted a different amount of space, and they've just kind of had to keep moving around, of course. As Airdrie grew bigger, they moved out to Nanton because that was the next place that they could find that had that small town sort of feel.

I think there's the – I sound like my kids now; it's the vibe, right? – vibe of living in a small town. But it's not just that. I think it is about priorities. It's about the kind of space you want. It's about the kind of services that you want to have access to or you don't feel that you need to have access to. So I think when we blend those ridings, like when we try to push our municipalities out into rural areas, it does just make it very complex to represent the needs of those populations because they're just different. They're very different.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin?

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you. I just wanted to comment that it is a general presumption, and I think it's yours as well, that the spectacular population growth we've seen in the last four or five years will continue, and it will not. All the demography shows us it's going to crash. Yes, we're in the business of figuring out how to service all this population through our various institutions, whether they be electoral districts or schools or what have you, but population growth is now crashing down to 1 per cent. Alberta being Alberta, maybe it's going to be 1.5 per cent growth.

**Ms Chapman:** Sure.

**Dr. Martin:** The unmanaged and unmanageable growth we've seen in the last two or three years is off the table now. So it does affect how we have to consider, you know, our work because the rates of growth we have seen are not the rates of growth to be anticipated.

**Ms Chapman:** Well, and that's fair. I mean, I guess that's the nice thing about this committee, that every eight years it gets to meet again and redo that work as opposed to, like what Ms Clements was talking about, those needs for schools. That's much more difficult, like, to manage your infrastructure needs, as you say, because we need the schools, as she said. We need them right now. Will we need them 10 years from now? Well, it's not clear, right? This is very complex work. How do you manage that?

**Dr. Martin:** I get that the school board issues are very, very complex. I grew up in a world of ATCO trailers, because I was early baby boomer, and that was just the way we all grew up. I know it's not desirable, but, you know, by the same token, the infrastructure built for schools is huge and it's a constant problem for trustees and the teachers' association and the like. Ours is a rather different problem.

**Ms Chapman:** Totally. Yeah.

**The Chair:** I'm just going to interject here. Just so you know, Ms Chapman, I wasn't distracted. I was writing notes and I shared them with my colleagues. I think we're going to cancel the morning break this morning and just keep going, because the flow of the presentations is going very well and we'll finish well before noon. I know that in the past we've had some informal discussion with presenters after. This whole hybrid thing is a real conundrum for us as a commission, and we can't really solve that, but I'm happy to have a conversation with previous presenters after we get through all the formal presentations. So just so you know that I wasn't being distracted. I want to kind of maximize our time here.

Mrs. Samson, any questions or thoughts?

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for coming out. I appreciate your time today. I wanted you to know that the commission identified the penguin wing as a shark fin. So you've got to up your game. That's a shark fin.

But I guess I want to follow up the question on hybrids with something specific. Your explanation or your thoughts on hybrids focuses more on the rural mixing in with urban or city. What's your thought on Calgary as a city taking on another city like Airdrie? Could you see a connection there that would make sense?

**Ms Chapman:** That's an interesting question because you're right: then we're looking at two municipalities. The interesting thing about Airdrie for me, because we had close friends there growing up and I spent a lot of time in Airdrie, is, you know, the folks I was mentioning fled Airdrie when it got too big, but many people didn't. It's hard to move. It actually is hard to pick up and move to a different community. It's not something that people do easily or lightly, in my experience, the majority of people. So when I think about Airdrie today, I think that there are still a lot of people who live in Airdrie because it's not Calgary, right? Even though Airdrie is a growing city; of course, it's a much smaller city. I wouldn't call it a small town the way it used to be, but it is a much smaller city than Calgary. And I do think that people make a deliberate choice on what type of municipality they want to live in.

There are a lot of differences between Calgary and Airdrie, the same way between Lethbridge and Medicine Hat. I don't know if I know enough about what the priorities of the people of Airdrie are when it comes to provincial representation to actually make a well-informed enough comment to you right now on whether I feel like there is enough overlap between Airdrie and Calgary, because I think I'm just using my own sort of personal lens right now when I'm thinking about the two municipalities.

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay. Thank you for your comments. I appreciate it.

**Ms Chapman:** You bet.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans?

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you for coming and presenting twice.

**Ms Chapman:** Yes. I remembered to introduce myself this time.

**Mr. Evans:** That's a positive. You heard my questions to the other presenter. I want to, rather than go through that whole list – and I'm happy to help you if you can't remember some of the items, but would you be able to weigh, give me your assessment of the importance of the various factors, and then, finally, where you would weigh in terms of the importance of voter turnout as a factor in assessing effective representation?

**Ms Chapman:** Yeah. The voter turnout was – I don't remember all the factors, but I do recollect the question about voter turnout, which I thought was a really interesting question because when you look at voter turnout – and, again, I'm not as well informed about voter turnout rates anywhere other than where I live, well, Calgary. I mean in Calgary. I mean, I really know the turnout rates in Calgary-Beddington, but I have a sense of the turnout rates across Calgary.

**10:10**

To me, to my interpretation, there does seem to be a correlation with socioeconomic status and voter turnout, which is not surprising to me. Well, and age. I mean, age is a huge factor, of course. I was just actually speaking to some parents and students the other day. A young person wanted to see more reflection of the

needs and values of young people in political party platforms, and I said: you need to start voting. She didn't like that very much.

**Mr. Evans:** Would you be able to share what the voter turnout numbers have been in your riding?

**Ms Chapman:** Oh, that's a good question. I don't know it as a percentage. No, I can't do it for you off the top of my head.

**Mr. Evans:** Can you give me the total number of turnout?

**Ms Chapman:** It was 40,000 voters, and then turnout was somewhere between 16,000 and 18,000.

**The Chair:** In Calgary-Beddington.

**Ms Chapman:** In Calgary-Beddington. I feel like I should know this because my recall petition – they need 10,000 votes, and that's 60 per cent of eligible voters, so it's got to be around 40. I want to say around 40 per cent.

I hope Greg is looking up the real answer.

**Mr. Clark:** Sixty point three.

**Ms Chapman:** Sixty point three. Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** When was the last election? Twenty twenty-three.

**Ms Chapman:** Twenty-three. Yeah.

**Mr. Evans:** What was the voter turnout?

**Mr. Clark:** Sixty point three.

**The Chair:** In Calgary-Beddington.

**Mr. Clark:** In Calgary-Beddington, shark fin and all.

**Ms Chapman:** Shark fin and all.

So from talking . . .

**The Chair:** Sorry. I'm not a math wizard, but 16,000 out of 40,000: that doesn't seem like . . .

**Mr. Clark:** Total votes cast: 20,820.

**The Chair:** Oh, okay. I thought I heard 16,000.

**Ms Chapman:** Sorry. Ten thousand is the . . .

**Mr. Evans:** Twenty thousand.

**Ms Chapman:** Yeah.

Just from my experience of many years of, you know, canvassing to look for votes or to ask for people's votes, my impression is that when your socioeconomic status is lower, there are a lot more barriers for voting. Largely it's time, right? If you are a working family, both parents are working, you have two kids, you're maybe working multiple jobs or you're working jobs that don't have a sort of standard 9 to 5, making it out to the voting station is actually a difficulty.

Socioeconomic status is only one factor when we look at how well a population – like, when you're representing a population, it's always easier to represent people who have similar, you know, needs or the community has similar needs. If we're including sort of wild variations, like if you were to take the poorest riding and marry it with the richest riding in Calgary, I do think it would become very difficult. That's not the only thing that affects voter

turnout – I know that – but that's just the way that I thought about it when I heard you ask Ms Clements the question.

**Mr. Evans:** Where would you weigh it in terms of a factor? You know, the factors we're looking for are those which are going to be demonstrative of effective representation. Do you think it is a factor to be considered in determining this elusive concept of effective representation?

**Ms Chapman:** I don't know if I feel well informed enough to answer that because I don't think that I understand all the factors that affect voter turnout. I'm sorry. I've got no good answer for that question. Obviously, a factor to be considered, but I don't know how I would weight it, and I forget all the other factors even though you just said them 10 minutes ago.

**Mr. Evans:** Well, the major one is, of course, population density.

**Ms Chapman:** Yes, which I do think is the most important, like without question, right? Having your ridings be as equal as possible in population density I do think is the most important factor.

**The Chair:** Ms Chapman, thank you very much for coming. It's always helpful to have members that knock on doors and talk to the constituents, so thank you so much. Please stay if you can and hear the other presenters. As I said, we're not going to have a break. We're going to go right through, so I excuse you from the table now.

I'll call on Ms Cynthia Wagner.

**Ms Wagner:** Hello, hello. Hi.

**The Chair:** Good morning.

**Ms Wagner:** Good morning. Happy Monday, everyone.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Please tell us where you're from and what electoral district you wish to comment on.

**Ms Wagner:** Yes. I believe I can make comments on a couple, so that's what I'll do. I live in Calgary-North West, so some comments about that, and then Calgary-Edgemont: I volunteer, hang out there quite a bit. Those are the two principally that I wanted to talk about. Then also, listening to the presenters this morning, I think I have two other general comments. I will do this because this is how I remember that I have two things to say, because there's one and two, so I will keep my fingers like this until I have the opportunity to make those points.

Yeah. Calgary-North West: I don't have all of the border committed to memory, like the visuals of it, but I don't think there was too much of a switch in the boundaries in Calgary-North West, which is great because I think the boundaries right now really make sense. Twelve Mile Coulee is a very defined line about what is the city of Calgary and what is outside of the city of Calgary, and that is the sort of western border of Calgary-North West.

On the populations from some of the other northwest ridings: like, I think Calgary-Edgemont is 55 K, Calgary-Foothills is 57 K or something, and Calgary-North West is 50 K. So it might seem . . .

**The Chair:** Fifty-two.

**Ms Wagner:** Fifty-two.

So it might seem like it's a little bit under the average, but that dog leg there that goes on the river: that is a huge new development, and it's maybe only at 15 per cent capacity right now. It's almost like another big Tuscany out there. By the time the next election

sort of comes around, that'll probably be your extra 3,000 or 4,000 people right there, right? So on the population piece while Calgary-North West may seem like it's under on the population number, I think, yeah, by the next time it'll be right back up there. Like, all of the other neighbourhoods are really quite established. The borders are, you know, very defined, so that is really the only place where I think there is going to be a lot of growth other than one-offs, like somebody builds something in a double house or whatever. But big, big developments: that's the only one. I think the lower population right now in Calgary-North West totally makes sense. Yeah. That was my bit on Calgary-North West.

Then in Calgary-Edgemont, like, it totally made a lot of sense to take the Hamptons out of Calgary-Edgemont because if you look at Country Hills Boulevard just sort of walking out and about and, you know, going to the different parks and everything, you have to walk it almost feels like 30 minutes to be able to get from one crossing to another to be able to walk over to the Hamptons neighbourhood. So keeping the Country Hills as the northern border for Calgary-Edgemont I think makes a lot of sense.

10:20

Then on the sort of general population growth and everything, as I had mentioned earlier, like, northwest has that big area, Rockland or rock cliff, whatever it's called, that's really growing. Edgemont doesn't have any big developments like that, so the neighbourhoods are going to be pretty stable, and keeping the borders defined like that in that 55 K: I think it makes a lot of sense.

Yeah. Like, Country Hills is a very, very big barrier, if you want to call it that, on, you know, people who are walking around, people who are riding their bikes around, even driving. If you're driving down Country Hills, you have to go quite a bit of the way down there to then go cross over and go to the Hamptons. So I think it makes sense to keep all of the neighbourhoods in Calgary-Edgemont really bordered by Country Hills and Stoney and Crowchild and Shaganappi on the other side because it just seems to make sense with the way the roads are. Those are my two things on that.

Then general points: should I make those now, or do you want to ask questions?

**The Chair:** No. Go ahead and finish.

**Ms Wagner:** Okay. General points. I'm a very rural person and live in a city now and stuff. I know a lot of the times it gets paid a lot of attention, but rural overrepresentation is a huge issue, and it is starting to really be in the unfair part of representation. The cities are growing through the roof, and everybody needs to have as equal as possible type of representation. If that means having all of, you know, eastern Alberta as one riding from Cold Lake down to Lethbridge or something – it's population, and it's basic math. I'm saying this as a rural person. When there's too much representation for too few people, it skews things unfairly for the entire province. That was point number one about rural-urban ridings. Like, the cities need more seats for sure.

Then, second: hybrid. One of the cities that I've lived in, Saskatoon, for example: Saskatchewan did some sort of switching of boundaries – I don't know – late '90s or something, early 2000s. They sort of did a pie and had the city in the middle and then all of these rural areas. It doesn't represent the city well. It doesn't represent the rural well. Having these hybrid ridings I don't think is fair to anybody either because if you're a rural person put in, like, 70, 75 per cent urban stuff, your voice is lost anyway, and then you just get mad. Then the cities are the same thing. So I think it's way better to have, you know, groupings of communities or different

interests in one riding because then you can actually represent it more. Trying to have the hybrids that take in everybody: I don't think that's a great model to sort of emulate. Yes.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you for your presentation. Anybody that shouts out Saskatoon in my world needs to be commended.

In your first general comments – I'm not sure if you realize this – you voiced a very American concept of one person, one vote equal representation. I guess it leads me to my question, and it may be a bit of an ego thing for the commission. Did you read the first 60 pages of our report?

**Ms Wagner:** No, no. I just read the, like, executive... [interjections] I know. Yeah. Like, the executive summary.

**The Chair:** We're all hurt now.

**Ms Wagner:** Yes, yes.

**The Chair:** We go to some lengths to explain why we're not American, and that is one of our concerns. That is a very American concept: one person, one vote. Canada, through our jurisprudence and through our historic practice, focuses on effective representation. It may be a shock to many Canadians that we have never had the principle of one person, one vote in any Legislature or Parliament. So I want to make that correction.

Then the hybrids. You touch on the hybrids as your second point. That is a struggle that we have had from day one. It is an optional tool given to us by history, the legislation, and the courts, but how you square that circle is difficult, and you've touched on the problem that we have.

**Ms Wagner:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** Anyway, I just wanted to comment on those two general propositions.

**Ms Wagner:** Thanks.

**The Chair:** I'll start with you, Mr. Evans, if there are any questions or further discussion with Ms Wagner.

**Mr. Evans:** I'm going to be beating the same drum of voter turnout and how that is a factor that could be considered. If we take, for example, Calgary-North West, in 2023 Calgary-North West had a voter turnout, percentage-wise, of 70.15 per cent.

**Ms Wagner:** Pretty good.

**Mr. Evans:** That's pretty good. The provincial average, so everywhere in the province: voter turnout would have been 59.5 per cent on average. Would you agree with me that if we are looking at that as a factor, what we would do would be to increase the number, to take Calgary-North West and get it closer to the voter turnout percentage of the provincial average? We would do that by increasing the number of people, so increasing the density of that riding. That makes sense to you?

**Ms Wagner:** Well, I think if you, let's say, add 5,000 people to it, you can't really necessarily assume that they won't vote and it'll bring the average down.

**Mr. Evans:** I guess one of the factors here: we just use general population.

**Ms Wagner:** Yeah.

**Mr. Evans:** When the statistics are run on voter turnout, they have calculated it based on eligible voters, which would be different. So the population of that riding would have been something like 52,000, for example, with eligible voters of 35,000.

**Ms Wagner:** Eligible voters or people that participate, participatory voters?

**Mr. Evans:** Eligible. And then the vote count is what gets the percentage.

**Ms Wagner:** Yeah, yeah. But everybody, like, the 52,000: they're all eligible.

**Mr. Evans:** No. That's just the population. These numbers, if you're looking at this . . .

**Ms Wagner:** Oh, that includes all the others under 18.

**The Chair:** Children.

**Ms Wagner:** Oh, okay.

**Mr. Evans:** If you have a pulse, you count.

**Ms Wagner:** Okay.

**Mr. Evans:** So the numbers that you see as it relates to each electoral district in the draft report represents alive people, unlike Quebec, where they represent dead people. Here we only use those that are alive. Eligible voters are not factored into that number.

**Ms Wagner:** Okay.

**Mr. Evans:** So is that a factor that you would consider important, the eligible voters in each electoral district and factoring in or considering voter turnout historically as it relates to effective representation?

**Ms Wagner:** Yeah. Like, voter turnout goes up and down, right? Like, four or five federal elections ago there was turnout that was maybe cracking 50 per cent. Maybe. And then it just – like, I think Elections Canada did a huge, big push, and everybody else did a huge, big push. Once enumeration stopped, the electoral list was even less and the turnout just got less and less and less, and then . . .

**10:30**

**Mr. Evans:** Let's take Calgary-North West, for example. The last two elections, 2019 and 2023: in both instances it was about 70 per cent.

**Ms Wagner:** Awesome. Yeah. Just working to recognize that voter turnout is an indicator of how involved people are, how interested they are, how aware they are of what's going on, and, like, getting people to participate. It's a bunch of different factors. Just increasing or decreasing the population doesn't necessarily translate a hundred per cent one to the other.

**Mr. Evans:** Do you think it's a factor that should be considered, eligible voters and voter turnout historically?

**Ms Wagner:** I don't know. Taking the amount of the population and then the turnout and that margin: I'm not sure. Yeah. I'll definitely ruminate on that one and think about it, but in all of my stuff on voter turnout I don't think that has ever popped in.

**Mr. Evans:** You haven't thought about it?

**Ms Wagner:** I don't think so, no.

**Mr. Evans:** Well, thank you for thinking about it.

**Ms Wagner:** That's a specific correlation between if there is a change in population and voter turnout, if that specific factor influences it. Like, if you have 100,000 people, 50,000 are new, and if the original 50,000 are going to participate at 70 per cent and the new 50,000, I would just think that it would even out and sort of be around the 70 per cent anyway. But maybe – like, I've never thought about adding a whole chunk of population and how that would encourage or discourage the other part.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Susan.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thanks for coming out. I appreciate your time today. I just wanted to make a comment on Calgary-Edgemont. I'm glad that you like the boundaries because that's something we strive for, to have clear boundaries that make it easier for the voter to know which district they're in. I think that Edgemont was one of those that came out really nice, and I'm glad you agree with us.

**Ms Wagner:** Yeah.

**Mrs. Samson:** The other one is that we talk about hybrids a lot. We got a lot of submissions about: yes, I like them; no, I don't like them; I'm sorry you didn't use them. In the case of Calgary-North West we have a chance to look at Springbank, taking parts of it. How do you feel about that as a community of Calgary-North West if we looked at Springbank?

**Mr. Clark:** I think you mean Bears paw.

**Mrs. Samson:** Oh, Bears paw. I'm sorry. Thank you.

**Ms Wagner:** I was going to say: Springbank? That's totally the other side. How would you even – yeah. Crow flies, sure. But not lay-of-the-land type of thing.

**Mrs. Samson:** Sorry. Thank you, Greg. Yeah.

**Ms Wagner:** So Bears paw. Bears paw is where right now? Sort of in Banff, Airdrie, or that sort of stuff, right?

**Mr. Clark:** We'd move it in with Cochrane.

**Ms Wagner:** It's in with Cochrane. Okay. Possibly. I think my thing for not completely agreeing with that right out of the gate is that Twelve Mile Coulee Road is the natural barrier between city of Calgary and not city of Calgary. East of Twelve Mile Coulee is Calgary-North West, and west of Twelve Mile Coulee is Bears paw. So right off the top of my head I would say no because that area, I think, is Rocky View county, and it does not consider itself part of the city of Calgary. Like, populationwise and because, yes, it abuts the city of Calgary, I don't think, community-of-interest way of looking at it, that it would fit into the city of Calgary because it's always had different municipalities. It's never belonged to the city. Frankly, a lot of the time as soon as people are going down Crowchild and they get to that intersection, it's like, "Oh, I'm in the city now," but when you're on the other side of it, you're not in the city. I think it would probably make more sense to keep it in Cochrane-Springbank because that is a lot more similar types of neighbourhoods.

**Mrs. Samson:** I think we got the comments because of employment, shopping routes, that kind of thing, that Bearspaw came into the discussion to be joined in, so it's good to know, from someone who lives there, the lay of the land. Thank you.

**Ms Wagner:** Yeah. From my understanding, like, a lot of the sort of history or people who want to live in Bearspaw: they don't want to live in the city. So if all of a sudden later they are in the city, I don't think that would really jibe with – I just said such a millennial word – a lot of the reasons why people would want to live in Bearspaw instead of living in, you know, Rocky Ridge or something, right?

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you. I want to pursue along similar lines. I've heard your general opinion, and that's fair enough, but I want to take you actually to look at the map. You said that the area that is nominally called Bearspaw, that long finger that goes up the river, is about to grow a lot.

**Ms Wagner:** That is either called Rock Cliff or Rockland.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. So you reckon it's going to grow a fair bit?

**Ms Wagner:** Yes. There are construction trucks every minute at that intersection.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. But what I don't see there are roads.

**Ms Wagner:** Right. Yeah. The only way is sort of in through, like, Nose Hill, right? So you go down Stoney, and then you go Nose Hill. That goes right into that area.

**Dr. Martin:** What I do see in this little bay of Bearspaw is lots of built-out roadways of a suburban kind.

**Ms Wagner:** It does not have the same, like, density as suburbs in any way.

**Dr. Martin:** No, no. Let's just look at: the infrastructure is built out so people could work in Calgary.

**Ms Wagner:** Okay. At the very, very south part of Bearspaw, because Twelve Mile Coulee Road has always been the border, if you live in the very, very south part, like Lynx Ridge or whatever, you have to drive all the way up to Crowchild to be able to get out. They're not, like, that . . .

**Dr. Martin:** I don't see that being the case.

**Ms Wagner:** That Rockland Park, or Rock Cliff, which is in Calgary-North West, is only accessible to Calgary-North West through Nose Hill, but the Bearspaw part is only – like, they don't hook up. They may look like a road, but then when you drive or walk around there, it's one of those things that has the roundabout and the big stop sign, and you can see it, but it's not like they're continuous roadways. They're very, very divided. Even the north parts of Rock Cliff or Rockland that are sort of going out to Haskayne park, you have to drive all the way around, go down Crowchild, and whip around to get back.

**Dr. Martin:** I have to go and point at the map because I don't know the neighbourhoods by their names.

**Ms Wagner:** Yeah. Do you want me to come over and point?

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah, that'd be good, too.

**Ms Wagner:** Okay. Yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** What I'm looking at – first of all, my first question was that you say this is going to grow, but there are no roads.

**10:40**

**Ms Wagner:** Yeah. It's right here. Like, all of this big new suburb is starting right here.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. So some day they'll have roads?

**Ms Wagner:** Yeah. Like, right now it's just Nose Hill to get in here.

**Dr. Martin:** I have what I call the Tyvek test on growth, and I don't think I'm going to find it there.

**Ms Wagner:** Tyvek? Like the plastic?

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. The stuff you put on the side of new buildings. That's as far into the future as we typically want to go, so there's nothing here for us.

**Ms Wagner:** No. It's all sort of right here right now.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah, but there are no roads.

**Ms Wagner:** Right.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. Now, here there are roads.

**Ms Wagner:** A few, yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** Quite a lot, actually, and I posit – but you disagree with me – that these connect you to here.

**Ms Wagner:** Like, Tuscany only has two entrances from Twelve Mile Coulee, right here and right here, so even if it looks like you can get there from the bottom part, you can't. You have to go all the way up.

**Dr. Martin:** But you can go to there, right?

**Ms Wagner:** Yeah, but all of these people here, for example, you know, you have to drive all the way up to Twelve Mile Coulee and then over. Even, like, this stuff: it looks like it's very close as the crow flies, but yeah. You can walk there, but you can't drive there.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. So just to recap: somehow this is quarantined from the city of Calgary?

**Ms Wagner:** Yes.

**Dr. Martin:** And this has no buildings and roads yet?

**Ms Wagner:** It's going through the roof. Like, there is a huge, big suburb being put in right there.

**Dr. Martin:** My colleague perhaps has a more updated map.

**Ms Pithers:** That's what it looks like right now.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. It's quite open.

**Ms Pithers:** It's under construction.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. Very good. Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** Google to the rescue.



**The Chair:** Okay. Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. Yeah. I was going to ask a little bit about that. I just wanted to go back to Mr. Evans's questions. I'll preface this by saying that I stand to be corrected because this is a query I've just put to ChatGPT, so I think we need to do a lot more detailed research to make sure that this is actually factually correct. I don't think voter turnout has ever been considered as a relevant factor for electoral boundary commissions. Generally it's been population and not eligible voters. Those are the kind of frameworks that we're working from.

I won't necessarily ask you to comment on that, but I guess I was going to ask a bit about Bearspaw. I've got the same Google map up here. Would you agree, if I can paraphrase I think it was MLA Chapman earlier, that – and maybe, you know, you as somebody who grew up rural and used the Saskatoon example – when you're in Calgary, you're in Calgary; when you're not, you're not? Would you say it's fair that people live in Bearspaw specifically because they don't live in Calgary?

**Ms Wagner:** Yeah. I think so.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. I was asked to keep it short, so I'll keep it short. Thank you. Thank you so much for being here. Appreciate that.

**Ms Wagner:** Yeah. No problem.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you so much for your presentation and your dialogue. That makes it the most valuable.

**Ms Wagner:** Yeah. Okay. Thank you very much. This was very fun.

**The Chair:** I'll excuse you from the table, but please stay if you could and hear the rest of the presenters.

I believe we only have two more presenters. We've not had a coffee break. We'll go straight through. Is there coffee outside?

**Ms Wagner:** There is.

**The Chair:** Okay. Anybody want one on the commission besides me? If you could bring one up.

Thank you. Thank you very much.

**Ms Wagner:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Gord Lawlor.

**Mr. Lawlor:** Good morning.

**The Chair:** Good morning.

**Mr. Lawlor:** I am the counterpoint to a couple of the points that have been made. I made myself some notes while I was sitting here because this is my first go at this. I'm a two-term councillor in the town of Stettler, and I'm the new mayor.

**The Chair:** Sorry. Two-term councillor and mayor of where?

**Mr. Lawlor:** The town of Stettler, so I'm in the Drumheller-Stettler constituency.

I would ask if you would . . .

**The Chair:** South of Wainwright.

**Mr. Lawlor:** What's that?

**The Chair:** South of Wainwright.

**Mr. Lawlor:** South of Wainwright, yeah, if you want to use that. Sure. It's like Saskatoon but different.

**The Chair:** North of Brooks. Sorry. We had a hearing in Wainwright, and I drove home, and I almost ran out of gas and Stettler didn't have a gas station open. That's why . . .

**Mr. Lawlor:** The Co-op gas station has the 24-hour self-serve.

**The Chair:** But it's a cardlock.

**Mr. Lawlor:** No. No. No. The Co-op gas station, yeah, has the liquor store.

**The Chair:** Oh, the Co-op. Yes. Sorry.

**Mr. Lawlor:** That's okay. I'm not offended.

I would ask you to ask me tough questions, though. Like, please be bad cop. I like it. I've made myself some notes here. I want to say that this is friendly but formal and it's comfortable, so thank you for that. I would not want to be on your side of the table. I'm going to ask you to ask me a question about schools and about voter turnout because that's not part of my presentation, so I'd appreciate that.

I am here for rural in the city of Calgary, of Country Hills Boulevard, and I live in Country Hills. I have to drive to go anywhere. We don't have transit.

Going to my presentation, I'm Gord Lawlor. I'm the mayor of the town of Stettler. I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I'm here to represent and speak about rural Alberta as a municipal leader and on behalf of residents in central-east Alberta and all of Alberta about the electoral boundaries. I've only recently learned about the electoral boundaries because it wasn't in my wheelhouse as a councillor. I was more concerned with immediate local. These changes will reduce rural representation by three MLAs and increase urban representation by five MLAs. While the Drumheller-Stettler constituency is not being affected at all on paper, the principle and the reality of diminished rural representation does affect all of us.

The Drumheller-Stettler electoral district covers a vast rural portion of east-central Alberta, spanning over a large geographic area that includes the towns of Drumheller, Stettler, Hanna, Oyen, and many smaller communities and agricultural regions. We are very capably represented by the hon. Nate Horner, a gentleman who actually nominated me for and presented me with the Queen Elizabeth II platinum jubilee medal in 2022. I suspect that Nate was predicting my future as a municipal leader better than I did. I never saw myself as becoming mayor.

According to the electoral district profile the current Drumheller constituency has a population of about 50,000 – that's residents – and it covers a tremendously large area that spans many thousands of square kilometres. Electoral lists show that the number of registered voters in Drumheller-Stettler is significantly lower than the provincial average, reflecting our rural population spread over a low density outside of urban centres.

Urban ridings concentrate voters into dense areas, neighbourhoods with proximate services, frequent transit, centralized government access. By contrast, rural ridings face things like distances measured in hours, not minutes; emergency service response challenges that require MLA advocacy far beyond typical city concerns – I've sat on our ambulance authority for eight years, and I had Nate Horner do some intervention, and our health minister came to Stettler three times regarding our ambulance service – health care access issues where local clinics and hospitals serve large areas with limited resources; infrastructure demands

from gravel road maintenance for my county partners, bridges, regional drains, and fire halls.

In our riding, for example, a resident in Consort or Oyen may travel more than three hours round trip for specialist medical care in Red Deer or Edmonton. Our agricultural producers in rural counties operate across hundreds of kilometres with unique water, land-use, and environmental issues. On-call staff in our small firefighting and our EMS units: they juggle long shifts and long calls without the same support scale that's seen in urban centres. These are not abstract challenges. These are day-to-day realities rural MLAs must understand and advocate for. When rural representation is reduced, it weakens the voice of communities that already struggle to be heard above the noise of concentrated population and political influence.

Why reducing rural MLAs is a problem. I understand that Alberta's population, the urban population specifically, is growing. We should plan for fair representation that reflects population shifts, but population alone shouldn't be the sole metric. Geography matters. Accessibility matters. Community distinctiveness matters. Service delivery realities also matter. Rural Albertans do not live close to our MLAs' constituency offices, we don't have transit, and we don't have frequent municipal forums. We have vast distances and diverse local economies, from farming and ranching to tourism, small business, which I am part of that factor. Ignoring these factors in favour of a strictly numbers-only approach fundamentally weakens rural Albertans' ability to be fairly represented.

10:50

One thing I want to make clear is that my constituency has not been affected by the proposals. I guess you could say that I'm here because staying silent because it doesn't affect me directly would be wrong. It affects all of rural Alberta. This is why I'm here. I'm here to advocate for rural health care sustainability, address EMS, wildfire preparedness, municipal emergency planning, champion agriculture infrastructure and investment, bring forward local voices on the provincial policy that directly affects rural livelihoods. These outcomes are not theoretical. They are real lived experiences in Drumheller, Stettler, county of Stettler, Paintearth county, Starland county, and many families who make rural Alberta their home.

Rural Albertans are not asking for special treatment. We are asking not to be diminished. By reducing rural seats and increasing urban seats – and what I want to speak to specifically is that the two additional proposed MLAs added to each of Edmonton and Calgary makes sense. Removing three rural MLAs to then put them into the urban centres increases voice and decreases voice.

One of the realities that we face is that with the proposed boundary changes there are constituencies where it's up to a five-hour drive to get from one end to the other. I urge the commission to consider representation that balances population with geography, community context, and accessibility so that rural Alberta's voice remains strong and heard.

I appreciate your time.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Lawlor.

**Mr. Evans:** I'm going to ask you about voter turnout.

**Mr. Lawlor:** Voter turnout. The point is well made in the sense that a high voter turnout shows intensity and involvement. Speaking specifically to rural and our constituency, when Minister Nate Horner ran for a second term, our voter turnout was below the provincial average. I would consider that satisfaction. I'll say complacency, but satisfaction with representation. Pretty much a sure thing, so I really don't need to take time off the tractor to go

and vote. So I see it kind of in a counterpoint. It's not lack of engagement but more of a complacency: my neighbour is going to vote for Nate, so I don't have to because we got this.

**Mr. Evans:** In 2019 it was based on the population.

**Mr. Lawlor:** About 46 per cent ish, give or take.

**Mr. Evans:** It was 49, and it dropped in 2023 to 45. I understand what you're saying in terms of there's a satisfaction level there, so the complacency, you know, accounts for the drop in the percentages. But what about the concept of: if we're going to look at it, one, is it a factor that has value, in your opinion, in helping us define or determine effective representation and what that means in Alberta? If that were the case, would it then make sense to where there was high voter turnout increase the population, which, without diving into it in more detail, would dilute the voter turnout to bring it in line with the provincial average? The same would be true with respect to low voter turnout; you would reduce the population in that electoral district. Is there any value there?

**Mr. Lawlor:** Well, I see value there. You know, to sit on your side of the table would be total brain sprain for me. Like, I just couldn't do it because there are so many valid points being made that completely contradict each other.

The 2019 turnout was higher than 2023. In 2019 Nate Horner was running to become an MLA, and he was running against I'd say a pretty formidable opponent. Thus, people came out and made their voice heard. In 2023, I believe at that stage, he was the agriculture minister. He was doing an exceptional job representing our community. I have his personal cellphone number, and he answers my calls. I'm in a town of 6,000 people. How does he do that and still do what he does? Now he's Finance minister.

We're in a position where we have probably one of the busiest MLAs in the province. Everybody wants a piece of his time, yet he still represents us well, partially because he's got an incredible assistant. You have a meeting with Michele, you're having a meeting with Nate. They'll drive four, five, six hours at a time, and she will cover all the ground that's been talked about. So I see the lower turnout in 2023 as being a satisfaction more so than a complacency.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Lawlor:** Thank you.

Anybody have one on schools?

**Mrs. Samson:** Not yet.

**Mr. Lawlor:** All right, fine. I'll wait.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thanks for coming today. It was a long drive.

**Mr. Lawlor:** It was.

**Mrs. Samson:** Yeah. I appreciate that. Drumheller-Stettler is a very, very large riding, yet the population was low, and we struggled with Drumheller. Although you might think that it didn't change much, we did take Hardisty in – Hardisty was not in the riding before – because we needed the population numbers.

**Mr. Lawlor:** So you encompassed Hardisty in, which really is not a hardship in the sense of the coverage for our MLA, but the reality was adding the population. I understand that.

**Mrs. Samson:** You know, in the end, I know we talk population numbers a lot, but Drumheller-Stettler fits together quite nicely. I

think that there are lots of areas of interest and common interests and the whole thing. Outside of that change, it pretty much remained the same. But it is a big riding, and we have heard from a significant number of Albertans, and there are a lot of comments on the value of rural voice versus that in urban and vice versa. So I understand completely what you're saying, and I don't think there's anything I could say that would make you change your mind because it is a balancing act, and that's where the changes came from.

**Mr. Lawlor:** It's a tricky one, and I don't envy you your position. No matter what the outcome is, the fact that I and some of my colleagues have had the opportunity to present the counterpoint, to represent rural voice – we're challenged by getting, let's call it the attention of legislators, getting meetings in Edmonton to talk about aging rural infrastructures.

Now, I'm a new mayor since October, but I have joined the central Alberta mayors and reeves caucus to meet with other colleagues to talk about what our mutual concerns and challenges are. Also the Mid-sized Cities Mayors' Caucus I've joined, and these two organizations are basically working in alignment with Alberta Municipalities, not against. I mean, I've got infrastructure they're working on underground that's 130 years old, and over the decades it's been a challenge keeping up with the dollars that we get for funding.

That's the unsexy stuff. That's the stuff that nobody sees. That's the stuff that – God, I don't want to throw a stone here – prevents major water infrastructure issues. We own our own water treatment plant. We provide potable water, as a supplier, right out to Consort to the east and almost to Camrose to the north. We did have a break that had to be fixed. We did go into water conservation mode, and the public never found out because we got it fixed within 48 hours. So, yeah, we have our little tiny version of what's going on in the bigger centres, but aging infrastructure is huge. That's why we need a voice.

11:00

**Mrs. Samson:** Yeah. Thank you.

**Mr. Lawlor:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** I'll stop this discussion between two mayors and move along.

Dr. Martin.

**Mr. Lawlor:** Moving right along.

I like your smile. Like, you're grinning at everything. That's like: oh, buddy, I'm in trouble.

**Dr. Martin:** Well, thank you, Mayor Lawlor. I wanted to, first, say that you're like every other presenter here this morning; they don't envy us on this side of the table, so I don't know why I'm grinning. It must be awful over here.

**Mr. Lawlor:** You'd better pay more.

**Dr. Martin:** You've heard, as we've discussed with many of the other presenters, the array of factors that we are charged to think about as we determine boundaries. The act also asks us to do it – not come up with a weighting that is cookie cutter, but individualized to each electoral district under our consideration, which, of course, makes our life that much more difficult. One of the factors, and we see it a great deal in the rural areas, is that to achieve anything that looks plausibly like effective representation in very, very large footprints, we have to consider the distances travelled by the MLA. As a mayor you'll know some of this as well.

In your description of your MLA, busy man though he most certainly will be, he is travelling the entire electoral district in his car with a wireless phone and that sort of thing. There are a lot of good roads in Drumheller-Stettler in the summer, and I must confess to having driven probably too fast on most of them.

**Mr. Lawlor:** Me too.

**Dr. Martin:** You can get around reasonably well. In other rural districts it's completely not the case. It's very awkward, particularly in winter. Do you think the size of this riding affects your MLA's ability to be an effective representative?

**Mr. Lawlor:** Yes and no.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**Mr. Lawlor:** How's that for an answer? Yes, it does in the consideration of what his responsibilities are at the provincial level, the volume of work that he is actually having to do in the Legislature, outside of his constituency. So, yes, it affects it there.

The no part is the fact that he is an incredible human being in the sense of what he can accomplish, what he will accomplish. I had to send him a text one day saying: I have to say thank you. And he says: you're welcome; thank you for what? "Thank you for standing in the doorway of the Health minister and refusing to move until she committed to coming to Stettler." His response was: you know me well.

He represents us well. We needed that meeting; he got us that meeting. He didn't have to leave Edmonton to do it; he just had to go down the hall.

**Dr. Martin:** Well, that's a lovely anecdote. I'm glad that you're proud of your MLA.

I have one other question, which bears somewhat upon my colleague's remarks, but mine are about eligible voters, not the percentage that actually show up at any given time. Elections Alberta collects and keeps faithful records on the eligible voter populations in each electoral district. At this present time if you divide your population, you end up with a quotient of 32,000-ish electoral voters.

**Mr. Lawlor:** Yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** You're at 29 and a half. So even though you're a relatively small overall population, you have a quite robust eligible voter pool.

**Mr. Lawlor:** Right.

**Dr. Martin:** Now, most of the adults, most of the people over 18 in your riding are eligible voters. You don't have a large population of new Canadians who are not yet eligible voters, the way we see in some of the big cities.

**Mr. Lawlor:** Percentagewise I would find myself agreeing with you. I can speak only to Stettler directly. We have an amazing Filipino community. I kind of contribute that they were part of how I got elected as mayor. I had a very formidable opponent against me, and too many of them aren't eligible voters yet. Literally all of their goal is to acquire Canadian citizenship, be able to vote, make the difference, if you will.

**Dr. Martin:** This is useful. So in your experience, which must be considerable as the mayor, you know, there is an identifiable

population of people who are new Canadians, to put it crudely, who are not yet citizens, and they are living and working in and around Stettler.

**Mr. Lawlor:** Yes.

**Dr. Martin:** Do you anticipate that number to grow?

**Mr. Lawlor:** Yes. The Filipino community has. The part I really love about the Filipino community is that although they are distinctly in our community, they are also intermingled in our community. They don't just sort of all live in the same area, only go to the same things, only do the same things. They participate in our parade and they're out there with their beautiful costumes and doing the dancing. They participate in the community when we have cultural days. We have a Filipino day where they host the day, the food, the events, the activities. We have a growing Indo community as well. I'm actually, as mayor, looking into the rural renewal stream just to find out more about it, because we're not part of that. Yet 38 communities not dissimilar in size to mine are, in the sense of foreign workers, to assist the fast food, the seniors' lodges, and all the areas where there's need for employment.

It's out there in the sense of: they're taking all the jobs, they're taking all the jobs. Well, they have two or three jobs because there are people not willing to do those jobs for those wages. Who's right and who's wrong? So I really feel that it will be growing for us, very much so.

**Dr. Martin:** Good. That's great.

**Mr. Lawlor:** We've been very successful in getting doctors. I guess you could say that Stettler is the poster child for going from six doctors to 15 now in a very short time. It had to do with financial incentives, no question. Unfortunately, that's the world we're living in, but it also had a lot to do with doctors bringing doctors. You know, you get a South African doctor in Stettler, and he's got a friend, or she's got a friend, and now we're in Nigerian doctors. One had a special-needs son, so she chose to move to Red Deer because she had that need. Then she left Red Deer, joined us in Stettler because per capita, for what we are for size, we offer a tremendous level of service for special needs and our schools can handle that. We have a Catholic school and a public school, and I'm waiting for the school question, but did that answer your question?

**Dr. Martin:** It did. Thank you, sir.

**Mr. Lawlor:** Thank you. I'm glad.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark?

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you. First off, I just want to thank you for being here and showing up and for your service to your community. I think it's a real testament. It's not easy being elected, you know. You get pigeonholed in the grocery store, and everything is your fault when it goes wrong, and if it goes well, that's the way it was supposed to be.

**Mr. Lawlor:** I don't envy Jeromy right now.

**Mr. Clark:** But, you know, first off, I guess I just want to say that, and I think you've done a really nice job of laying out the grand challenge that we have, in reflecting that there have been some positions here on urban being underrepresented, and now you're bringing the rural perspective. I'm very sympathetic to that, to just the geography.

But I also am encouraged by Stettler. Drumheller-Stettler, in particular, is a really good example of, as Justice Miller said: "We don't do one person, one vote. We do effective representation." So without tipping over into the kind of almost extreme scenario, Drumheller-Stettler is about 23 per cent below the provincial average, and I don't think I'm speaking out of turn when I say that when we all looked at that, we went: "Yeah, fair enough. Like, fair enough." That's a big, vast area.

Also, I think not just the fact – I do agree. I think your MLA is a particularly capable individual, but it's encouraging that you seem to have pretty good access to ministers, and you're very particularly fortunate I think. You've got a minister as an MLA, and he'll pigeonhole the health minister and things like that. But the one thing I wanted to pick up on was that you made a good point. I think you said Minister Horner's assistant Michele, is that . . .

**Mr. Lawlor:** Michele Toews.

**Mr. Clark:** Would it be helpful if there were more Micheles?

**Mr. Lawlor:** Oh, man.

**Mr. Clark:** Right? So not just for Drumheller-Stettler, but if there were some way, and unfortunately this is beyond our scope, to say: "Well, wait a minute. What if one of the ways we could bridge this challenge is to say: let's have actually a significantly greater number of office staff compensated appropriately so they can do the work." Do you think that would help?

**11:10**

**Mr. Lawlor:** Absolutely. We have a constituency office in Stettler, and Christie Greiner is the office manager there. She also is remarkable. I was on the Parkland regional library system board for eight years. We had a meeting scheduled with Nate Horner at the constituency office, and when we got there, Ron, the executive director of Parkland, was just very disappointed, deflated that Minister Horner couldn't be there so we were meeting with Christie and with Michele. I said: "Trust me, this is almost better than having Nate here, because he'll be thinking of seven different things. They're focused on what we're talking about, and Nate will hear this in detail from both of them."

Yes, effective assistant-level representation who could help carry the weight of "the Canadian flag over there is tattered." If they can carry that stuff and not have it – because I've been there a very short period of time, but I've been on council for eight years. It amazes me the number of things that come to me now that didn't come to me as a councillor. So yes, I fully agree. Good, strong, well-compensated – so you get quality people – assistants: that will really help in the big rural ridings. If you're going to make them bigger, get more extra people, I think we're golden.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Lawlor:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Lawlor:** Please ask for schools. Please ask about schools.

**The Chair:** Okay. In 90 seconds or less tell us about schools.

**Mr. Lawlor:** One school: elementary, middle, high, all one physical structure that they bonded together.

**The Chair:** Stettler?

**Mr. Lawlor:** Yes. The school is underpopulated, as our constituency is underpopulated. Now, I learned that the school was underpopulated two years ago because we had a Clearview school municipal day with Alberta education and infrastructure, and we're talking about an upgrade to our schools: \$14 million to \$17 million, give or take.

Our elementary school is older than I am. It's band-aided together. It's had multiple different HVAC renewals. New schools are going up everywhere. They need to, right? They very much need to. The reason our school is underpopulated is because we're rural. So we have a welding shop, we have an auto mechanic shop, we have a carpentry shop, and Stettler built a beautiful performing arts centre about 32 years ago. Ultimately, I think about 16 years ago, give or take, we sold it to the Clearview school division for a dollar because it's physically attached to the school, and they use it for the drama. So we sold it to them for a dollar as a really good choice, and then we have coparticipation. That square footage is calculated into their education space, including the seats.

So we are underpopulated by the provincial standards. We very much need a new school, and by the end of that second day I'm sitting with the Alberta infrastructure guy, because I always sit with somebody I don't know and it turns out I'm sitting next to the senior guy, and I said, "Okay, \$14 million to \$17 million turns into \$19 million. Is this even possible?" And he says, "That's easier for me to sell for an underpopulated school than an upgrade."

We're not there yet. Our name hasn't hit the top of the pile. That's my goal in four years as being mayor is to get us a new school build in Stettler, but the demand elsewhere for population: I get it.

Thank you. I appreciate your time today. Any other questions for me?

**The Chair:** No. Thank you very much. I'll excuse you, but please remain.

**Mr. Lawlor:** I will.

**The Chair:** And if you have a written copy of your submission, that would be great.

**Mr. Lawlor:** Thank you all for your efforts and time.

**Mr. Clark:** I need two. Sorry.

**The Chair:** Sure. Okay. You've got enough for everybody here.

Okay. We will not have a formal break, and maybe I should have, an hour ago, had a break, but we only have one more presentation.

Mrs. Judy Heynen, please come forward. Take your time. Get comfortably seated at the table, and Mr. Clark will be back shortly.

**Mrs. Samson:** Tell us who you're talking about, and I can flip my maps around.

**Mrs. Heynen:** Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Fish Creek. A big riding in terms of population.

**Mrs. Heynen:** Well, you've taken away part of our population and added in a couple more pieces.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Just give us a moment to get that map on the screen, ma'am.

**Mrs. Heynen:** Yeah. You bet. It gives me time to get my paper ready. I'm not a screen person.

**The Chair:** Okay. Please introduce yourself formally and tell us again where you're from and what constituency or constituencies you wish to comment on.

**Mrs. Heynen:** Sure. You bet. My name is Judy Heynen. I live in the Midnapore, Sundance area of Calgary, and I'm part of the current Fish Creek constituency. I'm here to suggest that the current boundaries of Fish Creek should be left as is with good reason.

**The Chair:** Sorry. You know, you just touched on something that I probably as chair should have corrected. When we use the term "current boundaries," do you mean the boundaries before our report?

**Mrs. Heynen:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. Let's call that the 2017 boundaries.

**Mrs. Heynen:** Okay. Perfect.

**The Chair:** I probably should be a little more careful on that because current could mean different things to different . . .

**Mrs. Heynen:** Right. We just haven't had them changed formally yet. Right?

**The Chair:** Right. Yeah. So you don't like what we did in October. You want us to go back to what it was. Is that what you're saying?

**Mrs. Heynen:** October of this past year?

**The Chair:** Yeah.

**Mrs. Heynen:** Correct.

**The Chair:** You don't like it. Okay. Shoot away.

**Mrs. Heynen:** All right. I think that I can justify Fish Creek staying as it is with good reason and that this can be done by also considering proposed changes from the 2017 zoning for other areas of the city.

I've lived in Midnapore and Sundance area of Calgary since 1989. We moved there when Sundance was being developed as the most southern community in the city. The kids got to grow up in the mud. Both Midnapore and Sundance were designed with mixed-use housing, side-by-sides, townhouses, some apartments. Each has co-op housing and a range of sizes of single-family homes. Each community has schools and green spaces. There is some commercial development providing services and local employment. These communities since 1989 have become established. With Calgary zoning densification bylaws being reconsidered and the existing land use as it is, I think we can assume that these neighbourhoods will have relatively stable populations and I would say relatively stable voting-eligible populations. We may get turnover where there are more children moving in with their parents, but I think the number of voting people per household will probably stay fairly stable.

To the north and east of us in the slightly older neighbourhoods of Bonavista, Parkland, Deer Run, Deer Ridge, and Queensland, many of us have had parents and family. These neighbourhoods are similar. They, too, have mixed densities of housing with the probability of stable voting populations.

In addition to their stability, there is connectedness. As an example, the gifting with gratitude program allows neighbours to gift and ask for items that they would like to share with their neighbours that include a variety of household items. The communities chosen to participate in this exchange group have

school, church, sporting, commerce, entertainment activities in common. The communities involved in this group include Lake Bonavista, Parkland, Deer Ridge, Deer Run, and Queensland. The exchange program exemplifies neighbourly bonds and community. I think we need to get something like this going in Mid-Sun.

**11:20**

Bonavista and Parkland in particular are not divided along Canyon Meadows Drive; they are joined by it. It is a road with multiple exits into both communities, crosswalks, a bus route used by both communities, and a fairly extensive biking and walking population that goes back and forth. The same could be said about Sun Valley Boulevard, but that is not what is in question here.

The natural northern division of Fish Creek area is Anderson Road: four to six lanes, walled on both sides for the most part from the communities on either side, limited access to communities due to the more expressway nature of the road. To the west the commission's suggested inclusion of limited property along Fish Creek is – sorry – nonsensical. The community of Evergreen has been split in two. Part of the new boundary is a walking path within the community. Fish Creek Boulevard does not run straight east and west connecting with James McKevitt; it bends, and the walking path uses that space. I cannot speak to the connectedness of Millrise to Shaughnessy, but if asked I think constituents would agree that they are more connected with each other than to Mid-Sun on the other side of Macleod Trail.

To me in Midnapore Macleod Trail is a barrier. It separates and defines our current community. As Macleod Trail has grown into a major thoroughfare, it defines leaving the community. Both Anderson and Macleod are also recognized as boundaries for Calgary electoral district of ward 14.

The final barrier road is Stoney Trail to the south. Stoney Trail is more natural than the suggested boundary of Chaparral Boulevard that splits the community of Chaparral in two. The suggested boundary separates Chaparral Ridge and Chaparral Valley from the rest of Chaparral. There are no schools or shops in Chaparral Ridge. I cannot imagine that they don't have extensive connections to the rest of Chaparral.

Finally, the impact on other constituencies of leaving Fish Creek as it currently is must be considered. To the south Calgary-Shaw would gain back Chaparral. Currently the interim report appendix E puts Calgary-Shaw at a plus 4.9 per cent variance of voting population, and it is in a growth area still to be built out. Perhaps in eight years from now or before this commission reaches its final conclusions Calgary-Hays, Calgary-Peigan, Calgary-Shaw, and Calgary-Okotoks may need to shift borders, but for now, as far as Fish Creek is concerned, Calgary-Shaw should include Chaparral.

To the west Calgary-Lougheed is at a minus 4.9 per cent variance. This, too, is a high-growth area, but would putting half of Evergreen or a smidge of Evergreen, Shawnee Slopes, and Millrise back into Lougheed affect that number too much? There seems to be room for a lot of growth as Fish Creek is currently slated to be at plus 9.3 per cent, and that is considered acceptable. The variance for Calgary-Lougheed would be approximately 14 per cent that they could grow without reaching where Calgary-Fish Creek is at.

Lastly, to the north Acadia is an unusual constituency, isn't it? It includes Canyon Meadows but carves out Chinook Park and Kelvin Grove, and now it runs in the north into Confluence, the new constituency that guts Klein in spite of June feedback that largely suggested Klein should be left alone, shrinks Calgary-Buffalo, and gobbles up the north end of Acadia. I actually have no idea how many homes are in the area north of Glenmore and immediately east of Macleod, so perhaps this area presents a negligible change for Calgary-Acadia. But they, too, are at a proposed position of plus

4.9 per cent variance. Putting Bonavista back into Calgary-Fish Creek might balance that out. Bottom line for me is that I do not have enough information about street-by-street numbers to have suggestions for improvements in the centre of the city. However, I do feel my comments regarding Calgary-Fish Creek have value.

In conclusion, I would like to suggest that the existing communities of Fish Creek put together with the pre-2017 constituency alignment work well together. The boundaries that have created Calgary-Fish Creek should be left as is.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to speak.

**The Chair:** Thank you. I'm going to start, Mrs. Heynen, with the population. Our projected or recommended electoral division has a population of 60,044 for Calgary-Fish Creek. I'm embarrassed to say that I don't know what the previous one was. Do you have any idea?

**Mrs. Samson:** I can tell you. I just looked at that.

**Mr. Clark:** Fifty-two thousand eight hundred thirty-eight. That's 2024.

**The Chair:** Okay. So we've added a lot into this riding.

Are you saying that the area south of Stoney, which includes Chaparral, should be taken out of our recommended Calgary-Fish Creek? Is that what you're saying?

**Mrs. Heynen:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. And if that was done, you'd be happy?

**Mrs. Heynen:** If you left Bonavista.

**The Chair:** In on the other . . .

**Mrs. Heynen:** On the other end.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.  
Okay. Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you. Again, I mean, I just appreciate so much people who decide to come out and participate. As you can tell from the packed house, that isn't actually a massive number of people. But it's incredibly important, and I think what's especially important for us is to hear from people who live in those neighbourhoods.

I guess I would ask, if you don't mind, if it's possible – I didn't see a written submission from you.

**Mrs. Heynen:** No. I was told that it was being recorded, so there was no need for that.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. But if you could leave that with us . . .

**Mrs. Heynen:** Sure.

**Mr. Clark:** . . . or send us a copy through Aaron, it would be really handy. There's a lot of – you know, you sort of talked about a lot of different communities. I've tried to write down as many as I could.

**Mrs. Heynen:** Sorry.

**Mr. Clark:** But it's great. It's really, really helpful. I live in those neighbourhoods, so I'd love to know more. That stuff is really, really valuable when we start to do the fine tune. It's great stuff.

One of the first things you noted was the stability of the population of those neighbourhoods. Is there much development? I mean, it sounds like it's all built out, right? There's not a lot of

greenfield. Is there much infill? Some of this blanket rezoning: is that happening in any of these neighbourhoods, or is it pretty stable?

**Mrs. Heynen:** It is happening somewhat with resistance. I'm not sure, if the blanket rezoning is pulled back, how much it will increase. There are a few areas that it makes sense to have perhaps some more apartment-style buildings, but a lot of it is single family. What doesn't seem to work is single family, single family, an eightplex, single family, single family, so there's resistance to that type of development. These are communities that were done when you had the grand, sweeping, turny roads and cul-de-sacs. They're actually similar in that. The build-out that was done, though, in the initial construction, like I said, did include several denser developments. It's a nice blend. I think they've done a decent job.

**Mr. Clark:** Nice neighbourhoods.

**Mrs. Heynen:** Yeah.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much. That's great.

**Mrs. Heynen:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you. I don't know this area, but you've touched on my question. Really, as best I could tell it, other than the peripheral roadway like Macleod Trail, the only internal roadway across Fish Creek is Bow Bottom Trail road. Is that correct?

**Mrs. Heynen:** Bow Bottom is parallel to Macleod.

**Dr. Martin:** But it's the only one that connects the communities on either side of the creek itself.

11:30

**Mrs. Heynen:** It doesn't cross the creek at all. It stops before it gets to the creek.

**Dr. Martin:** Oh.

**Mrs. Heynen:** Essentially, Midnapore and Sundance are on the south side of Fish Creek, and Bonavista, Parkland, Queensland, Deer Ridge, Deer Run are all on the north and east sides of the creek. While Midnapore and Sundance – like, when we first moved in, we would refer to going into town. So if you were crossing Fish Creek, if you went across Canyon Meadows Drive, you had entered the city because we were that far south. At the same time that we felt that type of separation a long time ago, 30 years, 35 years ago, Bonavista and Parkland were already connected.

I think that what the suggested boundary change has not recognized is the cohesion of the Parkland-Bonavista connection, which are on either sides of Canyon Meadows Drive, which runs east and west. Bonavista people using Fish Creek park walk across Canyon Meadows Drive. Canyon Meadows Drive has bus routes running up and down it so that, you know, people taking the bus to other places in the city are getting on the same bus, whether they're coming from Parkland or coming from Bonavista. So I think there's quite a strong connection, especially between those two communities.

The communities of Queensland and Deer Ridge, Deer Run, Diamond Cove: there's really nowhere else to put them, not that you would want to put them anywhere else. They blend together even though Bow Bottom is quite a secondary road from, say, Bonavista. It's also flanked on the other side by the river, and the river is the bigger boundary of the two.

**Dr. Martin:** Following on that very thought, would you say that there has grown to be a cultural connectivity with the people around the Sundance Lake neighbourhoods and those north of the creek?

**Mrs. Heynen:** I'm actually surprised at how many people refer to familial connections because what happened is that a lot of people grew up in Bonavista and then couldn't afford to move in there themselves or the friends of their parents weren't selling. At that point, Midnapore, Sundance were much more affordable, so the whole population just kind of shifted south.

**Dr. Martin:** So there are quite literally communities of interest, I mean familial interest.

**Mrs. Heynen:** Yes. Yes.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mrs. Heynen:** Not everybody, of course, but it's certainly a part of the fabric of those two groups.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you for your presentation and for the historic anchor that you've laid out for us in 1989. I mean, it's amazing how I remember distinctly the late '80s, being at Fish Creek park, way in the south of Calgary, at a family reunion. I don't know what happened, but it's not in south Calgary anymore.

You made the reference. When you crossed – what was it? You were going into town?

**Mrs. Heynen:** Oh, Canyon Meadows. Going across the bridge, the Macleod Trail bridge at Fish Creek.

**The Chair:** Would you agree with me that the terminology has now changed? You're not crossing and going into town. Many people are jumping on the C-Train and going to work.

**Mrs. Heynen:** Yes, there are a lot of people doing that.

**The Chair:** I mean, it's not an exact equivalent, but the C-Train didn't really exist in '89.

**Mrs. Heynen:** No.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Okay. Thank you.

**Mrs. Heynen:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Thank you.  
Susan.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thanks. Thanks for coming out. I really appreciate your time here today. Fish Creek was one of the communities inside Calgary that saw a lot of change, so thank you for bringing those detailed communities to our attention. Now is the time. If there's a chance of changing, we'll do it now. So thank you again for that information and leave it with us.

**Mrs. Heynen:** Thank you. That would be awesome.

**Mr. Evans:** I have nothing. Thank you.

**Mrs. Heynen:** Okay. May I make one comment, though?

**The Chair:** Sure.

**Mrs. Heynen:** You have asked other people about whether there's a difference between voter turnout and . . .

**The Chair:** You were geared up for that, weren't you?

**Mrs. Heynen:** I was. I have to admit that I completely disagree with you on the principle. I think voter turnout is a reflection of availability of voting stations, which I think is an issue for a lot of people in rural Alberta, it is about the satisfaction with the candidate, and it is about the energy invested by the constituency associations within that area to get out the vote. If you penalize an area for having good voter turnout, it's kind of like smacking the kid who gets 80 per cent and saying: well, you know, really you only got 50. I think it's a reflection of the effort that goes into the community, not something that should be altered because the intensity wasn't there. Sorry. I just wanted to throw that in.

**Mr. Evans:** Now that you've brought that up, what about eligible voters as a demographic? Bear in mind that's different than population, which is every living, breathing person in that area, right? Eligible voters is a different demographic. Is that a factor that should be considered?

**Mrs. Heynen:** Yes. I would say yes. I don't think it matters. I mean, when we moved into Sundance, it was referred to as rabbit hill. It

wasn't because there were a whole bunch of competent adults; it was because all of us had three and four kids and there were just children everywhere. It didn't mean we needed more representation. We needed more schools, but we didn't need more electoral representation I don't think.

**Mr. Evans:** You mean the population didn't represent the eligible voters?

**Mrs. Heynen:** Correct, but I think it was fair to measure it by eligible voters.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much, and thank you for staying.

**Mrs. Heynen:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Now I just want to make sure, Mr. Roth: we have covered everybody that's formally listed to speak?

Okay. Thank you. We'll close this morning's session and break for lunch. We'll be reconvening at 1:30.

[The hearing adjourned at 11:37 a.m.]













Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Public Hearings

Calgary

Tuesday, January 13, 2026  
1:24 p.m.

Transcript No. 33

## **Legislative Assembly of Alberta**

### **Electoral Boundaries Commission**

Justice Dallas K. Miller, Chair

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John D. Evans, KC

Julian Martin

Susan Samson

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## **Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Calgary**

### **Public Participants**

Gerry Burger-Martindale

Theresa Letendre, Chair, Board of Trustees, Foothills School Division

Rod MacKenzie, President, Calgary-Cross United Conservative Constituency Association

Jerzy Maslanka

Pavit Sidhu, Constituency Assistant, Calgary-Falconridge

Claude Sandy Stevenson





1:24 p.m.

Tuesday, January 13, 2026

[Justice Miller in the chair]

**The Chair:** Good afternoon, lady and gentlemen. Welcome to the afternoon session of – well, for transcript purposes maybe I should have said ladies and gentlemen – our second day of public hearings of the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission.

By way of brief introduction I just want to go through some history of our commission before we hear from the presenters. Our commission is an independent body established by the Legislature of Alberta, and it consists, obviously, of the five individuals that are listed and that appear before you. If you want to know our background, you can simply go to our bio section on the website.

We have been given the task of dealing with two challenges or two problems. One is the expansion of the Legislature from 87 seats or electoral divisions to 89. In addition we are a boundary commission that is the first one since the last commission report of 2017. Over that period of time we have had a huge population increase in this province, probably an unprecedented population increase, and so we have the challenge of: where do we place the two new electoral divisions given the power given to us in the legislation, and how do we properly apportion the great increase in population?

To give everyone a sense of the population increase, when the 2017 Bielby report was released, Alberta's population was just slightly over 4 million people. At the commencement of our boundary commission in 2025 we looked at population sources, and we landed on the most up-to-date 2024 confirmed statistics. We are at about a 4.8 million population in Alberta.

To put some context and bring that down to the local electoral division level, in 2017 they used this formula and they came up with an average population per electoral division of 46,697. Of course, we are not a rep-by-pop jurisdiction. We do not rely on representation by population or exact one person, one vote formula as they do in the United States. Rather we focus on the term "effective representation," and we'll talk about that in a few moments.

The 2017 report had a target. That target was minus 25 and plus 25, and it ranged from 35,000 to just over 58,000 per electoral division. We've had a substantial increase with the new population level, and the average is 54,000, almost 55,000, and that targeted range varies from 41,000 to almost 69,000.

The task of the commission, given to us by the legislation, by the case law, and by Canadian tradition, is to come up with boundaries that provide for effective representation. We were established as a commission in late March or early April of this past year, and we did four basic tasks from that time period on.

First of all, we met and came up with a population-based standard on which we could use to make formulas for our constituency boundaries. We agreed upon the source of the most recent Statistics Canada figures, regularly and routinely updated by the Office of Statistics and Information of the Alberta Treasury Board.

We also reviewed hundreds of written submissions that were provided to our commission starting in April and May, and throughout May and June we toured the province and heard submissions from interested Albertans from as far as Fort McMurray down to Pincher Creek and criss-crossed the province to hear those presentations. All those presentations, I believe, are online and can be accessed on our website.

After we completed that, throughout the summer and fall we met with individuals from the office of Elections Alberta to come up with maps and create maps to apportion the 89 boundaries. That

then led to the completion and release of our, what we call, interim report.

The interim report was provided to the Speaker of the Legislature in late October and was tabled, and each member of the Legislature received a copy, and it became a public document. That is the document that you may have seen online or you may have had a copy. In completing that report, we followed as best we could with the information we had to take into account all the factors in the legislation. As we go through the hearings, you no doubt will make some submissions and they will touch on those issues listed in the legislation.

1:30

Our goal is to create understandable and clear boundaries for Albertans. Upon completion of that interim report and release to the Legislature, we opened a portal to hear feedback from Albertans in written format, and we did hear feedback. From November 3 to December 19 in excess of 1,100 written submissions were submitted.

Now at this stage we want to open it up for public presentations. Starting on January 12 we are holding hearings in Calgary for three days and then moving to Edmonton to hear in-person hearings, and we will hear submissions from the rest of the province virtually while we're in Edmonton. That will encompass the rest of this week and all of next week.

Upon completing and concluding the public hearing aspect of this second round, we will then take all the written submissions and the public feedback we've received and take this interim report and revise it if necessary and create a final report that we will submit to the Legislature in late March. The Legislature then takes that report and has the flexibility and the discretion to do what they wish with it, but it is expected that they will pass legislation based on the recommendations that we give them in our final report. By way of background information, that gives a bit of a historic context to how we got here.

I now have the privilege of opening it up for public submissions. I'm pleased to ask Theresa Letendre to come forward first. Have a seat at the table, make yourself comfortable, and tell us what electoral division you live in and which electoral division you wish to comment on.

**Mrs. Letendre:** Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I'm Theresa Letendre, and I'm chair of the board of trustees for Foothills school division, and I currently reside in the Banff-Kananaskis riding.

Today I'm speaking on behalf of the board, and my remarks are grounded in the written submission we provided to the commission on December 17. Foothills school division serves a large and diverse geographic region. Today our perspective is offered because school communities fall within the commission's mandate to consider communities of interest.

Before I continue, I would like to briefly clarify the scope of this submission. In the letter we sent in December, I referenced Cochrane-Springbank. I would like to clarify that Foothills school division is not directly impacted by the proposed changes to Cochrane-Springbank.

Our concerns are focused specifically on the proposed reconfiguration affecting Okotoks and Diamond Valley, the shift from Banff-Kananaskis to Banff-Jasper, and adjustments involving High River-Vulcan and Livingstone-Macleod. While spanning multiple ridings is not new for our division, what is new and somewhat concerning is the number and simultaneity of the proposed boundary changes that would affect Foothills communities.

Rather than restating the details of the letter, I would like to use my time to share two brief stories.

**The Chair:** Sorry. Can you just give us the date of that letter?

**Mrs. Letendre:** Yes. December 17.

**The Chair:** December 17. Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Evans:** Which school division?

**Mrs. Letendre:** Foothills school division.

I'll share two stories that illustrate how the proposed boundary changes would be experienced by families, particularly when those changes are considered together. My first story is from Longview and the surrounding rural Foothills community. Longview, if you're not familiar, is a small rural village of approximately 300 people, and Foothills school division operates a K to 6 school with about 60 kids. While the size of Longview is small, it does not exist in isolation. The village and the surrounding rural area function as one interconnected community. Families share Foothills schools and school councils, transportation services, volunteer spaces, and common rural education concerns.

Under the proposed changes the village of Longview would move into High River-Vulcan while families just outside the village to the west would fall within proposed Banff-Jasper. On a map that boundary line may appear minor, but in lived experience it's not. Families whose children attend the same school, whose parents sit on the same school councils, and who raise the same concerns about rural equity would now be represented by two different MLAs in two very different electoral divisions. One MLA riding would be shaped by a regional rural centre of gravity, so High River-Vulcan; the other would be shaped by a park- and tourism-centred gravity, the Banff-Jasper. From an education perspective advocacy becomes fragmented, accessibility becomes uneven. And for a small rural Foothills community there's a loss of a coherent voice, not because the community has changed but because representation has been split around it.

The second story is Okotoks-Diamond Valley and the loss, essentially, of the Highwood riding. The second example comes from Okotoks and Diamond Valley. Today Okotoks, Diamond Valley, and the surrounding Foothills communities function as a single, integrated education community. Families are connected through shared Foothills schools, attendance boundaries that cross municipal lines, and a long-standing school council and advocacy relationships. Highwood has historically reflected a Foothills-centred reality. Under the proposed options a Foothills-based riding disappears. If we consider the Calgary-Okotoks option, Okotoks families will be drawn northwards into Calgary and anchored by a Calgary-focused division while Diamond Valley and some of the surrounding Foothills county families will be reassigned to High River-Vulcan. [A timer sounded] Oh, my God. My time is up? No.

Mirroring what will happen in Longview, families whose children attend the same Foothills schools, raise the same education concerns, and participate in the same school communities will now be represented by MLAs whose ridings are shaped by different dominating centres of gravity, one oriented towards Calgary, the other towards a regional rural constituency. What is lost is not simply a boundary but a Foothills-based lens on representation.

Why do these stories matter? I shared these two examples, one rural and one urban adjacent, because they illustrate the same underlying issue. When integrated school communities are divided across electoral divisions with different dominant centres of gravity, representation becomes partial rather than whole. Public education systems function as a community of interest. Families are

connected through schools, not municipal borders. Representation works best when those connections are respected. When boundary changes divide those connections, representation becomes more complex, less accessible, and somewhat less effective even when each individual change appears to be reasonable on its own.

In saying that, Foothills school division recognizes that the commission is carrying out a legislated mandate arising from population change, and change has to happen. Our role as trustees and a school board is to ensure that the lived realities of families and school communities are visible within the process. With this in mind, as you move towards a final recommendation, we respectfully ask that the cumulative impacts on education communities be considered together and that the final report articulate how proposed changes strengthen effective representation for the families affected.

Thank you for your time and for considering this community perspective.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mrs. Letendre. A quick question for clarification and then I'll open it up to the rest of the commissioners. Could you just give us a description as to the boundaries of the Foothills school division again? What geographic area does it encompass?

**Mrs. Letendre:** Foothills school division operates – if you think of Calgary and then you have Rocky View county going around it, Foothills is the connector. We have schools going from the edge of Calgary ...

1:40

**The Chair:** South of Calgary.

**Mrs. Letendre:** South of Calgary, all the way down to High River and Cayley. Nanton is outside our area. Then we go west: Longview, Millarville, and then into Red Deer Lake, Priddis. Bragg Creek is outside our boundary. We kind of are in a ...

**The Chair:** The east boundary is where?

**Mrs. Letendre:** The east boundary is the Strathmore – like, the edge, pretty much up the QE II.

**The Chair:** Okay. That's helpful.

Okay. Any questions, Mr. Clark?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you very much. I really appreciate that presentation. It's so helpful to have people who live in the communities and, like, experience on the ground. I was playing around, looking at Longview as you were talking. It's just an interesting artifact of how we've drawn things for other – you know, we thought very rational reasons at the time.

I guess I'm interested in two things. The kind of community of interest piece: you used a really interesting term. I think you said, "a Foothills-based view of good representation," right? How would you describe that? Like, what are those things you think would connect you together? Obviously, you come at it from a school division perspective. Are there other things? You know, what sort of belongs with what, and what's sort of like with like, and where would you draw some lines and say that sort of there's a different view of representation for this region or that group?

**Mrs. Letendre:** Yeah, it's an interesting perspective. I would say that Longview is the clearest example, right? The families that are west of Longview that attend Longview school, that are in Longview community: it's a rural farming community. You see the cattle drives on the back roads throughout the year. It's not something that I would naturally equate to the tourism hubs of

Banff and Jasper. They feel very opposite to that. In terms of the rurality of the High River-Vulcan area, I see that that – I know your challenges here. The scope and size of Livingstone-Macleod as it exists now and Highwood is massive. There are a lot of niche communities that have each of their own individual needs within that rural context. How do you reflect all that voice and then also shift the boundaries? I feel that Longview would fit more appropriately with High River-Vulcan because there's more commonality and synergy with that.

The Okotoks to Calgary: I can see a trend that Okotoks is a growing bedroom community, but it's not quite Calgary, and I don't know if it ever will be. Part of Okotoks is the small-town charm, where they really celebrate what it is to have that small-town feel in kind of an urban setting. Could it fit with Calgary? Yes, but I feel like the greater alignment is with the Diamond Valley. Diamond Valley amalgamated between Black Diamond and Turner Valley not too long ago into becoming one town, where they were separate before, so that in itself is growing as well. Okotoks is probably the advanced stage of where Diamond Valley will eventually be, so it makes sense to pair those together from that perspective in terms of priorities.

**Mr. Clark:** Great. Just one quick follow-up if you don't mind. Is there value in having more than one MLA advocating for you? If I look at that boundary, you know, around Longview in particular, you're absolutely right. But it's not – I'm sorry, Susan; I'm going to steal your term – a brick wall, right? It is a boundary that's permeable. In this scenario you'd have more than one MLA, potentially, advocating for whatever it is that you're looking for. I'm just kind of curious on your thoughts on that.

**Mrs. Letendre:** Yeah. Currently we have three MLAs that represent our area. We have Minister Sigurdson and we have MLA Petrovic and we have MLA Elmeligi. We work hard to ensure that they're aware of everything that is happening with Foothills school division and the communities. Is it nicer to have three people at the Legislature advocating for Foothills school division? Definitely. If we combined it all into one, would it be a detriment? Perhaps, because it's one voice in a larger span. I think the biggest worry about Banff-Kananaskis stretching to Banff-Jasper is just the fact that if the MLA was situated in Jasper, for example, the odds of them coming all the way down to Millarville, to Longview area for community consultation – I have empathy for that person because that's a massive area to cover and to represent. So a bit of yes and a bit of no.

**Mr. Clark:** Fair enough. That is an entirely acceptable answer in our world. We live in those greys all the time. Thank you very much.

**Mrs. Letendre:** Perfect. You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Okay. Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

This is a huge footprint for a school district, and kudos to you and your colleagues for managing it because it's very large. I wanted to ask you a bit about that footprint. If we did a map that identified all the schools in your district, I mean, you know, the countryside would have fewer and Okotoks would have more, but they would be scattered across the entire footprint, right?

**Mrs. Letendre:** That's correct.

**Dr. Martin:** For example, you'd have an elementary and a middle school in this village but people would have to bus further to go to a high school. That's a very typical example from my own history.

But then, quite apart from the sprawl of just the overall footprint, (a) you're used to having several different MLAs in play and how to advocate with them, and two, I mean, we speak about, "Well, Diamond Valley kind of goes with Okotoks," but I'm thinking, you know, the entire district that on my map is just blank is full of schools, so some of them are going to have a say in how you get represented by you and your colleagues at the board level and so, too, with the MLA. I suppose what I'm saying is that if the lines are drawn as we have in our interim map as opposed to how they had been in the previous and still-existing configuration, you still have the same problems of identifying representation.

**Mrs. Letendre:** Yeah, we would. Like you said, the majority of our schools are located in Okotoks and the next in High River, but it's currently that equity of rural education that's really come under the lens, the spotlight. As classrooms get more complex and education becomes a whole different beast, which we won't dive into, it's the rural opportunities that the kids have. When a public school system offers a rural school, it's often the anchor of the community. If a school pulls out of a rural town or village, often that space: people move out of it and it becomes obsolete. So we have a responsibility to ensure that this rural school is a flourishing school to provide a flourishing community, and it's done easier when you have an MLA who actually lives in the area, who knows the landscape, and who I can say I've seen at the store or whatnot, right? That's the challenge when we live in Canada. When it's such a broad, vast land, we have this sparsity, right?

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

Thank you for your presentation. I think we're all on the same page in that it is a big area, and it's three MLAs. I feel bad that we couldn't offer you no change in that area. You know, the school system will suffer a change, but I think, ultimately, you will still end up with three MLAs. It's just the boundaries will have changed, so you have to rekindle those relationships.

**Mrs. Letendre:** That's part of the work that we do as trustees and elected officials. I guess the biggest takeaway for us, though, is that opportunity for effective representation of those families. When you're sitting at a school council meeting with a group of parents and they say, "Well, my MLA is this, and my MLA is that," but we live on the other side of the road, you go, "How is that?"

1:50

**Mrs. Samson:** Exactly. How is that possible?

**Mrs. Letendre:** As we spoke before, some MLAs are exceptional in reaching out to their constituents and being available, and others not as much. You can't predict that, so you have to work with the structures that you're given. If we can help shape the structure in a way that will afford us an easier path, we definitely would do that.

**Mrs. Samson:** Exactly. Okay. Thank you very much.

**Mrs. Letendre:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** Good afternoon. Thanks for your presentation. A question for you. You know, clearly within a school division that big you have within that school division different community interest groups, and you have areas and communities that would be more urban than rural and some that would be more rural than urban. In terms of them representing their interests and conveying them to you as a school division, how do they do that, and then how do you take in that information to adequately represent them with respect to the province?

**Mrs. Letendre:** That's a very good question, and it's definitely the crux of the work. We often describe ourselves as a rural school division because of just that. The way we are structured, the fact that we have urban elements supports those rural elements. The way education is funded on a per-student piece, the more densely populated areas can support those rural areas.

From an elected official standpoint we have trustees that are elected in the different wards. We have two that are in Okotoks, one in High River, and then we have another three that are in the more rural areas. We are regularly out in our community, and we attend school council meetings and bring that voice of the parents to the table of the board to inform those decisions. But yeah, it's a careful balancing. How do you equitably balance opportunity in the rural and in the urban?

**Mr. Evans:** How do you decide your ward boundaries? That's exactly what we need to know.

**Mrs. Letendre:** I know. Well, it's funny because one of our newly elected trustees asked that question. I did a deep dive into it, and I could not find a solid answer. Foothills school division was established in 1938, and then in the '70s it had another relook at the ward boundaries. There is some guidance from the minister, but it is ultimately this division that chooses how its ward boundaries have been set, but I cannot tell you. I'm still looking for that answer.

**Mr. Evans:** Well, when we're done this.

**Mrs. Samson:** We'll get on that.

**Mr. Evans:** If you need Justice Miller to, you know, train us all, we're ready to go.

**Mrs. Letendre:** Perfect. You'll have the experience, and you can come. That would be great because some of it makes no sense with the boundaries as well.

**Mr. Evans:** I don't know that we have good experience, but we'll have some experience

**Mrs. Letendre:** Experience nonetheless. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. I have one question, and it may betray my ignorance. Is there an equivalent school division on the separate school side that covers the same geography that Foothills does?

**Mrs. Letendre:** Not necessarily. Not really. Catholic schools are formed largely in urban centres. They don't necessarily serve the rural areas as much, so they span actually all the way from Strathmore to Canmore. They span a bigger population, but they're not busing kids or moving families in those small ...

**The Chair:** Okay. They don't have the same experience you do.

**Mrs. Letendre:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, thank you so much, and your personal examples were very interesting and helpful. I'm quite proud of the commission that no one blurted out: where's Longview?

**Mrs. Letendre:** It's okay. I should have brought beef jerky because they're famous for it.

**Mr. Evans:** I know exactly what you're talking about.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Letendre:** Yes. Well, thank you for the opportunity today.

**The Chair:** Please feel free to stay for the rest of the presentations.

**Mrs. Letendre:** I will stay for a little bit. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Our next presenter is Gerry Burger-Martindale.

Take a moment and get comfortable, Ma'am, and when we've got the frame presented on the screen, you can introduce yourself and tell us what riding you're from.

**Mrs. Burger-Martindale:** I will, indeed. It's very interesting, and I think you'll probably think that this is a bit of from the sublime to the ridiculous, and it's probably Alberta in a nutshell, right? A huge amount, and then the details that I hope that I can pass over to you.

My name's Gerry Burger-Martindale, and I want to thank you for this opportunity to present to you. When I was reading the interim report, I thought: what an incredible job to have. I'm quite jealous. It's really difficult, but isn't that a wonderful thing to do?

**The Chair:** We can put a chair up here.

**Mrs. Burger-Martindale:** Absolutely. Next time please think of me because: fascinating.

**Mr. Evans:** I'll take your spot and talk about Montgomery.

**Mrs. Burger-Martindale:** Okay. We're on. I thought you did an incredible job, well executed. I've obviously got some points and other people have got some points. That's what it's about in our democracy, isn't it?

Okay. I'm Gerry Burger-Martindale. I have lived in Canyon Meadows since 1989. God. Wasn't meant to be that long. And since 1993, which is the earliest I could track back, I've been part of the constituencies of Calgary-Lougheed, Calgary-Fish Creek, and Calgary-Acadia, and I haven't moved one iota. It's with pleasure that I have found myself in Calgary-Acadia for a few years, as I know this area. I shop in local stores. My daughter attended school, daycare, and youth groups in Kingsland. I know the communities up and down Elbow Drive, and I can say with certainty that Elbow Drive forms a community and social barrier and a logical constituency border as much, believe it or not, as larger roads recognized in the report such as 14th Street Southwest and Macleod Trail.

I hope you've all got my little map here so that we can point to things.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mrs. Burger-Martindale:** Thank you.

With schools to the east and west side of Elbow Drive, not to mention higher-priced housing stock on the west side than the east

side, I've got a little bit about the constituency. I got some of this from Wikipedia.

The Calgary-Acadia electoral district was created in the 2010 Alberta boundary redistribution. It was created primarily from the old electoral district of Calgary-Egmont . . .

I was probably part of that, too, and a portion of Calgary-Glenmore. When created in 2010, the Calgary-Acadia electoral district had a population of 37,718, which was, amazingly, 7.7 per cent below the provincial average of 40,800. Minor adjustments to the district occurred in the 2017 electoral boundaries redistribution, where the Chinook Park community moved out of Calgary-Acadia and into Calgary-Glenmore, dividing on Elbow Drive.

Further, Bow River would no longer bisect the constituency and, instead, would largely form its eastern boundary. The boundaries as adjusted would give the electoral district a population of [48,900] in 2017,"

which Wikipedia says is 9 per cent above the provincial average.

This is where the map comes in. In the draft report it's proposed that Calgary-Acadia lose Kingsland and Manchester – those are the red areas; I'm not very artistic – with a combined population of 5,713 and gain Lake Bonavista, the green area, with a population of 10,293, for a population gain of 4,580. Calgary-Acadia would also lose the thriving commercial area north of Glenmore Trail and east Blackfoot Trail. So that's the sort of slightly nebulous area to the top right-hand side, and that area makes a good mix with the residential areas south of it. I have personal knowledge that these businesses enjoy being recognized and represented by their MLA.

2:00

Adding Lake Bonavista means over 18 per cent of the constituency will be new, which is a huge percentage and will drastically change the riding. Moreover, Lake Bonavista is quite different from existing areas of Calgary-Acadia, i.e., northwards of Anderson Road is Willow Park and Acadia. So that's on that slide. Calgary-Acadia is already 4 per cent above the provincial average using the 2016-2017 provincial boundaries commission report, and these changes take it to 4.9 per cent above it. Furthermore, adding Kingsland to Calgary-Glenmore takes its population – "its" being Calgary-Glenmore – to six per cent above the provincial average.

The report touches on the status quo, quoting

. . . that [if] the status quo is achieving effective representation, that warrants consideration.

And again,

This is consistent with Justice McLachlin noting in *Carter* that "history" is a proper consideration in drawing electoral division boundaries.

With regard to proposed changes, and I'm quoting from page 40 of your report,

In order to increase Calgary-Acadia's population, it is accordingly further recommended that areas north of Canyon Meadows Drive, east of Macleod Trail, south of Anderson Road, and west of Bow Bottom Trail . . .

even describing it is a mouthful,

. . . be moved from Calgary-Fish Creek to Calgary-Acadia.

So that's the green area.

These areas share significant . . . centres and infrastructure with neighbourhoods to the north and west already in Calgary-Acadia, says the report. Respectfully, I'll challenge that statement with data on slide seven.

What we're looking at here is data that I've pulled from the last of the marvellous city of Calgary community profiles, which ended in 2019. I used to use them all the time in my former life. I pulled out percentage of population with postsecondary education, percentage of population with a degree, and percentage of population with an income above \$150,000 in 2019, and the

Calgary average for those three is 61 per cent, 36 per cent, and 27 per cent, respectively. Comparing Acadia and Willow Park, which are part of Calgary-Acadia, with Lake Bonavista, we see that Acadia has 54 per cent, 22 per cent, and 15 per cent of postsecondary degree and income, and Lake Bonavista has 68 per cent, 43 per cent, and 44 per cent of the population with income above \$150,000. If you know Calgary, you know what I'm talking about. It's hugely different.

Comparing Kingsland to Chinook Park, where the report says that they're similar, we've got 58 per cent, 28 per cent, and 11 per cent of the population with an income above \$150,000, and in Chinook Park we have 71 per cent, 52 per cent, and 41 per cent, respectively. Now, these are 2019 figures. Things change, gentrification changes, but these are some quite interesting statistics we have here.

Also with regard to one of the big, shared service centres and infrastructure is Southcentre Mall, and I'm quoting from the Southcentre report, which says the mall serves as "a super-regional shopping centre," and annual footfall reaches about 6 million visitors, generating \$300 million in total sales, which is terrific, but it just shows that it's not a local shopping centre. Everyone shares Southcentre. There are local shopping areas, some quite large such as Lake Bonavista and Willow Park, within each of these communities with no need to share these facilities. With regard to Calgary-Glenmore and Calgary-Acadia, all the small commercial activities, i.e. the corner strip malls, are within Calgary-Acadia on the east side of Elbow Drive.

There are some possible alternatives to the changes that you recommended, but that's not my job. I would and I wouldn't. By that I mean that I'm not yet treading on your toes, right? The new Calgary-Hays is 5.1 per cent below average, and boundaries could be moved between Calgary-Peigan, Calgary-Fish Creek, and Calgary-Acadia to create more consistent populations while utilizing existing boundaries and still significant geographic features.

In summary, I would say that currently Calgary-Acadia is 4 per cent above provincial average. It includes a mixture of fairly average in terms of education and income, communities and commercial businesses. With proposed boundary changes Calgary-Acadia would lose commercial businesses, would lose the communities of Kingsland and Manchester, population 5,713, and gain the community of Lake Bonavista, population 10,293. The increased population brings it to 4.9 per cent above the average. Kingsland's population is vastly different from the adjacent, across Elbow Drive, Chinook Park: percentage of incomes over \$150,000, 11 per cent versus 41 per cent, and clearly reflected in the housing stock. Acadia's population – that means the community of Acadia's population – is also very different from Lake Bonavista's, also reflected in the housing stock and leisure activities.

My request is to relook at the proposed changes to Calgary-Acadia. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much. And thank you for your – obviously, a lot of work put into examining our report here.

I'll start with Mr. Evans. Any questions or comments?

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah. With respect to the socioeconomic data that you put up in terms of the number of postsecondary degrees and people over \$150,000, what were you using that to illustrate? You were using that data foundationally to do what with respect to your proposal?

**Mrs. Burger-Martindale:** Well, the report talks about the consistency of shared services and the consistency of adjacent areas in the ridings, and this is just to say that there aren't. They're quite

different areas, and this is a demonstration of that. I'm not saying that there aren't any other areas that also share these sorts of differences, which, you know, after all, is the way that the big cities are made up. I absolutely understand that. I'm saying that, particularly with the Kingsland and Chinook Park division, Elbow Drive is a significant divider every bit as significant as the adjacent ones of 14th Street and Macleod Trail, certainly to the people who live there. I've talked to people on the other side of Elbow Drive who live in Calgary-Glenmore, and they agree with me entirely. I've lived these many years traipsing up and down Elbow Drive. I know what the differences are, and that community of Kingsland fits very nicely and happily within Calgary-Acadia.

**Mr. Evans:** So your options are:

- (a) sparsity, density . . . [population growth],
- (b) communities of interest . . .
- (c) geographical features,
- (d) the availability and means of communication and transportation . . .
- (e) the desirability of understandable and clear boundaries, and [then]
- (f) any other factors the Commission considers appropriate.

Would this be something that you would say we should throw into – it would be a factor in (f)?

**Mrs. Burger-Martindale:** I think it could be.

**Mr. Evans:** And would it help us to identify, for example, a community of interest?

**Mrs. Burger-Martindale:** Well, I think that you went through the initials. There is a geographic boundary. Elbow Drive is the geographic boundary.

**Mr. Evans:** But in terms of your socioeconomic data.

**Mrs. Burger-Martindale:** Yeah. Well, maybe I just got carried away down a rabbit hole, but I thought it was very interesting to put those two together and say that there's no difference. There's very much a difference. Similarly, with Lake Bonavista and the communities to the north of it. I mean, I had no idea that Lake Bonavista had the population it did.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Burger-Martindale:** You're welcome. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Susan.

2:10

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation. It was well thought out. When we were looking at the riding of Calgary-Acadia, I thought that the end result had very clear, definable, understandable boundaries and that that would be helpful when people are thinking about: who is my MLA, and where do I find them? I think that's what we were looking at when we were doing it, and there were some communities taken away and some added in.

My question to you would be – the biggest change is Lake Bonavista. Can you live with Lake Bonavista? Like, they must have overlapping needs that they would request representation with their MLA the same as whether you lived in Lake Bonavista or somewhere else within the riding, you know, when you talk about the basics of housing, health care, education. What are your thoughts on that?

**Mrs. Burger-Martindale:** I'm sorry. I'm not quite sure what the question is.

**Mrs. Samson:** Like, could you live with the people from Lake Bonavista? Do they not have similar needs to you?

**Mrs. Burger-Martindale:** Oh, I'm sure we all do. It's interesting. The former presenter talking about the kids' parents in their school districts having different MLAs. My daughter went to French immersion school, not the local school. How many MLAs were represented by the kids there? Doubtless many. It's an urban issue as well as a rural issue. I mean, you're right. It looks like a square, rectangle if we include Lake Bonavista. I could say that some of my best friends live in Lake Bonavista. But I think Lake Bonavista looks south, not north, whereas the area of Kingsland and the northern part of our riding would say they're, if not in the inner core, in the good old doughnut around the city centre. I'm not sure that Lake Bonavista, with its eyes on its beautiful lake, would necessarily be looking downtown as the centre.

I mean, yes and no. We all have the same services, but the medical facilities aren't put one each in the constituency nor any of the other services with the exception of some of the shopping centres. For instance, the Lake Bonavista shopping centre: I think if I lived there, I would find that very suitable except for when I wanted to go to a big box store. The same can't necessarily be said of the little shopping malls up and down Elbow Drive. I mean, I think the answer is yes and no. We all need the services. Living in the same place but in various constituencies over the last 30 years, I've still gone to the same place, if they're still alive, for my medical services and the schools. Again, they're still there.

I think it's fairly nebulous there. I don't think they're distributed in terms of provincial or even federal constituency boundaries, quite honestly.

**Mrs. Samson:** Great. Good. Thank you.

**Mrs. Burger-Martindale:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Dr. Martin, any questions?

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you. I want to follow along a similar theme and ask you about the Lake Bonavista area. I take it – but tell me where I'm wrong if I am – that it was built later than the area immediately north of Anderson Road.

**Mrs. Burger-Martindale:** I've got a funny little story if I may. I'm from England, and a million years ago when I was at high school, I had a friend who, obviously, had an aunt, and she travelled in Canada and sent me a postcard. The postcard said that her aunt lived in this strange community. It's all flat and they built an artificial lake, and she thought it was the strangest thing she'd ever seen. I finished high school in '72. My house in Canyon Meadows is '74, so Lake Bonavista isn't all that new. Now, the Acadia district probably is more like '60s. I never thought that I'd come to live near where my friend was quite dismissive of, but there you go.

**Dr. Martin:** I'm just trying to tease out – your impression that you offered up was that the Lake Bonavista neighbourhood, roughly speaking, is orientated south. I mean, obviously, the Fish Creek park is on their southern flank, as it were, so that makes some sense to me, but is there a southern orientation with respect to shopping?

**Mrs. Burger-Martindale:** Well, as I say, the Lake Bonavista shopping centre is quite a good shopping centre. It has, you know, a Safeway. It has a pharmacy. It has all sorts of things. Like, all of us, we go to Southcentre. We go to Tsuut'ina for our Costco. Those aren't built on any boundaries except city boundaries, so I don't

know that there are any particularly southern shopping centres, not in the same way of Southcentre. Oh, yeah. There's Shawnessy. I don't know where they shop, but I would think Southcentre and Tsuut'ina for Costco.

**Dr. Martin:** And your major point there, really, was that they're not orientated north.

**Mrs. Burger-Martindale:** No. No. I can't see why they would be going north of Anderson. That intersection there is pretty hefty. The reason to go north – well, except, of course, for Fish Creek library, which is just on the edge of Anderson and Lake Bonavista Drive, so they presumably go to Fish Creek library unless they go to Shawnessy library, but mostly it's within their area.

**Dr. Martin:** Well, thanks.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. You know what? I think I was going to ask a little bit more about Lake Bonavista, and all my questions have been asked. Thank you so much for being here.

**Mrs. Burger-Martindale:** I know much more about Acadia than I do Lake Bonavista despite my friends living there.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you so much.

**Mrs. Burger-Martindale:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mrs. Burger-Martindale.

**Mrs. Burger-Martindale:** Would you like any documents that I...

**The Chair:** Please leave them with Aaron.

**Mrs. Burger-Martindale:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Sandy Stevenson is the next presenter.

Mrs. Burger-Martindale, please stay if you can for the rest of the presentations. It's always helpful.

Mr. Stevenson, have a seat and tell us what riding you live in and what riding or electoral district or districts you wish to comment on.

**Mr. Stevenson:** Thank you. I live in Calgary-Varsity, and I wish to comment broadly on the work of the commission, not on any particular riding, because I think other people from Calgary-Varsity have already made some very good, detailed comments about the proposed boundary changes. The only thing I would say to that is that, having reviewed some of those, I'm quite in agreement that adding Montgomery to Calgary-Varsity has a high probability over the next 10 years, before the next boundary commission is convened, to wind up with pushing us well over the 25 per cent maximum that we're trying to accomplish.

My remarks are almost entirely generically on the work of the commission. In my initial comment, Mr. Chairman, to the commission on May 23, 2025, and again on December 18, 2025, I raised the very serious issue of the perception that the provision of the electoral boundaries was at risk of being an exercise in blatant gerrymandering across the province, which was a bit of an extreme view. However, the 1993 boundary revision history of the current party and government gives enormous weight to the possibility of that outcome and the further risk of undermining democracy in the province and entrenching rigid divisions of opinion on public policy here in this province. Any boundary revision that is perceived by the 777,404 citizens who did not vote for the current government

party may result in those citizens refusing to accept the legitimacy of the result of the next election. That is a situation that must be avoided.

Avoiding that situation is not helped by the passage of a bill banning voting machines and elections in the province. It has been proven in U.S. courts that tampering just isn't possible, which leaves many citizens mistrustful of the integrity of future provincial elections. Fortunately, the actual October 28 interim report goes a long way toward allaying those concerns.

2:20

In most respects municipal boundaries, when setting riding boundaries across the province and our two largest cities in particular, have been very well done. Most of the riding boundaries reflect an attempt at fair, equal, and effective representation. It goes halfway to recognizing the rapid population growth in Calgary and Edmonton by adding another seat in each city. Adding another in each city would go the rest of the way, in my opinion.

Of course, the purpose of interim reports and public feedback sessions is to solicit commentary on oversights, identify missing information that could change the final boundaries and perception of potential misjudgments. Others have already outlined in detail the need to use much more up-to-date information when setting the boundaries for my riding of Calgary-Varsity. That information clearly shows that there is a serious risk in creating a riding which will significantly exceed the plus 25 per cent margin from the provincial average population criteria over the next 10 years. The current boundaries, in my opinion, must be retained in order to avoid that outcome.

The other aspect of boundary setting which creates division and mistrust in the electoral process is the use of hybrid ridings. Any good marketer will tell you that perception is reality and must be dealt with as such. Perception of hybrid ridings is that they only exist to favour the rural voters who support the government party and to disenfranchise urban voters. Any well-meaning intent around some of them has been, in my opinion, more than off-set by that perception, unfortunately, and I encourage the commission to avoid them wherever possible.

Burdened as it is with the negative perceptions rooted in Alberta's political history, the commission must also consider that they'll be watched closely to see if the interim report was only meant to lull urban voters into a sense of complacency only to be rudely surprised by a final report which is anything but fair, equal, and effective. For the good of the province I urge the commission not to be swayed into going down that path. Instead, I urge the commission to continue to use its mandate, as it has in the draft report, to create boundaries that maximize the public perception of fairness, equality, and effectiveness of representation.

The best result that this commission can produce is one that renders all of my fears completely groundless, and I look forward to a final report that achieves that goal. Those are my comments.

**The Chair:** Thank you for your very good analysis and brief presentation.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

**Mr. Evans:** No. Thank you for your presentation.

**Mr. Stevenson:** You're welcome. Thank you for your time.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for coming out today. That was good information. Also, know that we heard a lot about Calgary-Varsity, so thank you for adding to that.

**Mr. Stevenson:** Well, as I said, there are other people who have, as I'm aware, put forward some very detailed and comprehensive explanations. I don't need to spend time with that here.

But really, having voted in elections since 1971 in this province, I'm very concerned about the current state of division in Alberta society today. It is far more divisive than anything I've seen in my 50 years of voting, to the point where I'm rather alarmed that we seem to have been on a path over the last several years of divergence to the point where it makes the usual process of crossparty negotiation and compromise enormously more difficult. There are always going to be people who are extremely passionate believers in their particular political party or point of view; it's inherent in a democracy when we have that diversity of opinion. However, there have always been ways in my period of living in Alberta where we have found ways to accomplish reasonable compromises, and what alarms me is that I see that capability continuously slipping away.

You folks have a particular mandate, which is rather limited, but I applaud the fact that you have taken the opportunity to move us more toward the ability to achieve consensus than away from it. That, folks, when I read your October 28 report, was an absolute delight. Thank you for doing that.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin, any questions?

**Dr. Martin:** Well, I just want to say that I fear we will not be able to allay all your fears, but insofar as they are fears about electoral boundaries, we'll do our very best.

**Mr. Stevenson:** That's all you really can do.

Since they've been used as a device in the past, which left me aghast in 1993 with what happened back then, when six weeks before the election the ruling party rewrote the boundaries and, in fact . . .

**The Chair:** None of us were there doing that.

**Mr. Stevenson:** Well, guess what? I was old enough that I was. Even the Premier would have lost a seat if they'd kept the original boundaries.

Well, you know, they got acceptance. One of the things of democracies is acceptance of either side to the other one's eventual victory and acceptance of defeat of the other side. If you lose that, I don't know what happens, and I really don't want to find out. That was the reason why I came to present today, and I appreciate your time and attention to my remarks.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Just a real, you know, thank you. We take this role very seriously, and I really appreciate your comments about the interim report. I think it is noteworthy that it's the first unanimous interim report in 20 years, 25 years. It's been a long time. It is certainly something I think we were striving for for sure.

I guess just maybe one last chance for you to tell me what specifically about the interim report you like. Yeah. Maybe I'll just ask that.

**Mr. Stevenson:** Well, as I said in my written remarks, what you really tried to do was make fair and equal and effective representation. I did not see in going through that report where there was any serious attempt to manipulate the boundaries in favour of one party or the other, okay?

Most people don't think about these things, quite frankly, mostly because we haven't had to because we have always had these ways to not worry about them, to come to compromises. That's always been possible all the times that I have been the age of majority. But now the level of extreme comment that you see not only on social media but in published media across the board leaves one with the impression that that is becoming enormously more difficult.

I think what I liked about your report is that you folks made a tremendous effort to avoid any of that and just to give us fair, equal, and capable representation. Obviously, as an urban resident and a voter I would be much happier to see another seat in Calgary and another one in Edmonton, but at least we have gotten, you know, as I said, halfway there.

I would also point out that what I dislike about hybrid ridings is that urban voters have a very different lived experience from rural ones in Alberta. We have been diversifying in that experience space for all the 50 years I've been an adult, and that process continues. I at one time would have agreed that hybrid ridings, say, 20 or 30 years ago, were not a bad idea because you've got an opportunity for somebody to develop an understanding of both sides of the coin and the very different requirements of an urban versus a rural riding. Regrettably, I don't believe any longer that that's true. You will disenfranchise an urban voter by having an MLA who's distracted with rural concerns.

Having spent 13 years of my life working for Agrium, which was an agricultural company, and being exposed on a daily basis to the concerns of rural Albertans, in fact rural western Canadians, I no longer believe that an MLA that is representing an urban riding can do justice to what the significant requirements and concerns are that are unique to a rural riding and require someone from that riding who has lived that experience. It just isn't the same. They're too diverse.

That is basically what I liked about your report. You went a long way, when you talk about fair and effective representation – sorry to go on a bit at length, but that's what I need. You know, 13 years of reading Green Markets every week, you acquire a bit of an appreciation as to what the broad agricultural issues are, and then living in an urban environment, when you go to the office every day and deal with urban experiences: very, very different.

2:30

Of course, what that also requires, if you do elect along those requirements – and I appreciate, Dr. Martin, what you're saying about that you can't ever with just a boundary commission resolve these issues. You can't at all. You can only make one contribution toward it, which I'm grateful for you doing. But you're going to have to have those two folks try to sit down and work out a legislative agenda which does justice to both, which is inherently difficult, inherently problematic but also inherently necessary in this province or in any other democracy where you have an urban-rural mix.

**Mr. Evans:** Can I ask a question, Justice Miller?

**The Chair:** Very quickly.

**Mr. Evans:** I'm interested in terms of your ability to adapt in that environment, because unless you had a rural upbringing . . .

**Mr. Stevenson:** I was a city slicker first and foremost.

**Mr. Evans:** But you had to adapt.

**Mr. Stevenson:** Oh, yeah.



**Mr. Evans:** Can you tell us about that? Because that experience would seem to be something that an MLA would have to go through. What was that like for you? What extra effort did you have to do?

**Mr. Stevenson:** Well, first of all, you know, I was involved in last-mile transportation, delivering 2 million tons of product every year, and I negotiated all the freight rates for that plus some in the western United States, as Agrium was then constituted. My tenure was from 1986 to 1999. Then, of course, the entire business changed with the change of the former co-ops into joint stock companies and the liberation of hundreds of millions of dollars of capital, which they then used to buy out every fertilizer dealership in western Canada, which evaporated my job because then the joint stock companies took over all the freight.

It involved understanding rural delivery requirements. It involved going into and meeting with some of the largest dealers that we had, understanding how their market worked, how they marketed our product, their transportation requirements, how unique they were. I had worked five years for Trimac, which was the third-largest bulk trucking company in North America, as a cost analyst, so I was well prepared to understand the cost basis of transportation at that time. I worked closely with Lloyd Ash at that time, who trained me in truck costing. He's recently passed away, but he wrote the federal government report on the cost of trucks in Canada for many years.

As a result, you became sensitized to a lot of these significant concerns about infrastructure in particular, because all right, that's fine, but you're delivering 60 per cent of your volume in a 12-week period, which is highly compressed delivery time frames, and you're doing it in the middle of road ban season. Now, how do we manage that with 40 per cent loads and 60 per cent loads, all sorts of things which directly get into service and deliverability to the rural market?

Sorry to run a bit at length on that, but it was kind of my job. I do apologize for maybe bending your ear a bit too much, but I lived it for so long.

Yes, adapting to that would require an enormous – I mean, it's a lot of work. With the volume of information that anybody in government, God bless them, has to go through now – I mean, you look at the recent civic election and the constant mention with the new mayor of the firehose effect of just the city government at a \$5 billion budget. Now think about what that does for an almost \$100 billion budget across an entire province. You get the firehose of that.

Plus, it's tough enough for an urban MLA to hold enough town halls to stay in touch with their clients' ongoing concerns, with the constant changes that we all experience today, versus a rural MLA with all of their huge travel requirements and the greater distance. I'm particularly sensitive to those because transit times were my thing, and I just don't see where you can properly service one versus the other. You know, change always happens. It's the rule of life, and we have to adapt to the current environment, not what it was even 20 years ago.

Does that answer your question?

**Mr. Evans:** If you would have been someone brought up in a rural community, would it have been easier for you to have carried out your role?

**Mr. Stevenson:** Yeah because I would have known the difference between flax and wheat and barley. I learned all of that stuff and also the soil types. I spent umpteen hours staring at soil type maps to understand the underpinnings of consumption rates and

disappearance rates, the various fertilizer rates and who bought what, why they bought it, and what they needed it for. That was a pretty steep learning curve. Fortunately, I had a lot of fellow colleagues who were born and raised on a – thank you.

I'll end it there, but basically I had a lot of help on that range. Yes. I see where your point is taken, and it only reinforces . . .

**The Chair:** Mr. Stevenson, I'm going to have to cut you off. Thank you very much for your answers.

**Mr. Stevenson:** Sorry.

**The Chair:** I'm going to excuse you, but please stay to hear the rest of the presentations and possibly an opportunity for informal dialogue after. Thank you.

**Mr. Stevenson:** Sure. You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Is Mr. Pavit Sidhu here? Oh, great. Please come forward.

**Mr. Sidhu:** Sorry. Just give me a moment.

**The Chair:** Sure. Please identify yourself, and tell us what electoral division you're in and which division or divisions you wish to comment on.

**Mr. Sidhu:** Okay. My name is Pavit Sidhu. I'm here to comment on the riding of Calgary-Falconridge, and because of the nature of the changes, there'll be some commentary on Calgary-Cross as well. That will be the topic for my presentation.

Am I good to begin?

**The Chair:** Yes, sorry. Please proceed, sir.

**Mr. Sidhu:** Okay, of course. I'm just going to give you a little bit of background as to why I'm speaking on the boundaries because I think it will give you a good idea of where my insights are coming from. I am currently a constituency manager for the riding of Calgary-Falconridge. I've worked in the office of the MLA since the summer of '23. You know, of course, through supporting constituents, you gain a lot of insights into kind of how they navigate the riding: services, everyday life, identities, perceptions, communities, all those kind of nuances that are going to inform the wonderful work you're all doing.

Then I also have a personal connection. I've been a resident particularly of Whitehorn since I was eight, Temple before that, right next door, the ridings that are actually flipping between Calgary-Cross and Calgary-Falconridge. It was in Calgary-Cross originally, now in Calgary-Falconridge, now going back to Calgary-Cross. I'm also part of the board there as well, the community association, as vice president for the last eight years, and I have extensive grassroots engagement. I was a youth worker before this role with the MLA. So I spent a lot of time, actually my whole life, in this part of the city.

I'll be speaking again based on that feedback as well as the report as to what I think of the changes.

**The Chair:** Sorry. Can I just stop you? I didn't realize Mr. Clark was out.

He's speaking to Calgary-Falconridge and parts of Calgary-Cross.

**Mr. Clark:** Yes. I got that. Sorry. I apologize for popping out.

**Mr. Sidhu:** Oh, no worries.

First of all, I just want to thank the commission for the report. I know it's not easy. It's a Herculean task, and I don't envy any of you sitting on this side of the table because you have so many things to keep in mind as you go through this report, but what I do want to do is just highlight a couple of things about Calgary-Falconridge.

Just to give a little bit of a background as to how this riding started, this one was created in 2017 during the previous commission. They abolished Calgary-Greenway and shifted Calgary-Cross south and took parts of Calgary-McCall, now Calgary-Bhullar-McCall, and made the riding of Calgary-Falconridge, which includes Temple, Whitehorn, Castleridge, Falconridge, Coral Springs, and the east half of Taradale currently. Of course, I know with the boundaries there are some changes, and I'll speak to those in a second. Homestead is also included, which is the new area on the east side of Stoney as well.

2:40

Originally, when the riding was created, it was already 13 per cent above the median. You know, we all know that this part of the city, the northeast quadrant in particular, north parts and adjacent areas, if you look at Airdrie or the area between Chestermere and Calgary, communities like Homestead all the way down to Belvedere: lots of growth. At that time, they said that they weren't expecting growth, but of course we know that was wrong. Part of the reason why there was a lot of growth in Calgary-Falconridge, just to give context, is that besides the addition of Homestead there's a lot of densification happening in some of the older, more mature communities on the south end of the city as well as we have to acknowledge the reality that people in this part of the city live in multigenerational households, especially the ethnic population. So that adds to the density in a way that we might not see by household maybe in some of the other ridings across the city.

Just to speak, kind of, on the particular changes: I'm happy to see the addition of Martindale moving into Calgary-Falconridge. This actually makes a lot of sense, partially because the demographics of Martindale match the adjacent communities of Castleridge, Falconridge, and Taradale quite well. You know, for example, these are communities with significant South Asian populations – actually predominantly South Asian – with a significant Filipino population as well as a growing East African population. Languages like Punjabi, Urdu, and Tagalog are very widely spoken throughout this area, so it makes a lot of sense.

In addition to that, the addition and the removal of Whitehorn and Temple also make a lot of sense as well, just due to the fact that, though it may not seem like it, Calgary McKnight has quite a significant division within the community. Like, the North of McKnight Communities see themselves in one type of way whereas this community south of Calgary McKnight see them in a very different way. For example, Whitehorn and Temple are part of what we call The Properties, right? So that also includes Rundle and Pineridge, which is currently in Calgary-Cross.

These changes make a lot of sense given that, if any of you know the history of the migration of ethnocultural populations in the city, they all start in the Forest Lawn-Penbrooke area, and they move north. That's why you see the South Asian community furthest north, especially in areas like Redstone, Cornerstone, and then you see a lot of growing East African populations kind of in Marlborough Park, Marlborough, because that's more of the recent immigration that's happening to this part of the city. So it absolutely makes sense.

I know there's a little bit of a lack of neighbourhood cohesion, particularly you see it with, like, Taradale and Monterey Park, but you know, it does make sense given that a lot of the people in those communities – there's a lot of fluidity between those communities. I know it's not going to be perfect. Just because the population is

so immense in that area, there's going to have to be, you know, a couple of sacrifices, so that definitely does make sense.

Of course, Westwinds is also included in this area, which also makes sense as it's a huge cultural hub. There are lots of community organizations, religious organizations, places of worship, cultural groups, small businesses, particularly ethnocultural businesses. Often a lot of people from Martindale think they're in our riding anyway, so this addition does make sense because it's just north of the Westwinds industrial area.

In terms of population context, I knew it was already above, but I think with the new boundaries being just 2 per cent above with 56,000 roughly, that's greatly appreciated, but again, the growth drivers as I mentioned are going to be Homestead and other areas on the other side of Stoney as well as the density and the fact that a lot of that growth is always from multigenerational families, so we have more people moving in. I believe Evans had mentioned this, just before the new year in that report during the previous hearings, that you expected 18 per cent growth in that area, and even the adjacent areas are going to see a lot of growth. Like, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall is expected to see almost 29 per cent growth.

Those are kind of my thoughts on the Calgary-Falconridge changes. Again, I really appreciate it. You're doing the best you can with what you got.

Based on the changes that are happening at Calgary-Cross: again, I mentioned this earlier, but I'll reiterate it, which is that Whitehorn and Temple moving to Calgary-Cross restores kind of historical alignment. Everyone in Whitehorn and Temple already think they're in Calgary-Cross because they view themselves as being part of the group of communities south of McKnight and they see themselves as part of The Properties. That includes Rundle and Pineridge. This clarifies a lot of those kind of misunderstandings that often tend to happen when people are trying to find their local MLA, so this change definitely makes sense. You know, they share schools, right? I went to the schools in this area. They share libraries, recreation centres, service hubs, so this definitely does make sense.

It also kind of clarifies some of the demographics of the area. Calgary-Cross is actually similar in demographics to Calgary-East than it is to Calgary-Falconridge, so it's much more mixed. It's a mix of very old, established seniors from decades ago when the communities were first built, with very young newcomer families. It's a very interesting mix, and there's no one community whereas you have a multitude of various communities that have kind of moved up from the Penbrooke-Marlborough area that creates this interesting mix as well. They have their own unique needs as well – right? – as a more mature, kind of older, established community, so it makes sense that they're together because they already advocate together as well.

Those community associations, again, one of which I'm part of: we actively work with the areas south of McKnight, not traditionally north of McKnight, so it definitely does make sense in that regard.

I understand the inclusion of Conrich, which doesn't very much fit the demographics of Calgary-Cross, but I understand that due to population, of course, there are some oddities that are going to happen, so totally understandable. But, again, I think anything past that would be quite odd given that, you know – especially Chestermere, they have their own identity. They're very proud of that identity, as someone who's also worked with folks in Chestermere, and so I think anything past that would be not conducive to good representation, especially when Chestermere has its own needs. I understand why Conrich is included, given that they access Calgary-Cross for services.

Again, this aligns pretty much with public perception and how people think they're supposed to be in terms of boundaries, which is very nice to see, very good in terms of population, only 1.3 per cent above at 55,000. I know Evans had mentioned in the previous report an 11 per cent growth, so still steady compared to maybe some of the communities in the far part of the northeast.

I do have one or two comments just about Calgary as a whole, just to kind of add to the context in this. I know there's a lot of growth pressure, particularly in northeast Calgary, in terms of the actual quadrant, not the riding, just because it is potentially one of the fastest, if not the fastest growing part of the province, and we've seen that. I know Calgary-North East alone is expecting 55 per cent growth. I know this adds a lot of pressure to adjacent areas, so I do appreciate an additional riding being added to the Airdrie-Cochrane corridor that exists because that makes so much sense given how large Airdrie is now and given the movement of folks from the northeast into parts of Airdrie as well.

I know that there have, of course, been other – you know, Calgary-North East was basically cut in half, which makes sense given Deerfoot is a major boundary, and often people on the other side of Deerfoot don't really identify as being part of the cultural northeast, right? There are the physical boundaries and then there are the cultural boundaries, and so it definitely does make sense to keep everything contiguous on this side of Deerfoot.

Speaking of boundaries, I know that the majority of the growth, besides in the Airdrie, far northeast part is that there's going to be a lot of growth, I know, on the other side of Stoney. If you go all the way up from Homestead by Airport Trail, all the way down to Belvedere by 17th Avenue, that whole corridor is filling up. There are so many communities – right? – like Twinhills, Huxley, et cetera. Of course, that also includes the Conrich area as well, which has also seen significant growth, often transplants from the traditional communities like Calgary-Falconridge and Calgary-Cross.

I think with that added growth – and I know you folks have definitely done your best to plan for future growth, and I know there have been two ridings added to Calgary, again, with Calgary-Confluence and Calgary-Nose Creek, which is amazing. There is, I know, a hybrid-type riding potentially indicated on the south end of the city with Calgary-Okotoks, but I would say that instead of having a hybrid riding, that third riding should actually be a fully Calgary riding, given the expected growth, particularly around the outskirts of Stoney, because we know it's going to explode. That in-between area is filling up faster than most people can even keep track. You drive by a month later, and there's a new building up.

I think that, you know, despite these kinds of additions, I would humbly request that we should consider making that third seat a fully Calgary seat, given the abundance of growth that we know is going to happen in the coming years, because then we're going to end up in the same place where we are now, where we're playing catch up. Right? I also know that the urban ridings, of course, far exceed rural populations, but I know that often the urban ridings have concerns kind of around the equity, particularly around representation.

That kind of sums up all my notes. I tried to keep it concise and to the point. If there's anything that maybe you folks would like clarification on, I'm more than happy to kind of go back and address anything.

2:50

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Sidhu. A very concise and punchy presentation.

**Mr. Sidhu:** In my line of work we have to. My phone's already buzzing because I'm already getting calls from work, like: where are you?

**The Chair:** We always say that we're happy when MLAs come to present, and many times the alternative brain and the alternative person in the world of an MLA is someone like yourself. Thank you very much.

I'm going to turn it over to the commission for questions. Any questions, Mr. Evans? Okay.

**Mr. Evans:** Yes. What was your point? I wasn't sure if . . .

**Mr. Sidhu:** To summarize, I'm very happy with the boundaries that have been introduced because they align very much with, I think, the rationale with those mentioned in the report as well as the rationale that you see kind of on the ground at the grassroots level.

**Mr. Evans:** So you're okay with what we did with Currie and . . .

**Mrs. Samson:** Cross.

**Mr. Sidhu:** Sorry. Cross and Falconridge.

**Mr. Evans:** With Cross and Falconridge.

**Mr. Sidhu:** Yes. Absolutely.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. That's what I thought.

**Mr. Sidhu:** Sorry. I get bogged down sometimes in detail. Apologies if I wasn't clear about that. Again, I think the only kind of addition I had was at the end, where I would encourage that last riding to be a fully Calgary riding because of, again, the expected growth. But I've been very happy with the report just because, again, it aligns much closer to the reality on the ground. I don't expect anything to be perfect. That's, like, nearly impossible given the task that you've all been given, but I do really appreciate what's been in the report.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Samson, any questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation. I appreciate that. You should also know that we did get written submissions on the very topics you spoke about, and they mirror what you're saying to us today. So thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. Thank you.

I was taken by a couple of occasions you spoke about McKnight Boulevard as being a perceived dividing line among the communities. I'm very interested in that kind of topic, you know, because you mentioned later that they're both physical and cultural boundaries. Am I right to infer that you think McKnight is both of those things?

**Mr. Sidhu:** Yes. Absolutely. I used the example earlier even of Deerfoot, right?

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. Well, that's the big one.

**Mr. Sidhu:** I think it's one of those things where you may not see it as kind of an overview on a map, but based on how the communities work together, how they advocate, who is connected to whom, that often ends up being a very hard boundary. There's

even an organization called North of McKnight Communities, right?

**Dr. Martin:** Oh, really?

**Mr. Sidhu:** Then you have the properties south of it, that were kind of built together.

**Dr. Martin:** Then my inquiry becomes more pointed, if I may. It is because, as you see in the interim maps, we've drawn this new Calgary-Falconridge. There's an area that is south of McKnight. Are we wrong to presume that these are comparable communities north and south of McKnight?

**Mr. Sidhu:** Yeah. That north part of Monterey definitely is closer to Coral Springs, which is the other community just north of McKnight on that adjacent Stoney side. What I would say to that, just to clarify, is that I understand there's going to be some adjustments made due to population. You know, I don't want to be someone who makes your job tougher than it needs to be . . .

**Dr. Martin:** That would be hard to do.

**Mr. Sidhu:** . . . but I particularly know that, especially in the case of Whitehorn and Temple, those particular communities have a really strong affinity whereas folks in kind of Monterey Park and Coral Springs tend to kind of be a little bit on the outside, so they don't mind being on either side. But I know that in Whitehorn and Temple they have a very strong affinity to being with Rundle and Pineridge.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** I just want to say thank you. I filled up a good half of my notepad here. I wrote down a question, and every time I wrote it down, you answered the question in the course of your submission. So, try as I might, I haven't got any clever questions because you answered them all. That's, I think, the hallmark of a good presentation. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for taking the time. Much appreciated.

Okay. Our next presenter is – I think we'll kind of bypass a break, as we traditionally have, and just go right through – Mr. Rod MacKenzie, please.

**Mr. MacKenzie:** Yeah. I'm here.

**The Chair:** Okay. Please come forward.

Thank you again, Mr. Sidhu, and stay if you can to hear the other presentations. I know you're a busy guy.

**Mr. Sidhu:** Unfortunately, I've got to go and get back to work.

**Mr. MacKenzie:** Who are you?

**Mr. Sidhu:** My name is Pavit. I just presented.

**Mr. MacKenzie:** Yeah, but what's your affiliation with the area?

**Mr. Sidhu:** I work in the area, and I live in the area.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you again.

**Mr. MacKenzie:** You did a very good job.

**The Chair:** Mr. MacKenzie, please have a seat, identify yourself for the record, and tell us what electoral division you live in and

what divisions you're commenting on. We've got a time-allotted period for you, so please proceed.

**Mr. MacKenzie:** My name is Rod MacKenzie. I live in Calgary-Cross, and that's the only riding I'm going to comment on.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. MacKenzie:** I'm sure you've heard a lot about Calgary-Confluence. I don't care about that. I'm only going to comment on Calgary-Cross, and I will be candid with you. I am the president of the UCP Calgary-Cross board. I have a long affiliation with the Amery family. I was the president of Calgary-East when Mickey's dad, Moe Amery, was the MLA there. This is my background.

Most of my life I've lived in south Calgary. I lived in Lake Bonavista and Millrise. Seven years ago I moved to Calgary-Cross to live in the riding where I work because my office is there, and my office has been there on and off for 25 years. So I feel I have strong connections to Calgary-Cross.

Now, my concern with the new boundaries is that I believe, as a principle, that the historic communities that have been in the same riding should be together. So I believe that the proper set-up for Calgary-Cross would be Pineridge, Rundle, Marlborough Park . . .

**The Chair:** Slow down.

**Dr. Martin:** Mr. MacKenzie, only one of us is from Calgary, and these are just words, so we have to write them down.

**The Chair:** Pineridge, Rundle. What else?

**Mr. MacKenzie:** Marlborough Park, Marlborough, Mayland Heights, and Vista Heights, plus the Prince of Peace retirement trailer park.

You know, I kind of agreed with what the last guy was saying. In my view, 32nd Avenue is a natural division for the area. Like, that should be a divider for that in terms of the same schools and everything else. The communities south of 32nd Avenue – Marlborough, Marlborough Park, Pineridge, Rundle – had the same schools and demographically they're quite similar.

I don't know how much my friend got into this, the guy that was before me, but when you look at the demographics of those communities, it's highly Caucasian, it's Arab whereas Monterey Park more resembles the demographics of Falconridge. Like, it's a large Sikh population and Punjabi speakers.

In terms of demographics, the communities that I mentioned are very similar; they're Arab, they're Caucasian, a large Filipino population, which is also true of Monterey Park and the northern parts of that region. In terms of shared transportation, shared schools, those communities – Pineridge, Rundle, Marlborough Park, Marlborough – belong together.

To balance it out, I think that Mayland Heights and Vista Heights probably have more in common with those communities than Monterey Park, right? Monterey Park probably belongs with – and I think my friend kind of touched on this before. Monterey Park probably more resembles the demographics and the shared infrastructure with the Calgary-Falconridge community. This is my view of it. The Prince of Peace retirement home, the retirement trailer park: I believe that they also share infrastructure with those communities, and I think that they would be properly lumped in with them.

That's my presentation. If you have any questions, I'm prepared to answer.

**The Chair:** Actually, I wouldn't mind if you went to the map up there, the screen, grab a microphone, and I want you to point out to us where Monterey Park is.

**Mr. MacKenzie:** Yes. I can do this. Let me just approach it here. This is the new map that you guys are proposing.

**The Chair:** Yes, this is the new map. So just generally point out the various districts that you – starting with Monterey Park.

3:00

**Mr. MacKenzie:** These two blocks . . .

**The Chair:** Okay. Two blocks: meaning the two higher blocks?

**Mr. MacKenzie:** They're Temple and Whitehorn. This is Rundle, where I live. This is Pineridge. This here is Monterey Park.

**The Chair:** Okay. That's right at the intersection.

**Mr. MacKenzie:** Yeah. And this is like a rural area there. But, as I say, this is really important to us, in our view. Marlborough and Marlborough Park belong with Rundle and Pineridge. These two areas here: we're not happy that they're being removed from our riding at all. So these two, Whitehorn and Temple, belong in Falconridge. Monterey Park probably is better than Falconridge. But this area here is what we think should be our riding. Plus, to make the numbers work, we think that Mayland Heights and Vista Heights would be good additions to our riding as well, plus the Prince of Peace retirement trailer park.

**Mr. Clark:** Where is that?

**Mr. MacKenzie:** That's kind of in that rural area there.

**The Chair:** Go and point it out again, please.

**Mr. Evans:** So 32nd Avenue is the dividing line?

**Mr. MacKenzie:** This should be the dividing line. Well, yes, exactly right. This should be the dividing line. So Prince of Peace is like here somewhere, so that's fine, but I don't know if the numbers would work, like we have to make the numbers work, right?

**Mr. Clark:** Is it within, is it like just – I could probably google it.

**Mr. MacKenzie:** I think this is Temple. Prince of Peace is in here somewhere.

**The Chair:** Is it south of 16th or north of 16th?

**Mr. MacKenzie:** You know, I think it's parallel to Temple. Just a minute. Let me turn my phone off here. I actually think it might be north of 16th, but we'd be happy with that. So that rural area there: if the numbers work, we're happy with that. But if the numbers don't work, then we have to do something else, right?

**Mr. Clark:** I think as it stands now, that is in Cross, that little dip down there where it says city of Calgary – oh, wait a minute.

**Mr. MacKenzie:** And that was not part of the riding before. This is like a rural area. We're not opposed to that, but if the numbers don't work, then we would be saying we'd rather go with Vista Heights and Mayland Heights. We have to make the numbers work as well, and I appreciate . . .

**Mr. Evans:** So you're saying that above 32nd Avenue, that goes elsewhere; below 16th Avenue is in.

**Mr. MacKenzie:** This is Temple here, so Prince of Peace would be here. We're interested in Prince of Peace, to be honest with you, but if we can't make it work, that's fine.

**Mr. Evans:** Below 16th Avenue, where's the cut-off line?

**Mr. MacKenzie:** So 32nd Avenue should be the boundary, right here. Right here should be the boundary, then we have Rundle, Pineridge, Marlborough, Marlborough Park, then shake this place. I don't know if we can make it work, but, as I said, Prince of Peace is somewhere in there, and we'd be happy with that.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah, it is. Currently it's inside Cross.

**Mr. MacKenzie:** In this map here, Prince of Peace is part of that.

**Mr. Clark:** Yes, that's correct.

**Mr. MacKenzie:** But this is a new map.

**Mr. Clark:** Yes, this is the new map. We have put it in.

**Mr. MacKenzie:** Historically, it was not part of Calgary-Cross.

**Mr. Clark:** No, but it is in now.

**Dr. Martin:** But this also includes Conrich, which you're suggesting, you know, we could switch out.

**Mr. MacKenzie:** We're happy with Conrich as well, but this is new, and if it can't – I know you have to make the numbers work, like you have to make the numbers match. Much more important to us, to be honest with you, is that we would rather see Marlborough and Marlborough Park together with Rundle and Pineridge because historically that's what we've done.

**Mr. Evans:** Where are the schools?

**Mr. MacKenzie:** You have Lester B. Pearson, which is in Pineridge, an important high school. I believe that some of the kids in Marlborough and Marlborough Park would go to Forest Lawn, but that's not in the riding. I think Lester B. Pearson is the most important one in terms of high schools. And then there are a number of elementaries, but that they share, and there are a few others. Yeah.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Okay. We've kind of had that dialogue already started. Any more questions of Mr. MacKenzie, Dr. Martin?

**Dr. Martin:** No, thank you.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much, sir, for coming. It's obviously an area you're very familiar with, and thanks for pointing out the suggested changes.

**Mr. MacKenzie:** Thank you for your time today.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. MacKenzie:** So you're a justice?

**The Chair:** I am.

**Mr. MacKenzie:** A King's Bench?

**The Chair:** King's Bench.

**Mr. MacKenzie:** Thank you. Nice to see you.

**The Chair:** I believe that leaves us with Mr. Maslanka. Is Jerzy Maslanka present? Please state your name, sir, and again, tell us where you're from and what electoral divisions you wish to comment on.

**Mr. Maslanka:** Where I was driving from. Okay. I was driving from Nordegg, Alberta. It takes four hours, three and a half hours in winter conditions to get here.

**The Chair:** Where in northern Alberta?

**Mr. Maslanka:** Nordegg, Alberta.

**The Chair:** Oh, Nordegg. Sorry. Okay.

**Mr. Maslanka:** That's my Polish accent.

My name is Jerzy Maslanka. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to sit in front of you and make this submission. I'm a resident of Misty Valley. It's a small subdivision about 10 miles from Nordegg. I've been a resident there for 22 years, and I worked in the oil and gas business for 30 years. I retired. I should say, I was forced to retire by COVID in 2021. Then during COVID I realized that I don't want to go back.

I love history. I love Alberta history. I love to research Alberta history, and I love to research the colonial Alberta history. I'm always searching for the truth, and, you know, it's very exciting to actually learn about the Alberta history. I decided to start a tour company, and I have a Jeep Wrangler Sport four-seat, so I cannot take too many people but just two mostly. I didn't even realize that I'm going to be one of the most sought tour operators in Banff national park. I do tours. I offer the tours. For the last 20 years I'm very involved with the community. I know the community. I have many friends at Big Horn reservation, Smallboy Camp reservation. It's not an official reservation, but it's not far from here.

Why I am here: I have to say that I love the boundary. I'm familiar with the boundary, and we discussed with many friends those boundaries back in the summer.

**Mrs. Samson:** Can I just clarify. I don't mean to tell your story. Are you liking the boundary that includes Nordegg in Banff-Kananaskis or in Banff-Jasper?

**Mr. Maslanka:** No, I love the proposed boundary.

**Mrs. Samson:** In Banff-Jasper? Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Maslanka:** I have to be clear. I love the Jasper boundary.

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay. That's what I wanted. Thank you.

**Mr. Maslanka:** I don't like the other boundaries. The reason for this is – I was not planning to be here on Saturday morning, but then I followed the Clearwater county council meetings. They post the agendas, and today there was a council meeting, and they voted to submit proposed electoral boundary changes affecting Clearwater county to you. That is going to be presented on January 19. I went through this, and I said: I don't like anything there.

So I contacted my ward 5 councillor. I said: "Why did you never ask me? Why did you never come to our community and do a meeting and say, 'Guys, what do you think?' before we are submitting?" I said: "This is not fair. This is not fair, to say something that I don't agree with." On Sunday I found the website. I signed up. I am very thankful that in the last minute I had the

chance to submit why I don't agree with the county submission and what I like in this new proposed boundary.

3:10

I've been living there for 22 years, and I've been working there for 22 years, so I know the region very well. I know the people. Honestly, it's a stagnant, very rural area with a very, very solid conservative base. I remember when I came to this country in '87. They were still burning crosses there in this region. I always understand. It's very good, hard-working people that I work with but very opinionated. A person like me, who doesn't really align with the Conservative Party policy, you know, a voice like me is marginalized. I never had a chance to really sit with MLA Nixon or other MLAs and say: let's talk. Let's talk differently about things – right? – how we want to see this old boundary.

I feel that there is no balance. There is no balance. Once when I realized and I've seen the new boundary, I said: "Yeah, this is the balance. This is the place where the marginalized voices can be heard." When we look at the map, you can see the Rockies. I mean, the Rockies means tourism. The Rockies means 5 million people coming to this region, and I'm part of it. You know, I bring those people to this region. I show them the province, the history. I focus on the culture. My company is called Elite Brands Culture Discovery Tours. I love to share. I love to share this with people. And I believe that when we talk about these new boundaries, we have to look for the balance for the growth, the environmental stewardship, right? It's very difficult. It was always difficult to talk about the environment, and it is with the current boundaries because everybody knows in this province what the opinion is on the eastern slope piece by the current government, right?

Also, what I really like to see in this new boundary: I really like to see that for the first time First Nation communities are included and being an integral part of this boundary. I have many friends on the Stoney Nakoda reservation. Morley is, you know, the place that all the chiefs are. This is a totally different boundary, right? Their voices are never heard. They have to talk to the chiefs that live in the different part of the constituency. There's no communication. The chiefs speak about their problem or don't speak at all. So with these new boundaries, they're very excited. My First Nations friends are very excited. They said: "You know what? We're going to have one MLA. I don't need to go more and talk to the chief. I can go like you. I can go sit with the MLA and talk to them."

Especially, you know, there are plans for this region where I live, and there are big plans. There's \$23 billion that the government wants to invest into this region. And knowing that without proper communication with the First Nations people, with the people who live there, these are going to be, like, very difficult things to acknowledge. Having everything under one room: that's the best way to do it.

I wrote this yesterday, you know, the points, what I'm going to talk about, and this morning I woke at 5 o'clock and I was too early today, Commissioner Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Yes, you were.

**Mr. Maslanka:** You know, when I was looking at what I wrote and I look at the old boundaries, the new boundaries that you are proposing, I just realize that the Jasper boundaries – I start to think about the separation from Canada, Alberta separating from Canada.

**The Chair:** Okay. Sorry, sir. We've got a six-minute limit for your presentation. We've met that now. Can I summarize your point, that you are in favour of the proposed boundary and you're concerned about the Clearwater municipality's position contrary to that? Is that correct?

**Mr. Maslanka:** Yes. Yes, I am. That probably would help you to articulate the question when you're going to make the . . .

**The Chair:** Okay. Let me open it up to questions now. I think we've got your point. I have to say – sorry. It's kind of break time, and that's why I kind of jumped in there.

**Mr. Maslanka:** No. You know, I truly understand. I mean, there are people that can talk for 20 minutes.

**The Chair:** Okay. Let's start.

Mr. Clark, any questions or comments?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. I want to follow up.

**The Chair:** I'm going to just excuse myself.

**Mr. Clark:** You bet. I understand.

First off, thank you for your presentation, and thank you for deciding to come down today. That's very much appreciated. That's been a great part of this process, just listening to folks who are, you know, concerned about their communities and care about democracy and can share some local knowledge of kind of conditions on the ground, if you will.

One of the things I think we're interested in and very much, I think, the intent of this draft constituency – one of the intents was to bring together Indigenous people. I just wanted to know if you would comment, please, if you can, on including the O'Chiese reserves as part of Banff-Jasper.

**Mr. Maslanka:** Yes. O'Chiese is part of it. Stoney Nakoda: part of it. Tsuut'ina is going to be part of it. I think it's going to be much easier, you know, because, obviously, that's treaties 6, 7, 8 – right? – all together. Also, I mean, this part of the region, the Kootenay Plains, Nordegg, historically is not a treaty region, and it has been contested in the court ongoing. The land claims are contested ongoing by all the First Nation people. We have to think about that. But other than that, yes, O'Chiese is going to be part of it.

**Dr. Martin:** In the chair's absence he tapped me on the shoulder, so I'm the chair, and I'll make one comment. I mean, O'Chiese is in the old riding as well, so the O'Chiese and Sunchild and Big Horn were in the existing riding. Your point is that in this new configuration that's before us today, they would be joined by a whole series of First Nations in the southern end of this new configuration.

**Mr. Maslanka:** Yes. I mean . . .

**Dr. Martin:** That's all. I just want to clarify that.

**Mr. Maslanka:** Yeah. Not the O'Chiese, but Big Horn, definitely.

**Dr. Martin:** Susan, comments or questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

When you think about your previous electoral boundary with the Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre riding and now you are the Banff-Jasper, am I correct in reading between the lines that you think this is going to be much more beneficial to the development of tourism and other environmental issues in the area?

**Mr. Maslanka:** Definitely. You know, like I said, there are big difficulties to develop the tourism. That's how I've seen it for 20 years. I mean, in today's world of tourism you need to be open minded. You have to think differently, and the county never thought differently. There was a beautiful town, Nordegg, that they just

destroyed, right? Today if those buildings would stand up there, it would be one of the most unique places to visit. Definitely, I am of the view that it's going to change. It's going to change because it's going to bring and light everything. There are going to be people from different political spectrums contributing, arguing. That's a good thing. Arguing is a good thing.

**Mrs. Samson:** I agree. Thank you.

**The Chair:** That's our bread and butter, sir. I missed your dialogue. I'll have to read the book.

Mr. Evans.

3:20

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah. I had a question. I was just double-checking the same sort of thing that Susan was checking. You are closest to Rocky Mountain House in terms of where you live?

**Mr. Maslanka:** Yes.

**Mr. Evans:** And in terms of you getting to Banff, which is quite a bit of a jaunt, you've got to jump – like, are you close to highway 11?

**Mr. Maslanka:** Yes. One of the issues that has been brought many times is safety, right? People are arguing Banff hospital versus Rocky Mountain hospital, and we have to think about that. I go there almost three times a week, and I really like that we are called to Banff hospital because Rocky Mountain hospital has very limited facilities, so in case of serious accidents they have to fly to Red Deer.

**Mr. Evans:** They have to fly to Red Deer? Is that what you said?

**Mr. Maslanka:** Yes.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Where's the \$23 million investment that you mentioned?

**Mr. Maslanka:** I think it's more than that. I think \$35 billion.

**Mr. Evans:** Billion? What is it?

**Mr. Maslanka:** That was announced by the Alberta government. That's what they're going to invest into tourism development.

**Mr. Evans:** You said \$35 billion?

**Mr. Maslanka:** Thirty-five billion dollars by 2035. That's huge.

**Mr. Evans:** In all of Alberta.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Maslanka:** Definitely it's a critical, critical boundary that everybody is going to look into very soon. It's good that it's going to be one MLA because national parks have to be collaborated with the federal government – right? – so it's much easier to deal with them from the political point of view.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Maslanka.

Let me share the history of this riding. I recall distinctly when that presentation was made back in June, I guess it was, to one provincial riding, Banff-Jasper. I was originally very much taken by that and very impressed with that. However, I am concerned about the balkanization of a riding like that; in other words, one provincial representative representing this whole area. I don't think

you were here this morning, were you, for this morning's presentation?

**Mr. Maslanka:** No.

**The Chair:** There was a presentation by a Mr. Peter Scholz, who came out very strongly against that concept. As someone who is experienced in that alpine region, he made the case for not creating a Banff-Jasper riding but, you know, having at least two ridings from the foothills but into the national parks because of the very difficult challenge of dealing with the highly regulated national parks. I wish you'd have been here to hear that presentation because it would have been fun to have you two dialogue.

**Mr. Maslanka:** I mean, you know, from my experience doing this for the last four or five years, I think you're right. It's challenging to work with the parks, but it depends which party is in power, right? I've always been thinking, in this country, out of the box, and we have to think about that box because – I know that you caught me because I mentioned the word "separation," but we have to think about that. I came from the region that lost six countries. If I go back to Poland, this whole region is different. There are no countries, or there are extra countries. We have to think about that. Those parks will be there, and they will be always under federal jurisdiction, and I think it's much easier. I think it's about power and keeping the power and influence in this region. We have to think that tourism is going to drive this region.

**The Chair:** It was exactly that point that Mr. Scholz made. I think what he stressed is that there needs to be cross-pollination between the provincial representatives and the federal parks, and it is stronger if there are at least two or three that bump up against the federal ...

**Mr. Maslanka:** I think it's better to meet in Canmore, in Banff at the one table than to travel around between Rocky Mountain House, Edmonton. I think it's better. It's better to go for a beer in the evening and have a good argument.

**The Chair:** Especially in Canmore. They've got a good brewery.

**Mr. Maslanka:** Yeah. That's good beer, so you can have a good argument there.

I love it. I talked to many people, you know, who are not conservative driven in opinions but who are open minded, and everybody likes it. I know that there are businesses, tour businesses that are against that, but they are very attached to the current connection. I think it's politics, but we should forget about the politics. We should think about how to build this whole region strong and give opportunity. I think we have so much opportunity to change tourism in the Rockies. I mean, Banff national park is almost destroyed. I think we have to go outside the boundary. We have to create opportunities to make sure that we save this park because we are basically saving this park from destruction.

**The Chair:** Two representatives might be better than one.

**Mr. Maslanka:** Exactly.

I think I like to have it in one place. I like to have one door. I like to have all the chiefs sitting together arguing. We all know that we all like to argue, right?

Oh, I forgot to mention that I love that Rocky Mountain House is out of the boundary because if Rocky Mountain House would be inside the boundary, that would totally challenge the balance, you know, during the election, right? Then you get another 18,000 people who vote and have no idea what's going on. I think it's important to keep Rocky Mountain House outside of the boundary. It's great. I have to admit you did a great job by introducing this new Banff-Jasper boundary.

Thank you so much for the opportunity.

**The Chair:** Thank you for coming and making the trek.

Okay. I think that is everyone. No one else is on the list. We'll close the proceedings this afternoon and reconvene tomorrow morning at 9.

[The hearing adjourned at 3:28 p.m.]













Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Public Hearings

Calgary

Tuesday, January 13, 2025  
9:05 a.m.

Transcript No. 32

## **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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Manager of Corporate Communications

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Managing Editor of *Alberta Hansard*

## **Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Calgary**

### **Public Participants**

Patti Dolan  
Willem Klumpenhauer  
Lee Krywitsky  
Art Matsui  
Michael Parker  
Peter Scholz





9:05 a.m.

Tuesday, January 13, 2026

[Justice Dallas Miller in the chair]

**The Chair:** Thank you, everyone, and welcome to the second day of the second round of public hearings for the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission. Someone misdescribed it as the electric boundary commission, and it's quite a shocking thing to come to that. It's a little more boring for the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

Welcome, everyone. We will be running most of the morning with public submissions, but before I start the public submissions, I want to give some introductory comments and remarks about the commission. You can see from the name plates and from the screen the names of those of us who are sitting on the commission. For biographical information you can go to the website and see our background.

Alberta is at this stage of the election cycle such that we are legislatively mandated to review the electoral boundaries in the province. Two things are motivating that change. One, an increase in the number of electoral divisions from 87 to 89; that amendment and legislation took place a little over a year ago. When we make a change like that, we then must consider population. Of course, as everyone knows, individual voters, eligible voters in an electoral division have the right to elect their member of the Legislature to sit in the Legislative Assembly in Alberta.

The second aspect of not only increasing the number of seats is that we have a significant increase in population since the last Electoral Boundaries Commission report in 2017. A rough approximation is that we have over 800,000 new people since 2017. The question is: where do we draw the boundaries in order to provide for effective representation?

Just to go back to the last report of 2017, there was an estimated population of just over 4 million people in Alberta, divided among 87 electoral divisions, resulting in an average of 46,697 voters per division. We do not strive for that absolute average. We've worked towards the range of minus 25 per cent population to plus 25 per cent population. You can see the range that the 2017 commission worked with for their report.

Because of the increase in population we have approximately 4.8 million people as a population base that we're dealing with for this commission. If you want to know how we arrived at that, you can look at our report. I believe it's pages 15 to 17 that talk about why we chose that figure as the best estimate for us to use as the population base for the province. When you factor the 89 seats into that population, it reveals an average population of 54,929, which is almost 55,000. The target range, then, is the minus 25 to plus 25 you see on the screen, just over 41,000 to almost 69,000.

Our task is not to come up with a map that shows one person, one vote. We are not like our American neighbours to the south who have a very strict constitutional principle of one person, one vote. Rather, in Canada we have the term "effective representation." Many factors go into assessing what effective representation is. I'll chat about those in a minute, and some of those issues will come out actually in the presentations, I'm sure.

We were appointed in early April last year, and the work of the commission involved those four tasks starting in May. We discussed and spent a lot of time talking about population, and we came up with the agreed upon population demographics based on the latest Statistics Canada report of 2021, which was continually and consistently updated by the Office of Statistics and Information from the Alberta Treasury Board department. Again, the basis for those statistics can be found in our report.

We also reviewed hundreds of written submissions from interested Albertans, public officials. Then in May and June we spent several weeks travelling across the province, having public hearings and listening to individuals across the province. That was probably one of the most rewarding aspects for us as a commission, to be in parts of the province we normally wouldn't be and hear the perspective of interested citizens in those venues.

Then, after that was all completed, we worked hard with the map people at Elections Alberta, and the purpose of that was to create maps that provided 89 boundaries that provided for effective representation. In late October we completed and published our interim report, and we were pleased to be able to present that to the Speaker of the Legislature, after which he tabled it and every member of the Legislature received it.

Now we're at the stage of receiving public input and public response to that interim report. Just so everyone knows, we used a number of factors to come up with the boundaries that we did in order to ensure each Albertan had effective representation. Again, population is only one factor. It's one of the primary factors, but it's only one factor that's to be considered. Our goal ultimately was to come up with understandable and clear boundaries, and we are hearing from Albertans whether we did a successful job of that.

After we tabled our report in late October, we then opened it up for further public responses to our report, and from early November to December 19 we received in excess of 1,100 written submissions. Now we are at the stage of having a second round of public hearings. This is the first week. We've dedicated approximately three days in Calgary, and then we move to Edmonton this week, and we will be hearing in-person submissions in Edmonton next week and virtual or online submissions as well. We are not travelling throughout winter. We're just staying in Calgary and Edmonton.

I hope that gives you a background as to where we're at and why we are here. We had a full day yesterday. And as our second day leadoff we will hear from the presenters that have signed up.

Is Michael Parker present?

**Mr. Parker:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** Okay. You're first up, Mr. Parker. Please come forward. We have allotted 10 minutes per presentation. As a terrible timekeeper I've honoured that more in the breach than the observance, so don't panic. Please have a seat, introduce yourself, and tell us what constituency you are coming from and which one you want to comment on.

**Mr. Parker:** I'm Mike Parker from Banff-Kananaskis. First, a little bit about my background and then I'll kind of get into what I'd like to talk to you about here today. I live in the summer village of Waiparous, as I said, in Banff-Kananaskis.

**The Chair:** Sorry. What village?

**Mr. Parker:** The summer village of Waiparous.

**The Chair:** Waiparous. Okay.

**Mr. Parker:** It's about 20, 30 kilometres northwest of Cochrane. It's in the foothills, in Ghost River valley.

You know, I think the Banff-Kananaskis riding is one of the most unique in the province because it's very diverse: First Nations, tourism, agriculture, ranching. I worked 40 years in the oil and gas industry, currently a member of the village council, as well as a member of the volunteer fire department. I've lived in Alberta for much of the last 24 years, splitting my time between Calgary and

Waiparous. I lived 10 years in Calgary in city centre and then in 2016 moved full-time out to Waiparous. I think it kind of gives me a unique perspective about what's important to people in the city or a town like in Calgary and, say, Cochrane even versus those in the Bow Valley in more of a rural setting.

I guess the key point I'd like to make first is to tell you thank you. I actually talked to you back in June. If you remember, we went to UT. Yeah. I had two main points or two requests when I came and talked to you. One was that you keep the ridings fair and logical, and the other was that you put communities with similar issues and interests in the same riding as much as possible.

9:15

As far as my first point, I asked that you honour the past practice of having fair and logical ridings, and you did that. As you can tell from my accent, you know, I did not grow up in Alberta. I grew up in the States, went to school in the States, and I'm now a dual citizen. One of the things I noticed when I moved to Canada was that the riding boundaries made sense. They were logical; they seemed to have similar communities and neighbourhoods in them. This is very different from what I was used to in the States, where a lot of the ridings would be gerrymandered to the point of being ridiculous, strictly for the point of giving one particular party an advantage in an election. That was before you consider what's going on there right now, which is: what do we even discuss?

When I look at the maps of the proposed Banff-Jasper riding – and in fact, actually, when I kind of glance at all the maps – they look logical. You all did a very good job of laying out why you made the changes. It's all based on data and good logic. So, yeah, like I said, I think you did a good job, and I'd just like to say thank you for upholding my faith in Canadian politics.

The second point regarding communities: you know, I said ridings should consist of neighbourhoods and communities with common economies, geographic commonalities, and issues. That allows the MLA to properly represent their community in the Legislature with issues that affect the riding. I think the Banff-Jasper riding does that. If you look at Jasper, Banff, Canmore, and the Bow and Ghost River valleys, they all have similar concerns and issues; and in all the communities in the Banff-Jasper riding the environment, tourism, and wildlife preservation are all key issues. As you point out in your report, they actually all have either a direct or indirect tie to the national parks.

I think it was also good to bring in some of the First Nations communities that you did, because we already have a fairly large First Nations population. In fact, especially the Stoney Nakoda community, so that now all the Stoney Nakoda are represented by one MLA.

I also think that if you look at the west side of Calgary and the communities that you removed from the current Banff-Kananaskis riding, in the new one, I think they're basically suburbs of either Cochrane or Calgary. They have issues much more aligned with the ridings in Calgary or Cochrane than they do with those people living in the Bow Valley, and, like I said, as somebody that's lived in both places, I can appreciate and really understand the differences between those. I think your proposed map does a good job of recognizing those differences. You know, to me it's a win-win. You've got the Banff-Jasper, which is, like you said, people that are focused on the national parks, the environment, wildlife, and, like you said, needing to split some off, the ones you split off definitely, I think, are more aligned and fit well with the new ridings that you put them in.

In closing, I'd like to say thank you for your hard work. I know it was a difficult task, but I think you've done a good job of listening to everybody's input. I was impressed in June when I talked to you.

Everybody seemed engaged. Everybody seemed to listen. Everybody asked good, relevant questions. You know, I think you've done a good job of developing an electoral boundary map that's fair to all Albertans. So again I just wanted to say thanks for upholding my faith in Canadian politics, and I'm open to any questions that you have.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Parker.

Mr. Evans, any comments or questions of this presenter?

**Mr. Evans:** No, but thank you for coming back and telling us we did a good job.

**Mr. Parker:** I figured you'd probably get more negative than positive. Definitely a thankless job. I understand, so I wanted to do that.

**Mr. Evans:** Appreciate it. Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Again, I have to say thank you. First thing in the morning to have praise works well, so thank you.

I do want to ask you a question. Although the riding didn't change for Canmore and the area around Canmore, now that we hook together the national parks, both of them, do you think that that's a problem for Canmore fitting in? The national park element, in my mind, might be overbearing.

**Mr. Parker:** No, I don't think so. I think, too, from a population standpoint Canmore is still going to be the largest population, right? Also, I think it probably will help Canmore, to be honest. One of Canmore's big issues is that they are a tourist economy. They basically have to deal with, you know, two, three, five times the amount of people that come in there. They need the infrastructure for a very large population, but the people living there aren't there. So from that standpoint, they actually are very much like a Banff or Jasper.

I think it will actually help them because, like you said, they deal with the same issues as far as housing and, you know, affordable living that Banff and Jasper do. It's interesting. I had not even thought about pulling Jasper in, but it makes a lot of sense. It really does.

**Mrs. Samson:** Great. Thank you for those comments.

**The Chair:** This report may be criticized that Banff-Jasper is a bit of a balkanization, especially that it's a very large riding and may be difficult to traverse in winter. Your comments about Canmore: doesn't that maybe warrant keeping Canmore and Banff together?

**Mr. Parker:** Well, obviously, I mean, Banff and Canmore definitely need to be in the same riding, without a doubt. Like you said, you're probably going to hear it today, too, a few people that say that maybe it should be the Jasper-Banff-Canmore riding. You'll probably get some of that, but as far as – yeah. It's already a large riding. You're right. Adding Jasper will make it a little more challenging.

I feel confident, though. From your report it sounded like Sarah Elmeli, the MLA, is actually one of the ones that kind of suggested it. I think she would have a good handle or feel for it. You know, there's not an ideal way to handle it, but I think, especially with current communications and Zoom – I mean, right now she lives in Canmore. Going all the way down to Millarville is an hour-and-a-half drive for her now. Going up to Jasper is a little bit further by probably a couple of hours or so, but I think it's doable. I think the downsides of it – let me say that I think the upsides outweigh the downsides.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.  
Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you. I want to first ask where Waiparous is. Is it just north of Canmore?

**Mr. Parker:** No. It's actually due north of Mini Thni, or Morley. If you know where Ghost Lake is, it's basically up highway 40 about 17 kilometres, but geographically it's, like, due north of Ghost Lake about maybe five, six kilometres.

**The Chair:** How do you spell it?

**Mr. Parker:** W-a-i-p-a-r-o-u-s. It's in the foothills. As the crow flies, we're probably 30 minutes from Canmore. Driving there it's about 45, 50. We actually have to go back around the reserve.

9:25

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you. My more substantial question is about Kananaskis Country as we generally understand it. It's pretty clear, then, that Canmore has a strong relationship with that region also, you know, leaving aside the relationship with Banff national park. Can you speak to the economy of Canmore vis-à-vis the opportunities in Kananaskis Country?

**Mr. Parker:** Okay. Yeah. You're right. You know, Canmore's economy is tied to tourism, whether that be the national parks or whether it be Kananaskis Country. Kananaskis Country gets a significant amount, probably not as many international tourists that probably go there just because of – but definitely local and Albertan and stuff. So, no, I do think having those tied together makes a lot of sense even though Kananaskis is not a national park, being a provincial park and being very much a tourism-based economy and also dealing with the issues of the environment, wildlife preservation, management of all of those kinds of conflicting and interlocked issues.

There is a lot of similarity between Kananaskis and the national parks and therefore Canmore also, so I think it makes sense to have them all together although it does make for a large riding. Now, I'll say that peoplewise you're not adding that many people. You know, there are very few people that live in Kananaskis, but it definitely makes sense to have them together.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** You mentioned Indigenous peoples and that connecting is one of the features you liked about this constituency. I mean, it is a large constituency. One of the things I'm curious about – you may not know this, so if you don't know, that's okay. If you do, I'd love to hear your thoughts. The O'Chiese First Nation near Rocky Mountain House, which is the kind of north bit right on the map where it says Clearwater county boundary: do you know much about the O'Chiese First Nation? Do you have any thoughts on whether it makes sense to bring in?

**Mr. Parker:** I mean, the only thing I know is what I've read online. So, yeah, I probably don't know, like you said, whether that one makes sense to pull in or not. You know, I'm much more familiar with, say, Eden Valley. The Stoney Nakoda is currently in our riding. I'm much more familiar with Stoney Nakoda. I do know, like I said, bringing Eden Valley in made sense. The O'Chiese: that one, unfortunately, I'm not as familiar with.

**Mr. Clark:** Fair enough. Okay. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Parker. You're excused. Feel free to stay and hear the other presenters. If there's time after, we can have a more general conversation. But, yeah, I appreciate your input, and thank you for coming back a second time.

**Mr. Parker:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mr. Klumpenhower.

**Dr. Klumpenhower:** All right.

**The Chair:** Good morning.

**Dr. Klumpenhower:** Well done on the last name there.

**The Chair:** Identify yourself, sir. Tell us where you're from and what particular electoral divisions you're wanting to address us on.

**Dr. Klumpenhower:** Sure. I will go through that. My name is Willem Klumpenhower. I live in the relatively unchanged riding of Calgary-Acadia. I'm not really interested in speaking about it unless you have burning questions about that area. But I'd like to talk a little bit more broadly about some of the proposed changes, mostly on the, like, fringes of Calgary and Edmonton.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Dr. Klumpenhower:** I'll mention a few specifics, and then we can talk about them after if you'd like.

I just wanted to situate briefly where I'm coming from. I work professionally with spatial data a lot in my day job, and I've spent a lot of time thinking about how lines on a map can really shape real-world outcomes. I'm very aware that drawing things like electoral boundaries involves a lot of difficult trade-offs, and I want to echo the praise that this is not an easy job to do. There's no such thing as a perfect system, especially between population equality, shared interests, values, geography, and with our first past the post system it's really imperfect solutions.

My intent is not to second-guess your work but to highlight a trade-off that maybe you haven't thought of or haven't heard of yet or maybe you have thought of but I wanted to sort of echo and re-emphasize, and I think it matters for representation.

Before I turn to that, I want to take one mild point of friendly frustration offered constructively. For data nerds and members of the public like me, I like to engage more deeply with the process. I like to have access to the data and the information, and I found it very difficult to find the spatial data needed to bring into your own maps and do some of your own analysis. That was very hard to access. It was not offered in an open way, so I would love if you would consider doing that in the future. You know, I feel that open data is sort of a key part of democracy, so it would be great if you could share those kinds of things, but I'll leave that now.

The perspective I want to offer comes from some research on Alberta's sort of urban-rural fringe, specifically the ones that looked at Rocky View county and the Calgary region more in depth. It was conducted by a scholar who actually later went on to serve as mayor, and it was grounded in both close observation of how growth, governance, and political conflict play out in these sort of fringe, edge areas. I'm not trying to appeal to authority with that but just to signal that the perspective is grounded in research and then practical work as well.

Some of the proposed ridings – and I’m going to talk a little bit about Calgary-Okotoks and Edmonton-West-Enoch – combined three very different kinds of places: a sort of satellite municipality, a rural land that lies in between, and a portion of a major city. Often I’ve heard these described as hybrid ridings. People have talked about them as hybrid ridings as though hybridity itself were sort of this form of cohesion, that hybridity can be a good thing. The research suggests, and I kind of feel that there’s a more cautionary interpretation, that hybrid spaces are not defined by shared identity but really more about shared conflict or shared pressures but very different conflicts and very different ideas about how to deal with those pressures.

Calgary-Okotoks is probably the clearest example of this challenge, which, you know, combines part of Okotoks, a distinct satellite municipality, intervening rural lands, and the edge of Calgary into a single electoral district. It may appear reasonable on a map, but socially and politically these areas operate with very, very different expectations. Okotoks being an incorporated municipality, it has its own governance, services, civic identity. Rural residents in between may prioritize things like land use and agriculture viability, taxation. Then Calgary edge communities may be focused on more city issues: transit, schools, those kinds of urban infrastructure. They may experience common growth pressures, these areas, but they want often very different policy responses to those things, right? That’s a big challenge.

I think the riding of Edmonton-West-Enoch raises kind of similar concerns. We have an Indigenous community, adjacent rural lands, and suburban Edmonton neighbourhoods. Again, proximity is not really a proxy for shared political interest. These communities have very distinct governance structures, priorities, and relationships to the land.

In Alberta’s urban-rural fringe conflict operates at multiple levels at the same time. There’s, obviously, conflict between these groups that we mentioned. There’s conflict within groups, which is not necessarily a bad thing to have in a political discourse, and conflict within individuals themselves. They don’t disappear because people live near one another. In fact, I think that often the proximity of these different shared values together can sharpen those conflicts a lot.

The trick is that from the standpoint of effective representation, combining multiple structurally opposed communities into a single riding can really create a risk of dilution of representation. I know from being sort of an active individual that representation can often go to the loudest group or the group with the most resources, and quieter or more marginalized groups, less institutionally embedded groups can often be sidelined. I think the risk is greater in these sort of hybrid areas.

I’m not arguing that these areas aren’t connected. They clearly obviously are geographically, but electoral boundaries kind of serve a different purpose than regional co-ordination. I feel they should make sort of representation legible and achievable. Trying to maximize the effectiveness of representation is the way I see these things. I think that on these hybrid ridings it’s a reason to be very careful and avoid this kind of aggregation that can happen in these ridings and in fast-growing regions like Calgary and Edmonton’s peripheries. Electoral boundaries work best when they respect the distinct political identities of municipalities, rural areas, and urban communities rather than trying to combine them all into a single district.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, sir.

Mr. Clark, any questions or comments?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you very much. I appreciate that submission. I’m really curious. You didn’t mention Calgary-West-Elbow Valley, and we had a submission, in fact, if I’m not mistaken, our very first one yesterday, from someone who shares your view that hybrid constituencies are, broadly, not something they wish to see. However, in the case of Calgary-West-Elbow Valley there were certain characteristics they felt spoke in favour of a hybrid in that specific circumstance.

9:35

In that case Elbow Valley shares underground sanitary sewer infrastructure. I think they may be on city water. No, I think they were on the water licence, but they shared that infrastructure. There’s a somewhat similar built form, somewhat higher density. She compared that though to Bearspaw or Springbank, which is, you know, two- and four-acre, quite different well-water septic system kind of thing. Would you agree that there are cases where a hybrid makes sense? Even if we accept your sort of broad submission to maybe be careful about it, there may be some cases. I think we’ve had a few written submissions, not in person. But Calgary-Cross I think includes Conrich, right? They are areas that are kind of practically speaking part of Calgary even if they aren’t geographically within the four walls, if that makes sense. Are there scenarios in your mind where hybrid makes sense?

**Dr. Klumpenhouwer:** It’s possible. There’s not going to be a perfect way to do it. I don’t know how far west Calgary-West-Elbow Valley goes. Just looking at this map, I don’t quite know what...

**Mr. Clark:** All the way to highway 22.

**Dr. Klumpenhouwer:** But it doesn’t include Bragg Creek or Cochrane; those are separate? It just kind of follows along the highway?

**Mr. Clark:** L-shape.

**Dr. Klumpenhouwer:** In a little L-shape.

To me I tend to focus on and I think that what I was reading tends to focus on governance and, like, the representation of that. In that sense, you know, you could follow that conclusion to say that you should follow municipal boundaries as much as possible, which I understand has been a big part of the conversation, whether we should do that or not.

Obviously, there are going to be shared interests. How provincial those interests are versus how municipal those interests are probably matters. Like water infrastructure: I mean, we can get into water infrastructure. It’s very relevant right now, but that might be something that is a little confused about what is an issue. But I do generally tend to think that the growth pressures that sort of the Calgary-West-Elbow Valley suburban area has, which looks like Tuscany to me, and the pressures sort of further west are probably different. Or the pressures might be the same, but people want to respond to them a lot differently.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

I wanted to ask you about Edmonton Enoch. I’m going to posit that there is a significant economic linkage between Enoch Cree First Nation and its economy and that of the western part of Edmonton. The Enoch Cree Casino is the largest in western Canada. It has a thousand employees; 200 of them are from the

band. The rest are from Edmonton. I mean, I think the economic linkage is inescapably large. Its social and entertainment features, because it's not just a casino, you know, also bring it well within the orbit. In fact, it's central to the orbit of Edmonton's music and entertainment scene. On both those parameters the linkage is very, very strong.

I think that your general argument about hybrids being not uniform and not free of different interests is inescapably true, yet there are other considerations that make them plausible. I think Enoch Cree is a plausible choice for a hybrid situation.

**Dr. Klumpenhower:** Yeah. I have two thoughts about that. One is that I tried to pick areas – the two areas I focused on were areas where I saw sort of three distinct governance structures. I mean, again, maybe to Mr. Clark's point, Calgary-West-Elbow Valley has sort of two things. I didn't focus on areas that had sort of just a rural and then the edge of a city. I picked those two because I feel like they have three distinct sort of governance structures with a reserve, a sort of rural county, and a city. Three may be too much to ask, frankly, of an MLA to represent.

**Dr. Martin:** Well, you can ask.

**Dr. Klumpenhower:** You can ask, but I think we should be making the barrier as easy as possible for individuals.

I also wonder about the argument that economic link is a reason to draw a boundary. For example, I mean, you could take that argument and say that downtown Calgary is obviously economically linked to the rest of the city, so you would want to have representation. If you're going to follow the economic argument, then you'd want to have downtown be represented by other ridings as well, but we don't. We divide it up so that downtown partially has its own riding. I don't know that that economic link is necessarily a representation problem.

**Dr. Martin:** Oh, it is. I mean, it's one of the factors that cluster under the heading of communities of interest, so it's one that we are bound to look at seriously by the act.

**Dr. Klumpenhower:** Yeah. I do think I would agree that issues that come up that have to do with the economic link are shared issues probably. Right? If there's a problem with what's going on where someone works and where they live and those are tied together, you probably want somebody to represent that fairly. But I think we can't do that entirely well inside a city necessarily either because cities have sort of an economic link that's very clustered and centred versus the fringes.

My focus was mostly on governance. I would say that the argument for having three different governance structures is what concerned me, but perhaps that is mitigated in the Edmonton-West-Enoch.

**Dr. Martin:** I like the simpler label.

**Dr. Klumpenhower:** Yeah. I do, too. I was trying to use the official one.

Perhaps it's mitigated in that case and there's potentially a justification for it, but, yeah, it was those three different ones that I was focused on.

**Dr. Martin:** All right. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for the presentation. Interesting thoughts. I wasn't aware of the Rocky View county man that wrote

or investigated the theory of hybrids. What is that? Who is that individual?

**Dr. Klumpenhower:** That was actually Jyoti Gondek.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for that. I'm going to look that up.

Also, my thought was around the Enoch. I was interested in your comments on that, and I think you've answered my question there.

**Dr. Klumpenhower:** Okay. Good.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you again for coming out today.

**Dr. Klumpenhower:** Yeah. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** Yes. Mr. Klumpenhower.

**Dr. Klumpenhower:** Yes. Good enough.

**Mr. Evans:** Did I get that one? Like is that better than Justice Miller?

**Dr. Klumpenhower:** Marginally.

**Mr. Evans:** The name pronunciation.

I was very interested in your submissions with respect to a couple of things. One, how you were using the concepts of marginalized and loudest in terms of representation and how you considered that was going to be more problematic with hybrids than nonhybrids. I'm going to ask you to give me some further thought on that because I don't know that that's necessary. To me that doesn't make sense. I think those issues, those concerns that you've raised, which are valid, are applicable in any riding.

I would suggest that, in fact, in a nonhybrid riding it may be more difficult and be more of a concern that needs to be guarded against than a hybrid riding. I'll suggest that the reason for that is because if you look at the act in section 14, and 14(b) talks about communities of interest and then it talks about including municipalities, regional, and rural communities. What the act has done there is specifically identified hybrid ridings as a means of identifying communities of interest. You have clear demarcation, I would suggest, of a community of interest being rural versus urban, which I would suggest makes it easier because if you can identify what your communities of interest are, you can guard against the dangers that you've mentioned. It makes it easier to do that. For example, in a nonhybrid riding, say, you know – pick a riding.

**Dr. Klumpenhower:** Calgary-Acadia, since that's where I live.

**Mr. Evans:** Sure. You could have some significant and potentially larger or bigger communities of interest that have completely opposite views or interests that are within that riding.

9:45

The other thing that I'm going to ask for some comment on is the governance issue that you've raised by saying that there's going to be a difficulty because you have two municipalities, which is what you used in Calgary-Okotoks. I think you have a much more difficult problem when you're dealing with the ward system in Calgary in terms of being able to have a voice with a representative that's going to be able to protect the interests of that particular area.

An issue that's front and centre right now, that clearly indicates this is your water issue in the city of Calgary: what a disaster. Why? Because your ward system does not facilitate being able to target resources to a specific area from one municipality, one municipal

government, so each ward has its own interests. Each ward may not have the same water problems, and therefore there's not a unification on: hey, we've got to solve this problem. If I'm in ward whatever number and I don't have a water problem and I've got a beef with another alderman, I don't care. I'm not going to support them. That's a problem for the people, and that's a problem that we face in terms of our politicians changing all the time.

My concern is that people focus on this urban and rural and forget that those are just communities of interest and should be treated exactly the same way as a Muslim community of interest versus a Jewish community of interest versus a whatever community, hockey group.

**The Chair:** That is a long and wrong – I think there's a question there, but briefly respond, sir, please.

**Dr. Klumpenhouwer:** Okay. I could give you a couple of thoughts. I'll try and address them. First, let's set aside the Calgary ward system. There's another commission, I think, for that.

**Mr. Evans:** Well, we have to deal with that.

**The Chair:** No. Okay. We need time. Very succinct.

**Dr. Klumpenhouwer:** Okay. Let's deal with the urban-rural. I think that there is a difference between who you look for as a representative, as I think many people, like – the majority of the population – often don't exactly know who to ask and who to go to for what issue. I think that will be sort of more problematic in an area where you actually have three different municipal structures going on at the same time. You have a county, you have potentially an incorporated city, and you have Calgary. Knowing where to go for what issue is going to be even more difficult, and the governance differences will emphasize or will sort of more strongly create this problem where voices are not heard.

I think we should absolutely not be drawing lines, you know, on the basis of demographics. I think that's a very slippery slope to do, and I think communities can be very different things. I like to focus on the governance part of it because I think it is different. It is about who you talk to and who will listen to you to bring back to this representative democracy.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Klumpenhouwer.

I just want to make a comment, and you'll have a brief response. We have found in this process – and you've touched on it a little bit – that there's a civics problem in the public mind. This isn't a criticism; I think it's just reality. We've taken an approach, at least, I think, from my contributions to the interim report, to basically lay out a civics lesson for Albertans or contribute to that process.

I think it's important to make clear that there are really only three options when we deal with boundary reallocation and redistricting. One is to add a bunch more seats to the Legislature, and that hasn't been done. I mean we only got two. The second option is to simply take away more seats from the less populated areas. That poses a whole bunch of other issues relative to effective representation. And the third option is hybrid ridings, and it is a legitimate option, and most of Alberta has been living under that option for generations. Now it's getting to the point where Alberta has changed tremendously over the last few decades, and hybrid ridings are a reality, and we are working hard to make sure that they're not inappropriate. They are a reality, and they are an option. So I just want you to consider that. That's part of our attempt to explain the true legal options to the Alberta public. Okay?

**Dr. Klumpenhouwer:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. You know the task we have. I mean, you've obviously studied this, and you know how difficult it is. Your comments about data: I'm the wrong guy to take up that torch, but certainly somebody will. Your comments on accessing the data are very important.

**Dr. Klumpenhouwer:** Yeah. I'll say very briefly then that, you know, my job as an interested person is to just give you more complexity and more nuance, and then it's your job to try and sort that all out. Absolutely I understand you wouldn't have proposed them if they weren't a real possibility.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, sir.

Our next presenter is Lee Krywitsky.

**Mr. Krywitsky:** Hello. My name is Lee Krywitsky from Calgary-Glenmore. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and the entire boundary commission. Again, my name is Lee Krywitsky, and I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you. I want to thank all of you for your efforts to date and applaud your current trajectory for updating Calgary-Glenmore's constituency perimeter and express how doing so and doing it well is so important to sustain our democracy.

I've been very fortunate to live in the community of Woodlands in the Calgary-Glenmore constituency since 1983. I'm semiretired and most of my career was that of a technical entrepreneur involved in designing, manufacturing, and marketing high-specification flow equipment in the aerospace, nuclear, refining, and transportation industries, then applying these proudly engineered and Alberta-manufactured technologies in dozens of countries. I've had the privilege of serving our community as a co-chair in Woodlands parent-teacher council. I've been volunteering and chairing a technical committee for the Canadian Standards Association with a mandate to ensure public safety. I continue to participate in professional organizations that mentor youth and strive to diversify our economy.

Trying to achieve these noble goals, like the one you have been asked to do, whilst addressing the concerns of all stakeholders is often a daunting task and at times, no doubt, seemingly thankless. I appreciate and do want to thank all of you for your collective efforts. Thank you.

Our wonderful riding is diverse, vibrant, and nurturing for all the people that call it home. We have a community with outreach facilities that try to improve the lives in Glenmore and for all Canadians. For example, the William Roper Hull school is very close to where I live, and that wondrous place has changed the lives of many students that face the challenges of emotional, social, and psychological issues. Glenmore has lower income, high-density housing as well as many affluent areas. Calgary-Glenmore citizens have access to 15 public schools, four child care centres, an orphanage, three nursing homes, two long-term care facilities, two medical centres, a hospice, and the wonderful Rockyview hospital. It's a great place for families with lots of recreational facilities and places to enjoy, the highlights being Fish Creek provincial park, Heritage Park, and the Glenmore reservoir.

Calgary-Glenmore's recent demographics reveal a slow and steady population growth, yet we are impacted by the rapid growth that Calgary overall is experiencing. We're living with the changes and challenges that come with such rapid change. Special-needs schools, a very new, busy Ring road, bus transit routes, and more are all part and parcel of a thriving community that commits to supporting our friends, helping our neighbours, and doing our part for the city, province, and nation. I'd also mention we have a

thriving, jam-packed, new huge Costco nearby, which is always a good thing.

9:55

The prospect of augmenting electoral boundaries was not of interest to me until recently. I was in Ukraine in March of 2022 trying to assist with refugees that were affected by the Russian territorial aggression. I personally witnessed first-hand the effects this has on scores of ordinary people I met, with this most unwelcome and unwarranted boundary redistribution. I've done much business in the U.S. during my career, and I've seen the recent swell of polarization and the proliferation of gerrymandering of voting areas that are packed, cracked, and stitched together to favour one party to stay in power longer. So witnessing this and the onslaught of the other incredulous events that are accosting us every day, I've tried to better understand the spirit and intent of your task on the boundary commission.

My understanding is that the commission's mandate is to independently review and propose new provincial electoral divisions, the ridings we live in, to the Legislative Assembly to ensure fair representations by balancing population size with communities of interest, geography, and historical patterns. These pillars, I understand, include the thoughtful composition of your board, the mathematical guardrails and population mandates, defining a boundary-drawing criteria, and public transparency of this actual process.

As well as to better understand the spirit and intent of the why of updating of provincial boundaries, boundaries were articulated, I believe, very well by the former Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin in 1991. This seemed very reasonable then and especially now. Justice McLachlin's approach to boundaries is both literal, in literally referring to electoral districts, and philosophical, referring to the limits of government power versus the right of the citizen. She argued the rights of effective representation, that electoral boundaries' population size should be roughly equal. The primary goal, of course, is effective representation. Justice McLachlin argued that democracy is not just simple majoritarianism, that idea that winner takes all and does whatever they want. I would argue that the world's democracies are being stress-tested today like never before with that very threat, so we must collectively be vigilant in safeguarding it.

I come here today to thank you for all of your hard work on this quest. The proposed changes you have considered so far for Calgary-Glenmore seem spot-on. Adding a segment of North Glenmore Park and the addition of the community of Kingsland makes sense, and leaving the rest as is is dialed in just right. I feel this proposed positive change will encourage the citizens of the new Glenmore boundary to keep participating in and growing our community and doing so in a fair and healthy democratic system. It is a precious system, one that built this great city, province, and wonderful country. I sincerely thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, sir. Your comments are most appreciated. I would invite you to remain after you're excused, because it's helpful for everybody to hear the other presenters. If I had a magic wand, I would have locked everybody in a room and made them hear everybody else's presentation. Thank you so much.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

**Mr. Evans:** No, but thank you for your comments.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for the excellent presentation. I appreciate your kind words, and I just want to say to you and the rest of the group that we were pleased to leave Calgary-Glenmore pretty much intact the way we found it. That makes it very valuable

to the people who live there because nothing has changed for them. Continuity, familiarity of what's going on will stay, and I think I'm always pleased to celebrate that. Thank you again for coming out today.

**Mr. Krywitsky:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you. I very much appreciated your thumbnail sketch of the riding and the very large and diverse number of communities and activities that occur there. Indeed, it's food for thought, really, to consider that even in what is, in effect, a long-standing inner-Calgary riding, you have that full range of communities of interest and activities that we talk about more generally. I thank you for your description of the riding, and of course I'm happy that we got it pretty much right.

**Mr. Krywitsky:** Thank you.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. It is nice to get things right occasionally, so let's celebrate that as a win.

Your comments about the Supreme Court reference have got me back reading the reference itself just to remind myself of some of the principles contained therein and just, you know, reminding ourselves of what the definition of relative parity of voting power is, where we're allowed to deviate, how we justify that. We consider factors like geography, community history, communities of interest, minority representation: taking all those into account.

This isn't so much a question as a bit of a speech, so I'll keep it very brief. In referencing back to an earlier presenter and the differences between Canada and the United States in particular, I do think we have both an opportunity here in this panel and this process as an elevated one that sort of supersedes partisan interests and really does look at these things. It doesn't make it easy because there are a lot of different definitions that could meet what the Supreme Court says, right? I think the general direction of travel is about right, but within that there's a pretty wide berth of what we could actually land on.

I guess with that and in conclusion, I would just say thank you. It makes a big difference to us, for yourself and everyone else who's come to present, in helping us determine exactly where we draw those lines. Thank you.

**Mr. Krywitsky:** Well, thank you for your kind words and your sustained and courageous efforts. They're greatly appreciated. Thank you so much.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, sir.

Peter Scholz, the next presenter.

**Mr. Scholz:** Good morning.

**The Chair:** Good morning. Make yourself comfortable. Please state your name for the record and tell us where you're from and what riding you wish to comment on.

**Mr. Scholz:** My name is Peter Scholz. I reside in Banff-Kananaskis. I have lived at different times in both Banff and Jasper, and I've worked with most of the communities and First Nations in

the area. I'm just waiting for my six slides, approximately one minute per slide. There it is.

My comments focus on whether the proposed Banff-Jasper electoral district reflects the realities of how alpine Alberta actually functions. The proposed Banff-Jasper district is here critiqued using economic relationships, transportation patterns, service delivery, and provincial jurisdiction. Ladies and gentlemen, contrary to what you have heard from former Canmore mayors and the current MLA who lives in Canmore, alpine Alberta is not a single park-based economy. This perspective, which received much weight in the report, is common in central Bow valley, which is itself a tiny portion of alpine Alberta. Sorry; I don't have bifocals yet. I'm getting used to these new eyes and being old.

Alpine Alberta functions as an integrated mountain-foothills ecosystem rather than a linear park corridor. Mountain parks, foothill communities, and extensive working Crown lands form one interconnected region economically, ecologically, and hydrologically. While tourism is important, regional economies also include forestry, ranching, transportation, and a legacy of mining and resource development alongside expanding recreation activity. Further, the vast majority of tourism growth is not inside but outside the national parks. As a former Parks Canada agency employee, I can state with certainty that Parks Canada policy is deliberately geared to limit new growth within the national parks. Gateway and corridor communities such as Hinton, Cochrane, Nordegg, Crowsnest, Bragg Creek, and Sundre, all within provincial jurisdiction, support these new and emerging multicentric systems. They function differently from the national parks, particularly in housing, labour markets, and service provision.

Provincial jurisdiction includes highways except in the national parks, wildfire management except in the national parks, health services, education, and land use decision-making, again except in the national parks. These provincial activities are essential to how communities interact in co-ordination and partnership with the national parks and should therefore be reflected in electoral boundaries. Stated more plainly, a provincial electoral district should not be based on certain limited federal jurisdictions.

#### 10:05

Several issues arise when the proposed Banff-Jasper district is examined through a functional lens. First, the proposal includes a 200-kilometre unpopulated gap along the Icefields Parkway. There is no comparable example in southern Alberta of an electoral district anchored by such a long stretch with no permanent population or intervening communities. They are common in the north, but those are much larger jurisdictions with very limited population.

Second, the configuration groups together communities that have limited regular interaction, different service centres, and distinct economic orientations. The long extensions and odd shape of the riding, in my opinion, to be frank – and please take this gently – leaves the ABEBC vulnerable to accusations of gerrymandering.

Third, the proposal effectively conflates national parks and multiple First Nations reserves into a single federal community of interest. In practice these represent fundamentally different governance relationships and daily realities. We must also ask if a provincial MLA's job is to focus more on federal jurisdiction than provincial.

Fourth and finally, by emphasizing a tourism and park framing, the district risks marginalizing nontourism sectors, including ranching, forestry, transportation, and resource employment, that remain central to much of alpine Alberta.

An alternative approach is to organize representation around corridors that already function as coherent systems. The first would be a Canmore-Crowsnest Pass district aligned along the southern

Rockies and eastern slopes. Communities here, from Canmore to Bragg Creek to Diamond Valley to Crowsnest, share terrain constraints, limited developable land, growing recreation pressure, debates about significant transportation investments, and common land-use and wildfire challenges. They are linked by highway 22 and highway 40 and share a legacy of coal mining, transportation corridors, and ongoing economic transition.

The second is a Rocky Mountain House-Banff district spanning the Bow and North Saskatchewan headwaters. This configuration brings together gateway communities, Crown land, forestry activity, recreation, and Indigenous lands within a continuous service and travel network. Highways 1, 11, 22, and 40 reflect real movement patterns for workers, visitors, and emergency services. Banff and Canmore are tightly integrated such as that they operate almost as a single unit. Even the station stop locations for the future Banff-YYC railway have been selected in these two towns.

Political representation to advocate for Banff-Canmore integration has limited need. I would no more hesitate to place them in separate electoral districts than I would to separate Calgary-Klein, where we now sit, from Calgary-Cross, which is right next door. I can confirm that both of these proposed electoral districts remain within the allowable population variance.

Slide 5. Almost done. With respect to Jasper and as a former resident of Jasper I remain unconvinced that removing it from West Yellowhead improves representation. My argument here effectively is: if it ain't broke, don't fix it. I have lived in Jasper and can state that it has long-standing functional ties to Hinton and Edson much more than to Banff. Jasper and Hinton share labour pools, freight and rail corridors, wildlife response, and regional services. By contrast, Jasper is separated from Banff by approximately 200 kilometres of unpopulated parkland with minimal day-to-day interaction between the communities.

The current West Yellowhead population remains within acceptable variance, and its continuity has supported effective representation for decades. Indeed, I understand the population has effectively remained static in this riding for the last five years. Decreasing the size of a riding that is either decreasing or increasing, depending on which source you read, but very slightly is difficult to justify.

Final sentence. In conclusion, effective representation in alpine Alberta depends on functional geography rather than symbolic linkage. The proposed amendments retain population balance while aligning districts with real economic systems, transportation corridors, and provincial responsibilities.

Thank you for your time, and I'd be pleased to answer any questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, sir. Can I encapsulate that your presentation is in that we should be going east-west with respect to Banff and Jasper rather than north-south? That's one way to describe what you're saying.

**Mr. Scholz:** Yes. For economic, ecological, and hydrological reasons.

**The Chair:** Okay. So it's not only directional.

Tell me, because we've heard some comments about – I'm not familiar with the transportation corridor except in summer. What's access from Banff to Jasper like in the dead of winter on highway 93?

**Mr. Scholz:** That depends on the God of winter. If it decides to snow, the highway, basically, will usually need to be shut down.

**The Chair:** So it is shut down from time to time?



**Mr. Scholz:** It is frequently shut down. There's a location near the Weeping Wall where there is, basically, a mountain with a full avalanche slope that goes right down to the highway. The base of the valley is, like, 150-metres wide, and that particular mountain catches a lot of snow. It's at the Columbia Icefields. The Columbia Icefields are there because there's a lot of snowfall there. But this particular mountain is not glaciated, so you get these big snow buildups, and Parks Canada has to blow it. Then you get these videos. These massive avalanches come down, and then they have to clear the snow out, and they usually have to blow it twice to make certain. It's Rocky Mountain snow, and Rocky Mountain snow is inherently unpredictable. So it's often shut down for days. Every time there's a big snowfall, good chance it's going to be shut down for a period of time.

**The Chair:** Okay. I assume we're going to keep that PowerPoint and we'll get a copy of your presentation.

**Mr. Scholz:** You have it.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin, any comments or questions?

**Dr. Martin:** Oh, yeah. Thanks.

Thank you very much. Very comprehensive. It's clear from the language that you deploy that you are versed in the language of planning and policy.

**Mr. Scholz:** I'm a professional planner registered with the province of Alberta.

**Dr. Martin:** I can, with my own personal experience of having done research in the mountain parks and working quite closely with the superintendents, attest to your assertion about the antigrowth, skeptical of growth policy that permeates national parks for obvious ecological reasons, it seems to me.

**Mr. Scholz:** That's correct, sir.

**Dr. Martin:** That certainly has continued. The governance structure of the parks is that the superintendent is lord.

**Mr. Scholz:** Effectively, yes.

**Dr. Martin:** So when they decide that a road will close, it will.

**Mr. Scholz:** Yeah, basically. It functions well in its own way in terms of government. I certainly have disagreements with the Parks Canada agency around certain directions, which is why I resigned from that agency. But, again, it is a federal jurisdiction. The power of an MLA in there is relatively limited except for health and education.

**Dr. Martin:** I have one further line of questioning. I'd like you to speak a little further about the interface, gateway communities, as you referred to it in this particular slide. That interface is of great interest to the rest of Alberta, I think.

**Mr. Scholz:** Yes.

**Dr. Martin:** Can you characterize how that works? I mean, all of the forestry industry, the mining, and so on and so on is centred on those particular villages and towns. You call that still part of the alpine Alberta region, correct?

**Mr. Scholz:** Yeah. Alpine Alberta comprises two geophysical zones. One is what we think of as the Rockies. The other is the foothills, which is forested, hilly, bumpy, and generally very

underpopulated or very low permanent population but generally, actually, with very good infrastructure: highways, power lines, even railway access into Robb and formerly into Nordegg to access coal deposits, timber supplies. But it's still very heavily used on a tourist perspective.

Most of the tourism growth in Alberta is shifting to this area, and there are very significant concerns happening out there. Talk to any county representative – say, Clearwater county – and they will go on about: tourists are coming in; we don't know where they're going. They don't have clear lines of protocol. They use the infrastructure that was installed by industry. There's a lot of space out there. People don't realize how big of an area we're talking about. It takes an hour to drive from Sundre to the base of the mountains moving at 80 kilometres an hour. You think of Sundre as right at the edge of the mountains. It's not. It's a good hour there. The farther north you go, the wider it is.

I could spend a long time talking about this, but what you're seeing is that the mines that moved into the mountains: you've got some fee simple title lands, and people want to live in the mountains. When the green-light zone was established in the 1930s and '40s in Alberta, the thinking was: farmers need to own their land so they can farm properly, but who wants to live on a lake in the woods by themselves out in the hills, surrounded by trees? I mean, it's dangerous. There are bears, and there are forest fires. Why would anybody want to do that? How are they going to earn a living? Well, that's changed now. Now everybody wants to live on a lake in the trees out in the foothills, but they can't because there are no fee simple lands.

I mean, look at Canmore. It went from a 5,000 mining town to a 20,000 tourism town. If somebody said, "I want to mine a coal deposit outside Canmore," like, good luck. You're likely to be lynched and hung from the nearest tree. Crowsnest: you're starting to see the same power. Try to drive into Crowsnest on a Friday afternoon before a long weekend. Good luck. They're looking at twinning the highway. You're seeing the same pressure, but in Crowsnest you're seeing tremendous push-back against the Canmore subculture. I could definitely see an advantage for an MLA that's representing Crowsnest, Canmore, Bragg Creek, Diamond Valley. These are all mining communities.

Sorry. I can go on this for hours. I'll stop. But, you see, it's all the same issue in different phases, so they can communicate with each other, and up in Banff, Rocky Mountain House, Banff is basically the headwater zone. It's full. They're not allowing any more growth in there. Every five feet right on the edge of the Banff national park there's another tourist operator looking at a new ski resort or a new hotel or a new something, and they can't get through because there's no cohesion, but the Banff market is spilling over.

10:15

Banff has become so expensive that it's basically an international market. That is where Albertans are going. Alberta is growing at around a 2 per cent growth rate. In 35 years we're going to double the population because this city is probably going to be the size of what Vancouver is now: 3 million people. Where are they going to recreate? Where is that going to be? That's all going to be where we're talking about, so you need to have really powerful representation that's taking experience from Banff for working in co-ordination with Banff for the extension of that zone eastward and co-ordination also with all the industry that's going on.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you. I'm curious. I mean, I'm trying to get my head around the geography that you're talking about, both in terms of connecting Rocky Mountain House to Banff but also Canmore to Crowsnest. My friend Google Maps tells me that a drive today right now from Canmore to Pincher Creek in Crowsnest Pass is about three hours and five minutes. If I was to go Banff to Jasper, highway 93 – I acknowledge it's not always perfect – that's three and a half hours. Banff to Rocky Mountain House is also three and a half hours, so I'm not seeing how your proposed alignment solves the distance problem.

**Mr. Scholz:** My focus wasn't on the distance problem and how long it takes to drive. My focus was on the distance of the unpopulated region. There is no community between Lake Louise and Jasper. Saskatchewan crossing is a resort with a staff population of about 20, which goes down to about 10 or five in the wintertime for maintenance purposes. There's 200 kilometres there. If you drive from Canmore to Crowsnest, you're going community after community after community. There's a constant link there. One MLA can drive that length and hit most of the communities in one shot. Similarly, I mean, there's Lake Louise, yes, which is a very low voting population because it's mainly staff workers, some of whom are international.

But that ecosystem, the Banff ecosystem – like, if you're hiking into Mosquito Creek, you hike one day in, you're at the headwaters of the Red Deer River in this super isolated valley which goes down to Red Deer. That area is the headwaters of moving into the larger ecosystem, and that tourism market, the local Alberta tourism market, is less and less. It's using Banff very, very heavily on a general basis. Believe me. I live near the freeway. I can see the traffic jams and the accidents.

More and more it's switching to the east side of Banff national park. There's a resource tourism economy under very high strain going on there, and the riding boundaries, if you notice, just touch on Cochrane a little bit. You know, what's the point in that? Cochrane's founding is as a sawmill. The sawmill is one of the biggest single employers in Cochrane. We're including that catchment area where they get their timber in that, so I'm seeing it as a – it's basically the western portion of central Alberta. Yeah, it's about three hours to drive from Rocky Mountain House to Banff, but that road is pretty much always open, and . . .

**Mr. Clark:** Sorry. I don't mean to cut you off because I know there's some interesting . . .

**Mr. Scholz:** I apologize. I do this for a living. I can go on and on.

**Mr. Clark:** No, not at all. I do appreciate it. I just have a couple of other questions, and I want to save a little time for my colleagues here as well. You know, that's one of the things we're really struggling with in the entire map, right? Alberta: very big, lots of space between lots of places. You've identified the north, lots of other spots, so I think that's one of those sort of unavoidable things one way or the other.

Just in terms of connecting Banff and Jasper, though, it's worth noting, and I'm curious based on your experience in the mountain parks, that the town of Jasper has written us a letter saying, "Yeah, we'd like to be with Banff; that makes sense to us, and by the way we're okay adding the name Canmore in there as well," very generously. I'm just interested in that because, I mean, I think that's something they've identified and said: yeah, we actually do connect with Banff. Notwithstanding the fact that there's this large geographic distance, there's a community of interest there. What's your thought on that?

**Mr. Scholz:** Well, what Mayor Ireland says or doesn't say is, obviously, completely out of my power. The argument is that, you know, there's a common interest amongst the national parks, but I would argue that that belongs in the federal segment, which I believe has already been done. It's not Albertan-based forest mismanagement that led to the great fires. It was Parks Canada fire mismanagement that led to the fires, so I would love to see the MP for that region at the House of Commons going: why is Parks Canada not treating fire risks more seriously such that with 30 years' advance warning they still weren't prepared for a fire that burned a third of the town? The house I lived in was burned to the ground. The reason I quit in 2008 was because of long-standing fire concern issues that I wasn't being listened to about. Why am I working as a town planner when I believe that the town might be burned down to the ground? What's the point of doing my job? That's why I quit. One of the main reasons I quit, I should say. That issue, I believe, belongs in a federal riding.

For provincial jurisdiction we're talking about things like Yellowhead Pass twinning. We're talking about the fact that Jasper has got a severe housing shortage right now. People are not living in Lake Louise or Banff and commuting up to Jasper every day. People that need housing are living in basements in Jasper or they're in Hinton or have found a basement in a cabin in east Jasper right at the edge of the park there at Overlander, and they're driving in every day. There's no bus service. There's no train service. There are these unco-ordinated, recreation-based subdivisions that are forming all around Brûle and near Entrance, Alberta, which is an old station stop just west of Hinton. They're kind of unco-ordinated, and you're getting this mishmash of different land uses that are going to interfere with the resource base on highway 40. Those are provincial jurisdiction issues.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much. Appreciate that.

**Mr. Scholz:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.  
Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you. You've given us a lot to think about. We've had lots of input both for and against, and you have very powerful reasons to have a real hard look at this again.

I am struck by the lack of co-ordination in that area that is not known as the Rocky Mountains, the foothills, like where there's sort of lawless recreation happening and camp where you may or quad or whatever. Now I start thinking about it in terms of: who's going to manage that when we've given them the national park thing?

**Mr. Scholz:** Historically the foothills have been treated as an afterthought for ridings based on the prairies. It's still flatish land, but just west of highway 22 or around highway 22 there is a transition from prairie to foothills, and it's always been east-west. You look at the ward boundaries in the counties. They'll have a base in Caroline and they'll extend all the way to the mountains. There's an underrepresentation going on there, and what I'm saying is that we need that area to have its own representation.

What the market wants to do – people are going to freak out. Half a million Albertans want to move in there or they want to recreate there, but they can't because it's all Crown land. It's part of the green zone, which was established in the 1930s and 1940s. Is that the right thing to do? I am not going to answer that question, but I'm putting the question. That is a real thing facing Alberta.

Our population is at 5 million. We were at 4 million, like, yesterday. We're going to 10 million. We're going to 10 million

within our lifetimes, a very high probability. By the time I die, I expect Alberta is going to have 10 million people. Are we going to have 4 and a half million in Edmonton and 5 million over here in Calgary and, you know, a million scattered along the other communities? That could be an option, but I don't see it as the ideal option. That's where we need to be thinking about this long-term future and how we're going to approach. That's why we need strong provincial representation that understands the international and tourism role of the national parks but how that is now extending eastward into the foothills.

**Mrs. Samson:** Right. Thank you very much. I appreciate those thoughts.

**Mr. Scholz:** You're welcome. Thank you. Would you like my notes?

**The Chair:** Yeah. Please leave them with Aaron.

**Mr. Evans:** I missed how you were dealing with Jasper, the Jasper national park. Where does that fit in the proposal?

**Mr. Scholz:** I believe Jasper should remain part of West Yellowhead.

**The Chair:** The existing one.

**Mr. Scholz:** The existing one. The population hasn't changed. I'm saying: if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

**Mr. Evans:** The national parks are hugely problematic. Anyone having dealt with them: it's a world unto itself. Even when you reference health and education as being provincial jurisdiction, it's ethereal at best because the physical facilities are still controlled by the parks.

10:25

**Mr. Scholz:** Parks has a very tight control over the community of Jasper, a little bit looser on Banff, but I run into the same issues. I've been talking to, over in British Columbia, the councillor for ward A of Columbia-Shuswap regional district because Parks Canada has not rebuilt the glacier lodge at Rogers Pass for 15, 20 years, which is bringing down the tourism economy for the entire region, and they struggle with the same issue. Yeah.

I'll say that I am in contact with Big Horn First Nation, which is a Wesley, Goodstoney version, and they're looking to – I'll put it this way. In 2008 I met them and I said, "Are you interested in developments on the east side of Banff national park?" They said: "The elders said no. It's too early." Myself and a First Nation associate I work with: every three to four years we asked them, and they kept on saying: "No, it's too early. It's too early." Last year they called me and they said: "It's time to start thinking about it. What can you share with us?" Okay? So we waited 15 years until the elders said: it's time to start thinking about what sort of investments we can make. I have not been in communication with O'Chiese, but I know that they're now starting to think about: we have to do an MDP for our land and those kinds of things. They're moving slowly, but you can feel that pressure building. Big Horn, O'Chiese: they fit into what I'm talking about. They do not fit into what Banff and Jasper are talking about.

**Mr. Evans:** If they're moving slowly, then in conjunction with the federal government and the parks will be glacier slow.

**Mr. Scholz:** Well, O'Chiese is moving slowly. Big Horn is moving fast.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Scholz.

**Mr. Scholz:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Please do stay if you can. We've got a couple more presentations, and from time to time we have informal discussions.

**Mr. Scholz:** It would be my pleasure.

**The Chair:** Your input is very interesting. Thank you.

**Mr. Scholz:** Thank you, sir.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mr. Art Matsui. Please have a seat, sir, and just identify yourself again and tell us where you live and what electoral division you're speaking to.

**Art Matsui:** Well, my name is Art Matsui. I live in Calgary-Buffalo in the neighbourhood of Ramsay, right adjacent to the Stampede grounds, and under your interim proposals I would likely be redistributed into the new riding of Calgary-Confluence. It'll be the third boundary redesignation since I've lived there, so I'm of big interest in this.

Anyways, I guess I'm ready to start. It's probably hard to see, but these are my data sheets. I'm here to speak about the proposed urban redistribution in Calgary, specifically the creation of Calgary-Nose Creek in the north and Calgary-Confluence in the inner city, and the impact these proposals would have on Calgary-wide elector parity. The purpose of my submission evaluates these proposals using elector parity as a primary measure of democratic equality. My conclusion is straightforward. Creating two new ridings in the inner city and north would worsen vote inequality in Calgary by concentrating representation in areas with significantly fewer electors per MLA. While population growth pressures are real, redistribution that relies primarily on population rather than electors risks systemic overrepresentation in high turnover, lower registration urban areas. That outcome is inconsistent with the principle of effective representation.

Effective representation means parity of voting power, not simply equal population. In dense urban Calgary geography does not justify elector-light ridings. Both north Calgary and inner-city Calgary already have the lowest electors per MLA in the city. Creating Calgary-Nose Creek or Calgary-Confluence would deepen that imbalance while suburban ridings, which are closest to the provincial elector norm, would be diluted. An elector-based approach is the fair and more defensible solution for Calgary.

Using the Elections Alberta elector quotient of approximately 33,300 electors per riding, this disparity becomes clear. Inner-city Calgary, following a Calgary-Confluence carve-out, would be projected at 22,000 to 26,000 electors per MLA, or roughly 65 to 78 per cent of the provincial average. North Calgary, following a split to create Calgary-Nose Creek, would fall even lower at approximately 20,000 to 25,000 electors per MLA, or 60 to 75 per cent of the provincial average. By contrast, suburban Calgary ridings such as Calgary south, Calgary-Varsity, Calgary-Foothills already sit at 110 to 140 per cent of the electorate quotient. The result is that a suburban Calgary voter would carry nearly half the voting power of a voter in the north or inner-city Calgary. This disparity would be created or worsened by adding new seats in elector-light areas.

Legal framing re effective representation. The Supreme Court of Canada has been clear that absolute voter parity is not required, but deviations must be justified by legitimate factors such as geography, community history, or minority representation as set out in reference re provincial electoral boundaries, Saskatchewan. In

urban Calgary none of these justifications apply. There is no geographic remoteness. MLA accessibility is high. Community interest can be preserved without reducing elector counts. Persistently allocating MLAs to areas with substantially fewer electors undermines the equality component of effective representation, particularly when those deviations are not balanced elsewhere in the city.

Application to the proposed ridings. In north Calgary ridings show very high population deviation but only modest elector counts. Creating Calgary-Nose Creek would push multiple seats towards the bottom of the electorate distribution, worsening inequality. In inner-city Calgary, Calgary-Buffalo and adjacent inner-city areas already have low elector density. Combining portions of Acadia, Peigan, Klein, and Calgary-East into Calgary-Confluence would likely produce one of the most elector-light ridings in Alberta without geographic or constitutional justification.

Conclusion. On an elector-weighted basis Calgary does not require additional inner-city and northern ridings. The creation of Calgary-Nose Creek and Calgary-Confluence would reduce average electors per MLA, intensify vote inequality, and move Calgary further from elector parity. Calgary's population pressure can be addressed instead through boundary realignments within existing Calgary ridings, shifting redistribution pressure towards elector-strong suburban seats, targeted voter registration and list maintenance in north and inner-city Calgary. These approaches address growth without undermining voter equality.

Thank you. These are my charts that I base this on. I got the population charts from the boundary commission.

**The Chair:** Okay, so you've used our population numbers for these electoral divisions.

**Art Matsui:** Yes. As you can see, Calgary-North East is the highest population deviation in the province at 55 per cent, but they're right almost on the elector average. So if you reduce the population of Calgary-North East by 55 per cent, say – and I'm not suggesting that you are – then it would place Calgary-North East in the range of 86th in the province for electors per MLA.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mr. Matsui, I didn't take much math in university, okay? These graphs: I want to be sure I understand them before we open it up for questions. So you're saying that there's an incongruity because in Calgary-North East you've got the population at 85,000. Our proposed riding shows it at 54,540.

10:35

**Art Matsui:** No, that's proposed. This is before redistribution.

**The Chair:** Oh, so these are the existing ridings?

**Art Matsui:** Yes. These are the existing ridings, just to be clear.

**The Chair:** So column B is the existing ridings, not our proposal.

**Art Matsui:** Yes. All of these charts are on existing . . .

**The Chair:** Okay. Good. That's helpful.

**Art Matsui:** I'm just saying that because it's unknown, but . . .

**The Chair:** Right. Okay. That's helpful.

Now, let me ask you a couple more quick clarification questions. Calgary-North East deviates 55 per cent with the average population. Explain that to me.

**Art Matsui:** Yeah. Well, the average population . . .

**The Chair:** Is the 48,000 under the old regime?

**Art Matsui:** No, no. It's proposed to be 55,000. Currently, if you did nothing, Calgary-North East would be 55 per cent over the proposed average population, which is 55,000, right?

**The Chair:** Okay. And where do you get column D from?

**Art Matsui:** Column D comes from the 2024 electoral list from Elections Alberta.

**The Chair:** Okay. I think I have clarified for myself in my own mind these statistics, so I'm going to open it up for questions from the panel.

Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you very much. Appreciate that that's twice we've had the Supreme Court reference quoted to us today. This is a banner day for the lawyers on the panel, so thank you. You know, having read it, though, or at least looked at the reference case, you'll see that the justices refer to population as part of the criteria.

**Art Matsui:** Yes. I understand, like, you guys are based solely on population, and I think that's a mistake to not consider, you know, electoral weight.

**Mr. Clark:** I hear what you're saying. I think the Supreme Court would disagree with you. Just to make sure I'm clear on what you're saying with your spreadsheet, the current Calgary-North East has a population of 88,188. You're saying: that's okay; we should keep it roughly that because there are 35,000 electors, and that's where we should be measuring electors.

**Art Matsui:** I'm not saying that. I gave you a copy in my notes.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah, please. Thank you.

**Art Matsui:** What I'm saying is that you have a mandate to come within plus or minus 25 per cent on population, correct? That's what I'm assuming. But there's no mandate about electors. If you were, the way that Calgary-North East and Calgary-Buffalo are the two highest in the city – like, Calgary-Buffalo is plus 41 per cent above the 25 per cent. I acknowledge that. Populationwise you're mandated to reduce our population, but you have a parameter of plus or minus 25 per cent, and you're not taking into account the elector distribution.

If you brought Calgary-Confluence by combining these things – and I'm not exact on these numbers. I know what you're taking from Calgary-Buffalo. But no matter how you calculate this, they would have in the range of 20,000 to 25,000 voters in the new Calgary-Confluence, and that's far too low. That puts it in the range of, like, Peace River or something.

**Mr. Clark:** If you don't mind, I'll ask just a quick follow-up.

**Art Matsui:** Sure.

**Mr. Clark:** You've obviously done quite a bit of reading. Have you read any of the other electoral boundary commission reports from other provinces or the federal government, and do you know if any of them have used what you're saying? Is this a model that has been applied anywhere else?

**Art Matsui:** No, I haven't. I mean, I'm interested in this solely from the fact that I'm in another new riding, you know, every time we get redistributed. Ramsay, Inglewood, which is an area – well, you're from Calgary. I mean, it's comprised differently of the

Beltline, so right now Calgary-Buffalo is the Beltline plus Ramsay, Inglewood.

**Mr. Clark:** If you don't mind, Justice, can I ask just one more brief follow-up?

**The Chair:** Yeah.

**Mr. Clark:** Would you agree that elected representatives represent people who can't vote? Kids, new Canadians. All of those folks use provincial services: health care, social service, education. They're not voters, but they are . . .

**Art Matsui:** I'm not disputing the population aspect of it. I'm just asking that, you know, there should be some balance with electors, and it doesn't seem like the process allows for this. It's only population plus or minus 25 per cent.

Can you put up my other slide?

**Mr. Clark:** That's all. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are you saying, sir, that as we look at the range, plus 25 or minus 25 from the average, we should be considering other numerical factors, i.e. number of electors per electoral division? Is that what you're saying?

**Art Matsui:** Yes, because you don't want to create these . . .

**The Chair:** Artificial, cookie-cutter numbers. Is that what you're saying?

**Art Matsui:** Yeah. Just because now you've got the population down, but you've put the elector count into, like, the worst of the far-north regions. They have a geographic reason. We have no such geographic reason in the city of Calgary that an MLA can easily represent.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you for that clarification.  
Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Mr. Matsui, I have intellectually – but not written spreadsheets – noodled around with this issue as well, and what I think my question, really, that I want to share with you is: how would we use your data sets as a tool in the work of this commission given its strictures on the kind of factors we can take on board? We have a catch-all category called (f), any other things that the commission feels are relevant. But really, more to the point, I'm asking: what kind of a tool is this? You know, perhaps it's applicable at the margins, the gross and dramatic differences at either end of your spreadsheet, but how would you govern this tool? We govern the population with a plus or minus 25 per cent variation that's allowed to us as a part of our tool kit. Are you implying that we should have a similar tool kit under our section (f)?

**Art Matsui:** Okay. Now I've sorted the list the other way, so this is the ranking of ridings by population. You can see that, well, number one is Airdrie-Cochrane. They're 39 per cent over the electoral average. On your one list, by population, you're putting Calgary-North East as your primary hit target because, man, these guys are so far over the population; we've got to do something. Well, none of the urban ridings face pressure on the electoral side. If you look at the chart, the first time that someone appears, it's Calgary-Bow and Calgary-Shaw on this list. It's nothing to do with the north or the inner city.

So now you're not addressing the inequality on the electors side in the southern Calgary ridings. You're only addressing population

in the northern and inner-city ridings and causing this voter inequality to be – you know, you're going to push down into the '80s these two new ridings. That doesn't seem like sound planning that you would put them on the fringe. They went from the upper fringe of population to push them down into the lower fringe of electoral representation.

10:45

**Dr. Martin:** Well, it's certainly a cautionary tale, at the absolute minimum, that you would inadvertently create new ridings that are like rotten boroughs, you know, where you have a dramatic deficit in the number of eligible voters in the new district. That would be wrong-headed.

**Art Matsui:** Well, without proper justification. You know, you go into Lesser Slave Lake and of course you're going to have some kind of deficits there.

**Dr. Martin:** But if we do that in, you know, central Calgary, then we've done something wrong.

**Art Matsui:** That's what I'm here to say.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.  
Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you. We've been toying with this concept. It's been brought up starting yesterday. We prepared the interim report without considering voters. Like, we identified when we started that it wasn't going to be voters; it was going to be population. I think we have to have a conversation amongst ourselves how we want to manage this tool. For my own clarity, based on this chart that we're looking at right in front of us with Airdrie-Cochrane at the top, the problem is not limited to urban centres.

**Art Matsui:** No. But obviously, my interest is Calgary and all of Calgary, you know.

**Mrs. Samson:** Exactly. So I think your point is well taken.

I'd have to think about this a bit more, so I need all of this stuff left behind, and then I think we have to have a conversation here.

**Art Matsui:** Yeah. I've submitted these charts. Just so you know, I just whipped these up. I'm sorting by elector and I'm sorting by population, and you're only sorting by elector count, right? So the first chart, or the population versus elector: that's what you're really working from, not really working from the elector side but just the population side. You know, I'm saying: well, there's this other chart that talks about elector inequality. It's not just in Calgary, although I only considered Calgary because I live here, and I'm part of one of the ones that's going to be newly created, being Calgary-Confluence. But I looked, and Calgary-North East is an even worse example of this electoring because Calgary-North East has – you noted this. It's roughly the average, right?

**The Chair:** Our proposed Calgary-North East. Yeah.

**Art Matsui:** Calgary-North East, the existing Calgary-North East, is the largest population riding in the entire province, so it has to be redistributed somehow. But electorwise it's sitting at just about the average, so when you take away 25 to 50 per cent of their population, it's going to push the remaining Calgary-North East down to the bottom. And because you're pushing so few electors over by redistributing out of a low-electors riding, now the new riding is also going to be down on the list, so you're going to have

two – not just one, but two – of the lowest elector deviations in the entire province in north Calgary, specifically more or less northeast Calgary. That doesn't seem right, that we're a third of the population of the province and yet we have two of the ridings that have the lowest elector representation in the entire province.

**The Chair:** Okay. I'm going to have to move on and let other panel members – any more questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** I do have one more that just came to my mind because this is all new to me. Do I have to grapple with why the population is not voting? Like, does that mess up the whole concept of why we're trying to be – can you comment on that?

**Art Matsui:** Well, I don't think you have to consider that. I mean, if you look at it – I've lived in Calgary and in the northeast for a lot of years. The northeast is growing. You know, I hesitate to say this, but it's growing with immigrant population . . .

**Mrs. Samson:** New Canadians.

**Art Matsui:** . . . new Canadians, but not necessarily voting, and not only new Canadians: a lot of permanent residents and temporary workers. I have a thought that as a Canadian my vote should count, right? When people move here, that's under the understanding that, no, I don't get to vote here until I become – you have to have some incentive for permanent residents to become Canadian citizens and take part in democracy. Just because you move here, I mean, I know we have to take care of these people, but as far as governance goes, the governance should go to people who have invested the whatever to become a voting citizen. We're a citizen-led democracy, so I think that needs to be taken into consideration.

**Mrs. Samson:** Good answer. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much.  
Mr. Evans, a question or comment?

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah. I mean, you brought up some interesting points with respect to the Supreme Court of Canada decision in Saskatchewan and Carter. I'm going to read from the head note of the Supreme Court of Canada decision because it deals with the issue of voter parity and it comes up with a concept of voter equity. It sort of interchanges those two terms.

From the majority decision:

The history or philosophy of Canadian democracy does not suggest that the framers of the Charter in enacting section 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 section 3 of the Charter.

I think the confusion is the language of "other than voter parity," and I think what you're suggesting is that voter parity or voter equity would be a factor to be considered in determining effective representation in conjunction with population density.

**Art Matsui:** Yes. That's my point exactly, that it doesn't seem to me – I don't know how you came about these decisions – that you only considered population and things like, you know, you talked with this other fellow about geography but none of those facts. And I'm only talking about Calgary for voter equity. We should have

voter equity across – we're a homogeneous kind of area, being urban Calgary. I'm willing to go outside of Calgary, as you've done. Like, I'm okay with these hybrid ridings, but I think we still need to consider voter equity. It doesn't feel right to me, especially since I'm the victim of not having voter equity in my riding.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Matsui.

One last quick question. In your studies and your research for this presentation, have you come across any academics that back what you're saying or make reference to this principle?

**Art Matsui:** No. I mean, like Mr. Evans said, there's the Supreme Court Saskatchewan decision. It still talks about population a lot and, you know, that there are mitigating factors to lower this equity, those factors being like communities, geography, minority representation, those kinds of things. I think those kinds of things can be applied to electoral count as well.

10:55

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Matsui. Again, please stay for the rest; there's only one or two more presenters.

I think we'll just barge on through and not have a break. The last presenter for this morning is Patti Nolan.

**Ms Dolan:** Dolan.

**The Chair:** Dolan. Sorry. Yes.

**Ms Dolan:** Bad printing.

**The Chair:** No. Poor eyesight.

Ms Dolan, tell us where you're from and what riding you're commenting on.

**Ms Dolan:** Sure. I'm Patti Dolan. I live in Calgary, and I reside in Calgary-Bow.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Ms Dolan:** All right. Good morning, Chair and commissioners. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today and the important work that you're doing here.

My name is Patti Dolan. I'm here to speak against the proposal to move the community of Montgomery out of Calgary-Bow into Calgary-Varsity. I've lived in Calgary-Bow for the last 25 years; 23 years in Bowness and the last two years in Montgomery.

When I moved to Montgomery, I chose to stay in the area very intentionally because from a resident's point of view, Bowness and Montgomery are not separate communities; they function as one. Both were originally independent towns before being amalgamated into Calgary, and that shared history still shapes daily life. We rely on the same services, attend the same events, use the same roads and transit, and face many of the same challenges.

A clear example of a shared experience is the flood of 2013. During the flood both Bowness and Montgomery were heavily affected. Homes, businesses, and community facilities in both neighbourhoods were damaged. Residents supported one another through evacuation, cleanup, and rebuilding. Community halls and volunteer networks stepped up because the impact didn't stop at an arbitrary boundary; the river connected us. Varsity, by contrast, sits on higher ground and did not experience the event in the same way. Flood mitigation, riverbank protection, emergency response, and long-term recovery continue to shape Montgomery and Bowness together. These are shared priorities that make sense to address within the same electoral division.

This shared vulnerability is not just historical; it is current. Right now Calgary is experiencing a significant water infrastructure crisis, and once again Bowness and Montgomery are directly affected together. Residents are dealing with boil-water advisories, localized service disruption, and traffic congestion caused by emergency repairs and detours. The impacts affect daily life: commuting, accessing services, supporting local businesses, and ensuring the safety of vulnerable residents. Emergency vehicles, transit routes, and the commuter traffic all rely on the same constrained corridors that serve both communities. Varsity, while subject to city-wide water restrictions, is not experiencing these impacts in the same way. It is not facing boil-water advisories or localized infrastructure disruptions to the same extent.

This difference matters because of the highlight of how Bowness and Montgomery share infrastructure risks and emergency realities that Varsity does not. Beyond emergency events, day-to-day community life is deeply intertwined. Residents attend each other's community events, participate in shared programs, and volunteer together. Families move back and forth through school activities, recreation, and local services without thinking twice. Long-standing events such as Tour de Bowness, the Montgomery street fair, reflect a shared local identity. These are not siloed neighbourhoods; they are part of one connected community.

Transportation further reinforces this. The number 1 bus route runs directly through Montgomery and Bowness and is a lifeline to residents for commuting to work, school, and services. This daily connection does not extend into Varsity the same way. From a community of interest perspective, these shared experiences, emergencies, infrastructure challenges, celebrations, transit, and daily life are what define effective representation.

I understand that the proposed change is driven by population balancing, and I respect that consideration. However, I don't believe it fully reflects the long-term growth trends in the area. Calgary-Varsity, particularly the university district and south Shaganappi area, is already designated for significant growth under the south Shaganappi community local area plan, and that was approved in March of 2025. As that development progresses, Calgary-Varsity is likely to see substantial population increases. Any short-term balancing achieved by moving Montgomery would likely be temporary. With boundaries expected to remain in place for eight to 10 years, it may make more sense to consider additional representation in Calgary rather than dividing closely-connected, well-established communities.

In closing, I respectfully ask the commission to retain Montgomery within the Calgary-Bow electoral division. Doing so reflects lived reality, preserves strong historical and infrastructure-based ties, and supports effective, responsive representation.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms Dolan. You're not the first person that has made this point.

**Ms Dolan:** Good. I'm not unique, you're saying.

**The Chair:** Right. Yes.

Comments, questions, Mr. Clark?

**Mr. Clark:** I don't, no, aside from a thank you. And yes, you are unfortunately not the very first, so I'm afraid any question I've had has already been asked and answered, but thank you so much.

**Ms Dolan:** You bet.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you. Like the others said, we've heard a lot about Montgomery. I want to ask you to speak further about the linkages and not just the pedestrian and what seems to me by looking at Google Maps the only road that links the two across the big river. I'm more interested in the historical linkages that are social and cultural. You suggest that those persist, and I wonder if you can describe some of that.

**Ms Dolan:** Sure. Montgomery and Bowness have a very small-town atmosphere. There are a lot of local businesses, very, very few if any box-store type businesses in the area, so it is very much connected as, you know, small, family businesses. Several generations have been there. Recreational facilities are shared. Shouldice pool is across the street from me in Montgomery yet that's the main facility for Bowness. There's nothing else in the area, so it is very intertwined. The park system: the pathways run from side to side, so there is the physical river dividing one bridge, but it's very . . .

**Dr. Martin:** There's a pedestrian bridge right next to Bowness Road. Is that correct?

**Ms Dolan:** That's correct. That's the Hextall Bridge.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms Samson, any questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** Thanks for coming in today. I really appreciate that. From my own perspective I want to tell you that I live in Sylvan Lake, and when I looked at the map and I saw the Bow River, it was a natural geographic feature that would easily allow me to support taking Montgomery away. I so appreciate that it's real people in places that tell us: that's not right. Thank you for that.

**Ms Dolan:** Perfect. Thank you.

**The Chair:** I was going to say that, in our defence, we use the river, which nobody faults you for using a river, generally.

**Ms Dolan:** Well, it makes sense if you don't live in the community. If you live in the community: no.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Thank you.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah, I've got a question about, I think it's Wildwood. Wildwood is in the top left-hand corner of what we have as Calgary-Bow. Tell me about the connectivity and the interaction between Wildwood and Bowness.

**Ms Dolan:** Well, as a cyclist there's a connection there. Edworthy park is just below Wildwood, and so that is a natural extension of Shouldice-Bowness into the south side of the river. It's also a very old community. Again, the community structure there is very similar. It was built in the '40s, and, you know, small businesses are in that area, too, and a lot of park systems. It has a small-town atmosphere also. You have to visit the community because it backs on to an escarpment that goes down to the river, so there are a lot of similarities there I think in lifestyle.

11:05

**Mr. Evans:** Is it on both sides of 16th Avenue or the Trans-Canada?

**Ms Dolan:** No. Montgomery is on 16th Avenue going to the river. The river kind of twists and turns throughout. It's not a straight line.

After Hextall Bridge once it becomes Montgomery, it kind of snakes along the river over to, I think, Crowchild, is where the division is.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms Dolan.

**Ms Dolan:** That's it?

**The Chair:** Yep. Thank you so much. I appreciate you coming.

I think we're going to break now. I don't believe there are any other presenters, so we're going to close our morning meeting for a break for the panelists. We've been sitting for a while, but we're happy to talk to any of the presenters or any of the people that are here in informal capacity, and we'll reconvene at 1:30.

[The hearing adjourned at 11:07 a.m.]













Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Public Hearings

Calgary

Wednesday, January 14, 2026  
9:01 a.m.

Transcript No. 34

## **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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## **Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Calgary**

### **Public Participants**

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Sabrina Grover

Samir Kayande, MLA, Calgary-Elbow

Amelia Kiddle

Jim Ridley

Irfan Sabir, MLA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall

Amy Shantz

Alex Shevalier, President, Calgary & District Labour Council

Graham Sucha

Kelli Taylor

Richard Warnock, Mayor, Town of Sundre





**9:01 a.m.****Wednesday, January 14, 2026**

[Justice Miller in the chair]

**The Chair:** Good morning, everyone. You now again are welcome for this morning's session. This is the third day of our second round of hearings for the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission. The commission representatives are noted on the screen, and you can see our name tags. If you wish to see any background information, you can go to the commission's website.

Our task as a commission, which was started back in April of 2025, was to deal with two things: basically, the expansion of the Legislative Assembly from 87 electoral divisions to 89. The main reason the legislation was changed was because of the very significant population increase that Alberta has experienced since the last electoral boundaries report in 2017. As you know, voters in an electoral division actually select their individual MLA to serve them in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Every two election cycles the government strikes an electoral boundary commission pursuant to the legislation.

The population has increased substantially since the last report was conducted back in 2017. I'm going to be using very rough numbers, but it has increased by slightly over 800,000 people. In 2017 the population was just over 4 million, and in 2025 we are using a population base of 4.88 million. To give you some context as to the average voters in each electoral division, in 2017, based on the population at that time and the number of ridings, it was 46,697 per electoral division. That's not our target; that's just the average. The target population per division is a range that fluctuates from minus 25 per cent of the average to plus 25 per cent of the average. You can see that range on the screen. This time around, the average population per electoral division is just under 55,000, and the targeted range, as you can see, is from 41,000 to almost 69,000.

The task of this Electoral Boundaries Commission is to hear from Albertans both orally through public presentations like we're having today and through written communication and come up with an electoral map that provides for effective representation across the province. That is easier said than done, I can assure you.

Since our appointment in April we spent our time doing the following things. First of all, we looked at the data source for the population. We spent some time with statisticians, and we arrived at an agreed upon data source. That background and information can be found in our report, pages 15 to 18, and that is based on the latest decennial census for Statistics Canada, which is regularly updated by the Office of Statistics and Information by the Alberta Treasury Board.

Then we reviewed hundreds of written submissions that were presented to us throughout May, June, July, and onwards. In May and June we conducted public hearings, and we travelled the province, heard presentations from Albertans in the north, central, south, and in the larger urban centres.

After that public hearing season was completed, we spent a tremendous amount of time with officials from Elections Alberta and their map department and checked out how we could properly allocate the boundaries given the limitations we have in terms of the range. We did that for all 89 proposed boundaries. That ultimately resulted in the report that is on our website. You can see the cover. That interim report was completed and provided to the Speaker of the Legislature in late October. Immediately all MLAs in the Legislature received a copy.

As we prepared this report, we covered many of the factors laid out in the legislation that allowed us to come up with an effective representation goal. Our goal, in the end, was to make sure that

there was effective representation and that there are understandable and clear boundaries. Then, in response to our report that was tabled in late October, we opened a portal for public submissions from early November to December 19. We got public submissions, over 1,100 written submissions, that I believe are now all on the public website as well so the public can access them.

Now, at this stage of our commission's life, we are back for a second round of public hearings, and this is the third day we've been in Calgary. We've got a busy last two days. We're here till noon, and then we move up to Edmonton to commence virtual hearings tomorrow and Friday and then in-person hearings in Edmonton starting on Monday. Once we conclude those public hearings, we will start deliberating as a commission, and we will work to have a report completed and able to be tabled by the deadline of late March of this year.

We're at a point now where we want to hear from the public again in response. I am going to call on our first presenter, who I believe is here. Just so everyone knows, there is a time limit. We are going to be adhering to the time for presentation fairly strictly today because we want to get up to Edmonton in daylight.

I'll call on the first speaker, Mr. Alexander Shevalier. Make yourself comfortable and tell us what riding you're from and what riding or ridings or electoral divisions you wish to speak to.

**Mr. Shevalier:** My name is Alex Shevalier. I'm president of the Calgary & District Labour Council. I live in Calgary-Currie, but I will be speaking more generally about the report.

On behalf of our 50,000 members, we just wanted to thank you for doing the thankless work and hugging the cactus of doing this unenviable task.

**The Chair:** I'm going to use that one.

**Mr. Shevalier:** In reading the interim report, we think you reached the ever-elusive effective representation, and we support your interim report's recommendations. I think you struck the right balance between urban and rural tensions. We think you did a really good job. We support the report, and we don't see any need for any changes.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Evans:** We're done.

**The Chair:** Yeah.

Let me be the devil's advocate, though. We've received, and you no doubt would have – well, no, if your members are only in Calgary.

**Mr. Shevalier:** Calgary and district, so Airdrie south, High River north, to the B.C. and Saskatchewan border.

**The Chair:** We've received tremendous negative feedback for taking an electoral division out of the north.

**Mr. Shevalier:** Okay.

**The Chair:** That poses a huge problem for effective representation, so we've got to look at that. What do you say to someone who I think earlier this week said that the southern boundary of the northern riding that we created is closer to the U.S. border than it is to the N.W.T border? In other words, the electoral division is very, very large geographically. How can someone provide effective representation traversing such a vast distance? I'm using you as a sparring partner here in this process.

**Mr. Shevalier:** The legislation does allow for, I believe, four special districts, if I'm remembering correctly, which allow for a variation of up to 50 per cent. I can't comment on this one because I didn't look, but in the last one we had two, and one of them was the same size as the country of Serbia, if I'm remembering correctly, because I looked.

9:10

**The Chair:** Yeah. That's a good point. We actually are using less in our interim report. I hope you appreciate that we may have to make some changes.

**Mr. Shevalier:** I don't live in northern Alberta and I can't appreciate the struggles because not only is everything more expensive, they don't have access to effective Internet. Those are considerations you have to make. The only problem I see is the rippling effect because then you're going to have to change every other riding.

**The Chair:** That's the hugging of the cactus that you referenced.

**Mr. Shevalier:** That's the hugging of the cactus.

Because you create another special one, then you push every other boundary to become larger. Depending on how large you make one of the special boundaries, it doesn't take long for it to get into some very odd consequences. I seem to remember at the end of the last process that we had Fort McMurray-Conklin, which had, I think, 19,000 people in it near the end, and we had Calgary-South East, which had 119,000 people in it. We got into some very, very odd situations where you had places where one vote was worth six times another situation. The hugging the cactus part, yes, and I appreciate that the legislation allows for that, so the ripple effects are going to be the complicated part.

**The Chair:** Yeah, you're right. There's a cascading effect.

Let me ask you this because you've obviously looked at this seriously. Another option we have is hybrid or blended ridings. We've heard a lot about that this week. That is a legitimate tool that we have.

**Mr. Shevalier:** I believe you've created 18 of them already, though.

**The Chair:** Right. We've had, I think . . .

**Dr. Martin:** They already were there.

**The Chair:** We had about 13 or 14 or 15 up until this time around, and we added a few more. What are your thoughts on more hybrids?

**Mr. Shevalier:** My only concern with hybrids is: do they share a community of interest? I'll use the example of: my brother lives in Strathmore; I live in Calgary. They come into Calgary to shop, but they generally will stay in their communities to live and do every other thing. So the community of interest, because they don't have transit links – within Calgary you don't really leave. So do the hybrids share that community of interest? I don't know that they do.

**The Chair:** You've touched on the essence of the problem, yes.

**Mr. Evans:** Can I ask a question?

**The Chair:** Yeah. Mr. Evans, start.

**Mr. Evans:** When we think about hybrids and looking at the legislation, to me they just are different conglomerations of communities of interest, right? I think that where we've gone maybe a little awry with respect to looking at communities of

interest is we jump to a point and we say, "Well, they don't have transit issues," but they do have transit issues. They're just slightly different. They both want to go from A to B. How do they get there? So it's always an amelioration of those issues, and that's no different with respect to purely urban. There'll be communities of interest within those electoral divisions that have different interests.

What I'm interested to hear from you is: what about the communities of interest that are somewhat different? Let's say rural and urban, so a hybrid riding. What would be their homogeneous interests that they would all have? I think we jump quickly to what the difference is, and it might be one thing. We don't think about the 15 items that are all homogeneous in terms of their issues and interests. We'll use the example that you brought up with your brother. We'll say he's a rural community of interest and you're an urban community of interest. What are the similarities? What are the interests that you share in common, rather than focusing on the differences?

**Mr. Shevalier:** We share a lot in common in terms of, like, wanting community safety. We share a lot in wanting – I don't know – more hospitals, better health care.

Just to backpedal, in creating hybrid ridings, my argument to you would simply be that Airdrie and Cochrane share more in common than somebody between Airdrie and Calgary because in terms of economic development it's often that, unfortunately, we're pitted against each other. Like, the cities and rural Alberta have tried to not compete with each other in terms of economic development, but it will inevitably happen. For example, rural Alberta in terms of land costs is cheaper than the city of Calgary, and there are pluses and minuses in every category. I think we share a lot in common, but if we're talking about counties and reeves, the economic development and the services provided are just different because they don't provide the same services or the same level of services.

**Mr. Evans:** Aren't they all meeting the same needs, though? I guess I want to ask you this question. I think you agree with me or we're in agreement that most things are in common. Some things are different. And then would it be a weighting of those differences in terms of how important they would be in distinguishing one from another?

**Mr. Shevalier:** Sure. I'm simply reminded that, like, the overarching consideration is rough equity in terms of size as well and that, unfortunately, demography . . .

**The Chair:** Size being geography or population?

**Mr. Shevalier:** No, no. Not geography. In terms of vote parity. And in this case, unfortunately, demography is destiny.

**Mr. Evans:** What about voter eligibility? Have you considered the impact of voter eligibility?

**Mr. Shevalier:** Well, that's not what the legislation contemplates, though.

**Mr. Evans:** Does it?

**Mr. Shevalier:** No. If they'd wanted to say "citizen," they would have, but they didn't.

**Mr. Evans:** Fourteen (f), other factors?

**The Chair:** Well, maybe let somebody else engage here. Mrs. Samson, any questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Hey. The second speaker isn't here, so you're not leaving early, so you know.

**Mrs. Samson:** I can't help you out on that, Justice Miller.

I read your submission. Did you make an in-person submission as well?

**Mr. Shevalier:** I believe I did.

**Mrs. Samson:** Yeah. So I feel like I have already quizzed you, and I want to thank you for your appreciation of the work we put out.

**Mr. Shevalier:** Yeah. This is not my first boundary commission.

**Mrs. Samson:** Yeah. It doesn't sound like it. You're well informed. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you, and again thank you for your letter. I mean, it's very clear that it's very thoughtfully prepared by you and your colleagues. Obviously, I thank you for the fact that you're sensitive to the dilemmas that we juggle, hybrids being just one of them, one of many, and the difficulties we have now, because my colleague has been speaking of it. You know, you can have large populations but static or declining eligible voter populations, which is, I think, what he's alluding to under "any other factors." Certainly, the Supreme Court cases dwell upon equity for voters, and rightly so.

**Mr. Shevalier:** Yeah. I would simply also supplement that the Supreme Court has said it, but the legislation also contemplates it. The Supreme Court said that overriding it is rough equity of votes, and then you can consider other factors after that, and I think the legislation reflects that reality as well.

**Dr. Martin:** Our provincial legislation focuses on population, so you have two different directives without any clear indication of how they connect.

**Mr. Shevalier:** Well, no. I think when we focus on population, you're dealing with today, but you also have to contemplate tomorrow because somebody who's 17 today can't vote but in one year they can, so that changes. That's why you have to contemplate the future a little bit in determining these boundaries because, again, we don't want to get into a Fort McMurray-Conklin versus Calgary-South East situation again.

9:20

**Dr. Martin:** Well, those are two good examples of gross extremes, and we want to avoid all that, but it still remains the case that we have difficulties in balancing all these factors. That's what you allude to, I guess, as grasping the cactus.

**Mr. Shevalier:** Thank you for hugging the cactus.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**Mr. Evans:** I like cactuses.

**Mr. Clark:** If you don't mind, can I . . .

**The Chair:** Please.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you. Sorry.

I've got a few things I'd like to ask. You've obviously done a lot of research on this stuff, and we really appreciate that because you

obviously appreciate the challenge we have. I'll just ask, on the question of voters or citizens compared to population as our key criteria, are you aware of any other boundary commissions in Canada or the provinces or any academic research that would say voters or citizens are the criteria versus population, or do commissions use population in your research?

**Mr. Shevalier:** I did not look at other boundary commissions because you're bound by Alberta legislation and by precedent.

**Mr. Clark:** I'll say that I haven't found any myself, but if anybody out there listening has, please let me know because I'm curious about that.

I'm also interested. My friend down the way talked about communities of interest, and we think a lot about that as it relates to the legislation and also our challenge here. What would you say if I said: well, the city of Calgary is a community of interest, downtown Calgary is the economic heart of the city of Calgary, and therefore we should draw constituencies that look like a wagon wheel? Every one of 20-plus constituencies touches downtown in some way; that's going to be an appropriate blending of the interests of the city of Calgary.

**Mr. Shevalier:** You're entering into some natural boundary questions.

**Mr. Clark:** Fair. Let's just pretend Calgary is built on a perfectly flat bed of prairie east of where it currently sits and we could do that. Would you feel that's fair?

**Mr. Shevalier:** Okay. I'm going to get a little nerdy. The city of Calgary contemplated that. They contemplated doing it for their wards so that everybody had a little bit of a stake in terms of the success or failure of the downtown, and they didn't end up doing it. I can't remember the rationale now. They did not end up doing it because I think then you end up splitting up communities in ways that are not good. Part of your contemplation is – like, I live in Bankview, and if somebody were to split up Bankview, then it makes it very difficult for voters to figure out who their MLA is and how to vote. Communities evolve over time. It's not as if we live in – it also ends up looking odd in terms of the boundaries. You know, I don't want to make it look like we're gerrymandering in any way.

**Mr. Clark:** That's great. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you for your presentation and for letting us dialogue and converse in such a way.

**Mr. Shevalier:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Our next presenter is Samir Kayande. Please come forward. We don't want you to get comfortable back there. You have to sit up here. Please make yourself comfortable and tell us which electoral division you are from.

**Member Kayande:** All right. Thank you so much for the opportunity to present. My name is Samir Kayande, and I'm the MLA for Calgary-Elbow. I presented in front of you prior to the interim report being published.

I want to first start off by thanking you all for your incredible hard work. I didn't realize fully until I saw the first interim report just how much work, how much thought that you'd put into this. I know, speaking on behalf of all of my constituents, the people of Alberta were incredibly grateful for your work.

That said, I have quibbles, and I thought that we'd just jump right into it. I believe I only have, like, 10 minutes, right?

**The Chair:** Probably less.

**Member Kayande:** Probably less. Okay.

The biggest issue that I see with the map thematically is that Edmonton and Calgary remain underrepresented. I'm looking at appendix E from your report, and the average Edmonton riding is 3 and a half per cent above the overall population variance. That seems small, but when you aggregate over an entire city, what that means is that Edmonton is actually something like .75 seats below where it should be. So there is a real case to be made that – you know, how that's managed is, of course, something I leave in your very capable hands. But the elimination of the Edmonton-Riverview riding, for example, actually contributes to Edmonton continuing to be underrepresented, which has been the case for, I believe, many, many years now. It just means that the voices of Edmonton city voters count for less.

Calgary is less of a problem. Where I believe Calgary remains underrepresented is in the fact that it's not adjusted for future growth. That's how we get a situation, which is very unfortunate, where Calgary-Buffalo was at a 40 per cent variance, for example. I don't think anybody wants that to happen. One way to prevent that is preloading, basically. You know, making sure that both Edmonton and Calgary have an extra seat and in so doing ensuring that these cities remain properly represented.

Just to tie that off, the only other region of the province that you broke down in appendix E where there's a substantial variance exceeding that of Edmonton's is the north, which has a negative 10 per cent variance. Basically, what that means is that the north has an extra seat. That means that the average northern voter's voice counts for 1.1 times. Actually, it counts for – I'm doing my math in my head – about 1.2 times that of the Edmonton voter, and I don't think, frankly, that that's what the intent of the legislation is.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, sir. If I can just jump in, your analysis is bang on if all we were worried about is Calgary and Edmonton. It's bang on if we were on a one person, one vote system. That is not the case, as you know. We do not have representation by population in this country, never had. No jurisdiction has. Our task is effective representation.

Let me throw out a scenario because you've obviously studied this. Earlier this week – we haven't verified it, but let's assume it's correct. The proposed division we have for northern Alberta: the southern border of that electoral division is closer to Montana than it is to the Northwest Territories. You're a member of the Legislature. How can a member of the Legislature traverse that kind of distance and provide effective representation? That's the conundrum we're faced with.

**Member Kayande:** It is a very real conundrum, and I agree that effective representation is the legislation. It is the law. It's what you're tasked to ...

**The Chair:** I'm pushing back a little bit not only ...

**Member Kayande:** Yeah. The jurisprudence is very clear that effective representation is complex, and it includes a number of other factors.

**The Chair:** Yeah. And hybrids are a solution. They are a legitimate solution. You haven't raised it, but we got some unwarranted criticism about hybrids earlier this week. It is tiresome, in my view, to hear people go on and on about how hybrids are, you know, the skunk at the garden party. It's not the case. So I'm pushing back

aggressively because you know who you represent, and I wish it was only Calgary and Edmonton we had to deal with.

9:30

**Member Kayande:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** I'm going to shut up and let the rest of the panel ask brief questions.

**Member Kayande:** Okay.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you. I mean, I'm just going to pick up on that question of the north because that really is something we wrestle with a lot because, as Justice Miller said, there are any number of breathtaking comparators. The Mackenzie county, which is the northwest corner, has about 15,000 people in a space that's almost three times the size of the country of Belgium.

There are any number we could pick, you know, so there are unique challenges, but I guess I wonder: would you distinguish, as an MLA, between the unique challenges of dealing with that vast, vast geography, cellphone dead zones, massive driving distances, and ice roads and somewhere that's perhaps on the highway 2 corridor, for example, that has smaller towns, rural, but cell service? Really, what I'm asking is: if something has to give in terms of ensuring effective representation for folks in the far, remote north, what has to give, and how do we square that?

**Member Kayande:** Yeah. That's, I guess, my point – right? – that everything has a cost. And I agree, nothing is costless here. Hybrid ridings, for example. You know, the vast distances in northern Alberta, like, yes, those are – I would say that, for example, hybrid ridings are a last-ditch solution when you can't conceivably figure out a way to solve the problem. I hope that I haven't been one of these people who's been ...

**The Chair:** No, you didn't. No. Sorry; I didn't mean to imply that, sir.

**Member Kayande:** Okay. Yeah. As well, when we look at the vast distances in the north, for example. I guess what I would say, and this is kind of a meta comment, is that population follows economic growth, right? If you'll permit me to be nakedly partisan for, like, the next two minutes ...

**The Chair:** You'll be the first one.

**Mr. Evans:** Naked.

**Mr. Clark:** *Hansard* is forever, John.

**Member Kayande:** Yeah.

There's been a failure to invest in the economics of the north – right? – over multiple governments, over multiple years, and that failure to invest has resulted in a population that has not grown at the same rate as the rest of Alberta has. So the solution must be very carefully considered in line of the enormous costs in terms of representation. You know, do we say simply, "Okay; that's just the way that it is," and it's locked in, or do we allow northerners an opportunity to be like: "Look, we need a change here. We need a government that actually invests in us"?

This is a symptom. The fact that a seat was taken out of the north: it's not the problem. The problem is a lack of investment in the north. And I think if you talk to people in the north, they would agree.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much.

Dr. Martin, any questions or comments?

**Dr. Martin:** I know you're bursting to ask, but I'll ask a couple of questions, and thank you. I appreciate your remarks about the north. It's very likely part of the solution package, more investment there. Also, they've suffered in recent years with enormous fires. The town of Slave Lake twice, for example. That has pounded the local economy and the population and so on and so on.

**Member Kayande:** Yes. It's tragic.

**Dr. Martin:** We've had a large number of letters, this round in particular, about the north, and if I characterize them all together, they are all saying: we need more northern voices because we are underrepresented. Now, you've suggested, by just thinking about relative populations and the like, that they are overrepresented, and the weight of argument is not on your side there.

Similarly, one may argue, as we have amongst ourselves constantly, how to ensure that Edmonton and Calgary achieve effective representation. You may think it underrepresentation, but we're convinced it's effective. The case law, on the one hand, as you will well know, and the act itself give us guidance on what set of factors could constitute this nebulous creature called effective representation. That's our dilemma.

**Member Kayande:** I completely agree.

**Dr. Martin:** Not just the population, that on the surface of it looks unbalanced perhaps, but that's not, at the end of the day, how we come to the decision that, yeah, that's effective.

**Member Kayande:** That's right. The only thing that I would say, I guess, and one of the reasons I'm here is: let's not ignore the fact that while we are not a one person, one vote country, although, I mean, most people would find that very surprising if you asked them on the street.

**The Chair:** They do.

**Dr. Martin:** Well, most people would be surprised if they read the law at all.

**Member Kayande:** Yeah. While that may be something that exists, the Supreme Court has also been very clear, in my mind – sorry; I haven't read the briefings I received – that effective representation encompasses the notion that you want, you know, similar populations to have similar voices is a bedrock, right?

**Dr. Martin:** But you're making an elision there that you should back away from, which is the one most people make, between voter parity, which is the bulk of the directions we received from the Supreme Court's references. In order to achieve effective representation, you must place a large weighting on getting voter parity. It doesn't speak to populations, and there's an elision that's made in popular discussion between populations and voters, so we need to keep them all separate among all the other balls we're juggling.

**Member Kayande:** That sounds like a novel position to me.

**Dr. Martin:** No, but those are the facts of the matter.

**The Chair:** Okay. I'm going to move over to Mrs. Samson. Any questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** Yes. Thank you for coming out. I appreciate your time today.

**Member Kayande:** Thank you very much, Susan.

**Mrs. Samson:** When we talk about more electoral districts, you know that we were only given two.

**Member Kayande:** Yes.

**Mrs. Samson:** Can you tell me how those decisions are made? In light of Alberta Is Calling and the knowledge that we were exploding at the seams, how could that have come down as only two?

**Member Kayande:** In terms of the deliberation in the House, you mean? Well, okay. I mean, I know that there is like a grade 9 civics approach to how legislation is written, which is that, you know, everybody in good faith argues about the various different proposals, and I know that Commissioner Clark is probably cracking a smile here at my description. What in actuality happens is that the government decides, "Here's the bill," and then it passes because they have the votes to pass it.

I have not reviewed the *Hansard* completely around, like, how much debate there was on merely adding two seats, so I don't have an answer for you, I'm afraid. I think that if the commission wants to, in their report, suggest that: look, we should probably be thinking about adding more seats in order to make sure that these very difficult, challenging decisions are made less so. You know, I don't presume to do your job for you, but that seems like something that I'd approach them on.

**Mrs. Samson:** I think you're absolutely right.

**The Chair:** We would probably make a recommendation on a comparative basis with other jurisdictions.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

**Mr. Evans:** No. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Kayande, I appreciate you coming and I appreciate you being in very good nature taking the sparring that we've given you. We all had big breakfasts this morning and we're raring to go.

**Member Kayande:** These are long days, and you've been at this for a while. Again, I very much appreciate this, and I appreciate the work that you're doing.

**The Chair:** You know, if there was an unlimited budget for this process, I would insist that you present in Lesser Slave Lake and that the Fort McMurray presenters present in Calgary, because as presenters the public needs to see what other parts of the province are going through.

**Member Kayande:** That's right.

9:40

**The Chair:** And that's maybe a little bit why I came out pretty strongly on it.

**Member Kayande:** It's a fair comment. It really is, and you're absolutely correct that it's effective representation that's important.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you so much, and please remain to hear other presenters if you have the time.

**Member Kayande:** Okay. Absolutely. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Our next presenter isn't here, but, Richard Warnock, we're going to bring you up early if that's okay.

Please make yourself comfortable, identify yourself, tell us where you're from and what constituencies you wish to speak to.

**Mr. Warnock:** Okay. It's Richard Warnock, the mayor of Sundre, and I'm from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre constituency at this time.

**Mrs. Samson:** Do you live in Sundre?

**Mr. Warnock:** I live in Sundre, yes.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Please proceed.

**Mr. Warnock:** Okay. Thank you. I'm sure you've heard most of this before, but I really want to emphasize on behalf of this beautiful community of Sundre, my fellow councillors, and the residents of Sundre that we are thankful for the opportunity to provide meaningful feedback from the viewpoint of a community that will be deeply impacted by the proposed changes to our current electoral boundaries from an operational and a cultural perspective.

You know, I'd like to take the time to start by telling you a bit about the community of Sundre and the goals and ambitions we have for the future of this incredible community. We are located in the foothills of the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains, in fact just over the mountains from Banff national park. The town of Sundre has been identified as one of the 10 destination development zones in the province of Alberta by Travel Alberta.

For a number of years we've been working with Travel Alberta on destination development planning, and we are more geographically and strategically aligned with Banff, Bighorn, and Rocky Mountain House in this regard. We recently participated in a tourism strategic planning session in partnership with the Sundre Tourism Association, which included a survey of the residents of the town and our surrounding area. The vast majority of these residents were supportive of tourism in Sundre.

Our unique geography and close proximity to the eastern slopes is the ideal location for unique experiences, and we have worked hard to create strong partnerships with a number of international, market-ready tourism operators to the north, west, and south of Sundre in alignment with the government of Alberta's vision for tourism.

The town of Sundre has strong communities of interest and western municipalities that are distinct and different from the unique interests and priorities of our good neighbours to the east. We have a strong western community identity, and the proposed changes will split us from communities where we have historic and shared service ties, further disrupting our existing shared community identities. It is important that the commission recognizes the importance of how local governments and communities actually function and interact, and the regional cohesion we currently enjoy.

Operational co-operation is already established through mutual aid agreements with Bighorn, Clearwater county, and Sundre regional hub with our hospital, schools, social services, emergency, and fire areas to the west, including those of the MD of Bighorn and Clearwater county. This economic alignment is clearly western focused, and our key industries – oil and gas, forestry, sawmills, and tourism – contrast sharply with the eastern agricultural economy.

Sundre's economy is categorized as ultra-diversified due to our proximity to the foothills and primary resources. The town remains a hub for energy support services and conventional extraction, contributing to Alberta's energy sector, which accounts for roughly

25 per cent of our provincial GDP. Leveraging our western location near the West Fraser sawmill, forestry is a core industrial driver that is less prevalent in the plains area in the east. Sundre's mountain region makes tourism particularly a growth sector, with 2,000 campsites nearby. The local population in Sundre swells from 2,800 to 12,000 during the summer months with these local campgrounds around our town. These industries remain a pillar of regional employment.

The proposed boundary fails to recognize natural community interaction patterns, potentially going against the commission's requirement for boundaries that support robust and effective representation. We are aware that the new proposed electoral boundaries have faced criticism from both rural and urban communities. They create a conflict between the principles of population, equality, and effective representation.

When I read through the report, I was particularly interested in page 8 of the commission's interim report, which reads:

As a statutory body, this Commission's work begins with analyzing its enabling legislation. Only one of six criteria in Section 14 of the Act mentions population. After reviewing the Act, the Commission must remain focused on the constitutional right of Canadian citizens in Alberta . . .

And I'm sure you are.

. . . to vote and how that right has been interpreted by the Supreme Court . . . and the Alberta Court of Appeal. The Act reminds us of our duty in this regard. This translates to ensuring "effective representation."

The document's statement was further emphasized in the quote of the "pivotal case of Reference [of the] . . . Electoral Boundaries (Saskatchewan)" justice in the matter, which reached the Supreme Court in 1991.

McLachlin . . . in defining the right to vote, stated:

It is my conclusion that the purpose of the right to vote enshrined in [section] 3 of the Charter is not equality of voting power per se, but the right to "effective representation."

It goes on to state that

Ours is a representative democracy. Each citizen is entitled to be represented in government. Representation comprehends the idea of having a voice in the deliberations of government as well as the idea of the right . . . [of] one's grievances and concerns to

our regional elected representative.

It is our concern that placing Sundre with communities that are distinctively different than Sundre puts us in a position where we are at risk of losing effective representation. The current proposal combines geographically and economically diverse areas. A representative for this large and varied constituency would face challenges addressing the specific shared regional interests facing our town, Sundre, and its immediate neighbours. We are concerned that our MLA may struggle to advocate effectively for our specific needs, as the communities east of highway 22 have vastly different priorities and demands, and our voice will be drastically diluted. Effective intermunicipal co-operation is comprised when key partners must ally with different elected representatives.

Additionally, the representation by population model fails the effective representation standard and community interests alongside raw numbers. Additionally, and of great importance, reducing rural ridings is not representative of Alberta as the overwhelming majority of Alberta is rural while cities and other urban centres occupy a very small geographical percentage.

We are deeply grateful for the work done to date and your representation for all of us Albertans. We respectfully request that the commission acknowledge the town of Sundre's viewpoint that there are additional considerations impacting municipalities that should be considered apart from population. Please revisit the boundaries proposed in the initial review. Consider placing Sundre

and western Mountain View county in a riding with Banff, MD of Bighorn, and Clearwater county.

Thank you for letting me present.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Warnock. We have the map in front of us here. Maybe I could get you to tell us where the eastern boundary, in your view, should be of this proposed riding.

**Mr. Warnock:** Having looked at the entire province and what you presented, I think making the geographical lines east-west instead of north-south does change the focus of what you have. Therefore, if you take east of highway 22, that's just on the east side of Sundre, and if you take west of there, it's a different culture, a different aspect.

**The Chair:** Okay. So 22 is the dividing line, in your view.

**Mr. Warnock:** Twenty-two.

**The Chair:** Okay. Let me go through the commission. They may have questions or dialogue.

Mr. Evans, anything?

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah. What was the percentage of revenue generated by the various – you talked about tourism. You talked about oil and gas. Are you projecting more growth in tourism? Is that your anticipation as opposed to ...

**Mr. Warnock:** Yes. I believe west of highway 22 the Sundre, Caroline, Rocky, Drayton Valley areas are definitely changing their aspect with the decline of oil and gas being a different geographic percentage. We are all going to try and create that revenue by tourism because, as you know, forestry and oil and gas are declining.

**Mr. Evans:** We heard yesterday or the day before, I guess – maybe it was yesterday; I can't remember – about an investment of \$35 billion in tourism by the province. That's to 2035?

**Mr. Warnock:** Yeah. It's 10 years.

**Mr. Evans:** And it's \$35 billion.

**Mr. Warnock:** Yeah.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Susan, any questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** Just in a follow-up to this. The \$35 billion is targeted for your specific area, like, the foothills?

**Mr. Warnock:** Well, it's targeted for tourism. I don't think they drew a line that said that they're not going to allow some of that revenue to be elsewhere in Alberta.

**Mrs. Samson:** So they're talking about how that's their budget for the province.

9:50

**Mr. Warnock:** Of course, it's such a difference. If I could just take, you know, the Edmonton corridor of highway 16, I mean, what's in west Hinton, Edson, whatever: so different than Vegreville, Lloydminster. Well, Sundre, Rocky Mountain House is so different from Olds, Three Hills even. It's just such a different population.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

I am very interested in hearing more about Sundre as an economic hub. I'm thinking of more traditional industries: forestry, oil and gas, and some ranching. My general understanding from you, Mr. Mayor, and other submissions we've had is that there is a fairly clear divide in the type of agricultural uses, one may say, between the area east of 22 and the area west of 22. Is that how over the decades these areas have distinguished themselves from each other?

**Mr. Warnock:** Very much. The forage side of agriculture, which is, you know, the grass areas, the cattle areas, and so on, is basically highway 22 and west. Of course, east of that is more a crop culture, grain and so on and so forth, canola, grain. They definitely have a different aspect of how they market that. It's really distinct. I don't know how to explain it other than what I've learned through that is such a difference of opinion and focus on how they market their product. It does feed down to the municipalities, right?

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you.

First off, I'm somewhat envious of anyone who lives in that part of the province because it really is a unique kind of, you know, place: mountains, prairie. You're a lucky guy, so I'm envious.

I'm looking at the current Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre constituency. I see that Rimbey is a really different place than Sundre in the same way. As you say, it's agricultural. It's a different kind of agriculture and even just the transportation time. It takes about an hour and 25, according to my friend Google Maps, to drive to Rimbey whereas our proposal would have you out to Three Hills, which is east, and that would be about an hour and 15, right? You've got kind of a different orientation, but the kind of impact in terms of, like, an MLA's ability to serve that area, diverse as it may be, is not really impacted, or it is impacted maybe differently.

I guess I'm just kind of curious if you can kind of tell me a bit about, you know, what the conditions are like, road conditions, cell coverage. Have you got pretty decent cell coverage when you're on the road?

**Mr. Warnock:** It is east of 22, for sure. West of 22 not so much, right? Clearwater county is certainly working on having that fibre put into that area. But once you go west of Sundre, the municipal district of Bighorn and anywhere west of Sundre, there is literally no Internet service. In a lot of places there's no cell service. Period. Our emergency services do service that area, so it is very complex from an emergency services system.

Our fire department in Sundre is so vastly different than the fire department in Olds, Didsbury, or Carstairs. It's just crazy, the different exposure that we have and the risks our firefighters have because of that service you're just talking about. They have to get their help before they go there because once they get there, they've got to send somebody in a vehicle to the nearest place a cellphone works to call for additional resources.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. Thank you so much. Thanks. I really appreciate you coming down today as well.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Warnock. Now, we have lots of problems and challenges with this commission. We're looking for solutions. Have you come up with a map that corrects what we've done in relation to Sundre and the surrounding area?

**Mr. Warnock:** I didn't prepare one to bring with me, but what I can say is that if you use highway 22 as your dividing line and you take west of that and east of that all the way to Banff, Jasper, that's a different scope totally, and it really makes a world of difference.

**The Chair:** So you want Banff in your riding.

**Mr. Warnock:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much.

Okay. That prompted one question. Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** From time to time I go camping, and I always go through Sundre, where there are some great sandwich shops, good gas stations, and from there I go up the upper Red Deer River to Ya Ha Tinda. Mountain View is the last sort of point of civilization on that road, and from there you can get down to Banff, can't you?

**Mr. Warnock:** Absolutely.

**Dr. Martin:** Is this an all-year-round road for a guy in a pickup truck?

**Mr. Warnock:** Yes. It's not the best road – let me put it that way – but it is absolutely serviceable year-round. South of there – if you go south of Kananaskis, for example – that same road is closed in the wintertime because of the pass, but between Banff highway 40 is open year-round.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you so much. Please feel free to stay and hear the rest of the presentations.

**Mr. Warnock:** Thank you for letting me be here today. I appreciate it.

**The Chair:** Okay. Our next presenter is Sarah Elmeligi.

Good morning. Make yourself comfortable, identify yourself, and tell us what riding you are from or, well, representing.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Good morning. Yeah. My name is Sarah Elmeligi. I am the MLA for Banff-Kananaskis. It's very fortuitous to come after the mayor of Sundre. I want to thank him for his comments and perspective, especially since Banff came up multiple times. Hopefully, I can help contribute to that conversation.

I currently represent the best riding in Alberta, or the most beautiful, for sure. The proposed Banff-Jasper riding is even more beautiful, so that's kind of fun. Through my time as MLA I've developed in-depth relationships with the communities and people that I represent across the riding. I've learned so much about them, but I've also learned quite a bit about other communities along the eastern slopes as the shadow minister of Environment and Protected Areas, so I'm here today to provide input from both of those perspectives.

Electoral boundaries are a foundation of our democracy. How we decide to link communities together impacts how they are represented in the Legislature, and this is critical work, so I want to thank you all on the commission for your continued hard work to refine Alberta's electoral boundaries. I do not envy your job. I think it might be one of the hardest ones in the province right now, to be fair. The work that you're doing is at the heart of our democracy,

and it's really essential in how Albertans trust the electoral process, so thank you so much for stepping forward to do this.

While my comments today will pertain to the changes of the Banff-Kananaskis riding and the proposed new riding of Banff-Jasper, there are some overarching comments I wish to share based on the Electoral Boundaries Commission interim report.

First, I support separating urban and rural ridings while also retaining sufficient rural representation. There are significant differences between the needs of rural and urban Albertans, and as a rural MLA whose constituency borders Alberta's largest city I witness how my constituents' needs shift with their proximity to that city. For example, not having a local doctor in your community is very different for the people of Springbank, who live right next to the city of Calgary, versus the people in the MD of Bighorn, who might need to drive farther. The pressures experienced to convert agricultural land to other development intensifies as communities get closer to Calgary such as comparing grazing leases in the Ghost to private cattle ranches in Springbank or farms in Priddis. Rural transportation for school buses is also completely different in the MD of Foothills than it is in the city of Calgary, and there are completely different associated costs. Wildfire risk, preparedness, and response, which is something that every community in Banff-Kananaskis is concerned about, is an issue whose intensity and necessity is completely different in a rural landscape than it is in the city.

It is beneficial and strategic for an MLA to be able to represent the needs of their constituents when there are common needs, and this aligns with the need to keep similar communities together in riding boundaries. It really makes my job so much easier when my communities have something in common. This is a critical component of creating a fair map that ensures effective representation and that an MLA has the ability to represent their constituents with fairness and equality.

**10:00**

It is much easier to represent your constituents to your caucus and to the Legislature when there are common concerns. It is much harder to adequately and fairly represent your constituents when they are diametrically opposite to each other. As an MLA for a riding with a very diverse population I have come to this perspective from experience, and while I embrace the diversity of my riding, it does make my job more challenging at times.

A riding that is split between urban and rural communities will inevitably reduce the rural voice as the riding's greater population density will undoubtedly be in the urban area. The previous Banff-Cochrane riding was really problematic, as a person who's lived in Canmore for the last 18 years, because we felt in Canmore that we did not have a voice in provincial politics because the community of Cochrane pulled the vote, basically. When Banff and Canmore were included in a riding with Cochrane, the needs of the smaller communities were often deemed less important or less urgent than the needs of Cochrane, and that's simply because the majority of the population of the riding lived in Cochrane. So it's no fault of previous MLAs or previous processes. The sentiment in the mountain communities, however, was one of being overlooked or that their concerns didn't matter as much.

One of the greatest things about the current riding of Banff-Kananaskis is that there is no one population that sways issues in a biased way. As MLA, there is no one single community in my riding whose issues become more important than any others. It becomes my job to find the common ground between communities and to highlight the differences between them with fairness for each. It is a balancing act, but it helps ensure that every community feels equally represented. I will say that, as MLA for a riding like



Banff-Kananaskis that goes from Springbank to Lake Louise, it is my personal goal to make sure that each of my communities feel fairly represented.

The commission is faced with a significant challenge. As the population grows, many people move from rural to urban areas, and this has drastically increased the populations in both Edmonton and Calgary. It is apparent that both cities require an extra seat to ensure that population is fairly and equally distributed among MLAs. But I'll also say that rural Alberta is arguably different, and every rural riding is different from the others. Rural Alberta is a diverse, complex, and beautiful place with communities of various sizes, interests, economic potential, and population growth levels. A fair electoral boundaries map will also make sure that these characteristics of Alberta are maintained, acknowledged, and addressed. Finding ways to do this is perhaps the greatest challenge for the commission. When it comes to designing the rural riding boundaries, I believe it is important to link similar communities together, which the boundary commission has done well with the new proposed Banff-Jasper riding.

I support the proposed changes to the Banff-Kananaskis riding to create a Banff-Jasper riding for a couple really key reasons. First, I want to address the way that the riding brings Indigenous communities together. First, grouping all Stoney Nation communities, Eden Valley, Mini Thni, and Big Horn into one riding is great.

Over the past few months I've shared this change with Stoney residents and leadership and have received positive comments of support. There is broad recognition that bringing all of these communities and nations together under the responsibility of one MLA will improve representation of Stoney issues at the provincial government level. It continues to be my great honour to represent the Stoney people in a good way. Including the Sunchild and O'Chiese First Nations as well as retaining Tsuut'ina Nation in the riding ensures that the MLA for this riding will have a significant First Nations population to represent from both Treaty 6 and 7.

While all First Nations in Alberta are different, often speaking different languages, exhibiting different cultural and ceremonial protocols, and having different economic opportunities based on a variety of factors, there are commonalities. A good MLA for this area will work closely with these nations to understand their differences and find the best common ground to represent them. From my working experience with Treaty 7 one thing most First Nations have in common is a feeling of inadequate meaningful consultation on government decision-making processes, legislation, and policies and land-use planning. Having one MLA represent so many different First Nations gives each nation a more comprehensive voice when it comes to representing the need for their participation in government policy and the need for that policy to more thoroughly represent their input. An MLA who represents this diversity of nations will inherently need to cultivate productive relationships with MP counterparts and weave federal policies with provincial policies to ensure reconciliation is both meaningful and effective.

With these changes this riding becomes one of high Indigenous representation. That's a significant responsibility, requiring a unique set of skills. It's also a massive opportunity to demonstrate what truth and reconciliation can be when we work together with multiple First Nations and multiple levels of government. This boundary change could position Alberta as a leader in electoral reform to enhance Indigenous representation in a way that serves First Nations and celebrates all that they bring to our provincial culture, economy, and ways of knowing. I know part of the challenge to this riding – do you have a question, or am I running out of time?

**The Chair:** No, it's a time signal. Keep going but kind of wrap it up here so we can have some questions and dialogue.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Wow. Okay. I have a lot more. I'll zip through this part really fast then.

**The Chair:** Yeah, please zip.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Okay. I know this idea of including Jasper is concerning for a lot of people. I just want to take some time to talk about the national parks of Banff and Jasper, unique landscapes, their lands managed by the federal government, with federal pieces of legislation representing people who are Albertans. They also have the towns of Banff and Jasper, which are incorporated municipalities. In that way Banff and Jasper are actually unique municipalities in Canada. There are no other municipalities in national parks that are incorporated and have elected municipal government. So the MLA for this area necessarily inherently has to navigate municipal, provincial, and federal politics to best serve the people of these communities. That inherently makes Banff and Jasper have something in common.

The other thing that they have in common is that high dependency on tourism economy, really, as a foundation economy to the municipalities but also significant provincial contributors. Canmore, Banff, and Jasper contribute over \$1.5 billion a year to the provincial economy. How we manage tourism in these three communities specifically is very critical, and the intricacy of how that's done is nice if that falls to one MLA.

The other thing I'll bring in is that we are all mountain communities. After the Jasper fires displaced residents sought refuge in Banff and Canmore. Banff and Canmore have started to change their wildfire response protocols based on lessons learned in Jasper. We have regular communication as Canmore, Banff, and Jasper. We work together on a lot of things, whether we're in the same provincial riding or not.

This new proposed riding of Banff-Jasper also protects a big portion of the headwaters for the Bow and the North Saskatchewan watersheds, and that is something that people living along the eastern slopes have in common, a concern about protecting the headwaters.

The last thing I'll say about the specific riding boundaries is that I really think the community of Priddis belongs in the Okotoks-Diamond Valley or High River-Vulcan riding. I love Priddis. It's amazing. I'm actually heading there right after this. But Priddis agricultural landscape really has a lot more in common with Millarville and Diamond Valley rural areas than even with Bragg Creek, which is geographically closer. So I'm recommending that the riding boundary go south on secondary highway 762 to connect with highway 549 and go west from there.

I'll open it up for questions.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** And I'll e-mail you this because there's a lot more in here.

**The Chair:** Oh, please do. I somewhat regret slowing you down here and stopping you.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** No, that's okay.

**The Chair:** There's going to be lots of discussion here.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Sure.

**The Chair:** We'll touch on some of the issues that I'm sure you'll want us to understand.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark, any questions?

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you. I appreciate you coming. It's always great to hear from elected officials, municipal and provincial. You have a good sense of kind of the reality on the ground, and that's really helpful for us. So thank you for coming.

I'm curious. There have been some discussion questions around what the connections are perhaps south of you down into Crowsnest Pass.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Yeah. Sure.

**Mr. Clark:** That's a bit of a new one for me. I'd never heard that before. I guess I'm curious on your view as to what that connection is or isn't between your area and places like Pincher Creek, et cetera.

10:10

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Yeah. I mean, there are a lot of commonalities, obviously. Like the ecosystem is very similar, with the mountains to the foothills to the grasslands, and so the communities are kind of similar.

I spent some time in the Crowsnest Pass last year trying to talk to the current council about tourism opportunities, and the council told me in that conversation that they had no interest of becoming like Canmore, that they see themselves very different from Canmore. They are interested in exploring tourism, but they made it sound like they're not interested in exploring it to the extent that it is present in the Bow Valley, and there's a lot of nuance and complications there. Like, the Crowsnest Pass will never be the Bow Valley. It's not an hour away from a city of over a million people. There are a lot of things that make it very different and unique.

I don't think the people of the Crowsnest Pass think that they have a lot in common with Canmore, so, in one way, I don't know that it matters what I think about that. I don't think that the people of Canmore see themselves as being in common with Crowsnest Pass and vice versa. I think people really perceive that as being two very different, unique parts of the province, so I don't recommend putting the Bow Valley and Crowsnest Pass into one riding. I don't think it makes sense.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much for your presentation. Even though it was slightly truncated, we certainly got the spirit of it all.

I'm interested in your remarks about your role with respect to the diversity of communities you inevitably have in any riding, perhaps in this one most visibly so. You see your role as, if I'm paraphrasing, balancing those diverse interests from time to time, and I commend you for tackling that. It seems that you are pretty good at it.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** I try my best.

**Dr. Martin:** My point really is that this new configuration loads a heck of a lot more balancing work on your plate. I have some experience with the federal national park system and, you know, the superintendents are lords and quite apart from the incorporated towns. The superintendent is a really big voice. The sets of interests

that an MLA carries are burdensome already. This configuration would double them.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Well, we might be able to agree to disagree on that point.

**Dr. Martin:** Oh, okay.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** I've been working in national parks also since way before I was an MLA. You're correct that the relationship between the federal government as the national park agency and the superintendent and the municipal government is a complex one, but the roles and responsibilities are actually quite clearly defined. I do think that the municipal government in both Banff and Jasper have over the years developed really productive relationships with their respective superintendents. I think most of the conflict, if I may be so bold, actually stems from direction coming from Ottawa, not necessarily from the superintendents. I feel like that is another piece of complexity, I will say.

I do think it takes sensitivity to navigate that as a provincial MLA, but I think it actually makes the MLA's job easier to consider Banff and Jasper in the same work portfolio because they have a lot in common in that space. The municipal governments of Banff and Jasper, like the mayors, are already working together all the time, as are the superintendents of Banff and Jasper already working together all the time in what's known as the Rocky Mountain park complex. Those relationships already exist, and it's not that I mind having two MLAs working on it right now. I mean, I work well with MLA Long, who currently represents Jasper, but I think it's a lot easier if it's just one MLA who is developing those relationships and working with those parties.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

Thank you for coming out again.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Thanks for having me. Yeah. My pleasure.

**Mrs. Samson:** We've heard back from Canmore, not necessarily the mayor. He's quite supportive, just wants the name in the title Canmore-Banff-Jasper.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Yeah. He told me about that.

**Mrs. Samson:** We'll have to talk. But the thing that gets me is that there has been – I would like to hear your opinion from talking with your residents inside Canmore. How do they feel about joining the parks, the national parks, when they are not a national park?

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Well, we're not joining the national park. We're still outside of the national park.

**Mrs. Samson:** Yeah. Maybe that's the wrong word.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Like I tried to say, and it does say it more in my written submission, we really see ourselves as mountain people. I think that sentiment was further reinforced with the Jasper fire because every single person who lives in Exshaw, Dead Man's, Canmore, and Banff went outside the next day and looked at those surrounding hillsides and was like: that could be us.

Our communities totally ignored the fact that there are national parks and provincial parks and different municipalities. We instantly opened up. There were all kinds of, like, fundraisers and gear fundraisers because the poor people of Jasper don't have

climbing ropes anymore. How will they go climbing? I can't even tell you the amount of community effort that went into helping the people of Jasper in that immediate recovery time. People were opening their homes, their garages, their backyards for people to camp in. We welcomed a lot of displaced residents from Jasper, but also just the community really came together, recognizing that we are mountain people. I think the people of Canmore appreciate the idea of being recognized as such with Banff and Jasper.

**Mrs. Samson:** Good. Thank you. I appreciate that.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** No, but thank you for your submissions.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry to be such a timekeeper, but I have a comment to make and maybe some feedback. I wish you'd have been here a day or two ago. We had a presenter highly critical of our proposed electoral division. I can tell you, I was a big fan of it at the early stages when we had the deliberations. I'm starting to be concerned about a balkanization of that riding. We could do better in terms of representation, according to the presenter a day or two ago, if we had two MLAs from the foothills into the Rockies advocating on behalf of that tourism zone bordering the alpine district. There's considerable push-back, and I wish we had had you presenting right after that person because it's an interesting debate.

Let me ask you this: if we extended it as far as Sundre, as proposed by the previous presenter, could you live with that?

**Dr. Elmeligi:** I mean, you know, the funny thing is that it's not actually about me. I will not be MLA for this riding forever. Somebody will come after me, and you're making a decision that pertains to the next 10 years. I was thinking this morning how one of the hardest things is that people will come to you thinking about who the MLA might be and what party that MLA might represent and how people will vote, but ultimately your decision is to create boundaries so that people feel like they're grouped with like people. It doesn't matter how they vote or how many of them vote or don't vote. As MLA it's my job to represent all the people in my riding, regardless of if they voted for me or if they're even eligible to vote.

When I think about the eastern slopes and the Rocky Mountains, I see what you have proposed as being grouping like communities together, communities that are facing similar challenges around tourism growth and pressures and also the challenges that come with just living in rural Alberta and being far away from the city. So I wish I could have been here, too.

**The Chair:** Yeah. I wish I had another half hour with you here, too.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Well, you know, I mean, I would happily present again and just come and answer questions. Aaron, of course, knows how to get in touch with me if you do have written questions you'd like me to answer more specifically. I'm happy to do that at a later date.

**The Chair:** Thank you for your presentation and for the dialogue. Much appreciated.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Send your presentation over.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** I will.

**Mrs. Samson:** I would like to read it.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** I might add a little bit more to it based on your questions.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** Good. Okay. Two more before the break.

Mr. Sabir. Irfan Sabir. Good morning. Make yourself comfortable, and tell us what electoral division you're from and which ones you wish to comment on.

**10:20**

**Mr. Sabir:** Good morning, commissioners. I'm Irfan Sabir, MLA for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall. I will be making comments generally about my riding and the city. First, I would like to convey my appreciation for the opportunity to provide feedback on the interim report and for your many weeks of hard work on this redistribution process.

I'll jump right into the Calgary context. While the interim report makes steps toward recognizing Calgary's current and future growth, it still falls short of providing effective representation for Calgarians and Albertans in general. The proposed map fails to accommodate current and projected future population growth and, if implemented as is, would result in Calgary being underrepresented in future Legislatures.

The addition of Calgary-Confluence east of downtown and the new Calgary-North Creek riding in the north are two of the strengths of the new map. These proposals will help to prevent north and central Calgary seats from becoming overpopulated and will provide representation where population growth is increasing. However, both options fall short by failing to recognize and plan for Calgary's growth.

Most of the proposed ridings in Calgary are over the provincial average, and my proposed riding of Calgary-Bhullar-McCall is over by 10 per cent. At the same time the map proposes new hybrid districts in Calgary-West-Elbow Valley and Calgary-Cross, which take neighbouring rural areas to reach the average population number despite Calgary itself being overpopulated. Simply put, these hybrid ridings are not necessary to achieve the legislative purpose of effective representation.

Although the commission is not bound by a strict requirement to adhere to a measure of one person, one vote per the 1991 decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in the reference re provincial boundaries Saskatchewan, in the same decision the court also notes that diluting one group of citizen votes compared to another increases the likelihood that a map will not provide effective representation. In this manner the proposed map fails to strike a proportionate balance by making Calgary's seats on average significantly more overpopulated than rural Alberta and by diluting Calgary votes by arbitrarily connecting them to rural areas that are outside of their communities of interest.

This map could readily be improved by adding an additional seat to Calgary to recognize our fast rate of growth and better balance out overpopulated and high-growth areas of the city. Given that Calgary has a high enough population to have each seat be fully urban and within the population variance allowed for under section 15(1) of the act, there is no compelling reason to include rural areas like Cochrane, Springbank, Okotoks, and Bears paw with Calgary ridings.

Section 14(b) and (c) of the act allow the commission to take into consideration communities of interest and clarity of boundaries. Both of these elements would be most readily served by pairing rural or small urban communities with rural or small urban communities that share their interests while keeping metropolitan

areas like Calgary fully self-contained with clear, comprehensible boundaries.

The residents of my riding chose to live in Calgary, and they deserve to have a representative who understand their needs, the challenges they face in the communities that they live in and share interests with. The communities I represent are also a lot more diverse than neighbouring municipalities. If you merge us together, you will dilute the voices of racialized Albertans who have worked so hard to be fairly recognized.

I would also highlight for the commission that while it may consider factors that are enumerated in the act, the legislative intent of section 14 is clear that the requirements are, firstly, the Charter and, secondly, the enumerated factors in section 14(a) to (e). They take precedence of any additional potential factors which are not included in the legislation. If the Legislature intended the commission to rely on additional factors – voter turnout, eligibility, industrial output, GDP – those factors would have been included specifically in the text of the act. While the act provides commissioners some flexibility to consider factors external to the act to a limited extent, it places a heavy priority on the legal requirements of the Charter and those factors specifically included like rate of growth and communities of interest.

To the extent that this is a factor at all, voter turnout or eligibility should be weighed very minimally. In a province like Alberta, with rapid growth, turnout is likely to shift and change between elections, and it is not a reliable indicator of whether a riding provides effective representation. As MLAs we are obligated to serve our constituents, regardless of whether or not they choose or are eligible to participate in elections. This is why real population is a determinative factor, not voter eligibility. Relying on the latter would make many ridings unreasonably large. I represent a riding with many new immigrants. Some of them arrived last year, and some of them have been in the process of their citizenship for years. They have just as much of a right to representation as someone who is a citizen. This is the bedrock of our democracy.

Section 15 makes clear that the Legislature intended those factors to be used to assess and determine constituency size, not eligible voters or turnout. If this were a factor for the commission to consider, that would have been included. As I indicated, my riding is over by 10 per cent of the provincial average.

**The Chair:** Mr. Sabir, I hate to play Mr. Speaker here, but I see the number of pages you have, and I've got the warning. I'm going to ask you to wrap it up because we do want to have some conversation with you. Can you wind it up in two minutes?

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you for your consideration.

**The Chair:** Okay. Sorry. You shouldn't have had those pages up to see.

**Mr. Sabir:** No, some of them are background documents that I . . .

**The Chair:** I'm going to start with Mr. Evans. Questions or comments of Mr. Sabir?

**Mr. Evans:** No. Thank you, Mr. Sabir.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson?

**Mrs. Samson:** No, thank you. I assume that you liked your own riding that you're currently in, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** I think I may not specifically comment whether I like it or not, but I do see that my riding and many other Calgary ridings are above the provincial average. That's why I'm suggesting that

adding another riding in Calgary will address that issue and make room for effective representation.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin?

**Dr. Martin:** No. Nothing.

**Mr. Clark:** I do have questions.

**The Chair:** Good.

**Mr. Clark:** I feel like if we cut off Mr. Sabir, we should probably ask some questions.

**The Chair:** Yeah. I've got some.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. I do, for sure. I guess I'll start with your constituency, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall. Looking at that area there, one of the questions I guess I have is that sort of the rationale or the thinking about it – it's relatively well established. Are there areas for growth in there? What are you anticipating in terms of population growth, new development? It feels like it's reasonably built out based on a 50,000-foot view of a map, but I'm quite curious on your perspective as the person who lives in the neighbourhood and works in the community.

**Mr. Sabir:** I think I will make two comments. One, they took out Martindale, added the Cityscape area, so that doesn't change much in terms of the population mix. Like, it's a similar population in both these neighbourhoods, so that's not a concern for me, but Cityscape has a lot more potential for growth.

**Mr. Clark:** Sorry. Where is that? Is that east of the Stoney Trail? Where is Cityscape?

**Mr. Sabir:** Cityscape will be – I'll have to look at it. It will be north of 96 and west of Stoney Trail.

**Mr. Clark:** Oh, I see. It's just right out to the airport, so it would be . . .

**The Chair:** It's just not in your riding yet?

**Mr. Sabir:** No, Cityscape the new map has included.

**Mr. Clark:** It's just south of Country Hills, so where the words "Calgary-Bhullar-McCall" are, it's just above that.

**Mr. Sabir:** Yeah. My entire riding is west of Stoney.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah, just essentially right next to the airport, east of Métis Trail. Got it. Okay.

**Mr. Sabir:** But there are two neighbourhoods – like, in Saddle Ridge there is a neighbourhood, Savanna, that has growth potential, and Cityscape does have growth potential.

**Mr. Clark:** But relative to other parts of northeast Calgary that you're familiar with, the growth is likely to be relatively slower? The reason I'm asking this is that Calgary-Bhullar-McCall is a bit overpopulated relative to other constituencies because it's, frankly, impossible to draw a map that is exactly perfect and also maintains community integrity. I guess that would just be a question: have we missed anything really big? Is there, you know, some enormous development that we were unaware of? I'm just curious on that.

10:30

**Mr. Sabir:** I think in the northeast, when you look at it, the potential for development is north of 96th. That would be Cityscape, Redstone, all those communities. Skyview.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. That's helpful. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Mr. Sabir, I want to engage with you on the main points of your presentation, as I understood, before I cut you off.

I think it's safe to say that we are not able to put another riding in Calgary. Maybe my commissioners will disagree with me, but we're not going to be able to. We've done what we can so far.

You made some comments about the hybrids, and we heard a lot of comments this week criticizing hybrids. But to me we're a construction crew. We're tasked with building something. If we're told we can't use tools to build something, it's really frustrating. Hybrids are a legitimate tool under the legislation, under the jurisprudence, and we've got several of them across the province. No question. Calgary has got a couple or three, and Edmonton's got some. We have to use them. This is a very challenging task.

When you made reference to an unreasonably large riding, I assume you meant population, correct?

**Mr. Sabir:** I was looking at my riding map and the variance that it's showing me. Then I was looking at many other Calgary ridings ...

**The Chair:** It's still in the target range though. I've had this discussion with our fellow commissioners. The average isn't the goal; the target range is the goal for us.

**Mr. Sabir:** I understand that part. At the same time, as you said, you have that hybrid as a tool, but you also have a tool in your tool box that you can add another riding in Calgary. That would address, I guess, many other factors that are needed.

**The Chair:** Okay. Let me talk about an unreasonably large riding. We had a presentation from someone in the north earlier this week who said the southern border of one of our proposed northern ridings is closer to Montana than it is to Northwest Territories. That's an unreasonably large riding that we have to deal with in this round. I said previously – I'm not sure you were here – that I wish I had all the money available to force you to present in Fort McMurray or Lesser Slave Lake and have the northern people present in downtown Calgary, so there's that cross-pollination.

You prepared this well. You know the statistics, but I guess I just don't want to dash your hopes. I want to be realistic. I think we have to be realistic first here, so respond to that.

**Mr. Sabir:** Well, that's my recommendation based on my reading of the map, my reading of legislation and jurisprudence, that adding another riding in Calgary would help address these averages, would make for effective representation of Calgary in future Legislatures, and, also, would eliminate the need to add neighbourhoods outside of Calgary into Calgary ridings that may not have as much in common with Calgary as they will have, for instance, with Chestermere-Strathmore and neighbouring communities.

**The Chair:** I wish we could do that. Thank you so much.

Any other questions or comments from the panel before I let Mr. Sabir go?

Okay. Thank you for coming. Again, please stay to hear the other presentations, and we look forward to ongoing dialogue.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** I believe there's one more presenter before we break. Is Amelia Kiddle present?

**Dr. Kiddle:** Good morning.

**The Chair:** Good morning.

**Dr. Kiddle:** Thanks very much for having me, and thank you so much for your service to the commission. My name is Amelia Kiddle. I'm a professor at the University of Calgary and associate dean, research in the Faculty of Arts, but I'm here as a private citizen and a resident of Calgary-Varsity. I will be quite brief as I'm not an MLA, and I don't have any of the interests that some of my predecessors here have had, but what I did want to do was just take a minute to talk about the riding of Calgary-Varsity.

I've lived in the riding since 2012, when I moved to Calgary to work at the University of Calgary, and I have witnessed the incredible growth in the riding of Calgary-Varsity, particularly with the new construction in what's called University District around the University of Calgary. This has been a very large development of the west campus trust lands to the west of the university but bordering Shaganappi Trail. You can see on the map there where Shaganappi is. All of this, I would say, is like up on the hill by the university, not down in the river valley. The growth in the riding has been great, and there's also a potential of additional growth. I myself live in Brentwood, and there's been a development that's been proposed for the corner of Brentwood Boulevard and Brisebois, which is where there's a small co-op. That will also be an additional large development; multiple towers, multistorey residences.

This takes me to the point, which is that the current proposal that I've seen for the riding includes the community of Montgomery. This is not in the current boundaries of Calgary-Varsity; rather, it's in the current boundaries of Calgary-Bow. It's my submission that Montgomery should stay in Calgary-Bow, and this is, again, because of communities of interest. Montgomery, because of traffic patterns, because it's down in the river valley, has much more in common with Bowness than with Varsity or Brentwood, which are up on the hill and by Nose Hill. Then, this is also seen, for example, in the current municipal emergency regarding the water main breakage where Montgomery, like Bowness, has been greatly affected by the water main break and has experienced boil-water advisories whereas up on the hill it's a completely different area.

Given the prospective population growth in University District and in Brentwood as well as the communities of interest with Montgomery and Bowness, that is my submission, that although, you know, we're glad that you're working on this, it was a mistake to include Montgomery in the proposed boundaries for Varsity.

**The Chair:** Thank you. We've heard other submissions on this point.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

**Mr. Evans:** No. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** No. No questions. That was clearly articulated by many others before you.

10:40

**The Chair:** Yeah.

Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Yes. Thank you very much. I want to actually talk to you as a university-affiliated person. Two questions, really. One is the sort of triangle, as it were, if you look on the map, that runs from Crowchild to Shaganappi and with the southern boundary of 32nd. Now, it used to be loosely understood as the research area for the university.

**Dr. Kiddle:** Oh. Do you mean . . .

**Dr. Martin:** That big triangle, as it were.

**Dr. Kiddle:** So between Shaganappi and Crowchild.

**Dr. Martin:** And with 32nd.

**Dr. Kiddle:** Oh, yes. Yeah, there's going to be additional development in there as well.

**Dr. Martin:** So I wanted to ask you about that. It's not just research development.

**Dr. Kiddle:** No. There'll be housing, too, is my understanding.

**Dr. Martin:** Is that going to be student housing, or is that public housing – excuse me; private housing?

**Dr. Kiddle:** Not public but private, yeah. It's my understanding that they'll be developing part of that area very much in the same way that they have developed the west campus trust into University District. Some of that property, it's my understanding, will also be developed in a similar way, although there will continue to be research facilities. There's a current construction project right beside the Smart building, which will be a research facility. But it's my understanding that they will also be developing some of it for housing.

You may note that at the corner of 32nd where the fire station is, there's a new public housing development there that includes accessible housing, so some of the new growth will go in behind that fire station. Yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** Ah. And that leads directly to my second question, if I might, and that's about student population growth.

**Dr. Kiddle:** Yes.

**Dr. Martin:** I mean, the University of Calgary, like many universities, have experienced very large growth in recent years and have struggled to accommodate it, to be sure. But the growth, I put to you, is going to slump. So what are your projections for student population growth? Where are they going to live? Do they come from all over the city now?

**Dr. Kiddle:** As a professor in history most of my students live at home, many live in Calgary and do not live in residence. So it's quite different from a four-year residential college, such as that I attended. Instead, most are coming from the northeast, the southwest, et cetera, taking public transportation, trying to get to the university. So although there are residence facilities on campus, they're not as extensive as they might be at some other institutions. Also, the university family housing is being razed at the moment for these condos in University District, so there's going to be much more density in the University District as a result of that change. Yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** But that will not be, then, an exclusively university-related person, just sort of the general private area.

**Dr. Kiddle:** No. It seems that many students are renting in those areas in the University District – some are – but the rents are quite high. I don't know whether, you know, a great proportion of them are.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thanks, Dr. Kiddle.  
Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** No questions. We've had a substantial amount of input on this one.

**Dr. Kiddle:** Okay.

**Mr. Clark:** I just want to say thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you. You're excused.

**Dr. Kiddle:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We have a full slate of about six or seven more presenters. We're going to have a brief break. My watch says it's 12 minutes to, so can we reconvene at 5 to 11, please?

[The hearing adjourned from 10:45 a.m. to 10:57 a.m.]

**The Chair:** Okay. Good morning again, everyone. We'll reconvene our second part of the morning.

Our first presenter is all queued up. Mr. Jim Ridley, tell us what riding you're from and which boundaries you wish to comment on.

**Mr. Ridley:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate it. My name is Jim Ridley. I live in the town of Canmore, and presently our riding is Banff-Kananaskis. First and foremost, I want to thank the commission for the hard work that they've put in and will continue to do until the final report is prepared. I brought a token of appreciation for your work here from the town of Canmore, a little pin here that I'll distribute.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Ridley:** You're welcome.

**Dr. Martin:** On our travels, sir, we visited a lot of towns that had big objects. Does Canmore have a big object?

**Mr. Ridley:** It has a big head. It is a statue that our art committee put on main street, and it's very popular. It's a Gaelic reference to a big chief or big head. There was an army veteran that was commissioned to make a baldheaded statue about two and a half metres high. The kids love climbing all over that head. So yes, we do have a big structure there.

**Dr. Martin:** That's Alberta tradition.

**Mr. Ridley:** Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to provide some further comments for your consideration. I was born and brought up in Calgary, and I've lived in Canmore for 25 years. I'm a retired town councillor, served three terms for the town of Canmore. I would just like to preface my comments today with a reference to my presentation that I made in the spring to you folks. This is just in regard to demographics, which certainly have not changed appreciably since the spring. I just want to remind the commission that the largest municipality in the current riding is the town of Canmore. In March '25 a population count was reported for 2024 of 17,200 in Canmore, so it is the largest municipality in the riding.

Further to that, a detailed report in the *Calgary Herald* – and I had referenced that in my last presentation – explained the approved area structure plans on the Three Sisters development lands, which was headlined *New Developments Will Double Canmore's Population in 20 Years*. That is under way. That would result in a population count of 34,400 in Canmore. Now, that's over a long period of time, but I just point that out as an indication that there is growth happening in the municipality and that eight years hence from now I'm sure we'll be looking at the city of Canmore as opposed to the town.

**The Chair:** When you say that it's the largest municipality, you mean in both the existing riding and the proposed riding?

**Mr. Ridley:** Yes. That's correct. Thank you.

Further, I want to comment on the Springbank area structure plan in Rocky View county; and they received final approval last March, almost a year ago, planning a total of 20,145 persons in the Springbank area of the county. As well, the Harmony community, which is currently in our riding: they have an approved conceptual scheme. It's only a 6 per cent build-out, but they're projected to add another 4,480 residences. I'm not sure how many folks that would equate to.

For today, though, in my previous in-person presentation I offered the opinion that the Springbank area east of highway 22 should not become part of a western Calgary riding but, rather, remain in the present Banff-Kananaskis riding, and that was due to their rural acreage nature. That view of mine has not changed. However, I believe your jobs are clearly to consider forms of give and take in deciding boundaries, in part due to various community characteristics. Geography, transportation corridors, nature of employment and economic prosperity, natural areas and adjacent parks, government services: these are just some of the characteristics that help define community and thereby electoral districts. I do recognize, however, that healthy communities and ridings can as well have dissimilar characteristics.

I think you've done a good job of keeping the numbers of electors where they need to be by adding Jasper townsite to the proposed Banff-Jasper riding and moving Springbank to the proposed Cochrane-Springbank riding, whose residents now share some commonalities. I call these folks rurbanites.

For instance, I do personally know many acreage owners within the Rocky View county and residents of Cochrane that commute regularly to the city for specialty services, postsecondary education, health maintenance, use of parks and cultural venues, religious services, physical exercise, in-and-out employment, government services, transportation options, et cetera. The characteristics of many of the electors in the proposed new Cochrane-Springbank riding suggest that similar challenges related to ongoing and new government services needed in both areas will need to be in part supported by the MLA elected. Again, just a reference to the development growth in the two areas of Springbank and Cochrane is definitely anticipated.

Now, you've included new geographic areas in the proposed Banff-Jasper riding, which I agree wholeheartedly with. For instance, Indigenous residents of O'Chiese First Nation and Suncild First Nation: keeping them in the MLA's view along with the Stoney Nation, Tsuut'ina, and Eden Valley treaty people is important. As well, some rural West Yellowhead areas are included.

The interim report, in my view, cojoins the three mountain towns – Banff, Canmore, and Jasper – in a way that would enable the MLA, whoever that is, to consider provincial policies and programs that could assist all three municipalities, face similar challenges

associated with economic development, specifically tourism. To manage tourism in a sustainable way, Bow valley towns and the MD of Bighorn and Jasper need to feel that they're working toward common goals, protecting the most important natural environment while encouraging responsible human use.

The Bow valley is tight with Jasper. Some businesses in Jasper, for example, are extensions of parent firms in the Bow valley. Take the Fairmont chain. There are three extensive properties in those three areas: Banff, Lake Louise, and Jasper. There are many tour operators and transportation companies plying the parkway year-round, connections among artists and the mountaineering and outdoor pursuits community, and we both share the same electoral boundary to the west; that would be the B.C. border. Travel Alberta markets the Jasper and Banff parks collectively, not "Come enjoy the north" or "Come enjoy the south," so the existing division of boundaries on a north-south basis does not in my view serve the residents, businesses, and electors as well as what you've proposed, roughly an east-west recommended boundary.

The towering Rocky Mountains to the west of us feature the continental divide running south from Jasper, past Lake Louise, and at Canmore swings far south into Kananaskis country, the height of land being the natural boundary. The western boundary and lands proposed east herein comprise unique and properly managed environments that serve both to attract visitors and deserve rigorous levels of protection. I did not previously think to provide the suggestion of including Jasper and Yellowhead, Foothills in the existing Banff-Kananaskis ED, so I wish to thank whoever came up with that. Cheers from Canmore.

11:05

**The Chair:** I think it was the MLA.

**Mr. Ridley:** In conclusion, I would like to validate the give and take you have applied in deciding boundaries for the proposed Banff-Jasper, Canmore electoral district.

That's the conclusion. I'm happy to answer any questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you. I'll open it up to the commission, but I have got to ask this question. If we maintain this proposed electoral district, are you satisfied with the name?

**Mr. Ridley:** Whoa. I'd prefer to have the largest municipality reflected in the name.

**The Chair:** Which is consistent with our philosophy.

**Mr. Ridley:** But I will accept other suggestions.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** No. Thank you for your submissions.

**Mrs. Samson:** Do you have any comment on the Nordegg and area included in this electoral division?

**Mr. Ridley:** I don't know a lot about the demographics of those areas, but I would prefer to see the boundaries set as they have been proposed. So Nordegg being part of, I think, Mountain View currently ...

**Mrs. Samson:** Clearwater.

**Mr. Ridley:** Oh, Clearwater. Yeah.

I think that would likely be best served by remaining in there. I haven't given that much thought, to be fair.

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay. Thank you

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you, sir. I'd like to review again for me, because I can't write fast enough, your sense of the population growth in the two or three different communities you had identified. Could you just run through that again for me?

**Mr. Ridley:** Sure. You bet. Canmore has a population of 18,000 currently, of which 12,000 are permanent residents and 6,000 are what we call weekenders or nonpermanent residents. I'd just highlight that that creates huge pressure on the community. Although those 6,000 folks are not electors, they expect and demand services provided in part through provincial resources.

Same thing with Banff. Banff has a limit on their growth, and they are at 10,000 residents, of which most can vote. They are under extreme pressure as well because they are approaching 3 and a half million visitors per year. Imagine taking the city of Calgary, which is approaching 2 million, I believe, and adding 25 per cent nonpermanent users of facilities to the city.

I just want to point out that although the number of electors in Canmore is perhaps less than in other communities that would have that number of people, there's still an expectation that services would be provided, government services: municipal, provincial, and federal. Then, of course, add in that Jasper has got about 4,700 residents there

Just getting back to Springbank and Cochrane, we see Cochrane exploding. I don't know what the rate of growth is, but I do have context in my last presentation that defines what the growth rates are in the Springbank area through their area structure plans developed by and approved by the county there and then Cochrane growing as well and Harmony.

Those numbers, again, were Canmore moving from 17,200 to 34,400, Springbank planning a total of 20,145. That's not growth of 20,000; that's at build-out. And Harmony: 4,480 residences.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you. As someone who's lived in Canmore for some time and has a strong familiarity with that part of the world, I'm curious. How often do you get to Crowsnest Pass? Is that part of your orbit? Is there a connection? As a former town councillor of Canmore do you spend time there? Do you feel that's part of it, or is that somewhere else?

**Mr. Ridley:** Yeah, it's somewhere else. To my knowledge the municipality has not established any relationships, you know. Highway is closed in the wintertime down highway 40 at Highwood pass, so there's not a lot of traffic and community exchange back and forth between the southern communities and the upper Highwood and over into Kananaskis valley.

**Mr. Clark:** It's helpful. Thank you.

**Mr. Ridley:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you, Mr. Ridley. Your presentation is most appreciative, and we will have something on our lapels from here on in thinking of your presentation.

**Mr. Ridley:** Thank you very much for your time, folks.

**The Chair:** Please remain if you're able.

**Mr. Ridley:** Sure.

**The Chair:** Our next presenter is Sabrina Grover. Is Sabrina present?

**Miss Grover:** I didn't bring any presents. Sorry. I didn't know that that was standard.

**The Chair:** Well, you get five minutes less then.

**Miss Grover:** Damn it.

All right. Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to present today to the boundaries commission. My name is Sabrina Grover, and I'm a resident of Calgary-Mountain View. Much of what I believe I will say today you've already previously heard in evidence. It's part of your reports, and you've already seen it in your submissions. But today is one of those rare occasions where I don't believe that repetition is for repetition's sake or just to hear the sound of my own voice. I think that today I'm here to support the commission's proposed revisions to Calgary's electoral boundaries and to underscore why these changes are not only appropriate but essential for effective representation in this rapidly growing city. I will use my time to speak overall to the city of Calgary maps, both option A and option B as presented by EBC, with a particular interest in the inner city of Calgary, focusing on Calgary-Klein, Calgary-Mountain View, Calgary-Buffalo, and the newly proposed riding of Calgary-Confluence, and particularly focus on how I think that the changes you have recommended support the existing strains that Calgaryans have seen on public education and housing diversity as the city grows.

Again, a lot of what I want to say I think you've heard before. Of course, Calgary is no longer experiencing episodic growth. It's experiencing sustained, compounding population change, demonstrated over the last 10 years of immigration. Alberta has seen more than 700,000 people come since the 2021 census. Most of that growth has been in Calgary and Edmonton. Calgary alone is projected to approach 2 million residents by the end of the decade. That is driven not just by interprovincial and international migration but also by migration within Alberta. I believe that the stats show that between 2016 and 2020 more than 60,000 Albertans moved to Calgary from elsewhere in the province, plus the tens of thousands that arrived from across Canada. That means that Calgary is consistently leading as a major Canadian city in population growth and also that our, you know, services – housing, education, health care – continue to experience the strain and require adequate representation in order to maintain this growth.

The boundaries drawn today should be resilient enough to serve Calgary's population not just today but into the future and, I would say, beyond 2030. I don't think that this is a commission that we want to repeat every year. It's something that should be able to represent Albertans into the future with at least the next decade in mind.

I think the core of my presentation is really that representation is not abstract. It's how services get delivered. It's not just about voting parity; it's about how individuals have a voice in government deliberation and access to decision-makers, particularly where these communities are growing quickly. In particular, Calgary's growth is placing measurable strains on core public services. Schools in the public system are operating at or beyond capacity in most neighbourhoods. The health care system we know has struggled to keep pace with demand both in the family practice but also in the emergency room sector. Housing supply continues to be under acute pressure, affordability is a concern, and transportation continues to be stretched thin. If representation doesn't keep pace with growth and investment does not keep pace with need, when that happens, fast-growing communities lose their



ability to advocate effectively for funding, infrastructure, and services.

11:15

Personally I've seen this already in the public school system in Calgary, at which I have worked in ancillary ways. With the exception of last year CBE enrolment has surged and put immense pressure on the Calgary board of education. Last year only one new student was added, but in the previous years over 17,000 students were added. That puts an enormous strain on the school system as it exists, and without effective representation to the provincial government, communities are left suffering and vulnerable students and children are left behind, especially those with specialized learning needs.

It's also important to have a keen eye on housing. The diversity of housing needs to be supported by good representation and good investment. That means MLA representation. Presently 92 per cent of Calgarians believe that housing is too expensive. Nationally 49 per cent of Canadians believe that building smaller, more attainable homes should be a priority, and 51 per cent believe that the missing middle housing should be a priority.

Why does that even matter in this conversation? Housing affordability isn't an abstract policy debate. It's a direct consequence of how well growing urban communities are represented. Calgary's housing pressures are being driven by rapid population growth, constrained land supply, and infrastructure that has not kept pace. Decisions about zoning, infrastructure investment, transit, schools, and health services all shape whether housing can be delivered faster, at lower cost, and in the forms that people actually need. That means good MLA representation.

In constituencies that are too large or where urban communities are blended with rural ones that face very different housing realities it becomes harder for elected representatives to meaningfully advocate for the solutions that represent urban density, affordability pressures, and service demand. Housing challenges don't exist in isolation. They're inseparable for transportation capacity, school construction, health care access, and municipal provincial co-ordination.

Effective representation ensures that the scale and urgency of housing pressures in cities like Calgary are heard in the Legislature with the boundaries that reflect where people live and how quickly these communities are changing. We need to make sure that housing does not outpace the political voice and that affordability improves and doesn't worsen.

Overall I would like to say that the commission has been clear that its task is not to impose rigid mathematical parity but to achieve effective representation consistent with Alberta laws and Canadian jurisdiction. By recommending the additional seat in Calgary and perhaps an additional seat yet to come and adjusting the boundaries to reflect actual population distribution, I think that the commission has responded to the verified, up-to-date population data. I think that it has respected the communities of interest, and I think that it has prepared the democratic map for the next decade, not the last one.

In closing I want to thank the commission for its work and recognize that the additional seat in Calgary will match the scale and pace of Calgary's growth, and those proposed boundary changes respond to the city's needs directly. Thank you for your time and your careful consideration, and, again, I just wanted to approve of the recommendations of the city that the commission has already made.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you so much, ma'am, for that very concise presentation.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

**Mr. Evans:** No. Thank you for presenting again.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation. Very good, and thank you for the compliments. I like it.

**Miss Grover:** I don't come with gifts but I come with compliments.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** No, I don't have any questions. Again, thank you very much. It is a very nice overview and I appreciate that.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah, thank you. Compliments won't sway us, but we do appreciate it all the same, so thank you.

There's one stat you quoted – I was just curious – that I hadn't heard before, and that was, if I wrote it down correctly or heard correctly, 60,000 people in migration to Calgary from other parts of Alberta. Is that correct, and what time frame, and what's that source?

**Miss Grover:** Between 2016 and 2020. It was just before the pandemic, so I don't know what it would be since the pandemic, and I believe it was the census that noted that.

**Mr. Clark:** The Canada federal census?

**Miss Grover:** Yeah.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** And just for your information, I may have misunderstood you, but we do this – sorry. The legislation demands that an electoral boundaries commission is struck every eight to 10 years or, in other words, every second election cycle, so I guess I've not really done that. So 34 will be another one, so we are thinking of that, certainly.

**Miss Grover:** The next decade. Exactly. Yeah.

I think it's just important that, like, the recommendations that you make today are actually sustainable to 2034 and don't kind of outpace growth, say, at 2030. With Calgary in particular projected to meet 2 million citizens by then, we're not going to have another opportunity to reinforce these boundaries for another five years, so it's important.

**The Chair:** We are going to recommend that other Albertans not move to Calgary in the next eight years to skew the numbers.

**Miss Grover:** Perfect. Calgary is not calling. That's on *Hansard* now.

**Mr. Clark:** That may not be a unanimous recommendation.

**Miss Grover:** Okay. Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

Kelli Taylor? Good morning, ma'am. Just have a seat and tell us your name again for the record and what riding you live in and what ridings you wish to discuss.

**Ms Taylor:** My name is Kelli Taylor. I live in Calgary-North West, and I mainly want to address those boundaries. Some of my comments may be slightly general, but that's my focus.

Thank you for having me today. I don't have gifts or really specific compliments, but. . .

**Dr. Martin:** It will be noted.

**Ms Taylor:** I know. I'm sorry.

I will say I bring some experience. I've lived in that constituency for over 26 years, and I've seen it sort of shrink into what it is now landwise. We used to have all of Calgary-Foothills and Calgary-Hawkwood, and now Calgary-North West has been about the same for the last two or three elections anyhow, and I note that the recommendation is to maintain the current boundaries without any change. I do respect that, but I would like to propose some expansion. If you could refer to the maps that I gave you, the current – these are so amateur, but I realized this morning that most of you don't live in the city and may not be familiar with what I'm talking about.

**The Chair:** Don't apologize. This is a real good picture.

**Ms Taylor:** I whipped those together this morning, and I thought they would be helpful. So the yellow highlighting on those maps shows the current boundary, and the communities that I've written in black pen are the current communities. Anything in blue and outside of that is what I'm proposing as a bit of an expansion. I've gone way off my script, so here we go.

I guess I'd like to say that these nearby rural communities act very much like we do in the city. People live there because they like to, I guess, access amenities that are close by at the edge of the city, and there's a lot of interaction. I felt like the Bow River is, of course, a fairly natural geographical boundary, and 144th Avenue to the north, which is also known as Burma Road, is not a major corridor, but it's close to the city limits or above the city limits. Much of that proposed area is low density. Those are small acreages, people that have moved out mostly from the city. They will not add significantly to the number of voters, and the people there interact quite regularly.

The rural people will go into the urban communities for work, for recreation, shopping, medical appointments, worship, restaurants, and so on, and the residents from our Calgary-North West communities visit areas west of the city to the north and south of Crowchild Trail to visit places such as Centre Street Church, Glenbow Ranch provincial park, Haskayne Legacy park, Bearspaw Golf Club, the Bearspaw-Glendale community centre, RockPointe church, and Bearspaw Lions Club. I didn't put all of those on there, but you get the sense, and the Lions Club has a very active farmers' market that is seasonal but well attended. There are strong social and economic ties between these residents, and these amenities themselves I think would consider their catchment areas to transcend the city limits to include both urban and rural residents.

11:25

Much of the area to the north sort of on the east side: you'll see I've put Lafarge, that has a big gravel operation, and Spy Hill is there, which has a prison and a landfill. Really other than the prison – I just realize as I'm talking that the prison really does have people who are voters, so I don't know what their numbers are or how that would impact my suggestion. But there's another road, 85th street that's to the west of the prison, that could be another thought for a boundary because this part to the east is not a huge population factor, if you will.

During the many years that I was a volunteer director with the community association in my community of Tuscany, I experienced a number of interactions with residents in Bearspaw and Watermark when considering our planning and development applications. Up until that time I'm not sure people from our communities interacted all that much, but we made a big effort to do so and discussed how various proposals would benefit or harm our communities overall.

For example, we worked together to advocate for the widening of Twelve Mile Coulee Road, which is the current city limit and boundary. It was very unsafe until fairly recently. A few years ago it was widened and is a big improvement for all of us. Our concerns were often quite similar, and we made good progress when we worked together. We managed to not only work with our own residents but the city of Calgary and the municipality of Rocky View county, and we had very good interactions together.

Efforts, I believe, are continuing now. I'm no longer a director with the community association, but I believe that the planning people are working on the application for a development called Ascension, which is a retail and residential development just barely into the county, the corner of Crowchild and Twelve Mile Coulee. If it proceeds, this development will certainly rely on Calgary residents as well as those in the rural area for success, and we'll be looking for proper representation for the work they do.

As the rural areas have developed, I've noticed that many of my former neighbours have made the choice to move to, you know, adjacent rural properties. They're small acreages, like I mentioned, and they have maintained their social and economic ties to the people and businesses they live near in Calgary-North West. We continue to shop at the same grocery stores. We play pickle ball together at the same recreation facilities, and we socialize at the same restaurants and coffee shops. In fact, when I leave here today, I'll be joining a mixed group of rural and urban residents who live near me and play pickleball with me so we can have lunch and visit. Extending this constituency seems to support the priorities of sustainable and cohesive communities and follows the major geographical feature of the Bow River as well as significant transportation corridors.

In conclusion, I encourage you to support the expansion and integration of the nearby rural area to the west and north of Calgary-North West when determining the new electoral boundaries in 2026 and to consider a similar approach to other constituencies which may be in a similar situation.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms Taylor. My first question: your proposed addition obviously includes Bearspaw.

**Ms Taylor:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Do you have a sense of the population that you're proposing to add into this?

**Ms Taylor:** You know, I don't know the exact numbers. I know that these are very spread apart acreages, I guess, and I don't expect that the population is high, but – I'm sorry – I don't have that number.

**The Chair:** Okay. Good.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

**Mr. Evans:** No, but thank you very much for your presentation. Much appreciated.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for the map. That was most helpful. That visual is everything.

**Ms Taylor:** Well, if I'd realized – as I say, this morning I didn't know what we would have in front of us, and I thought that might be helpful.

**Mrs. Samson:** Yeah. That was great. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Yes. Thank you and, again, thanks for the map. I'm not from Calgary, so people rattle off neighbourhood names as if I would know, so it's good to have a map as reference.

I take it that the thrust of your argument is that these ancillary communities, if I can put it that way, are actually in real time and real life linked very closely with those we would regard as urban neighbourhoods, so you're making an argument about communities of interest.

**Ms Taylor:** Well, that's true, and I guess something I didn't say is that most of these communities within the constituency are, you know, essentially built out, and a lot of the kind of minor growth has gone to these areas that are not going to become high density around that. So a lot of our people have kind of nudged out, and they do act like each other.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. We've had long discussions about this kind of situation, typically under the heading of "hybrids," which really doesn't carry the subtlety of it all, and other conversations where you have a dichotomy between urban versus rural. What your map shows me is that there's such a gradation of forms of life, to be fancy about it, that it's worth us reflecting upon these kinds of communities. You're not baling hay out there. You're going to the golf course.

**Ms Taylor:** When you go further than this, you know, we get towards Canmore. It's very different – right? – but these are people that enjoy the amenities of the city, but they want a little more space, I think. So, yes.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** No. Thank you so much for coming in. Especially that map is top-notch. It was really helpful, so thank you.

**Ms Taylor:** Well, thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you for coming, and please remain if you can.

**Ms Taylor:** I will for a little bit.

**The Chair:** Oh, but pickleball is calling. I remember that.  
Is Kelli Taylor...

**Dr. Martin:** That was Kelli Taylor.

**The Chair:** Well, I just asked if she's still here. Come on. Boy.  
Amy Shantz.

**Ms Shantz:** Yeah. Thanks.

**The Chair:** Good morning.

**Ms Shantz:** Good morning.

**The Chair:** Have a seat.

**Ms Shantz:** Thanks for having me, and thanks for your work.  
And thanks for the invitation, Greg.

**The Chair:** Shantz as in S-c-h-a-n-t-z?

**Ms Shantz:** It used to be, in the German part of Switzerland, s-c-h, but it's been Canadianized as s-h. Yeah. S-h-a-n-t-z.

**Mrs. Samson:** Got it.

**The Chair:** Okay. Kept the Z, though.

**Ms Shantz:** I think there's a PowerPoint. Is there?

You know, when Greg invited me to speak, I thought, "Well, I only want to speak if I have something meaningful to say," and I thought, "Oh, do I have time to talk to my politicians and get some good ideas?" but when I looked at the first proposal, it did tweak a thought in my head. It's a bit of a principle, but rather than self-centre, first, around those of us that are not Indigenous, I wanted to start with using the principle with the Indigenous out of respect for the people that my ancestors colonized.

Okay. The principle that I'm going to take was just reflected in what Kelli said, in trying to help, which I think we all are trying to do with this.

**Mr. Clark:** Can you tell us where you live?

**Ms Shantz:** Oh, sorry. I live currently in Calgary-Buffalo, in the Mission community, which is part of the Cliff Bungalow-Mission Community Association, which is the springboard for what I noticed.

11:35

**Mr. Clark:** Are you speaking about that?

**Ms Shantz:** I will touch on that specifically, but I wanted to get into just a principle, first, of divisions, and that is related to both the laws that affect us, the associations that engage and represent us, and the interrelationships with our elected officials.

But as a first example I wanted to mention: could we consider not dividing up the treaties of Alberta when we make boundaries, because there are legalities within each treaty that are unique? I reached out to a couple of Indigenous people before I shared this. I didn't hear back, so I didn't get enough engagement on their ideas, but the one thing I thought about here was that when we look at people needing to have certain laws or even councils or committees representing them, nations when they organize, we often see statements by the chiefs of the treaty. So if we could avoid altering the treaty boundaries and keep each treaty within a particular boundary, that would be wonderful, I think.

**The Chair:** Do we, in our interim report?

**Ms Shantz:** Pardon me?

**The Chair:** Do we alter them in our interim report?

**Mrs. Samson:** Yeah, we do.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah, we do.

**Ms Shantz:** And then specifically what I could guarantee you – now, thank you that both of you knew that right away, because I, off my head...

**The Chair:** I wanted to hear it from you, though.

**Ms Shantz:** I'm sorry. I didn't actually go back and analyze all that. I just had a sense that it was, from the angles of boundaries, but I didn't analyze the detail. What I did analyze, though, was that in my own community of Cliff Bungalow-Mission – I'm in Mission, but the association of the community is Cliff Bungalow-Mission – one of the proposals cuts that in half, so that Cliff Bungalow is in one boundary and Mission is in the other if I read the maps correctly.

My advocacy here for keeping Edmonton and Calgary community associations within the same constituency is that

community association boards like to build relationships with the elected representatives. It often includes messages in association communications. Whether it's online news or a bulletin, there's often a statement from the elected officials: the councillor, the MLA, and the MP. So it's nice not to have two in the same level of government, and to have motivation that there's enough people for that representative to think it's worth their time in doing that for them, and not to say, "Oh, well, there are only 300 people," or "only 1,500 of that community association is in mine, so I won't communicate with that association when I do with the others where I'm fully represented."

Then, also, you know, I've seen MLAs come to community association AGMs. It kind of works both ways with initiatives, coming out to, say, the Scenic Acres Stampede barbecue, speaking to the last presentation in Calgary northwest. I was the constituency president with one of the parties for years. It does make it more difficult if we start to chop these community associations out.

Then the other point would be forums and debates during the process of elections. It's quite common that it's community associations in Edmonton and Calgary that are hosting the forums and debates, and if we cut those people into two different constituencies, which forum are you a part of hosting? I can tell you that in Calgary-North West usually Scenic Acres, Tuscany, and Rocky Ridge, Royal Oak will join together and do one forum that's productive with all of the MLA candidates. Now, in some areas – I know of one time in Acadia, I think, every community association did their own thing and the candidates had to go to three or four forums, but it's nice to kind of optimize the way that they can work together and represent. There are the community associations, just like I first mentioned, say, with the treaties and the chiefs that organize within that treaty. It's a way where we have a group of representatives that are already trying to be in touch with their members and talking about their concerns, and we're not splitting that up.

**Mrs. Samson:** That's it? You were on a roll there.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you. Thank you for your accompanying PowerPoint as well.

Mr. Clark, any questions or comments?

**Mr. Clark:** Maybe just talk a little bit more about sort of communities of interest. I mean, it's really sort of an interesting thought experiment, kind of what belongs with what. That's part of the challenge we have, right? And counterbalancing that are two really big factors. One is that we have also effective representation to consider. In particular, the far north: it's a real challenge. Just the vast geography is a huge challenge, but also not tipping the balance, you know, too far. And then just the simple reality in a city like Calgary: we have dense population; you need to draw a line somewhere, and there's no such thing as perfect.

**Ms Shantz:** One example, if we can kind of combine what Kelli and I spoke of: I know she mentioned Glenbow Ranch, but I also know that Glenbow Ranch has a close relationship with Cochrane. They are actually slightly closer to Cochrane than to Calgary, you know, as Calgary builds out. So there is that kind of when are people equally as much – if you look at the Driftpile reserve – Slave Lake, High Prairie, Grande Prairie – Grande Prairie was the biggest city for major things. Slave Lake was medium. High Prairie was in between Driftpile and Grande Prairie, but it was smaller than Slave Lake. So depending on what you needed, did you go to High Prairie? Did you go the opposite direction to Slave Lake, or did you jump further past High Prairie to Grande Prairie?

I think there are those aspects to look at in terms of: what types of essential services are people getting? There's a difference

between going somewhere to get an item and having that area be part of your community, right? Like, I would think that for Driftpile, High Prairie might be closer to the community. Grande Prairie: you might go there for some things, but you're not going to feel a part of Grande Prairie.

I actually started brainstorming, and I wish I was faster at admin and pulling things up. You know, I've got some friends that are brilliant at this, but we could look at this as, like: where is your water source, right? Like, are you taking water from the Bears paw, or are you taking water from some other area? How concerned are you about the eastern slopes? Where does the water flow? Which communities care about the same source of water? Which communities care about the same mine that's polluting? Which communities have an electrical pathway such that if some place gets disrupted, they lose electricity at the same time?

You know, I think there are lots of different ways that we can see who would be advocating for the same things with the same people. If we end up having four MLAs hearing from a small number of people about the same topic, it might have less effect than if one MLA heard from four times that number of people, and it's a big percentage of their constituency. I think that there are community things, there are infrastructure things, and there are various types of resources.

**The Chair:** You're touching on the challenges that we have as a commission directly.

Dr. Martin, any questions?

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

Yes. I certainly hope that you're going to leave your presentation behind, particularly for the map of treaties 6, 7, and 8.

**Ms Shantz:** It was e-mailed to Aaron, which is why it's on this computer.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. Super. I want to come to your second slide, which I have up on the big screen here, for your remarks about community associations.

**Ms Shantz:** Oh, here. That's my fourth slide.

**Dr. Martin:** Oh, I'm sorry.

We are cognizant of this. We had a particular discussion of it in Edmonton, where the community leagues are very heavily embedded and have been since, you know, 1910.

**The Chair:** Just after the treaty.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah.

We're very mindful of those sets of community dynamics, and we try to not bust them up. I can't speak to Calgary quite as much as my colleague. I think he has been equally attentive to making sure we didn't do something foolish in that regard.

11:45

**Ms Shantz:** Well, I think there was one map that split Mission and Cliff Bungalow.

**Dr. Martin:** Well, that's really where I was . . .

**Ms Shantz:** It's partly because sometimes it's misleading. If you see a name of a community, maybe what you want to do in Calgary and Edmonton is pull up the list of community associations and see how many have a double community in them. That's when it can be missed. If you look at a map and just see Mission and just see

Cliff Bungalow, if you don't know any different, you might think Cliff Bungalow has their own association and Mission has their own association, but they don't. It's only one amalgamated association that does the work, that has the potlucks and has the film nights and would have the AGM. It's probably a minority, but it just happened that you split down that particular one.

**Dr. Martin:** Your estimate of what MLAs should probably do with regard to community associations is very similar to what ward councillors, in fact, do as well.

**Ms Shantz:** Exactly. Yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** I mean, that is a very efficient way of reaching out to particular communities.

**Ms Shantz:** Yeah. I mean, it depends on the MP. I know in Calgary-North West the Scenic Acres president had been there for many, many years, and I think he drove a bit of that, but the MLA and the MP were always front and centre there. At least it gives that opportunity – in my area, you know, I haven't seen my MP interact much with my current constituency association, but at least it makes it easier. Also, provincial constituencies are almost half the size of wards and federal, so it is harder for MPs. MPs, of course, are flying to Ottawa and back, and then they have a twice as big area. MLAs have almost half as much the size, and if they have three or four community associations within a city in their area, that's manageable, pretty easy.

**Mr. Clark:** Can I just add one sort of small point of information? I looked it up. Mission and Cliff Bungalow have been split since the 2010 boundaries.

**Ms Shantz:** Thank you, Greg.

**Mr. Clark:** So that 2010, 2017, and the proposed – yeah. It's one of those.

**The Chair:** So don't blame us.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Exactly. I'll give you some phone numbers you can call. Sorry.

**Ms Shantz:** There are a couple of weird things. I mean, this is an area that Greg knows really well because he edged on this, you know, on the one boundary of his. There are some weird things around Calgary-Elbow, I think, and Calgary-Buffalo and Calgary-Currie where there are certain times where it's like: why do you want a tiny cut-out on this side of Crowchild? Like, typically that's not a big – I mean, sure, you might have kids going to school there. You might have certain things, but you're not going to bike there as likely unless you're in one of the big corridors that has a really good path to go straight across. Glenmore and Crowchild are kind of just like Macleod Trail. There are some areas that are kind of bigger divides of community than others, so I find sometimes those boundaries have been a little weird at times.

Anyways.

**The Chair:** No, no. Remain there. We may not be finished.

Mrs. Samson, any questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** I just wanted to comment that the kinds of things you're talking about occur in Calgary and Edmonton, the big cities. I mean, it's really complex, one overlay over the next over the next, to try and get those boundaries in. I thank you for your input because it's so much more than what we tackle.

**Ms Shantz:** I really think that on an actual communication and interaction basis in Calgary and Edmonton the community associations are the biggest driver of it. Those should be the foundation. Then the other things are: what other things also play in? But I think we should start with keeping community associations intact.

Obviously, in rural it gets a lot more complex in a whole different – you almost have to think: well, what should my major thing be? Now, you could ask people sometimes: "What's your major news source? Are you reading the Grande Prairie one? Are you reading the Slave Lake one? Are you reading this?" That might give an idea of where people are communicating, interacting with. But I think that is a big piece of representation. If you don't talk to someone, they're not going to represent you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Exactly. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** Hold on.

**Ms Shantz:** Oh, okay.

**Mr. Evans:** I wanted to get some clarification on what you were conveying to us about treaties. Did I understand that you wanted the treaties – are you suggesting that they would be in one electoral district?

**Ms Shantz:** I mean, some of the treaty areas are quite large, and there'd be multiple constituencies there. But I just wouldn't want to see the boundary be split between two different . . .

**The Chair:** Overlap.

**Ms Shantz:** I wouldn't want, you know, like, say, the Peace River one to need to include – I don't know. Peace River is huge. Let's say the Slave Lake one. I wouldn't want the Slave Lake one to be including part of that upper area and part of – what is it? – Treaty 8 and Treaty 7. They're under different treaty laws and expectations and chief councils.

**Mr. Evans:** The treaty doesn't impact . . .

**Ms Shantz:** But even their chiefs, the way the chiefs organize. You'll often see statements of, you know, "the Treaty 7 chiefs have made this statement on this area" or "the Treaty 8 chiefs."

For me, I think some people think that things that are ritualistic or, you know, maybe making a statement or doing a land acknowledgement are just in name, but I think ways where we show that organizations that affect somebody else's life matter or just taking time or priority to say what affects you: it doesn't affect me – right? – but does it affect them?

**Mr. Evans:** What are your thoughts on boundaries going beyond county or municipal boundaries for the electoral districts? Is your position the same on those as it is with respect to treaties?

**Ms Shantz:** Yeah. I mean, you make a good point. Again, now we have councils, right?

**Mrs. Samson:** Another overlay.

**Ms Shantz:** Yeah. It's a case of both. How are our Indigenous councils organized in chiefs, and how are our non-Indigenous councils organized? I think both matter, and I just wanted to ensure that . . .

**Mr. Evans:** Like, your position is the same with respect to both of those if I understand.

**Ms Shantz:** Yeah. I just wanted to make sure that, since I'm a descendant of early colonialism, I was a part of saying that I want to start by saying: you matter first. I want to bring one topic up for consideration, and it could be further investigated. I might have not done a good job of it, but I wanted to make sure it was on the table.

**Mrs. Samson:** Right.

**The Chair:** Ms Shantz, thank you for your presentation and your PowerPoint. We will have it. Thank you.

**Ms Shantz:** Thanks.

**The Chair:** I believe that leaves us with one other presenter. Mr. Graham Sucha. Please make yourself comfortable, and tell us what electoral division you're from and which ones you want to comment on.

**Mr. Sucha:** I currently reside in the electoral district of Calgary-Glenmore. My overarching comments will probably apply to a good portion of the deep south of Calgary, most specifically likely the southwest quadrants of those areas. As a note, in my day job I serve as the executive director of the Graduate Students' Association for the University of Calgary. However, my comments will be tied to sort of two positions that I bring to the table, one as a private citizen and then a little bit that I may touch on as a former Member of the Legislative Assembly for the constituency of Calgary-Shaw.

First, you know, I want to echo some of the comments that Miss Grover presented during her presentation. I recognize it's no easy task for the commission to come up with these boundaries. People get very emotional about where they live and the outcomes that come of those things. With that being said, I think, all things considered, you've done the best with what has been given to you. To sort of semiquote a former colleague of mine who may be at your table, my hope of these comments is to provide some feedback that may make this even better.

When I was looking at the interim report, one thing that caught my eye was actually the Edmonton-West-Enoch constituency, which I thought was something very bold and actually would probably provide some really good representation in that area because of the integration that's coming from the Enoch Cree Nation and the city of Edmonton.

11:55

The one thing I've realized is that the city of Calgary has the same thing going on with Tsuut'ina Nation and the south quadrant. Currently right now the Tsuut'ina Nation is undergoing a transformation following the development of the southwest ring road. There's the community of Taza, that is actually in development as we speak. Currently if you live in that part of Calgary, it is actually very hard to tell where Tsuut'ina begins and the city of Calgary ends. One thing I would strongly advise – however, I will preface that I do not speak for Tsuut'ina Nation in any way – is that you may want to consider the integration of Tsuut'ina Nation into Calgary as well with the sort of consideration of communities of interest, that has been a common theme throughout your conversations.

You know, I think if you look at what is the current riding boundary that they have, which is the Banff-Jasper one, I would strongly suggest that the prerogatives of that community and the new residents that will come into that area may be very different

than those who reside in the national parks. As people move into that community, residents and constituents may actually be taken aback by the concept that they belong to the constituency of Banff-Jasper and the national parks area.

This may also help you address some of the sort of feedback that you have received surrounding some of the hybrid ridings. If there is a decision or consideration to shift away from potentially a Calgary-Okotoks riding or shift away from a Calgary-West riding, you could easily encompass some of these areas to off-set any amendments that you may opt to choose to make. Or even, as one of the earlier speakers was speaking – the Sundre mayor talked about integrating that community into the Banff-Jasper riding. If you were wanting to do that, that could off-set by integrating the Tsuut'ina Nation into the city of Calgary.

With that being said, too, in my former role as an MLA one thing I'll sort of cite as a caution. I was a south representative in the area close to Okotoks, and I will say that at this moment in time that south area of Calgary has a little bit of contention that may put a future MLA in a very difficult place if they have to represent both Calgary and sort of the south Foothills area and Okotoks. One is the strong likelihood that if annexation occurs, it's likely going to occur in the south. Also, there are currently some very strong negotiations between the town of Okotoks and the city of Calgary surrounding things like sharing uses of water right now, too. So it may put that MLA at odds as to who they represent if they are looking to broaden those conversations. As the government representative during that time I had regular conversations with the council members and mayor of Okotoks surrounding that specific matter. It was one of heavy contention, especially because the development of Okotoks actually relies on potentially successfully negotiating a deal with the city of Calgary for shared water there.

The final note that I want to touch on is actually the name of Calgary-Shaw. I don't know if this has been brought to your attention. If you read Wikipedia – I don't believe this to be true – it's named after the former Liberal leader Joseph Tweed Shaw. However, I believe it to actually be named after Samuel Shaw, who's actually a settler and homesteader in the Fish Creek area. There are actually two communities in that area that are named after him, Shawnee Slopes and Shawnessy. Both proposed boundary redraws that you provided have actually removed those interested communities from the namesake of that constituency. Subsequently, the constituencies don't actually sit in the historical area that the namesake is from.

One area of solution that I might suggest is actually swapping the names of Calgary-Shaw and Calgary-Lougheed to resolve that solution as Calgary-Lougheed does carry sort of a historical representation of the late Peter Lougheed; however, it doesn't actually carry any significance surrounding it being a historical representation of where he represented. He was a representative of Calgary-West. I think you can still preserve that legacy while also preserving the historical legacy of the constituency's namesake as well.

Those are kind of my points.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Sucha:** Kudos to the hard work that you've all done.

**The Chair:** Thank you for your – and I say this respectfully – punchy presentation. Let me summarize, and then I'm going to open it up for questions. You're saying that any hybrid in the south doesn't work. It's inappropriate. You're in favour of option B, basically, in our proposal, right?

**Mr. Sucha:** It wouldn't end the world if you did it, but with that being said, I could see it being very contentious for whatever representative would have to represent that area.

**The Chair:** Probably, yeah.

You would be open and favourable to Tsuut'ina becoming like Enoch in Edmonton?

**Mr. Sucha:** Oh, absolutely. Even on a personal level – and, you know, this may sound hokey – I'm on Tsuut'ina Nation almost every week. I go there to go to the Costco, and I think there are a lot of Calgarians that are like that. I anticipate that most of the people who live in the Taza area are likely working in Calgary and they're going to be in Calgary regularly as well, too.

**The Chair:** Okay. While we're on the hybrid business and while you're talking about this, you were here when Ms Taylor presented on north of Calgary-North West, bringing basically Bearspaw and that area in. What do you say to that?

**Mr. Sucha:** It would be inappropriate for me to comment on that only because I've never lived in northwest Calgary, so I don't know what I don't know. I can only give you feedback ...

**The Chair:** You are a former MLA, aren't you?

**Mr. Sucha:** I am, but you know, from where I represented, it's a 50-minute drive to get to that part of Calgary.

**The Chair:** Okay. I'll open it up for the other panel members for questions.

Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. I want you to just give me a little more information on how you would view the Tsuut'ina Nation being included into the city. Can you just tell me your thoughts on that?

**Mr. Sucha:** Yeah. If you were to revise that – and granted this, I think, would take a little bit of thoughtful consideration. One area that you could look at is, if you're looking at the Calgary-West county areas: if you wanted to shift that to an entirely Calgary riding, then you could move that riding south.

**Mr. Evans:** We're going to bring up a map here. That's going to be helpful.

**Mr. Sucha:** Yeah. Exactly. Calgary-West-Elbow Valley. You could actually drop the Elbow Valley and make that part of the Tsuut'ina Nation. Alternatively, you could shift Calgary-West and Calgary-Elbow south and then have it integrate with Calgary-Glenmore. Where I live is sort of one community over from Tsuut'ina Nation. If you notice, there's a road that literally moves right through into Tsuut'ina Nation. That's Southland Drive, and there's strong likelihood there's going to be development there as well as near the grey eagle casino, so I think the Calgary-Glenmore area is going to have the most integration with Tsuut'ina Nation.

Also, too, looking at some of your population forecasts, Calgary-Glenmore was under the population sort of threshold from your original proposal, but I don't anticipate there's going to be a lot of development in Calgary-Glenmore. There will be a lot in Calgary-Lougheed because there was restricted development in that part of Calgary until the Ring road was completed, and now you're seeing very aggressive development in Lougheed. So it may help you kind of anticipate and prepare for that very aggressive growth that's going to happen in the next eight years but also allow for really positive integration within communities.

**Mr. Evans:** I'm going to just prepare you for Dr. Martin's question about the Tyvek test. In terms of that growth that you're talking about, that aggressive growth, Dr. Martin has a Tyvek test that he considers growth realizable and something that you can base decisions on when you can see Tyvek on the buildings. So can you tell me about that in terms of the aggressive growth you're talking about in west Calgary?

**Mr. Sucha:** I saw a little bit of this because the southwest Ring road was in development when I was serving in office. The developers bought that land in anticipation of the finishing and completion of the Ring road, and they've been sitting on it for a substantive amount of time. They're wanting the return on investment, and you're already starting to see high-density developments, including condos and apartments, in that area. They've already been constructed. They're starting to move residents in, and also, too, on sort of single detached homes as well. With that being said, I would even contest that the population forecasting that you have probably isn't even representative of what is existing there right now. It probably has a lot more people.

**Mr. Evans:** Can you show us on the map?

**Mr. Sucha:** On this map you don't even see the southwest Ring road. It goes like this right here, and it's all over here. The Tsuut'ina Nation boundary kind of exists right here, and this whole area is under aggressive development.

12:05

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Susan, any questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** Just one question. We heard from the MLA for Banff-Kananaskis that with the redraw by us she was pleased with the Indigenous being together. Of course, we have no feedback from the actual Indigenous. What's your thought on that with the suggestion of the Tsuut'ina getting pulled out of that now?

**Mr. Sucha:** From my informed perspective, although granted, again, I don't speak for any of the nations there, the Tsuut'ina are Dene people, and the Stoney Nakoda are Blackfoot. They're two different types of sort of representations. From my perspective, unless they have very strong views on this, I don't think it will have any major impact because you're dealing with two distinct cultures.

**Mrs. Samson:** That's good to know.

**Mr. Evans:** You said Tsuut'ina are Blackfoot?

**Mr. Sucha:** Tsuut'ina are Dene.

**Mr. Evans:** Dene. Okay.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you. I appreciate that.

**The Chair:** Thank you.  
Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you. I'm not going to ask you about the Tyvek test. I think you answered it. We struggled with, you know, how much into the future can we project growth, and I'd said: "Well, we have to discipline ourselves. We can't just take everybody's word for it that anything that's proposed and has a permit might actually come to pass." So I proposed the Tyvek test for our work.

Really, I wanted to ask you about the casino. We were having a discussion a day or two ago about the Enoch Cree Nation casino,

which is the largest casino in western Canada. It generates enormous amounts of wealth. The reserve is enormously wealthy, and it employs over a thousand people, only two hundred of whom are members of the band. That's a very strong argument for the linkages into Edmonton as normally understood. We have in fact received a letter from a member of the Tsuut'ina Nation saying: hey, do what you did with Enoch because the precedent is fabulous. I'm just curious about the economic driver here. I suspect it's, well, Costco, yes, but those are ground rents. But the casino will have employment for loads of people both on and off the reserve. Is that your sense of it as well?

**Mr. Sucha:** I would say so. You know, it's an all-encompassing event centre. I've been to two concerts at that casino this year, and even if you look at the sort of list of all the tour sites, they're also going to Enoch Cree Nation as well, too.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah, they are. I mean, you know, if I want to see a really good band, I'm going to go to the Enoch Cree resort and entertainment centre because it's the best venue in Edmonton, and this parallels that as well. So the arguments for linkages and communities of interest are very good. Thanks.

**Mr. Sucha:** Not a problem.

**Mr. Clark:** I just want to go back to Calgary-Shaw specifically. In fact, the map is now a little bit scooted up. I just need to head south a little bit. One of the struggles we have, of course, is just the population growth and then getting logical lines but also not overpopulating or underpopulating, so we've tried to – I feel like we're that old spinning plate thing that you see in vaudeville.

One of the proposals earlier on was to use Stoney Trail in the north. We've got that bite there, which I think is Silverado and Chaparral, and basically kind of cut that off, give that to Calgary-Fish Creek. In your opinion, everything sort of west of the river there: is that kind of connected? Like, if we made that a little more square, rectilinear, would that make more sense?

**Mr. Sucha:** Yeah. From my perspective, looking at, like, boundary cut-offs and natural sort of draw points, I would probably draw from the river more than I would from the road, especially in that south part of Calgary. We often joke that I see people who live up at the university more than I see in McKenzie Towne because that Bow River really does segregate the city of Calgary and cut people off. So if, you know, you're trying to weigh different options, I would

suggest that you leverage that river more as sort of a natural boundary point than the Ring road itself.

**Mr. Clark:** That's helpful. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much for your presentation.

**Mr. Sucha:** Not a problem.

**The Chair:** I wish we could spend an hour with each of the last three presentations, but we have to shut it off and we have to move on. I want to close today's public hearings – well, I want to make sure I have not missed anyone. Does anyone want to present that hasn't yet? No? Okay.

Well, thank you to everyone, especially those that are present, for your presentations. This concludes our time in Calgary. You've given us lots of food for thought, and we've got lots of thinking to do. We're going north.

Yes? Sorry.

**Ms Shantz:** Can I just make a comment? Really, just that last presentation.

**The Chair:** Sure.

**Ms Shantz:** I'm a volleyball referee. Tsuut'ina Nation has a very big sports complex, so they often host Volleyball Alberta events. There are club volleyball tournaments there. I don't know if they would for basketball as well. They've become a bit of a sportsplex hub, which wasn't mentioned, but I just thought I'd throw that out there. So, I mean, there are a lot of volleyball clubs in Calgary. Of course, there are through Alberta, but Edmonton and Calgary tend to have a very high number of them, and they're often there, so there is that relationship back and forth all the time with all sorts of areas of Calgary, not only the gas station and the Costco but also recreationwise.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

We close this chapter of our time in southern Alberta and move north as of tomorrow.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you, all.

**The Chair:** Safe travels to everyone.

[The hearing adjourned at 12:12 p.m.]













Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Public Hearings

Virtual

Thursday, January 15, 2026  
1:30 p.m.

Transcript No. 36

## **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 – Virtual**

### **Public Participants**

Tiffany Belesky

Jennifer Churchill, Executive Director, Alberta North Central Alliance

Mike Evans, Executive Director, Lesser Slave Lake Indian Regional Council

Carolyn Kolebaba

Ken Matthews

Amanda McDonald, Reeve, County of Grande Prairie

Mary Meisner

Stacey Messner, Mayor, Town of Grimshaw

Nathan Steinke

Francesca Ward, Mayor, Town of Slave Lake





1:30 p.m.

Thursday, January 15, 2026

[Justice Miller in the chair]

**The Chair:** Well, good afternoon everyone and welcome to the afternoon session of our fourth day of public hearings for the Alberta Electoral Boundary Commission. The commission members: if you have video, you'll see us and our names below us, and our biographies are on the website. I won't bother introducing everyone so you can check that information out on the website.

Our commission was established to take care of two issues relative to the Members of the Legislative Assembly. The first issue was to deal with the legislation expanding the Legislature from 87 seats or electoral divisions or ridings to 89. The government passed a law expanding it to 89 for the next provincial election, and we were tasked with providing for those two new seats. Of course, as everyone knows, voters in the electoral division actually elect the MLA for that electoral division.

The second aspect that we were tasked to deal with is the increased population that Alberta has faced over the last decade. Just to give you a sense of proportion, the population of Alberta when the previous Electoral Boundaries Commission reported in 2017 was just slightly over 4 million people. Since that time Alberta has increased by in excess of 800,000 people. So when we look at what the previous boundaries were based upon in terms of population, you can see from the slide that just over 4 million people divided by 87 electoral divisions resulted in an average population per electoral division of 46,697. Now that's the average. That's not the target; it's the average. The target population is a range for effective representation purposes, and it's a range of minus 25 to plus 25 of the average. That means the range was 35,000 to 58,000 in 2017.

Fast-forward to our commission, and we have got a population in excess of 4.8 million. Divided by 89 electoral divisions, that reveals an average population per electoral division of 54,929, or almost 55,000. Again, that's the average. That's not our necessary target. The target population zone per electoral division is anywhere from 25 per cent below that average to 25 per cent above. The numbers are noted for you on the screen: just over 41,000 population per riding to almost 69,000. That is the range that we must meet for each electoral division, subject to legislative exception, to meet the goal of what we call effective representation.

Sometimes we receive submissions dealing with the concept of one person, one vote. That is not a Canadian principle. That is not a Canadian target. Rather, our target is the concept of effective representation. One person, one vote is very much an American concept. Now, that doesn't mean population isn't important. It is a factor. It can be construed as one of the primary factors, but it is only one factor in determining the concept of effective representation. No provincial jurisdiction or federal jurisdiction in Canada's history has ever had the concept of one person, one vote. Rather, we have the concept of effective representation, and I'll talk about how we reach that goal in a few minutes.

This commission was established in early April of this past year, and the work that we have done since that time is outlined in the slide. First of all, we looked at the population figures and we came to a conclusion as to what the proper population base should be. The legislation requires us to take into consideration the last decennial census, which for Canada was 2021, so we took that figure. That figure is then updated by the province through its Office of Statistics and Information at the Treasury Board, and that updated work by OSI of the Treasury Board gave us the population figure that we could be quite certain of, as certain as you can be in terms of statistics, that as of July 2024 the population was 4.88

million people in Alberta. Now you may have heard people say it's pushing up to five. While we don't have the official statistics on that, we rely on the most recent data that is available to us.

We agreed on the population base for our calculation, and throughout the early part of our commission we received hundreds of written submissions as to how we should go about our work, where we should consider reallocating boundaries, and suggestions for the two new electoral divisions.

In addition, throughout late May and all of June, we as a commission travelled throughout the province. We were in places from Peace River down to Medicine Hat, and from Fort McMurray to Lethbridge and Pincher Creek, and back and forth, zigzagging across the province, and, of course, we spent several days each in Calgary and Edmonton. We heard a lot from the public in terms of how we should go about drafting our interim map.

After our public hearings, we then spent a considerable amount of time with the map people at Elections Alberta. They assisted us in drawing the maps and making sure that the appropriate population was within each proposed electoral division.

After that, in late October we prepared and tabled our interim report. That interim report was submitted to the Speaker of the Legislature and provided to each member of the Legislature, and then we were open to public feedback. In designing our report, we went through all the requirements that are outlined in the legislation in order to come up with our conclusion or our suggestions, in terms of effective representation of all 89 boundaries, and we sought to make sure that the boundaries were understandable and clear for the public. If you're presenting today, you will have no doubt reviewed our interim report, and you can make an assessment as to how well we did our job there.

When that report was released to the Speaker of the Legislature and became public, we then opened a portal for public submissions in response to our report, and we received many of them. From early November to December 19 we received in excess of 1,100 written submissions in response to our written report.

We are now at the stage of hearing from the public directly: comments, suggestions, criticisms, and commendations for our interim report. This week is the first week of public hearings. We spent two and a half days in Calgary receiving in-person presentations. Today and tomorrow we are conducting hearings online, which makes it accessible for people outside the major cities to participate. We're not travelling outside of Calgary and Edmonton because of the winter season, and then early next week we hear directly from people in Edmonton in terms of our report.

There are certain factors that were considered in this report. One of them is hybrid ridings. We are interested in hearing from presenters in relation to any specific hybrid ridings that we've suggested. It's important to remember that in the electoral boundary business what happened up until the release of our October 27 report was the regular season. We're now in the playoffs.

1:40

That means these two weeks of public hearings will result in giving us input so that we can prepare the final report, and that final report is due on March 27 of this year. We will present that to the Speaker at that time, and our task will be completed. It will be up to the Legislature to deal with our report to either adopt it, make some slight changes, tinkering or whatever the Legislature wishes to do. But we will have fulfilled our legislative mandate by the time we submit our final report.

With that background and context, I'm pleased to open the second half-day of the virtual hearings and hear from those people who have signed up and asked to present. The first person I have

lined up – and I'm not sure that person is in the room yet – is Tiffany Belesky. No? Okay.

Well, I did hear that there is someone by the name of Carolyn Kolebaba present, and if she is present, we're happy to have her move up in terms of priority and speak first if she's available.

**Ms Kolebaba:** Yes, I am, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Well, please identify yourself. Tell us where you live and what particular electoral divisions you're wanting to comment on.

**Ms Kolebaba:** I live in the Peace electoral division. My home residence is in Northern Sunrise county just east of Peace River.

**The Chair:** Okay. Please proceed.

**Ms Kolebaba:** Our geographic rural region is under threat by a population formula set up in favour of urban areas where the populations are in close proximity to their MLA whereas the formula even with the 25 per cent deviation is calculated to also support urban populations, so 80 per cent of this province has been reduced, or nonrepresentation in provincial or federal ridings will occur.

Our airport has no scheduled flights any longer out of Peace River. The chartered planes for MLAs are almost unheard of. In some of this riding already today the First Nations have problems with their road access and to some communities. We cannot go across the province above the 55th parallel east and west. For the MLA in our area it's eight hours to nine hours before he even gets home from the capital region. We ask that you do not take any more rurals or enlarged northern ridings, or we will have no representation at all.

Our recommendation is that if you need two more MLAs in Edmonton and Calgary, then add them, but leave our region the way it is and do not change it because representation right now will become unattainable for us.

I leave it at that. I just regurgitate what I told you probably in the last go-around earlier. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you, Carolyn. I've just got to tease out a little bit of something you said about eight to nine hours. Sorry, refresh my memory. Your MLA resides in La Crête. Is that correct?

**Ms Kolebaba:** La Crête. Yeah.

**The Chair:** Does it take that long to get there from Edmonton?

**Ms Kolebaba:** Yup. Well, it would be five hours to Peace River, and then he's another three after that, or depending on the weather it could be nine. Yeah.

**The Chair:** And it's your understanding that he goes by vehicle every trip to Edmonton. He does not and is unable to fly. Is that fair?

**Ms Kolebaba:** Well, they have passed legislation. There are regulations that they are not to use any planes whatsoever. He did charter once to get into a First Nation hamlet because that's the only way he could get in there. We don't have that service out of here anymore, and so he travels. Actually, if we want to see him, then we have to go to his office, and I just don't think that that's fair. Mill Woods is on a quarter section of land and there's – what? – 86,000 or so people living on that quarter of land. For us, I mean, it's 800 kilometres or whatever distance that we would have to cover. I just think that that's extreme. The north has to be exempted

to some of these formulas, and the formula has to change because 25 per cent is not solving our geographic problem. All it is is taking care of a population that – you know, a majority of the population could see their MLA in his office within an hour's drive. Well, that's not the case for 60 per cent of this province in Alberta.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much. I want to provide an opportunity for the commission members to ask you any questions, ma'am, if you don't mind.

Mr. Evans, anything you wish to discuss with this witness or presenter?

**Mr. Evans:** Well, a witness I would have lots of things to talk about, but as a presenter, thank you very much for your submissions both before and today and for participating in this. It's been helpful. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

Thank you, Carolyn, for being here today. I did read your submission from previous. I want you to know that you should be proud of your MLA. We saw MLA Williams in Calgary, and he did share with us that he recognizes the challenges and difficulties of the north as you have outlined today, but he also said he knew that that was the job and he's up for it, and he sounds like he really likes it. You've got yourself a great MLA up there.

Thank you.

**Ms Kolebaba:** Yes. I agree. Thank you very much. Again, the trading patterns are the ones that exist today, so please don't change it.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Dr. Martin, any questions?

**Dr. Martin:** Yes. Thank you very much. I just wanted to comment on something you raised which we haven't heard before, but I think you're absolutely right. That is the formula, as you call it, for deriving the average or mean population that is, of course, heavily skewed to those inevitably urban areas that have had huge population spikes thereby driving the mean average higher, which makes life tough if you're in northern and sparsely settled areas.

I completely agree, and I'm alive to it. It's just as well that the legislation forces us to look at a whole range of factors, population being paramount among them but certainly not the only one of relevance: transportation and logistical issues, geography, roads even. It doesn't actually say ice roads. In your case, I mean, these things are significant parts of daily life, and we are obliged to take them seriously as we weigh up our boundaries. Again, I'm very glad that you have mentioned this, the rather unfortunate effect of this population formula, but rest assured that we're fully attentive to how we best weigh all the other factors that the act obliges us to be respectful of.

Thank you.

**Ms Kolebaba:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much, Ms Kolebaba. I appreciate your contributions, not only this presentation but your written work. Please stay. Please remain in to hear presentations from other citizens as well.

Our next presenter. Sorry. Is Tiffany Belesky ...

**Mr. Roth:** She just came in.

**The Chair:** Okay. Ms Belesky, are you ready and able to present at this point?

**Ms Belesky:** Yes, I am. Can you hear me?

**The Chair:** We can. Yes.

**Ms Belesky:** Okay. Perfect.

Okay. Good afternoon, Chair and Commissioners. My name is Tiffany Belesky, and I'm here today as a resident of Jossard. Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I recognize the responsibility your commission carries in balancing population changes while ensuring fair and effective representation across Alberta.

My concern is that the interim proposal would weaken effective representation in my area by separating communities that function as one connected region. I live in Jossard. To give a quick picture of where that is, we are a small hamlet on highway 2 located between High Prairie and Slave Lake along the shores of Lesser Slave Lake. That location matters because it explains exactly how our region functions day to day.

I'm a teacher in High Prairie, and that is where I spend my weekdays and where many families in our region are connected through work and school. Slave Lake is where I do most of my shopping, errands, and medical appointments. That pattern is extremely common in this region. Many people who live in High Prairie work in Slave Lake, and many people who live in Slave Lake work in High Prairie. These communities are tied together by everyday life, not just geography.

**1:50**

Under the proposed changes those connections would be split in a way that does not reflect how our region actually operates. If I drive from High Prairie to Slave Lake, I would be travelling through three electoral boundaries to do what is for many of us a routine trip for work, shopping, or medical appointments. On paper that might look minor, but in practice it shows that the boundaries don't follow how people actually live and travel here. This matters because effective representation depends on practical realities, whether an MLA can understand and advocate for a region's shared needs and whether residents can realistically access their MLA. When one connected region is split across three electoral boundaries the issues that affect all of us – health care, roads, schools, emergency planning – become harder to advocate for in a co-ordinated way. Even simple concerns can turn into not-my-riding problems where responsibility is divided across offices instead of addressed as a shared regional issue.

I also want to speak directly about what this proposal likely means for Jossard. The new boundaries may place our community into proposed Mackenzie riding. If that happens, our MLA would most likely be based in High Level, and our closest MLA office would be up to five hours away. A five-hour distance matters. An MLA who lives and works that far from Jossard cannot reasonably provide the same level of attention, connection, or local understanding that we currently have within the Lesser Slave Lake region. Rural Albertans expect to travel, but representation still needs to be reachable. That distance makes it more difficult for residents to meet their MLA, attend community meetings, or raise urgent concerns in a timely way. It also makes it harder for an MLA to regularly be present in smaller communities like ours, especially in a riding that is extremely large and remote.

That brings me to another key concern. The proposed Mackenzie riding is so large that communities like Jossard could easily be overshadowed by larger northern centres with different needs and priorities. Concerns that matter deeply here – rural health care access, wildfire mitigation, support for economic development, and highway maintenance – could be competing for attention across a vast area. Even with a hard-working MLA, time and travel become limits and smaller edge communities can be unintentionally deprioritized.

At the same time our stronger ties are not north. Our community has strong practical ties to Slave Lake and High Prairie, yet under the proposed boundaries neither of these communities would be in our electoral division even though they are the ones we rely on the most. Our current placement within the Lesser Slave riding reflects how our region functions, and it works well for us.

I also want to emphasize the role of the lake region itself. Communities around the same lake should share the same MLA. The Lesser Slave Lake area is connected through the lake basin, the regional highway system, shared school systems, Indigenous partnerships, and economic networks that cross multiple boundaries. These connections are real, and they're strong. Moving Jossard north into Mackenzie would weaken those connections and split a region that already operates as a unit.

My request to the commission is specific. Please revise the proposed boundaries so that Jossard remains aligned with the Lesser Slave Lake region so that the communities that rely on one another – Jossard, High Prairie, and Slave Lake – are not divided in a way that fractures representation and complicates everyday advocacy. Keeping the lake communities together under one MLA would better reflect how this region actually lives, works, travels, and responds to challenges.

Thank you for your time, and thank you for listening to the lived reality of rural Albertans as you finalize these boundaries.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms Belesky.

Dr. Martin, any questions?

**Dr. Martin:** Yes. I'm very sympathetic to the issues of the north around transportation and, you know, the huge, huge footprint. No matter how you slice and dice it, the size of the land remains the same. It's huge.

I was particularly taken by your remarks about what you call the lake communities, which is not a concept that we've heard at the commission before, but it seems entirely reasonable that all the communities around the lake would have lots of linkages: social, economic, cultural, and the like. From High Prairie and right through the town of Slave Lake, I mean, is a very strong corridor for people in this region. Is that the thrust of your remark on that point?

**Ms Belesky:** Yeah. Like, you know, there are companies that have their base in High Prairie and Slave Lake. We have industries, the logging industry, those kind of things. As a First Nations person – I am Métis – we have lots of Indigenous land here. That is something that I hope is taken into consideration. Sorry, did I answer? I'm a little nervous.

**Dr. Martin:** No. Don't be nervous. I'm sometimes a little circular in my questions, but I'm just interested in the dynamic relationships between one end of the lake and the other. I think you've answered it reasonably well, but it really just hadn't occurred to me before that that is a significant factor in this area, so thank you for that.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you, and thank you for coming out today and speaking with us. I want you to know that, if you missed our earlier remarks, we had over 1,100 submissions, and I wouldn't say you were number one but you were darn close to being number one with concerns raised about the changes we made in the north. I want you to rest assured that we're having a good hard look at it, and thank you again for the points you brought up today.

**Ms Belesky:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** So you were speaking very fast and my wife accuses me of being, you know, hard of hearing. I thought it was only as it related to her, but it might expand beyond that. There might be some merit there. You teach where?

**Ms Belesky:** I teach in High Prairie, which is about 25 to 30 minutes away from Jossard.

**Mr. Evans:** And then you also go to Slave Lake, and that's how far from Jossard?

**Ms Belesky:** Forty-five minutes.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay.

**Ms Belesky:** So that's where, you know, like tomorrow I have a medical appointment. I'm probably in Slave Lake and High Prairie once a week. A lot of teachers from Jossard teach either in Slave Lake or High Prairie. If you look at the boundaries proposed we're kind of this little chunk of highway 2 that just doesn't feel like it belongs where – I think we're probably going to be the most unrepresented area. Keeping just even that highway 2: that whole chunk of area is really important for us community-wise.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thank you. I appreciate your comments.

**Ms Belesky:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** One of the neat things about this job is that we learn about Alberta. I'm just trying to locate Jossard. Are you just south of the lake?

**Ms Belesky:** Yeah. We're right on the lake.

**The Chair:** Okay, and how big is it?

**Ms Belesky:** It's a hamlet, so we're quite small. There are a few communities. We have Jossard, Faust, Kinuso – I'm not sure if you've heard of any of those – Widewater. Yeah.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, thank you, and I echo my colleague Mrs. Samson's comments: we are hearing from the north, and it's because of people like you who have stepped up and said, "Look, you looked at what we proposed and it just doesn't seem right," and I thank you for coming out. You did very well.

**Ms Belesky:** Okay. Awesome. Thank you.

**The Chair:** But please remain to hear other presenters if you wish, if you have the time.

**Ms Belesky:** Okay. For sure. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Going through the list, I'm just going to see: is Dorothy Anderson present? No? Okay. Stacey Messner?

**Ms Messner:** Yes, I'm here. Sorry.

**The Chair:** Good afternoon.

**Ms Messner:** Good afternoon.

**The Chair:** Please tell us where you are from and what electoral divisions you wish to comment on.

**Ms Messner:** Sure. So my name is Stacey Messner. I'm the mayor for the town of Grimshaw, and we're located in the current Peace River electoral division.

**The Chair:** Okay. Please proceed.

**Ms Messner:** All right. So my speaking points today: the first one is the northern, rural, and remote representation.

Firstly, to maintain the votes and voices of the north and that the true rural and remote residents of the province are critical to effective representation. I realize that electoral boundaries are created firstly based on population and understand the rationale for it. However, putting it into practicality and since living in northern Alberta for 14 years now, I've come to understand a few things. The large geographical region that the north covers beyond larger urbans such as Grande Prairie and Edmonton is extremely vast. Citizens drive, drive, drive, and drive some more through all kinds of weather to get to where they need to be for work, services, health care, and activities. We are trying to do all the same things a resident of a larger urban does within a driving distance of just over 455 kilometres, or close to five hours of driving time according to Google Maps, on good driving condition days between the proposed boundary of Peace River-Notley, where the southernmost point is, I think, at Athabasca River, and northernmost point at Paddle Prairie Métis settlement. That's just my first speaking point.

2:00

The second is attracting MLA representation. I guess I'm looking at the geographical vastness of our northern boundaries. What challenges does this present to attract and retain an MLA to run in a district where it is so large? You know, does it encourage individuals to run or, quite frankly, not at all?

My third point is regarding economic development. In the Peace region we are currently being considered for a large scale nuclear development, so we could see a lot of change in our population in the next five to 10 years for sure. I guess my question would be: at what point will the boundary be reviewed and changed to accommodate any large scale economic projects that are going to boost our population?

Then my last speaking point is the boundary that splits a municipality. I bring this matter forward not for feedback regarding the electoral district that Grimshaw currently is in but in hopes it might bring perspective to the challenges felt by our neighbours in Big Lakes county. Although in our other municipalities and in larger urbans with more population an electoral boundary may split an urban centre and this may not be seen as an issue due to a high population, however, when a boundary splits the municipality with low population and large geographical reach, this is an issue related to effective representation that needs to be considered by the commission.

I'll use an example that Grimshaw currently is experiencing from a school board perspective, actually. We have a school division, the Peace River school division, where the highway that runs right through Grimshaw, highway 2, is the boundary between two school districts in our community of 2,600 people. The east side residents have a trustee, and the west side have a different trustee. What this

does in rural municipalities, when there is an actual boundary split, is create confusion and in some ways, our council thinks, deters residents from, firstly, knowing who their trustee is and, secondly: will they even come out to vote? We saw a huge decrease in voting turnout in October 2025 for the school trustee election. I can honestly say that I saw on social media how many residents were questioning which ward they belonged to and where they were to vote. I just thought I would use that as an example.

Those are all of my speaking points. Thank you for listening.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. The boundaries that are proposed in our report for Peace River-Notley don't cut through a municipality, do they?

**Ms Messner:** I guess I'm looking at the corner where Big Lakes county is.

**The Chair:** Yeah.

**Ms Messner:** Yeah. I think I'm speaking more for them because I know of the concerns that it may present. Yeah. I don't know if I'm answering your question.

**The Chair:** Okay. So just to be clear, Grimshaw or Peace River itself isn't carved up.

**Ms Messner:** No, it's not. I think what I'm trying to do is trying to speak up in a situation we're currently experiencing in our community and how that could translate to something in Big Lakes county and what they may be experiencing with the proposed boundary changes.

**The Chair:** Are you content with the existing boundaries? In other words, you don't like what we've proposed for your corner of the north, but you could live with the existing boundary you had before. Is that right?

**Ms Messner:** Yes. We could live with that.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you for submitting from Grimshaw.

**Ms Messner:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin, any questions?

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. Thank you.

Mayor Messner, I wanted to thank you for your presentation. Rest assured that some of the themes – we need to preserve and strengthen the northern voice is something we've heard a very great deal of. I will share with you the fact that of the 1,100-odd letters we've received in the last three months, more than 100 came from the north. You should take some pride in the fact that at least 100 people are actually prepared to do something quite old fashioned, namely write a letter to us, on this point.

I wanted to press you in your role as a mayor to ask you about growth prospects. You mentioned the high likelihood of a nuclear project in its development, but could you characterize the local economy in other terms? I mean, are you largely agricultural? Is it oil and gas? What's the mix?

**Ms Messner:** Largely agriculture. I would say forestry is also something that Grimshaw sees the benefits of. I mean, to the north of us, of Manning, and north of Peace River: that's where you're going to see more logging and mill industry. And then some oil and gas. I mean, oil and gas has kind of been on the down-low for some time. I would say primarily agriculture.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**Ms Messner:** You're welcome.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thanks for coming on today. I appreciate your comments. I just wanted to answer your question about boundary reviews. It occurs every eight to 10 years. It's actually two election cycles on average. So when we are finished and hand in the report in March, our job is done and whatever is done would not be looked at again by a commission for another eight to 10 years. We're hoping to get it right, so thanks for your comments.

The other thing that I had not considered: you mentioned attraction and retention of MLAs. Is that common, that people would not have interest at that level in the political office in your area?

**Ms Messner:** I'm not exactly sure, but I would say that for anyone who potentially wants to run in the future, they're going to have a bigger job to do than before if that boundary is expanded or changes. It's a lot of work for an MLA to do their job in a district that's over 500 kilometres north-south long. I totally appreciate their commitment. It takes a special someone to say: I'm going to do that. I just thought I might raise it as a point.

**Mrs. Samson:** You know, just in closing on that point, I can tell you this. Out of the 10 electoral districts that the MLAs of the north hold, I doubt that there is a single one that doesn't love their job. I don't know, like, how they got to love it, that they would want to spend their days living in their vehicles driving, but they do, and they do it enthusiastically. That to me was an eye-opener.

Thank you for your comments today. I appreciate them.

**Ms Messner:** Thank you for your time.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans, any questions or dialogue with Mayor Messner?

**Ms Messner:** Sorry. I thought we were done.

**The Chair:** No. We don't let you go that easy.

**Mr. Evans:** I don't think I have any questions for you. Thank you for your submissions.

**The Chair:** Okay. We do let you go that easy.

**Ms Messner:** All right, then.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you for coming in and presenting. Please stay, if you can, to hear the other presenters.

Our next presenter is Mary Meisner.

**Mrs. Meisner:** Hello.

**The Chair:** Yes. Hello. Mrs. Meisner?

**Mrs. Meisner:** Hi. Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. Please identify yourself, tell us what riding you live in, what community, and which electoral divisions you wish to comment on.

**Mrs. Meisner:** All right. Good afternoon, Chairman and members of the commission. My name is Mrs. Mary Meisner. I am a retired community health nurse and resident of Spruce Grove, Alberta, so I'll be discussing the Spruce Grove-Stony Plain voting district. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about the proposed changes to our electoral district. I have revisited my original submission of December 9, '25, and I further reviewed

data, geography, and the commission's recommendation. I feel that the commission's proposed boundary change has more merit than mine based on the following.

2:10

Even though Stony Plain and Spruce Grove are very much closely connected communities in the areas of services, economies, recreation, travel, and voting patterns, Spruce Grove will continue to grow in population. The commission's recommendation to establish Spruce Grove as a separate electoral district makes sense. This allows for population and physical growth without having to encroach on Edmonton city limits or having to split the city of Spruce Grove in half. The commission's boundary to the east and north steers clear of other major urban populations such as St. Albert or Edmonton. This avoids siphoning off votes from areas that are not similar to Spruce Grove.

One of my main considerations in making my submission was to ensure the risk or impression of political gerrymandering was avoided. This risk could be presented by diluting votes from an included slice of Edmonton's city boundary within Spruce Grove's voting district. I did read some of the submissions on our voting district, and I was quite concerned to view one particular one that appeared weighed down with a bit of observable gerrymandering. When I carefully studied the revised borders put forward by the commission, I see that there is room for Edmonton's city boundary to expand further west without having to merge into a rural district or change an outlying electoral district.

The commission proposes that Stony Plain will merge into the Drayton Valley-Devon electoral district. This amalgamation will still provide Stony Plain with fair representation as Drayton Valley-Devon's past history of voting is compatible and comparable with Stony Plain's voting trends.

Therefore, in closing, I would like to thank the commission for their common-sense and well-researched recommendation. I fully support the commission's proposal for Spruce Grove to become a separate electoral district and Stony Plain to be combined with the Drayton Valley-Devon electoral district. I would also like to commend the good work of Aaron Roth, EBC administrator. He returns e-mails promptly and is most helpful in explaining procedures in a respectful manner and showing patience. If I need to amend my original proposal, I would certainly be happy to do so.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much, Mrs. Meisner. You just put a smile on the face of somebody I'm just looking at over the screen. Yes, he does tremendous work for us and for the province. And thank you for your comments relative to the proposal. We're never a hundred per cent sure what type of reaction we're going to get when we create these new scenarios, so hearing from a long-time resident of the community is very helpful and beneficial to us.

I want to let the commission have some dialogue and question and answer with you. Dr. Martin, anything you wish to raise with Mrs. Meisner?

**Dr. Martin:** Well, I'd just like to say, you know, that you're totally right that the interim was probably, on balance, the right thing to do. The growth of the area between Edmonton and Spruce Grove along both 16 and 16X has been tremendous and in some ways very exciting, and I fully expect it's going to continue.

I'm interested in your thoughts about the area that immediately surrounds Spruce Grove on its north side and then its south side as our interim included a fairly big chunk of hinterland, so to speak. Perhaps we overdid it. What are your thoughts on that?

**Mrs. Meisner:** I don't think you had much of a choice, because you have to allow for expansion. I don't know exactly if a lot of those

people own acreages and work in Edmonton and do business in Spruce Grove. Yeah. That's actually a typical question to answer, but I think you're allowing room for growth. I just get a sense that a lot of those folks aren't big farmers. There are a few. Like, there's a big dairy farm in the area, but I'm thinking they're more – how do you say it? – suburbanites of Spruce Grove.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. That's exactly what I would call it. I mean, you know, we often talk about urban versus rural, but that's a little crude because there is a gradation. You're right that it is sort of suburban. They're not baling hay; they're going to the golf course.

**Mrs. Meisner:** Right. Yes. A lovely thing to do.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation. I appreciate your thoughts particularly because when we were in person we heard a lot about keeping Stony Plain and Spruce Grove together. So I suspected that we were going to get some push-back in this area, but surprisingly we have not, so you have reinforced that this is inevitable, that Spruce Grove will stand on its own. I'm happy that you're pleased. Like my colleague said, it is the right way to move forward. Thank you again.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

**Mr. Evans:** I just want to know if you're related to Aaron Roth.

**Mrs. Meisner:** No. Actually, I grew up in Manitoba and lived many years there and worked many years in the interlake region.

**Mr. Evans:** I just wanted to make sure that it was a genuine and a nice comment. It's both. Aaron is phenomenal. Yeah. He's helped us greatly, and we appreciate him.

Thank you for your submissions.

**Mrs. Meisner:** Yes. Well, thank you for hearing me out.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Please feel free to stay to hear the rest of the submissions this afternoon.

We'll now move on to our next presenter, Francesca Ward. Please identify yourself and tell us where you're from and what electoral divisions you wish to comment on.

**Ms Ward:** No problem. Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I am Mayor Ward and am presenting on behalf of the town of Slave Lake council regarding the proposed elimination of the Lesser Slave Lake provincial electoral district.

Our council strongly believes this proposal undermines effective representation, fragments a functioning regional hub, and further weakens northern Alberta's voice in the Legislative Assembly. This is not about preserving boundaries for convenience. It is about preserving representation that reflects how northern Alberta actually functions.

The Supreme Court of Canada made it clear in *Carter versus Saskatchewan* that the purpose of electoral boundaries is not strict mathematical parity but effective representation. The court explicitly recognized that geography, community history, minority representation, and accessibility must be weighed alongside population equality.

Alberta's own Electoral Boundaries Commission Act reflects this principle by allowing special low-population districts where vast geography, remoteness, and Indigenous populations justify deviations from the provincial average. The Lesser Slave Lake district meets every one of those criteria. It covers an immense

geographic area, including multiple First Nations and Métis communities, sits far from the Legislature, and contains no large urban centre. Removing this district prioritized numerical symmetry over meaningful access to representation, which is precisely what the Supreme Court cautioned against.

Beyond the legal framework the proposed map demonstrates a fundamental disconnect between provincial boundary design and real regional governance. This region is home to multiple First Nations and Métis communities whose cultural, economic, and service connections are anchored through Slave Lake. These relationships are built on trust, proximity, and long-standing collaboration. Fragmenting these communities across multiple ridings risks weakening their access to representation and their ability to engage meaningfully with government, which runs directly counter to the principle of effective representation and reconciliation.

Slave Lake functions as the primary service hub for the surrounding region. Residents from Kinuso, Driftpile, Wabasca, Smith, and rural Big Lakes county rely on Slave Lake for health services, education, housing co-ordination, justice services, retail access, emergency response, and tourism infrastructure. These relationships are not theoretical. They are operational and daily. The province itself governs this region as a co-ordinated unit. By ministerial order the town of Slave Lake has been directed to collaborate with the municipal district of Opportunity and of Lesser Slave River on housing authority governance. Yet under the proposed boundaries, these mandated partners would be represented by different MLAs, directly contradicting the province's own administrative structure.

2:20

Educational governance tells the exact same story. The High Prairie school division operates as one integrated education system across Slave Lake, Kinuso, Joussard, High Prairie, and surrounding rural communities. Dividing this unified school system across multiple electoral districts complicates advocacy for capital funding, student supports, transportation planning, and staffing stability.

Health governance also recognizes this region as a single functional unit. Alberta health region advisory council 4 encompasses the Slave Lake-High Prairie-Wabasca corridor, and it was developed within this provincial term. The proposed boundaries fracture this health region politically, creating fragmented accountability for emergency coverage, physician recruitment, hospital capacity, and seniors care planning.

Tourism further reinforces the hub reality. Slave Lake serves as the gateway to provincial parks, lakeshore recreation, seasonal events, accommodations, and visitor services for the broader Lesser Slave Lake region. Tourism drives seasonal population surges that place measurable pressure on emergency services, policing, transportation corridors, health capacity, and workforce housing. Fragmenting this tourism region across ridings weakens co-ordinated advocacy for infrastructure investment, public safety, resourcing, and long-term economic diversification. In practical terms, visitors and seasonal workers experience this region as one system; only the political map would treat it as disconnected.

Perhaps most concerning, this redistribution reduces northern representation at a time when the Legislature itself is expanding. While Alberta increases from 87 to 89 seats, northern Alberta loses one MLA. Northern Alberta continues to generate a disproportionate share of Alberta's GDP through energy, forestry, agriculture, and transportation corridors. Yet under this proposal the north loses representation while the Legislature itself grows. The economic engine of the province should not simultaneously

experience a reduction in political voice. This continues a long-term trend of political influence shifting southward despite the north's vast land mass, significant Indigenous population, and disproportionate contribution to provincial resource revenues.

Furthermore, council is not asking for special treatment. We are asking for the commission to apply its own legislative mandate and constitutional guidance consistently. Effective representation requires that elected boundaries reflect how communities live, access services, and participate in governance. The Lesser Slave Lake district exists because the region exists. The map should follow reality and not erase it. Population formulas do not deliver emergency services, educate our children, or keep our communities connected; people and geography do, and electoral boundaries must recognize that. You can balance a population spreadsheet in Edmonton and Calgary, but you cannot govern northern Alberta from a calculator.

Thank you for your consideration. I welcome any questions and commentary from the commission.

**The Chair:** Well, Mayor Ward, thank you very much for your presentation. It is very punchy and very well-laid-out and comprehensive. Thank you so much. That's the type of information we need. I'll turn it over to the rest of the commission. I'm sure there are going to be some questions.

Dr. Martin, any questions of Mayor Ward?

**Dr. Martin:** Mayor Ward, we have heard from you as well as from others who have presented and over 100 people who wrote letters in the last couple of months about the need to preserve the northern voice. Message received. But with every speaker we learn some more granular information, so it's always extremely valuable to have people like yourself come and speak, because you're in a position of having to balance budgets, oversee planning arrangements, co-ordinating with other communities. It's fascinating to see how those linkages are maintained and how they may be damaged, as you suggest, by the interim boundaries that have been proposed.

I must say that I'm very curious about your relationships and your working arrangements with Peerless Lake and the MD of Opportunity No. 17. I just didn't think that there was that much connectivity, but clearly there is. Could you speak to that?

**Ms Ward:** I would love to. There is a substantial amount of connectivity between those regions. An interesting thing regarding our community is that there are 14 First Nations and settlements within an hour, an hour and a half driving distance of Slave Lake, the majority of which are represented by our current electoral district boundaries; not the one that is newly proposed. We have a multitude of organizations, including Alberta North Central Alliance, which has representatives from those communities, as well as our housing authority, the Lesser Slave Lake Regional Housing Authority. One of the ministerial orders is a partnership with the MD of Opportunity.

These long-standing relationships are going to be divided, and I understand that not living here, you may not be able to – a map doesn't describe how we live. A map doesn't show how we live, and that's what I was hoping to bring to you today. Access and services of both work and recreation are central around Slave Lake, honestly. We are the hub, and I wanted to convey for our community and our neighbours that this is how we live. By parting us off into those districts, that's not going to reflect who we are.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** By the way, did you submit what you just presented to the commission in writing?

**Ms Ward:** There is a 29-page report that was submitted. Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.  
Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation today. I appreciate the time that it takes to put it together and be here to deliver it. I don't think that any of the presenters from the north have not given us more information that we find valuable. I appreciate that. We've got some things to talk about and some reasons to change because you're absolutely right. What we're doing and what your lived reality is every day are quite a bit different. Thank you again for your time and information.

**Ms Ward:** I appreciate the commentary there. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah. Thank you for your submissions. I just had a question. You mentioned that the breaking up or, you know, our division and creation of electoral districts that didn't include some Indian bands as opposed to others impacted reconciliation. Can you just help me understand what you meant there and how that would impact or detract from reconciliation?

**Ms Ward:** Reconciliation would be taking a look, in my opinion – the reality is that we are all going to work and exist together, and part of reconciliation would be to facilitate that, to work as communities. Changing of boundaries is just going to make it harder. Changing of boundaries is going to make it harder to advocate for the needs of First Nations.

Again, I'm representative of the town of Slave Lake, but our Indigenous population in our current electoral riding is approximately 25 per cent, self-reported. The percentage is the same within the town of Slave Lake, so we have a significant Indigenous population whose First Nations, which they may not live on, obviously, if they're living in the town, are now disconnected. So we're relying on our MLA to communicate to the province the needs of our First Nations populations, and now they're segregated from each other. I believe the Indian regional council will be presenting in a bit with Alberta North Central Alliance, and I believe the chief would likely be able to better speak to the connections there, because that is going to be disconnected.

Everything about how we live and work, respectfully, is blown up by the way the proposal is. We will continue to exist and work the way we do. It is just going to make the lives of every one of us harder, including your elected officials, including your MLA. We will do what we do, like we always do in the north; we figure it out. But, respectfully, this is strong opposition to this.

**Mr. Evans:** Can you give me the bands that you referenced again, just quickly?

**Ms Ward:** Well, there are 14 different First Nations. We have Driftpile, Swan River, Peerless Trout, Sawridge First Nation, Whitefish, Loon River – I'm going to forget some; there are 14.

**Mr. Evans:** I'll look at your submissions.

2:30

**Ms Ward:** Yeah. In my submission we have the map there. Sawridge First Nation borders our community. We share a border with that. Within 45 minutes there's Swan River, Driftpile, and then

going the other way you have, obviously, Bigstone, Peerless Trout, Loon, and then continuing more, Sucker Creek as well. I know I'm leaving someone out, so that's not an all-encompassing list. There are also Métis settlements. There's Gift Lake. Mostly referred to as the back lakes up here, just speaking casually. We have so many that access services.

If you take a look when Whitefish First Nation had fires, where were they evacuated to? Slave Lake. We took 700 people in with four hours notice on my first year after the by-election. So when I speak to how we will rally together, how we will continue to exist the way we will regardless of electoral boundaries, we will, but it is going to make advocacy for the north – we can't deliver a baby in our hospital. I lose a person on highway 88 at least every month. Yeah. Can't deliver babies, and our ER closes.

Now, the communities all around us have the exact same issues. Does Westlock have this issue? No. They actually have knee surgery rooms there. So now, by joining Slave Lake to Westlock, we're just added on. I looked at Westlock town council's priorities, and one of them is being a commuter hub to Edmonton. That is nowhere near the priorities of our region. Still completely valid for their community, but I'm unsure how an MLA is going to effectively represent the region when you have such competing issues and such disparity even between health care services.

**The Chair:** Well, Mayor Ward, thank you again. Just so you know, your own MLA will be presenting next week on a time slot designated. I'm not sure; you may be the third or fourth northern mayor that has presented so far today, and I have no doubt that the municipal governance of the north is absolutely superb based on all these presentations. Thank you for giving us a gentle corrective on our interim report.

**Ms Ward:** I appreciate that it's complicated work that you do. You're looking at the whole province and not the north, and I would be doing a disservice to our community and our region if we didn't speak up when we felt something wasn't right.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Thank you so much.

**Ms Ward:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** You're more than welcome to remain to hear the rest of the presentations. Thank you.

Our next presenter before our break is Peter MacKay from Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Samson:** He's a no-show.

**The Chair:** No? He didn't show? Okay.

Well, maybe we should have our break now. Let's break for . . .

**Mrs. Samson:** Ten minutes.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Ten to. Let's come back at 2:50 p.m. for sure, and then we'll have plenty of time.

**Mrs. Samson:** In case he comes. Yeah.

[The hearing adjourned from 2:34 p.m. to 2:49 p.m.]

**The Chair:** Good afternoon again, everyone. We're reconvening after our mid-afternoon break for the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission. I'm wondering: is Peter MacKay, who is scheduled to present at 2:50, in the virtual room? No. Okay.

Are there representatives from the Alberta North Central Alliance? Jennifer Churchill, are you present? Can you hear me?



**Ms Churchill:** Hi. I am present. But if we could, I'm waiting – a representative from Lesser Slave Lake Indian Regional Council is going to join us, so if somebody could go before us. I can let them know that we're ready to go, if that makes sense.

**The Chair:** Sure. Very well. Thanks for that deferral.  
We'll ask if Ken Matthews is present. Is he ready to present?

**Mr. Matthews:** Yes, I'm here.

**The Chair:** Oh, good afternoon. Are you ready to go a little early?

**Mr. Matthews:** Yeah, I can go any time.

**The Chair:** Please proceed. Identify yourself, and tell us what riding you live in and what electoral divisions you wish to comment on.

**Mr. Matthews:** Okay. Well, I live in Big Lakes county, of course, which is within the Lesser Slave Lake constituency.

Just a little history. I'm going to give a little history of myself and then on with some of the history of the Lesser Slave Lake constituency. In 1971 I moved here from southern Ontario. I kept bees for about 15 years commercially. I worked for the Alberta government at northern and remote housing for about 13 years. I managed a retail lumber and hardware store in High Prairie for 14 years. Upon retiring, I entered into the local municipal government here, initially with the MD of Big Lakes, that turned into Big Lakes county, and served 15 years as a councillor and a reeve. I've been on the steering committee for the new High Prairie hospital. I spent 10 years on the first health advisory council in the north here.

The Lesser Slave Lake constituency – and I'm sure you people are aware of this – was originally started back in 1971, and it has been a major contributor in the provincial scene ever since. Changes have been made to the boundaries in the past, and some should be noted. In 1993 the boundaries were pushed north all the way to the territories. In '03 it was changed back because of, of course, the distance to travel and the impossibility of an MLA being able to represent that large an area. In 2010 the boundaries were again adjusted to reflect the boundaries of residents, councils, and MLAs dealing with the same map.

The current recommendation that has been put forward would have Big Lakes county residents and council dealing with four – four – elected MLAs. If that wouldn't add confusion, I don't know what would, but that's what the recommended boundaries show now.

There were minor changes again in 2017, but very minor. I think Calling Lake was added to the north. Back in 2017 I was involved at that time, when the review took place, as a representative from Big Lakes county. Again, the concern that has been brought up here time and time again is that there has to be some sort of adjustments made to the criteria for the boundaries. Population cannot be the only factor. I think, as Ms Kolebaba before me said, that you can cover a whole constituency in the city of Edmonton by travelling maybe an hour and a half in any one direction whereas in the north that's impossible. It's an hour and a half from here to Slave Lake on a good day, and we've had some days lately where you weren't travelling to Slave Lake in an hour and a half.

I would recommend strongly that the future recommendation be that boundaries remain as they are currently, with the exception that the southern boundary be moved south to include all of Big Lakes county, which it doesn't and hasn't for a while, including the town of Swan Hills. Being involved in local politics, I know that the town of Swan Hills would far sooner be in this constituency as it is now than where they are. You people are not likely aware of it, but Big Lakes county heavily subsidizes Swan Hills. In fact, Swan Hills

may not exist today if it wasn't for the funds that Big Lakes county put in there. If they were to dissolve, or make that move to decide to dissolve, they would have to be taken over by Big Lakes county because that's the constituency that they're within.

2:55

That said, we also noted that there's at least one, possibly two Hutterite colonies being established southwest of High Prairie or in Big Lakes county, and they usually average between 80 and a hundred people. Right now the one is already in the process of being established. They already have their camp there. They've already put up some buildings. There's a very good chance there's going to be a second one down there.

I just also might add that Lesser Slave Lake since its existence has been the home of two MLAs, one being the first Muslim MLA in the province, Mr. Larry Shaben, and the other is the longest serving Indigenous MLA, Pearl Calahasen. They've served the majority of the time since the inception of the constituency.

If I could just take another minute here. I agree totally with most of the comments that have been made by previous ones, especially some of the ones that Carolyn Kolebaba made and the mayor from Slave Lake, although I would not agree that they're the hub of the north. Of course, that's been an ongoing dispute between the two communities for a number of years.

The boundaries that have been taken out actually split Big Lakes county kind of in half. It takes out three Métis settlements, three of eight in the province, and at least six First Nations that are within the boundaries of Big Lakes county. It separates them. As the mayor has turned out, the trading centres for all those communities are Slave Lake and High Prairie. Again, going back to having four MLAs representing one municipality, I just don't see that as a workable situation at all.

Again, thanks for your time.

This area of Big Lakes county and that area: we incorporate or facilitate all the major industries in the province. We have forestry. We have West Fraser's big plant in High Prairie. We have Tolko here, who's the strandboard plant. We have different energy companies. I wouldn't even guess at the number of energy companies, especially in the Swan Hills area.

Tourism is another thing that's growing. A point that should be made is that the Joussard area and across the lake from it is Hilliard's Bay Estates, two huge communities that in the summertime likely would house at least 4,000 more people than what they would in the wintertime. Shaw's Point Resort: I know for a fact that on a holiday weekend a couple of years ago they had 10,000 people at that resort. Those are all factors, of course, that affect our health care systems and all that, but I guess the other point is that there are times of the year here when we have a lot more than what the provincial requirement is for population as well.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Matthews. Appreciate your presentation. I've got a couple of questions. I'm a little unclear. You said that Big Lakes county under our proposal would be divided into four electoral divisions having four MLAs. Just recite the ridings you're talking about.

**Mr. Matthews:** Well, you've got the one to the – I haven't got them in front of me, but the Peace River one that Todd Loewen currently represents: that would come right up to take in High Prairie.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mackenzie?

**Mr. Matthews:** Mackenzie would go, of course, to – well, I don't know how he's possibly going to manage that being the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**The Chair:** I'm just trying to identify the ridings right now.

**Mr. Matthews:** Well, Mackenzie.

**The Chair:** Yeah.

**Mr. Matthews:** And the one that Slave Lake goes into, is that Lac La Biche, that area?

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mrs. Samson:** Athabasca.

**Mr. Matthews:** And then the one immediately south of Swan Hills, Whitecourt.

**The Chair:** Okay. Yeah. So that was the only clarification I wanted to make, and thank you for the history lesson. I'm old enough to remember Larry Shaben, actually, and I didn't realize he represented that riding, but let me have some of the commission members dialogue with you.

Mr. Evans, any questions or points you want to raise with this presenter?

**Mr. Evans:** I just wanted the same clarification you wanted on the four MLAs, and it looks like, yeah, that's correct. I don't think we had realized that. The other was that I just want to make sure that – you said specifically that Swan Hills wanted to be part of the existing Lesser Slave Lake constituency.

**Mr. Matthews:** Yeah, or certainly part of Big Lakes county, but, again, with the boundaries – that's another thing I want to indicate. The boundaries shown on the maps that you put out, these new maps – the boundaries of Big Lakes county are not accurate at all. I don't know who did the map, but they don't even show Swan Hills being part of Big Lakes county, and Swan Hills is well within Big Lakes county's boundaries. Our boundary to the east of Swan Hills is likely, oh, I would say, eight miles to the east at least, and to the south of Swan Hills it's another eight or 10 miles.

**Mr. Evans:** I don't think it shows the south boundary of Big Lakes county, but it shows the west boundary.

**Mr. Matthews:** And that is not accurate. I'll guarantee you it's not accurate, unless you've got different maps than I've looked at.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Well, we'll make a note of that, sir.

**Mr. Evans:** But, again, my point, before we got sidetracked with that, not that it's not valuable for certain – but Swan Hills: that town, you're saying, would like to be part of what is currently the constituency of Lesser Slave Lake.

**Mr. Matthews:** Well, yes, because – well, actually, they're not in there now.

**Mr. Evans:** No. They're not there now.

**Mr. Matthews:** For some reason, though they're well within Big Lakes county's boundaries, the electoral boundaries down there – I don't know exactly where they cut off, but they cut off north of

Swan Hills. Right now they're part of Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

**Mr. Evans:** Right. But you're saying they should be added to Lesser Slave Lake.

**Mr. Matthews:** Well, like I say, we worked closely with them over the years. Of course, respectively, that's where a lot of the revenue for Big Lakes county comes from: in the Swan Hills area. But they've always had a different MLA than we did, so, you know, if they wanted something municipally, they'd come to Big Lakes county. If they needed to go to the province, then they'd go exactly the opposite direction. I understood that they already put in a written submission asking that they be included within our boundaries, but I don't know. That's just what I've heard.

**The Chair:** Others have made that request as well, sir, so you know.

**Mr. Matthews:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** Anything else, John?

**Mr. Evans:** No. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mrs. Samson.

3:05

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your time this afternoon. I appreciate the information you gave us, but I'll just share with you that before your call we had Mayor Francesca Ward on the line, and she has assured us that Slave Lake is the hub. So thank you.

**Mr. Matthews:** That debate has gone on for a long time.

**Mrs. Samson:** I like it.

**Mr. Matthews:** We've been on the new zone 4 health advisory council together now, so we'll maybe get it straightened out somehow.

**Ms. Ward:** Yeah. It's the new Edmonton-Calgary divide or the Edmonton-Calgary divide of the north.

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay. Sounds good.

**The Chair:** Yeah. We can solve a few of the problems. We can't solve all your problems, I can assure you.

**Ms Churchill:** Listen, as the Alberta North Central Alliance, it's my job to tell High Prairie and Slave Lake, you guys just need to get along. It's about us.

**The Chair:** Okay. Anything more, Susan?

**Mrs. Samson:** No. I'm good, thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** I'm just confused. I mean, we had MLA van Dijken this morning telling us that the centre of Alberta geographically is near Barrhead. It's very difficult to keep up with all these competing claims.

No. I wanted to thank Mr. Matthews for his presentation. It reinforces a lot of the themes that we've heard in the letters and in the submissions that we have heard today. Thank you, sir.

**Mr. Matthews:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Yes. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Matthews:** The centre is closer to Swan Hills, again, than it is Barrhead.

**Dr. Martin:** We need a commission on this I think.

**Mr. Matthews:** That's a fact.

**The Chair:** Okay. That brings us back now to Jennifer Churchill and – sorry – someone else.

**Ms Churchill:** Mike Evans.

**The Chair:** Okay. Jennifer, I'll let you speak and introduce whoever's assisting you.

**Ms Churchill:** Perfect. You guys can see my slide show?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Ms Churchill:** Perfect. It's been updated since the one I had sent earlier.

Thank you very much for having us today. My name is Jennifer Churchill. I'm here with Alberta North Central Alliance, and I also have here Mike. He is the executive director of the Lesser Slave Lake Indian Regional Council.

Mike, cut me off any time.

Who does ANCA and, within that, the Lesser Slave Lake Indian Regional Council represent? We have five First Nations and five municipalities, which basically make up the Lesser Slave Lake riding. Our boundaries are quite similar. We are working together to co-ordinate and to collaborate, to communicate, share information but also to advocate to bring supports and services to this region. Within the Alberta North Central Alliance is the MD of Opportunity, Bigstone Cree Nation, the town of Slave Lake, the MD of Lesser Slave River, Sawridge First Nation, Swan River First Nation, Driftpile First Nation, Sucker Creek First Nation and the town of High Prairie. The Lesser Slave Lake Indian Regional Council represents four of those nations.

Mike, I don't know if you want to add in there a little bit.

**Mr. Mike Evans:** Not now. Thanks.

**Ms Churchill:** Okay. Our area is over 55,000 kilometres of north-central Alberta, which is about 8, almost 9 per cent of the province of Alberta's land mass. Our MLA represents our entire region as we define it, which is almost 9 per cent of the province of Alberta. Within our region we have integrated rural, remote, and Indigenous communities within that piece.

When this all came to be and the conversation is to remove our one riding that represents all of those communities, your report is recommending that we split it into three. One end of the lakeshore, the northern piece, would go in with Peace River. One would go into the Mackenzie riding that's being recommended. Then the Slave Lake, Sawridge First Nation portion would go towards Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock. MD of Opportunity, that northern part, also would join Mackenzie riding. That particular riding recommendation would increase the region from 8 per cent, where we're at now, 8 to almost 9 per cent, to – some of my rough math said 22 per cent of the province of Alberta's land mass would be represented in that Mackenzie riding.

We also were a little bit surprised when we read the report. You know, we're talking about removing our riding, but we had one local session with two people that represented. There was kind of,

when we were talking about representation and those feedback pieces – you've had lots of representation today, too, from my region. The conversations about, you know, the idea of a lakeshore and some of those history pieces didn't hit the report because there was very little representation. It reduces regional input, so we appreciate that we have the opportunity today.

The report identifies that our population is 50 per cent below the provincial average. We're not confident that number is accurately represented. The town of Slave Lake almost has 10,000 people. The MD of Opportunity, which encompasses several nations, Métis settlements, et cetera: they're sitting at approximately 10,000. Bigstone Cree Nation has a large population, so I'm a little bit – as a region we've had conversations about: how accurate is that data? How accurate is the count from all of the Indigenous communities on the area? But also: where's the reflection and the including of how many oil and gas workers we have in the region at any given time? You've heard already today, but we have some communities in the summertime triple in size based on, you know, where they live in the winter and where they stay in the summer. I understand that the math matters, but in this sense the way that people are counted, if that's so essential, we're not convinced that is necessarily an accurate representation.

Also – it's been mentioned before, and here it comes again – you know, population does not reflect our representation needs as a region. We are a little bit surprised that we had a statistic where we have the smallest riding in terms of population according to your report. We were a little bit surprised that we on paper look like we have such a statistical advantage in terms of representation because we don't feel like that increase in representation has meant increase in services or increase in supports into our region. Alberta North Central Alliance and Lesser Slave Lake Indian Regional Council are two examples of communities coming together to work together to bring supports and services because there is a little bit of a shortage.

In the past we've been granted section 15(2) protection. We have some questions about why that is not now continuing. We know that there were three ridings in the province that get that exemption. We had it. Where is that going? Also, our geographical scale and service challenges have remained the same in those pieces.

It's interesting to me that you guys mentioned earlier that the province of Alberta is growing with increased population, and rightfully so, but we're not seeing that in the north. Your report even suggests that there's a case of the north shrinking in population, so maybe there's a bigger understanding of what's going on that a province is growing, but 60 per cent of it is struggling. Is it a lack of resources or investment, or how does that look? [A timer sounded] Sorry, I'll go faster.

With your report you're going to split groups like ANCA that were collaborating together and working together, too, to bring supports and services to the region and just an awareness of what it's like to live in north-central Alberta. Lesser Slave Lake Indian Regional Council has existed for quite a bit longer than ANCA, and Mike can speak to that. They signed Treaty 8 together and, in fact, were one band in 1899 under the Kinosayo band. Your proposal will split Sawridge from the rest of the nations in Lesser Slave Lake Indian Regional Council.

As Mayor Ward and as Ken Matthews have mentioned earlier, we have health care overlaps, education, labour transportation systems between the whole entire north and south of the lakeshore up through Wabasca, Red Earth, down through Slave Lake across over to the other pieces. The boundary fragmentation really makes it difficult to advocate for a region, and we're already having significant issues with that. Also, you know, for an MLA to be able to have the ability to travel and something that large – especially

Mackenzie, when you're looking at 22 per cent, where I live, Zama City would be in the same riding as me, and they're six hours away, if there was a road that directly connects us. Boundaries should reflect how communities function. Yes, I understand that it is numbers. Yes, I understand that a lot of it is: how do you make things equitable? But fair is not always equal, right?

Go ahead, Mike. You're muted, Mike.

3:15

**Mr. Mike Evans:** Sorry. That's better. Thank you, Jennifer.

I just wanted to add a little bit more historical information that I think is worthy of consideration here. Jennifer had mentioned that Treaty 8 was signed on the south shores of Lesser Slave Lake in 1899, that the Indigenous communities in this region were the original signatories, the first signatories of that treaty. So the region has a historical significance in that context.

The other thing that she was saying about how the constituencies should reflect a certain regionality in terms of the way that they work together: there's an enormous amount of existing co-operation within this region already between the mainstream communities, the Métis settlements, and the First Nations. Those services have grown up naturally to reflect a unity that now is being divided through the proposal that has been made. I think, you know, we have to acknowledge that the boundaries to some extent are arbitrary. You have criteria that you're trying to meet in terms of the proposal that's in front of the commission, that will be going to the Legislature, but it is missing I think some of these other considerations about why the region is as significant as it is.

The other thing we've got now to this slide – I just wanted to mention that I'd forgotten that Larry Shaben had been the MLA up there for a number of years, but that this constituency, the Slave Lake constituency, has for 28 of the last 36 years been represented by an Indigenous MLA. There isn't another constituency in Alberta that has anywhere near that kind of consistent representation from the Indigenous community. There's little enough Indigenous representation in caucus, in government that is being satisfied, if you will, that a certain perspective is being brought to the table out of the north consistently for the last three decades. That hasn't been true anywhere else. There's a very real concern in the Indigenous community that if the constituency is split as proposed, there won't be an Indigenous representative in any of them because the place where the strength of unity and action is most present will have been divided. That's a real concern to these communities who have endeavoured as well to, you know, represent interests even beyond themselves.

Jennifer had mentioned that regional council has existed for a long time. It was the first tribal council that was incorporated in Canada back in 1971. For a long time its leadership included Senator and Chief Walter Twin out of Sawridge. Originally the regional council was also very large. It had 11 member nations. Over time, due to geography and, again, existing service areas, regional council has become smaller. Three of its members that are farther to the west have formed their own tribal council and are within the Grande Prairie constituencies. There are some others that are farther north that have created a new tribal council, the Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council. But this body here in this region has remained strong for 50 years, and the proposal really risks taking that apart.

Those are some specifically Indigenous considerations that I wanted to bring to your attention. Happy to answer any questions you might have. Before I go, I'm certain that there are over 200 Mike Evans in Alberta, but, Dr. Martin, yes, it's me.

**The Chair:** Okay. Actually, I was just going to ask you to state your name again, sir. Thank you for this tag team presentation.

I have to confess that I was distracted at the beginning, Jennifer, and your first slide I couldn't read clearly. Could you just recap? Yeah. Could you just give us another recap of geographically and representatively who your members are? I think it'll give me a much better context.

Then I'm going to open it up to the commission.

**Ms Churchill:** Mike mentioned that regional council was the first in Canada of their type. Alberta North Central Alliance is the first regional group in Canada of our type, where we have municipalities and Nations sitting together at a table to have a conversation about what our region needs, because we have that many needs. So within that is the MD of Opportunity, Big Stone Cree Nation, the MD of Lesser Slave River, town of Slave Lake, Sawridge First Nation, Big Lakes county, Swan River First Nation, Driftpile First Nation, Sucker Creek First Nation, and the town of High Prairie.

**The Chair:** There's one other Nation not captured on this map, which is the Kapaw'n'no First Nation, but they are not a member of regional council.

**Ms Churchill:** They are no longer a member of ANCA either. There are other communities within this region that we, you know, advocate for as well, but they have chosen not to collaborate at this given particular time. Actually, Big Lakes county, which you can see on that map, has the most Indigenous communities in all of Canada. They have more Nations and Métis settlements within their boundaries as opposed to any other municipal or government within Canada. The MD of Opportunity is something like 65 per cent Indigenous. They're the only municipality within Alberta that is actually primarily Indigenous.

**The Chair:** Now, am I correct in understanding that all those counties and municipalities that you just listed: they are all contained within the existing Lesser Slave Lake riding?

**Ms Churchill:** Yes, they are.

**The Chair:** Okay. So there's a bit of a real cohesion that exists with what is present, and we, in our interim report, have in a sense blown up that wonderful cohesion.

**Ms Churchill:** Yes, and if Mayor Ward wants to turn on her camera, the town of Slave Lake is part of ANCA. But we've had to collaborate together because, you know, as we mentioned before, we're a little bit surprised that we have a statistical advantage within that map that I'm showing you right now.

We have four hospitals, and you can't have a baby in any of those four hospitals. We have some of the highest levels of diabetics in all of Alberta in that whole region. Besides some of the Nations that are bringing in diabetic foot care, we have to travel to Edmonton or Grande Prairie for diabetic foot care. Within that region we have roads that are crumbling. All of them are one lane with very few turnouts.

Travel Alberta: if you go to Travel Alberta's website, you will see that on our region we have the Lesser Slave Lake, like, the actual lake. You're not going to see any of our communities highlighted on Travel Alberta's website, and that was something that we've been working on. We're working together because there's a need and a gap – right? – so I don't want to say it, but the fact that we exist is because we need to exist. We have to work together to do so.

**Mr. Mike Evans:** There's a ton of advocacy still that can be done that is independent, I guess, of whether there's one MLA or three or four, except that this is a region that has its own internal logic and coherence. It would be disrupted by the proposal that's been put on the table, and we'd be a lot happier if that didn't happen, you know? There's kind of an unprecedented collaboration between the mainstream community and the Indigenous communities. Of course, it can always get better, but there aren't many that are doing the kind of job of integration that's being done here.

**The Chair:** I have one more question before I unleash the rest of the commission on you, and Mr. Evans, it's about your comments. So Treaty 8 was signed in 1899 on the southern shore of Lesser Slave Lake. Is that right?

**Mr. Mike Evans:** Yeah, that's right. Chief Kinodayo and Chief Moostos were what they called headmen at the time, who led all of the communities on the southern shore of Lesser Slave Lake, and the actual place of signing, as far as we know, was on what is now part of the Sucker Creek reserve.

**The Chair:** Fortunately or unfortunately, I'm a bit of a historic nerd, and I know very well where Treaty 7 was signed. I believe it was in 1873. That's an important data point for me for report-writing purposes. Mr. Evans, can you send me something, if it's not already in a report, about the historic nature of this area?

3:25

**Mr. Mike Evans:** I'm not sure that Jennifer provided anything to you. I know that we did not, but I would be happy to share that with you.

**The Chair:** Your comments about the continuity over the last 36 years are very important. In my previous life I did know Ms Calahasen, and she ably represented your area. Yeah. Please send the commission some information along those lines.

**Mr. Mike Evans:** I'm happy to do so.

Mr. Sinclair is now who's the MLA, and I realize he's in a position of some difficulty with the government, but he also is an Indigenous representative who was elected up here.

**The Chair:** Right. He's presenting next week, I believe, so we'll hear all facets of that. Okay. Thank you.

I've occupied enough time here. I'm going to turn it over to the commission. Dr. Martin, any questions, comments?

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. Several. It's good to hear your voice, Mike Evans. My first comment really is that it is the genius of sparsely populated areas and communities that they find ways to link up to discuss all the issues that preoccupy smaller towns about resource allocation, budgeting priorities, and services that can be shared and how to do workarounds, all of which is made much more difficult, of course, by the extreme distances and the sparse populations in the north. We've heard this point repeatedly and I think persuasively in the last couple of days.

I'm very interested to hear more. Perhaps, Jennifer, you could speak to this as well. I know Mike is very well versed in it. The whole planning process and the cohesion of all these groups in ANCA, five First Nations, five municipalities: it's quite a lot to juggle. You are inferring, and I'm persuaded by your remarks, that all these groups work well together, as the judge said, cohesively, to build out a planning portrait prioritizing the needs of these communities. This is quite impressive, I must say. I just invite you to add some further anecdotes if you will about shared planning and shared services.

**Ms Churchill:** It's a process that takes time, but I think lots of it is because when you look at even the reports that you're suggesting not only are you diluting our voices a bit as ANCA and as a region, but you're taking smaller communities and matching them with larger communities, so that rural Indigenous voice gets diluted by some of those bigger communities and other areas.

We have some needs and we have the same needs and we are all connected and we're all related and tied together. Are there times where Slave Lake and High Prairie have to be told: settle down a little bit; it's not always about you? As you can see, sometimes that's the case, right? But at the end of the day we have lots of the same issues. We're not going to agree on everything, but how do we communicate with each other? How do we share a healthy region and a healthy lakeshore, healthy communities? How do we tie some of those pieces in together to move the region forward? Is it a perfect system? No. Is it a slow system? But we're working at it.

If this was to go forward, do I know what the future of a group like us would look like? I'm not sure, to be completely and totally honest. Mayor Ward said it best, though, that we would figure it out because in the north we always do figure it out, and I agree with that. Right? But we're really starting to get some momentum and to bring some eyes on our region and some of the gaps that really exist. I'm sure if we had some support in terms of infrastructure and some investment in our region that we probably could grow like the rest of Alberta has been and that the next time that this commission happens we could be having a very different conversation, but we need some support and we need some growth and we need some investing in resources and our infrastructure to do so. By splitting us, it isn't doing that.

**Mr. Mike Evans:** I wanted to suggest something else as well. This map is actually really instructive because in a way it reflects the regionality that we've been talking about. There was an earlier conversation that there's some sort of dispute about the geographic centre of Alberta. Ken Matthews is correct. It's just south of Slave Lake. It's not that close to Barrhead. Regardless, if you look at this map, this reflects the regionality in the transportation corridor. If you were to connect all those dots, that's highway 2 on the south shore of Lesser Slave Lake, and that's part of the reason that these communities are linked the way they are. Then with the upgrades that have been done to 88 in the past 30 years, that's what connects the MD of Opportunity. That connects Big Stone, Red Earth. Shoot, now I'm forgetting the name of the other – I mean, a number of those communities up there.

It's been a while. I drove the highway from off number 2 through Swan Hills down to Barrhead for the first time in 30 years a couple of weeks ago. You know, that's another spur, but it comes off highway 2. It's no different than building a new road in the city and all of a sudden you've got new subdivisions. These communities work together the way that they do because they're linked by infrastructure, and what you're doing is splitting an existing – there's a potential here to divide an already highly functioning regional area that also has historical significance.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

One last comment to Jennifer's earlier remark about underreporting of population. We agree, but all census makers would agree that it's extremely difficult to do accurate population counts in First Nations because they're not necessarily self-reporting, so they have some probabilistic estimates. I suspect you're absolutely right empirically, yet we have to work with the data sets that the Office of Statistics and Information in Treasury Board have worked out. That has the highest probability of being

accurate at the time for the date they are published. So it's a fair critique. We can't actually repair those data sets, but your point is well taken. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Dr. Martin.

**Mr. Mike Evans:** I don't mean to be presumptuous here, but if there is a willingness – and as I said, you know, on some level these boundaries are all arbitrary as it is. If you're concerned that the population of this constituency is too small, how difficult would it be to add some areas from neighbouring to change the population without necessarily affecting – I'm just putting that on the table, I guess. If the population is the driver but this particular region is unique for other reasons, maybe that can be addressed in a different way than dividing.

**The Chair:** Jennifer, I think, raised the point of 15(2). We've not used those tools in our tool box sufficiently either, so that's certainly on our mind. Thank you.

**Ms Churchill:** Some of my last comment is about the population counts. There's a history about why lots of times, sometimes in Indigenous communities they don't want to necessarily be counted on some of those pieces, but by diluting some of those voices and not necessarily, you know – like Mike had mentioned, we have in history had Indigenous population represented. We have a high level of it, so there are quite a few people who represent our MLA – right? – through Indigenous pieces. By moving it so that that doesn't happen as often doesn't necessarily make them feel more welcome to be counted. If that makes sense.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Sorry to correct you, Jennifer. It's not your last comment because the commission isn't finished yet.

**Ms Churchill:** Oh, okay.

**The Chair:** I'm going to turn it over to Mrs. Samson for any questions.

**Mrs. Samson:** I just wanted to make a comment. I note that there was concern raised by the group that there was not sufficient or appropriate notice given for the work that we are undertaking. If it gives you any peace of mind, we have received an enormous number of submissions based on the work we've done to date, 1,100. My colleague tells me that over 100 of them were based on a discontentment with the work we did on the north, so rest assured that we heard you.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Any questions, Mr. Evans?

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah. Mike Evans, my brother is named Mike Evans, and I have a second cousin Mike Evans, so we can account for three of you now.

**The Chair:** There are three of them.

**Mr. Mike Evans:** I said that there were 143 of us.

**Mr. Evans:** Who knew it was such a popular name?

3:35

**Mr. Mike Evans:** When I was with the department of English at the U of A, there were three of us on faculty with the same name.

**Mr. Evans:** That would have been confusing.

There was a reference to the band – it was a united band, or more or less united – that signed Treaty 8. But then it looks like it fractured into a number of separate bands. Can you tell me how that works?

**Mr. Mike Evans:** Well, yeah. I mean, in the 19th century when the treaty was executed, there was no such thing as bands. You know, that's a colonial settler notion. The farther north that you go, perhaps not in – well, no; in 1899 that would have been true. It's still true. It might not have been true in 1200. But the farther north you go, the more traditionally people live, and the nature of the ecosystem requires a different kind of community than you might have been able to maintain in the south, where buffalo was your principal hunting animal, where you could acquire a large amount of meat by driving animals over a buffalo jump. People tended to live in sort of extended family groupings in the bush, a seminomadic life, but they all knew one another. They would gather at important places a couple of times a year. The southern shores of Lesser Slave Lake were one of those places. Folks farther south talk about Edmonton as having been a gathering place for large numbers of Indigenous people of varying backgrounds.

When the treaty was signed, it was signed by folks who were nominated sort of as the leaders of a loosely associated group of Woodland Cree people. They were well known to one another, which is why Kinosayo and Moostos were sort of the lead representatives, if you will. Then when it got time to be making reserves – and I'll have to look that up myself. I'm afraid I can't tell you when the reserves started to be designated, but it would have been quite a long time after the signing of Treaty 8. Eventually, as people were encouraged to adopt an agricultural lifestyle, then, of course, the population tended to concentrate in specific areas, and the reserves sprang up around those communities.

Over time, in part due to Indian Act requirements of, you know, having a chief and council that you need to elect every two years, which meant they didn't make very much progress, there were things by the mainstream community that were imposed on these communities that wound up creating what are now, with Lesser Slave Lake, four distinct First Nations that are all allied through the regional council to do work together. They also provide services to their membership – specifically to their membership – independent of one another as well.

Does that answer the question?

**Mr. Evans:** It does. Yes. Thank you very much. I appreciate all your submissions.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, this has been a very full afternoon, and we're not nearly finished all our presenters, but this has been very enriching for us in over a half hour.

Jennifer and Mike, thank you so much for your presentation, and I trust we'll have your PowerPoint. Anything further you can provide from the historic perspective, Mike, that would be helpful.

**Ms Churchill:** Some of that is in ANCA's submission, but I can get you some more.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Mike Evans:** I'm happy to provide information as well. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you. You're free to stay to hear the rest of the presentations. There are two more presentations.

First of all, Nathan Steinke. Nathan, are you present and able to present?

**Mr. Steinke:** Hello. Can you hear me?

**The Chair:** Yes. Please proceed.

**Mr. Steinke:** Excellent. Fantastic. Yeah. My name is Nathan Steinke. I am here both as a constituent of the north, and also I work in a constituency office in the north for MLA Todd Loewen here in Valleyview. I have a bit of an insight into kind of the inner workings of representation in this part of the world and its difficulties.

I'll start by saying that, you know, I suppose I'm a little bit disappointed that we have to be having this by Zoom rather than in person. I note that there are in-person events in Edmonton and Calgary. I kind of start my presentation with this not as a shot at any of the members of this committee or an attack on them but just as an introduction point to highlight just how difficult it is to represent the north, as I'm sure the commission has learned.

I appreciate that the commission had some events in person prior, as it did the first draft prior to Christmas in 2025, but I'm sure as you discovered, it's very difficult to represent this area, travelling place to place and trying to find hubs locally, enough locations that you feel can geographically cover the people that live here. I'm sure you probably also found that it's difficult to find venues and get the word out properly because we have a very fractured media landscape up here. The death of the local papers is kind of an unfortunate development. It's difficult to get the word out on events. You do your best to have events wherever you can across the area, and then you discover that you have halls that aren't very full or people that didn't ever get the word for whatever reason. My point is only to say that there are some difficulties in this. It's not an easy job. The larger we get geographically, the more difficult it gets, exponentially I believe.

I'm concerned – and I'm glad to hear that the commission has heard this from other people as well and has acknowledged it – that this report seems to have, I believe, I guess what I would call an urban bias, which is that it attempts to equalize population without considering the difficulty factor that that adds. There's kind of a strange logic here in the report. The logic works against itself, unfortunately, where the more you try to equalize population, the more difficult you make it. You're actually getting further away from equal representation the closer you get to equal population.

What I mean is, essentially, that in an urban riding I can appreciate that if you had 20 seats to distribute within Calgary and about a million people, say, you could do that calculation pretty easily and you would do your best to keep those populations as close as possible. If you ever had any dramatic changes within a city, it would be fairly easy just to move that line a couple of city blocks over and restore some more equilibrium. However, in the north trying to meet that population target often results in moving the line hundreds of kilometres. At that point you are introducing not just distance but, in many cases, multiple municipalities. If you move a line 200 kilometres, 300 kilometres, you're probably into another municipal district or county; you probably incorporated more villages and towns and even school boards. You're adding a number of different elected officials now that the MLA has to represent and meet with regularly.

I believe that we kind of got a bit of a double whammy here in rural Alberta in that the legislation adds two seats, taking us from 87 to 89, both of which are added in urban Alberta, and then we lose two seats. So the net swing is actually a four-seat swing to urban Alberta. Not that those people don't deserve representation, but again, we talk about fair representation.

I believe that the act in section 15(2) – I'm just pulling up here to make sure I'm referencing the right thing – does allow us to create boundaries that are up to 50 per cent lower than the average, and I

don't believe that's a bad thing. I believe that to try and minimize those, to try and say to have none or only one – I believe there's only one in this report that is within that 50 per cent margin – is missing the mark in that it seems almost to think that these exceptions exist, and the misconception is that we should try to minimize these exceptions when, honestly, my preference would be: if you're allotted four that are allowed to be 50 per cent below the average, use those four. I honestly think you have to use those four.

Population being equal, it's much harder to represent a rural riding. My math would be that if it's 50 per cent below the population average, it's twice as hard to represent, so that difficulty multiplier basically brings you up to equilibrium anyway. A rural riding the size of ours, with 30,000 people, is twice as hard to represent as an urban riding with 60,000. I would make that case for sure.

3:45

What this report does is that it unfortunately shoots at population equalization, so the kind of strange result of that, again, the strange logic of this is that you end up having urban seats with 49,000, 50,000, 51,000 people, and you have rural seats with 46,000, 47,000, 48,000 people, and I question the equity in doing that and the fairness in doing that. You know, again, population trying to be equalized – there is no comparison between the difficulty in getting adequate representation here versus in a city.

So I'll leave you with that. Again, I've appreciated watching the submissions, and I appreciate the work of the committee. Thank you for allowing me to present.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Steinke.

Let's get in some dialogue. Mr. Evans, any questions or comments for this presenter?

**Mr. Evans:** If I understand the summary of your submissions, it's: use 15(2) as a tool to provide effective representation in the north; don't be afraid to use it.

**Mr. Steinke:** Absolutely. I say that, you know, again, my preference would be to use all four if possible. I mean, I don't think that there is a – how should I put this? – moral argument for using fewer rather than more. I think that just because it's an exception doesn't mean that we should shy away from using it. It's an exception that's put in there for a very good reason. In fact, it's the only way – again, the strange logic of the larger you try to make your riding to equalize the population, the harder you're making it to represent. It's a paradox, right? So the only way to square that circle is to allow these exceptions. There's, frankly, no other way.

I do appreciate that the two extra seats that are being added did go to urban Alberta. I mean, we probably don't have a way around that in terms of – they certainly, probably, do deserve more seats in those areas. That kind of seems to take care of that urban growth factor. I think that, on the rural side, leaving those seats in place as much as possible would be far preferable.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you, Nathan. Appreciate that.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you again for your time today. Good descriptions and analogies for the north and the problems you're facing. I agree with my colleague. We have to have a hard look at 15(2) again, particularly in relation to your area, so I can tell you that we will do that. We will have a look at it. Thank you.

**Mr. Steinke:** Fantastic. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Yes.

Dr. Martin, any questions?

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. Thank you.

Thank you for your presentation. I think you're spot on about some of the difficulties and indeed the paradoxes, as you referred to them. You know, I will say in our own defence that when we first began, we knew this would be a long game. That's why we had an interim report, and it was even titled that. We have been rewarded with a deluge of submissions, many of which were very useful and very detailed, the accumulated effect of which is to bring much more granular information to our attention than we had when we began.

It's always been our intention to fully respect the features of the act, which is quite a juggling act to do. The population side of it is probably the easiest of all the factors that we are enjoined to pay respect to. That's why we're having this second round, as it were. So your remarks are heard, and I'm thanking you for presenting them.

**The Chair:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Steinke. Maybe it was the time of the year, but we didn't have an overabundance of presenters when we were in the north in June, but we certainly got the north's attention by way of our interim report. So thank you. You've given us some punchy lines here, and your description of the paradox is bang on. We might just steal that and incorporate that in our report. Thank you so much, Mr. Steinke. By the way, were you here throughout the day listening to other submissions?

**Mr. Steinke:** I was watching on the YouTube link.

**The Chair:** Okay. Good. Well, thank you.

We have one more presenter scheduled today, Amanda McDonald.

**Ms McDonald:** Good afternoon, everybody. Yeah. I have a feeling I may just be the summary that you need because I probably am going to say a lot of similar things that you guys have heard today.

I'm the reeve for the county of Grande Prairie. We just wanted to recognize the commission's mandate and that you've been tasked with balancing population parity with effective representation. In Alberta, and especially in northern Alberta, some of those concepts are not necessarily the same thing. Numbers alone do not necessarily tell the full story of how residents access their MLAs or what it takes for an MLA to meaningfully serve a very large rural riding.

The Electoral Boundaries Commission Act requires consideration of more than just population. You guys referenced that already, but some of those highlight: sparsity, geography, transportation realities, communities of interest, and clarity of boundaries, which, again was brought up, you know, previous to me. These factors are especially important in the north, especially when distances are very long and travel conditions are difficult and communities are very widely spaced apart. Even though a boundary map may look balanced on paper, in practice it could reduce representation if the riding became too large for one MLA to serve it effectively. When residents can't access their MLA or when an MLA cannot reasonably cover the vast territory, representation becomes unequal regardless of the population.

This is why the county of Grande Prairie is concerned about the interim recommendation that reduces northern Alberta from seven to six. This is not simply a reshuffling of lines. It does represent a structural loss of representation in the north. A single MLA serving a riding that is large would face enormous geographic and logistic challenges. It stretches from remote communities to agricultural

regions and from Indigenous communities to regional service hubs. This reduction not just affects accessibility but the responsiveness and engagement that residents expect from an elected official. In many cases this would mean timely face-to-face interactions become nearly impossible. I think even that was brought up today in response to the Zoom versus in-person meetings.

At the same time, we also want to acknowledge that some things are working really well. I mean, in the Grande Prairie area, the existing Grande Prairie and Grande Prairie-Wapiti ridings reflect a natural community alignment, and they fit how people live and work in this area. It does allow the MLAs to remain present and engaged, so the county supports keeping those boundaries intact. They are functioning, effective, and require minimal disruption. So thank you for that.

We also want to highlight the realities of geography and workload in the rural northern ridings. A rural MLA covers thousands of square kilometres, often travelling long distances in challenging weather and roads. They engage with multiple municipalities, school boards, agricultural service boards, First Nations, industry groups, and regional organizations. Sometimes that workload isn't necessarily comparable to some urban ridings. Again, that doesn't reflect in population numbers all the time.

Growth in northern Alberta further supports the need to retain full representation. For example, the county of Grande Prairie has grown by nearly 12 per cent in the last three years. The Grande Prairie-Wapiti riding aligns closely with those provincial averages, and the city of Grande Prairie continues to grow as well. Meanwhile even though there are some smaller populations in other regions, these do still cover a vast area. Historically, the commission has retained rural northern ridings like this because of the unique geographic and representational demands, so eliminating one now would sort of ignore those long-standing principles and create a larger rural riding that's more difficult for one person to serve.

I also just want to highlight quickly that northern Alberta plays such a central role in the economy. Resource development, agricultural and transportation corridors, and infrastructure located in the north contribute directly to the province's overall prosperity. When we're looking at reducing representation, decision-making at the provincial level risks becoming disconnected from realities and opportunities in the north. Strong representation will ensure that issues like access to health care, transportation, infrastructure, policing, and education are understood with that northern context if we're losing those people.

3:55

Just to summarize, I think we want to continue to support that retaining seven electoral divisions in northwestern Alberta is important to people up in the north. That structure ensures that residents across the vast region continue to have meaningful access to their elected representatives. We want to continue to support current boundaries in the Grande Prairie and the Grande Prairie-Wapiti region as they are working well, and they align really well with the community realities that we face on a day-to-day basis.

I think I'll leave it there. Again, I think I haven't really given you anything new that you haven't heard already today, but we just want to make sure that you're kind of looking at the bigger picture and not just a desk top. Really, I hope you take the words that you've heard today and take that into strong consideration when you go to your final report.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms McDonald.

Dr. Martin, any questions or comments?



**Dr. Martin:** Well, again, I thank you, Reeve. I think it is important even though you have reiterated many of the points that we have heard today, to be sure, as you alluded to. I must also say that you should take pride in the fact that of the 1,100-odd submissions we received in November and December, there were well over 100, maybe 125, from residents in the north talking about the northern voice, if I may encapsulate it that way, as an important influencer in provincial politics. So the notion that we would rely exclusively on population is misplaced, and the letters help us understand at a granular level a lot of the particular issues and linkages that exist between communities large and small in the north.

I'm particularly interested in your remark that the county has grown 12 per cent in its population in the last three years. Are there particular industries that drive that?

**Ms McDonald:** In the county we actually have quite a few. I mean, we have mills, some forestry, oil and gas, agriculture, and tourism. We're pretty special in that regard. We don't kind of focus on one thing. I guess mining would be one of the ones we might have missing. All of that is driving population growth for sure. Oil and gas is probably our strongest growth right now, but they're all still very viable.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** I don't have any questions. I just wanted to thank you for your presentation and taking time out today for us. I appreciate that. Thank you.

**Ms McDonald:** Thanks.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah. Thank you for your presentation, Reeve McDonald. I do have a question. Earlier today we heard from the mayor of Grande Prairie, and she's happy with the proposed electoral districts in the interim report, but her preference, if she had her preference, would be to split Grande Prairie so that you had two hybrid ridings. Is that something that you would be interested in?

**Ms McDonald:** I mean, I think as of right now, like I did say, we are happy with how it has been divided so far. I don't really want to just posturize on what I think. I would want to sort of look at what you were asking for. If it's just a split down the middle, I'm not too sure what that achieves differently than what you already do have. Both MLAs do have a portion of urban and a portion of rural, so I'm not sure other than maybe just if there was a line that made more sense, then I'd be interested in looking at that. But like I said, specifically in our area, they share an office; they work together on a daily basis.

Again, switching that line at this point I'm not sure would change a huge amount for us in the county. I can't really speak to necessarily what the city sees in that regard. I mean, I would be interested to see what your thoughts were, but again, like I said,

they both have a portion urban; they both have a portion rural. So I don't know what we would gain.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thank you. Appreciate that.

**The Chair:** Ms McDonald, I want to take this opportunity to just illustrate to you the challenge we have as a commission. Let me just reference an MLA who presented to us in Calgary earlier this week. He asserted that his electoral division was becoming unreasonably large, and by that he meant population. It was over 60,000 people. I then put to him: well, let's talk about unreasonably large. Now, it's been quoted to me – I'm not sure. I haven't verified it; our staff I'm not sure have verified it. But our proposed riding: the southern boundary is closer to the state of Montana than it is to the boundary of Northwest Territories. So I put that to him. That's the extremes we're dealing with. What's unreasonably large?

If I can maybe just give you a little recap of what happened. We didn't hear a lot of submissions from the north on our first time around. Having sat up there and been up there, I know why. Everybody was working hard, farming and fishing and doing everything else you do up there. But we've certainly got your attention in the north since our report. As Dr. Martin has said, we've heard from the north, we're hearing from the north, and that's the value of an interim report and moving to a final report. So thank you and so many of your colleagues from the north for your presentations and for so generously sharing your time and telling us where we need to go in the final report.

Thank you so much.

**Ms McDonald:** You bet.

**The Chair:** Okay. That, I believe . . .

**Ms Kolebaba:** If I may. Sorry. It's Carolyn Kolebaba.

In response to the MLA that spoke about his 60,000 people in urban Calgary, I would suggest to him that if he rented a large hall and notified his 60,000 people, he would probably get them there, and it wouldn't take any one of them very long to get there. If our MLA was to say, "We're having an open house in the north, and everybody, come," there would be probably 60 per cent of us that would have to stay overnight in a hotel in order to get there. So that is the difference.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Thank you.

Okay. Well, I think that's – unless I've missed someone. I'll just call it open for any people that are in the virtual room who had intended to present and we missed. Please come forth now and identify yourself. Otherwise, we will adjourn the proceedings.

We're going to be back here at 5:30 p.m. We're going to grab a bite to eat, and we'll be back here at 5:30 for this evening's sessions.

Thank you.

[The hearing adjourned at 4:03 p.m.]









Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Public Hearings

Virtual

Thursday, January 15, 2026  
5:30 p.m.

Transcript No. 37

## **Legislative Assembly of Alberta**

### **Electoral Boundaries Commission**

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## **Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Virtual**

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Valerie Boese  
Robert Duiker  
Cameron Galisky, Councillor, Town of Penhold  
Thomas Kent  
Laurie Miller, Mayor, Town of Bowden  
Leah Nelson, Mayor, Village of Elnora  
Marc Slingerland  
Elizabeth Strange  
Laura Svab, Mayor, Town of Blackfalds





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[Justice Miller in the chair]

**The Chair:** Good evening, everyone, and welcome to the evening session of the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission public hearings.

We've got several speakers in the queue ready to present, but I want to give some background information to the public and to the group that is presenting. First of all, we're an independent commission established by the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. As you can see, our names are listed in front of us and they're also listed on the PowerPoint, and you can check out our biographies if you so wish on the website. We're tasked to work to reorganize the Alberta electoral boundaries as required by the legislation.

We have two main determining issues that force us to do this work. Number one is that the Legislative Assembly has been directed to expand from 87 members to 89; in other words, 89 electoral divisions for the next provincial election rather than the existing 87. As everyone knows, it's the voters that are located and reside in the electoral division that elect the MLAs, and that member then represents that electoral division in the Alberta Legislature.

While the seats have been increased from 87 to 89, another huge determining factor that drives our commission is the increase in population. Just to give you some context, the last Electoral Boundaries Commission report was in 2017, and that report was based on a population base for Alberta of just over 4 million people, 4,062,609 population. That report then took the 87 ridings and came up with an average, as you can see on the screen, of 46,697 persons per electoral division. Now, that is not the target. The average is not the target. Rather, we use the average to come up with a range to establish effective representation, and for the 2017 commission that range of population was from 35,000 up to as high as 58,000. As long as the population base in each riding is in that target range, then the legislation allows us to call that effective representation. That was 2017.

Now in 2026 the population of Alberta has increased by over 800,000 in the intervening years, and our population base of 4.8 million Albertans divided by 89 electoral divisions reaches an average of 54,929 per electoral division. Again, that average is not the target. The target is the population range per electoral division of minus 25 to plus 25, and in real numbers that's 41,197 to 68,661.

The historic practice in Canada for representation, the jurisprudence from various courts, including the Supreme Court of Canada, and the legislation all point us to the term "effective representation." Canada is not governed, as is the United States, on representation by population. One person, one vote is an American concept. It's not a Canadian concept. There's no jurisdiction in Canada that bases its representation exclusively on one person, one vote. Rather, we have the term "effective representation." That is a challenge. It's not a mathematical exercise, and this commission went to work shortly after its appointment to come up with some guidelines.

First of all, we agreed on a data source, and the data source for population was the 2021 latest decennial census for Canada, which was then updated and supplemented by the Office of Statistics and Information of the Alberta Treasury Board. So we've taken federal data, updated it by way of provincial measures, and we came up with the population standard for us to work on. You can read in our interim report – I believe it's on pages 15 to 17 – more information as to how we got to the population base that we did.

After determining that and agreeing upon that, we then reviewed hundreds of written submissions that were provided to the

commission as to how we should go about our work, and we conducted public hearings from late May and throughout June. We travelled across the province. We sat in Pincher Creek and we sat in Fort McMurray. We sat in Peace River, Grande Prairie, and we sat in Medicine Hat, and, of course, spent days in Calgary and Edmonton in the intervening time. So we heard from Albertans.

Taking that population base, the written submissions, and the public presentations we heard, we worked with the Elections Alberta staff, which assisted us greatly, and we came up with maps that resulted in our report. Our report then was finalized in late October and presented to the Speaker of the Legislature, and he almost immediately tabled that report and provided each of the members of the Legislature with a copy. It was then made public on our website.

In completing our report, we followed the legislative guidelines outlined in terms of population boundaries, communities of interest, natural borders, et cetera, et cetera, and we worked hard to come up with a map that had 89 ridings with understandable and clear boundaries. As I said, that report was tabled in the Legislature and made public in late October. Then we opened a portal on our website for public submissions. From November 3 to December 29 Albertans responded. We have over 1,100 written submissions, and I'm told that it is one of the most responded to reports in Alberta legislative history.

Now at this phase we open it up for a second round of public hearings. We are travelling the province, so to speak, for two weeks. January 12 we started in Calgary with two and a half days of hearings. We are now opening it up to the rest of the province through virtual hearings today and tomorrow, and next week we are sitting in Edmonton, hearing from people in Edmonton. We will conclude our public hearings next Wednesday hearing from members of the Legislature, and then we will immediately commence deliberations as a commission to come up with a final report.

Our final report is due in late March, and we will table that report. The Legislature then receives our report and is required to respond by enacting appropriate legislation to deal with the two new ridings and our proposed boundaries.

That gives you a bit of a background as to how we led up to our interim report and what we've done since then, and now this is an opportunity for us to hear from those individuals who have signed up to present this evening. Our first presenter is Mr. Thomas Kent. Are you present, Mr. Kent?

**Mr. Kent:** Yes, I am, Justice Miller.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you. Please identify where you live and what boundaries you wish to comment on.

**Mr. Kent:** First, can I just check – I sent in a PowerPoint. Is that available to you?

**The Chair:** I'll defer to Mr. Roth.

Do we have that queued up?

**Mr. Roth:** Yes.

5:40

**The Chair:** Okay. I think it's coming online, so you can commence your presentation, Mr. Kent.

**Mr. Kent:** All right. Thank you. I am a resident of Calgary-Elbow. I know that Mr. Clark, I believe, is a resident of Elbow as well, but I'm not sure how many other members of the panel are residents of Calgary.

**Mrs. Samson:** None.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark is representing Calgary.

**Mr. Kent:** I beg your pardon?

**The Chair:** Yeah. You're right. Mr. Clark resides in Calgary.

**Mr. Kent:** And the rest of you: how many of the rest of you are Calgarians versus living elsewhere in the province?

**The Chair:** Yeah. You can see our bios on the website. The four of us are spread out across the province.

**Mr. Kent:** All right. Well, the reason I'm asking, Justice Miller, is because – I mean, Greg, I don't know if you remember me. My wife and I moved to Calgary in 2012, got flooded in 2013. I became aware of Mr. Clark when he and others formed the Calgary river action committee. Then I believe I voted for Mr. Clark in 2015, and we met later and had a lunch.

Anyway, I'm very surprised at the proposal for Calgary-Confluence, and that's the first page on the PowerPoint, the two maps. I don't know whether Mr. Roth can zoom in a little bit for you. For those of you not from Calgary, I can't fathom a riding that somebody would dream up that would purport to cross both nature and man-made boundaries, completely in contradiction to one of your main criteria. Everything to the east of the Bow River and the Deerfoot Trail, which all of you have driven on, I'm sure, some of you many times, is a raised escarpment. The only ways across that, when you're looking at this proposed riding, are Memorial Drive – you can see that, I think, hopefully, on the drawing – and 17th Avenue SE. Then you have to go way down to the Glenmore Trail, basically.

The point is that I'm also a cyclist. I'm a road rider, but of course Calgary has the great bicycle paths all over the city, and I often ride over and up the valley to Nose Hill, Nose Creek, up the Nose Creek valley. I have learned a couple of ways to get across the Deerfoot. One of them, believe it or not, is that you actually go under the Deerfoot and you're literally underneath the steel girders – it's not even a real path, but you can get under it on your bike; it's not really a place of travel – and then there's one overpass that you can go on on 17th, with a bike lane that comes off it, or a ramp down onto the canal. If you ride along that, everything, you know, is industrial lands, et cetera.

This Calgary-Confluence – if you go down to Glenmore in the south, all that area to the north of Glenmore, which is wide open on the map, is industrial, commercial for the most part. The areas of population that have been taken from four or five other ridings are off in the corners, in the northwest, in the northeast, on the other side of all these boundaries I've been showing you or talking about.

The biggest poaching of territory is Calgary-Buffer. Your explanation on page 32 of your report says something about, you know, reducing the population of Calgary-Buffer as if it's overpopulated, but it's not. It's slightly under, even on your chart down on page 108.

More importantly, Calgary-Buffer currently takes in Ramsay and Inglewood, two districts. The people who live in those districts have to go down to 9th Avenue S.E., which is in Inglewood, for their retail, commercial. They can now go over into downtown east, which is part of Calgary-Buffer, where there's a Loblaws, Superstore, et cetera, and a bunch of high-rise condos which have been taken out of Buffer. Macleod Trail appears to be the boundary on the west for this Calgary-Confluence, but it actually slides over to 1st Street S.E., which is one block west of Macleod Trail when

you get up to 17th Avenue. I know the condominiums in that area, which ...

**The Chair:** Mr. Kent, we're on a bit of a time schedule, so I want you to really focus. You started off by saying the boundaries. What boundaries would you suggest we change relative to Calgary-Confluence?

**Mr. Kent:** I don't think you should make this riding at all.

**The Chair:** Oh. Okay.

**Mr. Kent:** This is a travesty. This is gerrymandering by Governor Gerry. I mean, I don't want to take things to a level that – but frankly I'd have to say that I'm just surprised that Mr. Clark would sign off on this riding. I have to almost wonder whether Mr. Clark has designs on this riding.

**The Chair:** Mr. Kent.

**Mr. Kent:** Yes.

**The Chair:** This is a unanimous report from five commissioners. Okay? Please don't single out one commissioner. Have you written anything in terms of suggestions for dealing with Calgary-Confluence?

**Mr. Kent:** Don't do it.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Kent:** Where you should be doing this in Calgary is in the southeast, southwest, all at the south end, where all kinds of developments have already been approved. Services are going in. Some of them are already being built. There's a major hospital down there, south campus. Even northwest Calgary, as you leave town and you go out past the Olympic Park and you're heading up onto the flats to head out of town, right near the boundary of Calgary. That whole area has got a whole new trunk of water mains and stuff that are sitting on the side that are being buried as we speak. I mean the areas that are approved for growth are not trying to take these little pieces of five different ridings in Calgary that have these major – you might as well call it Calgary-Deerfoot because basically you've just made a highway riding, which nobody crosses.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. I think you made your point, but keep in mind that this proposal deals with the population. It's in the target range. So your recommendation is that we shouldn't put an extra riding in the downtown core and nearby area of Calgary; rather, it should go in other areas, Calgary south and maybe even northwest. Is that your point?

**Mr. Kent:** Yes, but this isn't Calgary core when you cross over the Deerfoot. That's not Calgary core. That's east.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Kent:** Nobody who lives in Buffer, in those areas I talked about, in Cliff Bungalow, which is practically in my riding: their life has nothing to do with anything on the other side of the Deerfoot and the Bow River. It's a major man-made and natural boundary. If you live in the city and you look at this riding, you just scratch your head and go: this makes no sense. It's got nothing to do with communities, services, or anything. The rest of my PowerPoint, if Aaron just clicks through it quickly, you'll see is all just: you're not meeting your own criteria. You're ignoring them.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Kent:** It detracts entirely from the credibility of your report, with all due respect.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you. We will have access to your PowerPoint.

I want to open it up for some dialogue. We're really time limited with the presenters, so Dr. Martin, any questions of Mr. Kent?

5:50

**Dr. Martin:** Well, yeah.

Thank you for the presentation. It's quite frontal, but you allude to a solution, and I want to press you further on that because if this is, in your terms, a no-go scenario, then do you have any more specificity about what a proper solution would be? Over and above, you did say you thought it would be best to go into the south, say. Do you have any more description you might offer around the solution?

**Mr. Kent:** Well, I thought that the hybrid type of riding that you talk about in your report clearly makes sense. You know, I totally respect the historical rural, urban, suburban, all this these things. I understand them, but I also think there's merit in what I think is your conclusion that perhaps life would be less polarized if there were some more of these ridings. I think you say there are about 18 of them, if I remember correctly, in the report, so I don't see why you couldn't do some finessing all across the south of Calgary and maybe even coming up around by Tsuu T'ina where there's massive expansion going on there of a commercial basis, so I think there's a lot of residential to follow, and work that way.

I don't see, for instance, that Calgary-Buffalo is going to grow anymore. You know, I don't even think the parts that you're adding in on the other side of the Deerfoot and whatever to make Confluence are areas of tremendous growth because I think they're already built-out, single-family type areas. So I don't think there's a worry that Buffalo is suddenly going to go to 70,000 or 68,000 or whatever your upper limits were. I don't think Buffalo is going to change that much. There aren't a bunch of cranes in the sky anymore, and there aren't any on the horizon, pardon the pun.

I think the focus has to be south, but I did happen to notice this brand new big water thing going in on the north side of the highway just leaving Calgary recently, and I thought: oh, okay; well that's opening up all this land just to the northwest, so clearly somebody is going to be building in there.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Samson, any questions or comments?

**Mrs. Samson:** I do have a comment. First, I'd like to thank you for your presentation and taking time out to talk to us, but to me working with these maps, it was never cut and dried that we're taking, like, from the neighbour Elbow and moving it around; it was that Buffalo had a high population before we started.

You know, what I saw was this cascading effect of starting at the top, like with a community or an electoral division like Calgary-North East that was sitting at 85,000, and you just try and move those numbers around, move the boundaries around. That would decrease the population, and then it just starts cascading, if you get my effect. That's how Confluence came to be, because of the cascading effect. It wasn't just a single change of one electoral division. It was a series of a lot, practically the top of Calgary right

down to that area. So I agree with you that we can look at tweaking here or there, but this one was not simple by any means.

I will defer to my other colleagues to maybe give you more detail, but I was there and that's what I saw and that's what I agreed on.

**Mr. Kent:** Well, I appreciate your comment, but when you're done or whenever, there are only seven or eight slides on my PowerPoint and it's all big bullet points.

I mean, you'll see that the riding just makes no sense for all the reasons that you're supposed to be following. I'm sympathetic to the problem, but it just, to me, makes no sense at all. It's not going to be some place that I would want to be the MLA in the sense of feeling like: okay, I've got these communities of Calgary, and they're all sort of drawing from the same places that they do things or buy things. You know, it's just a mishmash of the big areas, open areas, and undeveloped areas in between, or the undevelopable areas because of the highway and the river and the mandatory green space back from the river and flooding and all that sort of stuff. I know you probably don't want to go back to the drawing board, but it's just not good.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Well, we know we have to go back to the drawing board in some cases.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

**Mr. Evans:** Yes.

Thank you for your submissions. You've made some good points with respect to Calgary-Confluence breaking all the rules of the legislation, and it certainly breaks a lot of them. What you've suggested in terms of putting, you know, that riding somewhere in the southeast, for example you mentioned the Tsuu T'ina Nation, and that's come up previously when we were having public hearings in Calgary earlier this week. What's your thought of moving that into a hybrid riding?

**Mr. Kent:** Moving Tsuu T'ina into a hybrid?

**Mr. Evans:** Right.

**Mr. Kent:** I mean, I don't have the benefit of the amount of information that you've had and everything, and believe me, this isn't my hobby.

**Mr. Evans:** Just the concept of the nation being part of a Calgary riding in terms of the growth that you've mentioned that's going to take place out there, because that's the case. Does that feel right? Does it seem like an odd fit?

**Mr. Kent:** As a Calgarian and, as I said, as a cyclist who's been all around all these paths, that seems to me to be a no-brainer to be an area that would be part of Fish Creek because, frankly, that's the way the land flows. You know, now I'm just thinking aloud. If you want to talk about reconciliation and respect for natural boundaries in the land and everything, I mean, it almost starts to write its own story.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. I'm glad I asked the question. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** No questions from me.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Kent. We are under some time limits, and let me say that you seem to be a rare Calgarian. You have no problem with hybrid

ridings. We hear a lot of negatives from Calgarians against hybrids. Anyways, thank you for your presentation. We will review your PowerPoint in detail and conjoin that with your oral presentation. Thank you for coming.

**Mr. Kent:** Thank you for your time. As they say in your business, Mr. Chair, hard cases make bad law. Good luck to you all.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, and please remain to hear the rest of the presentations. It's always helpful to hear what others say.

**Mr. Kent:** Yeah. No. I intend to.

**The Chair:** Now who's our next – I lost my sheet here.

**Mrs. Samson:** It's right here.

**The Chair:** Oh. Laura Svab.

**Ms Svab:** Hello.

**The Chair:** Hello. Good evening.

**Ms Svab:** Good evening. I sent my presentation in as well.

**The Chair:** Okay. We try to keep it to about six or eight minutes and then a few minutes for questions. Please proceed. Tell us where you're from and what ridings you're commenting on.

**Ms Svab:** My name is Laura Svab, and I'm the mayor of the town of Blackfalds. We appreciate your time this evening to hear our presentation. Then the next slide is just a picture of me with my phone number and e-mail address, if you guys need to connect with me later on. Then slide 3 is just the outline of my presentation, and then slide 4 is when we get into the presentation.

We are part of the Lacombe-Ponoka area right now, and we found that the benefits from being with Lacombe and Ponoka: our MLAs for our communities are the same, and we have existing collaborations with them. It ties in with both highway 2 and highway 2A corridors. The boundary of the population is less than the new proposed boundary, and the constituents are familiar with the riding, reducing confusion during elections. We feel that we should continue as a north-south boundary instead of an east-west boundary.

**6:00**

If you'd go to slide 5. We understand that this is the proposed boundary for our thriving community. The benefit that we see for this new proposed boundary is that we will share the same MLA with the city of Lacombe and parts of Lacombe county. It improves the population equity, supports the effective representation mandate, and meets legal requirements for electoral fairness, and we will have an MLA that is the same MLA for our Red Deer Catholic school divisions, which we've never had before, as well as our Wolf Creek public schools, which we still share right now. But we would welcome minor revisions to help focus our wants and needs in our political forum.

Some challenges that we see with this proposal are that it's a larger geographical area and it covers more distance, reducing accessibility. Right now for a constituent to see our MLA, it takes them a 10-minute drive to Lacombe. In the proposed boundary it could be up to 45 minutes if we have to drive to Rocky Mountain House, and then vice versa for the MLA. It'll take time for us to build a new relationship with the new MLA.

The population will be higher in the proposed new boundary than in the current one. Changing boundaries could split our existing economic or social networks, thereby reducing advocacy efficiency

between municipalities along highway 2 corridor. Adding more municipalities to the boundary, Bentley and Rocky Mountain House, may make it difficult to get the attention required for local issues, reducing local influence and accessibility. And the six electoral divisions in the western and central non-urban areas of the province will be consolidated into five, which is taking away one of our rural ridings from central Alberta.

We would like to propose some revisions that we would like the commission to strongly consider. I'm just checking to see if I need to switch up. Okay. The Blackfalds population is about 12,000. With a change in the boundary, we would like to suggest that Blackfalds' name be added to the boundary. We've never had our name in the boundary before, so it would be great for our constituents. We would like the commission to consider keeping the boundaries north and south and closer to our demographics and existing economic networks, rather than being spread out with communities with different demographics and challenges.

The town council for the town of Blackfalds wishes to express the following concerns regarding the proposed changes to the electoral boundaries affecting our community.

Naming of the boundary. Again, we would love to have Blackfalds in the name, as it's never been in the name before, and our population, again, is almost 12,000.

Economic consideration. The town would request to be aligned with other municipalities along the highway 2 corridor like Lacombe, Innisfail, or Sylvan Lake, and hopefully we would be able to include Joffre because they're only, like, a 10- or 15-minute drive and there are a couple of plants out there.

Our increased geographical area. The proposed boundary encompasses this significantly larger area, which will increase travel distance for the MLA, again, and this may reduce accessibility for residents and increase costs associated with the MLA to communities within our riding.

Then on the next slide: loss of established relationships. The town has built a strong working relationship with our current MLA. A boundary change would require time and effort to establish a new relationship, potentially delaying advocacy and collaboration on key issues.

Impact on education representation. Blackfalds is part of the Wolf Creek school division. Under the proposed changes, the town would no longer share the same MLA as the rest of the division, which could hinder co-ordinated advocacy for education-related matters, but we do welcome part of this change as we would have the MLA sharing with the Red Deer Catholic regional school division.

Disruption of economic and social networks. Again, adjusting boundaries may split existing economic and social networks along highway 2 and the 2A corridor. This fragmentation could reduce the efficiency of regional advocacy and collaboration between municipalities.

Then reduction in electoral areas. The reduction from six to five, again, would negatively impact the efficiency and effectiveness of representation as MLAs will be responsible for larger and more diverse constituencies.

Then on the next slide, in light of these concerns our council respectfully requests that the Electoral Boundaries Commission reconsider the proposed changes to ensure fair, effective, and accessible representation for the residents of Blackfalds and our surrounding communities. We understand that this is the proposed boundary for a thriving community. We would welcome minor revisions to help focus our wants and needs in the political forum. As I have mentioned in previous slides, we would request that the commission look at some revisions.

At this time I would welcome any questions.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Clark, can we start with you?

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mayor. That was a fantastic presentation. There's nothing we love more than folks bringing potential solutions to us.

**Ms Svab:** Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** We have lots of folks who will offer things they're concerned about, but bringing some concrete solutions and potential remedies I think is really impressive, so thank you.

You know, I guess one of the things we really are challenged with is the population shifts in Alberta. The significant influx of population that's landed largely in the major cities has really ended up with a lot of imbalance, but also I know Blackfalds has grown enormously. I knew it was over 10,000; didn't realize it was 12,000. That's really significant, so absolutely I think adding the name is a potential. I can't commit to that by any means, but it's certainly something that we could consider.

I guess I maybe just wanted to get a sense, in the proposed constituency between Blackfalds, Rocky Mountain House, kind of what the highways are like. I mean, I drive highway 11 on a pretty regular basis – cell coverage, things like that. I'd just ask you to reflect a little on the difference between that and what we see in the far north and what we heard earlier today, as we did the same session for folks from the far north, Peace River country and that Slave Lake area, where the drives will be five and six hours, and a lot of that will have no cell coverage at all. Maybe you can just tell me a bit about what the actual conditions are like in terms of highway access, cell coverage, and things.

**Ms Svab:** Well, I've only been out to Rocky Mountain House, probably in the last three years, maybe five times, but I'm pretty sure the cell coverage is fine, and they are expanding the highway out there. There will be a lot of construction as they do the divided highway. But, I don't know, we've never changed constituencies that far before. The thing our council had talked about most was the economic divide because, highway 2, we've always been along that corridor, and our relationships have been with our north and south communities.

**Mr. Clark:** Great. Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** Yes. Can you tell me about the connectivity between Blackfalds and Red Deer, for example? In terms of a service hub, do Blackfalds residents go to Red Deer for their shopping?

**Ms Svab:** Yeah. They go to Red Deer and Lacombe because it's 10 minutes to either Red Deer or Lacombe, so everything is nice and close for us. But we also have shops and stuff that have opened up in Blackfalds, and we never had that before. So over the last four or five years we've actually grown with businesses as well as a lot of residential.

**Mr. Evans:** You've made a significant point about the boundary or the flow of the constituency being north-south rather than the way it is here, east-west, so can you explain why there is no east-west continuity there or flow?

**Ms Svab:** Well, most of our residents, if they don't work in town, they'll work either in Lacombe or Red Deer. Some may go out to Sylvan Lake, but most of our working residents do go to Red Deer or Lacombe. I don't feel like we have a lot of residents that would

travel to Rocky Mountain House at all. I don't know if that answers your question.

6:10

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah, it does. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Okay. Susan.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation.

**Ms Svab:** You're welcome.

**Mrs. Samson:** I had been reading some of the written presentations and wondering in my own mind: the north-south connection that has been proposed by more than just yourself, that would go as far as Penhold and Innisfail, I didn't see that. I hadn't contemplated that. Can you just expand on that? I'm going to throw another question at you at the same time, and that is that Gull Lake is cut in half, the top of Gull Lake, which is Ponoka county. Is that an inclusion that you would support? Rather than split the lake, we go right to the north end of the lake and take in those county residents that are surrounding the water. Thank you. If you could answer those two.

**Ms Svab:** Yeah. I feel that keeping the lakes together would be great just because it's one community, and I feel like if you're shifting the lake and have it split, to me it doesn't make any sense. We have great partnerships with Penhold and Innisfail as well, and Penhold is probably, maybe 20 minutes from here, and Innisfail is maybe 30 minutes from here. I know that the previous mayor as well as myself, like, we do communicate with the mayors, if not every three months, more than we can.

So we can build those relationships and those ties. It won't be as strong as Lacombe, but Lacombe is only 10 minutes, and we've developed a trimunicipal party between Lacombe, Lacombe county, and Blackfalds. We're hoping to have more things happen between our three for now.

When I was talking to the Sylvan Lake mayor, she said that sometimes it's great to have more than one MLA around your riding. So if we had to go more south, at least we still would have the partnerships with our northern enjoined communities and still be able to share, like, two MLAs instead of one. We know that eventually we're going to have to split because we keep growing.

**The Chair:** Anything else?

**Mrs. Samson:** No. Thank you very much.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much for your presentation. I was particularly interested and sparked by your remarks about the population growth in Blackfalds and your expectations for continued prosperity. That's where I want to go. I want to ask you: what characterizes the economy of Blackfalds? Now, I put a canoe in the Red Deer River just out of Blackfalds when I was younger, but I mostly know Blackfalds as I drive by on highway 2. My impression of it is that it's a very important centre for agricultural supply services, but I don't know anything more about your economy. Perhaps you could expand upon that.

**Ms Svab:** Just west of the highway, Lacombe county has the business area there, but we split the tax revenue just because we have to run the water lines and the waste-water lines under the highway. That's more of our industrial area. Then, again, Lacombe county in the Burbank area is more industrial, and in our community itself where we have two grocery stores now, we keep getting restaurants and fast-food places or pizza places, so it's coming.

We're going to have to look at eventually adding more commercial land to Blackfalds. We have some, but we don't have anything for big box stores, and we're not really sure if a big box store would want to come to Blackfalds, just because we are 10 minutes away from Red Deer.

**Dr. Martin:** Well, you never can tell.

**Ms Svab:** Exactly.

**Dr. Martin:** Once you start to build a hub concept, it often becomes attractive to the warehouse, particularly next to the big highway.

If I might, I just want to press you further on your remark about the connection with Red Deer. You suggested that a very large portion of your populace work and perhaps play, but certainly work, in Red Deer. Is that the case? Has that always been the case, and do you expect it to continue?

**Ms Svab:** Yeah. It's always been the case, and I do expect it to continue.

I should mention, because it wasn't in the presentation, that we are about 38 per cent young population, so 38 per cent is 18 and under. That's our young population. We have a lot of places to play in our community, and we're very appreciative of all the new schools that we've gotten from the provincial government as well.

**Dr. Martin:** Well, thank you very much.

**Ms Svab:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you, Mayor Svab. Now, let me be direct and tell you that we can make no promises on naming, but I'm sure the symmetry of going alphabetical would be your preference, right?

**Ms Svab:** As long as our name is in the title, I'm fine with it, whatever it is.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, thank you so much.

**Ms Svab:** You're welcome.

I've talked to both of the MLAs, Johnson and Dreeshen, so I know where their plans kind of lie, too, so I appreciate being able to speak with them and understand where they want to go with this, too.

I thank you guys so much for your time.

**The Chair:** Okay. I think we'll be hearing from one for sure, if not both of them, tomorrow, later.

**Ms Svab:** Yeah. Perfect.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mayor Svab.

Our next presenter is Marc Slingerland.

**Mr. Slingerland:** Good evening.

**The Chair:** Good evening. Please identify yourself and where you're from and which electoral divisions you wish to comment on.

**Mr. Slingerland:** Yes. Hello. It's Marc Slingerland from Lethbridge. Some of my comments may apply more generally, but I'll be speaking particularly in relation to Lethbridge and the surrounding ridings.

**The Chair:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Slingerland:** Okay. Thank you to the members of the commission for the work that went into the initial report, the

opportunity to provide further responses. I wish you every success in sorting through the huge volume of correspondence that you have provoked. It's clear from your report that you have taken seriously your statutory duty to prioritize effective representation.

Overall, it seems to me that there are three basic impediments, categories of problems, to providing that effective representation across the province. First, in terms of urban ridings, density of population brings its own challenges. There's a greater density of communities, organizations, perspectives. That can be challenging to represent effectively.

Second, rural ridings. The expanse there of the territory is the challenge, the requirement for travel, the number of different jurisdictions and institutions to represent across a wide area.

And the third issue is between the two, the urban-rural divide, the idea that these two types of ridings are fundamentally different from one another, that their issues are different, and that the priorities of the citizens and the representatives of urban and rural ridings are at odds.

What I found interesting is that your interim report builds a very good case for the legitimacy of hybrid rural-urban ridings, but after throwing that door open, you've chosen not to walk through it and incorporate hybrid ridings in Lethbridge. My primary purpose in speaking to you this evening is to urge you to reconsider this. I believe that hybrid urban-rural ridings address all three of the major representation issues that I've identified.

First of all, the rural-urban divide. By definition, having a hybrid riding helps to bridge that. A representative of a hybrid riding must consider both rural and urban perspectives and seek solutions that are beneficial for both. Particularly in the Lethbridge area, this just makes so much sense. It's difficult to promote infrastructure development, economic development, agrifood corridors, any of the priority issues for rural areas of southern Alberta without considering the implications for Lethbridge as the commercial hub of the region, nor for Lethbridge without thinking about the population that comes to Lethbridge to work and access services.

6:20

Just one other example, specifically for First Nations populations. That's one of the communities of interest you need to consider. The on-reserve and urban Indigenous populations: there are differences, but there's a lot of commonality and a lot of people who move back and forth, and having a representative who has seized with both sides of that divide, I think, would be very beneficial. Representing a hybrid riding must necessarily bridge the rural-urban divide.

In terms of the rural ridings around Lethbridge, if some of the population in each of those ridings was urban, the rural component remaining would be smaller, meaning less travel time, opportunity for better connections with those who live there, and an enhanced ability to represent them effectively.

That leaves the urban challenge. One could argue that a hybrid riding dilutes the urban voice. I think that is something you've heard from certainly some of the written comments from Lethbridge. In fact, I think the opposite is true. As I've mentioned, success for the city includes success for its surroundings. That's expressed physically through hybrid ridings.

At least as importantly, the result of having three or four hybrid ridings in Lethbridge would be three or four MLAs who represent Lethbridge in the Legislature. We know that the provincial government sometimes struggles to remember that their third- or fourth-largest population centre is not along the QE II; it's way down south. That forgetfulness is exacerbated by having just two MLAs. That's the same number as Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat, both wonderful places but barely more than half the population of

Lethbridge. So having more voices to speak for Lethbridge would, I argue, increase, not decrease the strength and equity of our representation as Lethbridge.

I would say that hybrid ridings represent solutions to all the most vexing issues for effective representation across Alberta, and I would urge you to enact them in the new representation map for Lethbridge.

Now, I did that within my time, so one other small point. Should the result of the second report be two ridings in Lethbridge, the adjustment you made in your interim boundaries does not really make sense relative to the existing ones.

You're allowing for differential growth between Lethbridge-West compared to Lethbridge-East, and that makes sense. You have access to detailed population maps that I don't, so exactly where the line goes, you're better placed than I am to decide on that, but granted for the sake of argument that 13th Street is historically privileged as the dividing line between the two ridings, that should be maintained as far as possible. The interim report has kind of a bulge midway, which really seems arbitrary. Up in the north that leaves one little chunk of Legacy Ridge on let's call it the wrong side of the boundary. The further north you go, the less that dividing line makes sense. I would suggest probably straight up 13th and then down Scenic Drive across highway 3, pulling a little bit more of the north quadrant into Lethbridge-East would be a lot more logical way to help people remember which riding they're in.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to you again. I wish you all the best in sorting through it all and look forward to the final report.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mr. Slingerland, thank you for your presentation. You've touched on several issues that have vexed this commission, no question. Your skilful compliment about us opening the door but not walking through it certainly speaks to us.

Mr. Clark, any questions or comments to this presenter?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah.

Thank you very much. I'll concur with Justice Miller that this is one of the things we've wrestled with generally. Specifically as it relates to Lethbridge, I can say that we probably have had more feedback on this particular topic than any other. Now, I will say that feedback is running at about a 2 to 1 with the opposite view of yours, for what that's worth, but I think all these views are worth listening to.

I guess I'm just curious. How would you break down that sort of hybrid split in Lethbridge? How would you feel if a constituency was 80 per cent Lethbridge urban and 20 per cent rural, or vice versa, or 90 and 10? Do you feel like the people in the 10 or the 20 would feel like they are being effectively represented?

**Mr. Slingerland:** Yeah. Fair question. Thank you. It depends where. There are places where maybe even a 95 to 5, right? Like, there are little pockets of basically urban population that are sitting just outside of city boundaries that effectively are part of Lethbridge, right? The roads connect. The services aren't provided by the city, but everything they do comes in. So on the western border of the city; there are some of those on the east; on the south there are some; the industrial park in the north. There's a number of areas where there are just little slivers, so even if it was just that much, that would make sense.

For the rest, you know, whether you go with three or four hybrid ridings, there'll probably be a different proportion in each of urban and rural, and I would say that the percentage there doesn't matter as much as the logical linkages between them, right? Particularly the highway corridors would make sense. How much you happen

to take up in a particular quadrant in order to make the numbers work, likely the west would end up with – west Lethbridge has a bit less population now, so perhaps that ends up with a bit less of the urban side if the river is the logical boundary.

Sorry. That's kind of a wandering answer. I guess the short answer would be no. I don't think that there's a particular percentage that needs to be there in order to make a legitimate hybrid riding.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you.

If Justice Miller would permit me, I'd like to ask a second question.

**The Chair:** Sure.

**Mr. Clark:** All right. You said you're from Lethbridge? Do you live in Lethbridge proper?

**Mr. Slingerland:** I live in Lethbridge. I have my whole life, and I have worked outside of Lethbridge for my whole life.

**Mr. Clark:** So why Lethbridge? I love Lethbridge; I've been there many times. The wind occasionally, I was going to say, knocks me for a loop. It occasionally nearly blows me over.

**Mr. Slingerland:** Oh, well, I grew up in Lethbridge, so I fall over when the wind isn't blowing.

**Mr. Clark:** Why don't you live in Coaldale or Taber, you know? What's special and different about living in Lethbridge for you?

**Mr. Slingerland:** Yeah. Great. I didn't have a choice to begin with. I grew up in Lethbridge, but that was interesting. My dad ran a farm supply company, and most of my uncles are farmers. Already at the time I had lots of connections outside. And we've stayed. We appreciate the services, being close to the library, having paved trails, the lake. The amenities in the city are great. But Lethbridge is just small enough of a city that it doesn't feel too urban, and it's the perfect match for our temperament. I would say it's the best of both worlds. I think of myself in kind of a hybrid way, so the riding would reflect that very well.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah. I've got a question in terms of mostly thinking of connectivity in the city. If you're looking at hybrid ridings on the west side, there's no connectivity to the southwest on the west side. You'd agree with that? Can you talk about the connectivity to the north on the west side? What would it connect to?

**Mr. Slingerland:** The north to the west side? Well, I mean, you've got highway 3 running out there, right? That goes straight through Coalhurst, Kipp, depending how far you go, like, Monarch, Nobleford. Nobleford is largely a Lethbridge periphery. If you want to stay on one side of the river, then you run the other way. You've got Picture Butte, Shaughnessy, Iron Springs. The Kainai reserve, obviously, is part of the urban-rural Indigenous population, would come on the west side. There are definitely some connections there.

**Mr. Evans:** Would those connections be to the west side, or would those connections be into, you know, east of the river in Lethbridge?

**Mr. Slingerland:** Well, highway 3 carries on through, of course, but more and more – probably the last time boundaries were being drawn, it would have been much less so. But as you point out, in terms of shifting the population a little bit and allowing for growth

on the west, there's quite a bit of commercial development. There's a new industrial park zone in the west as well, so more and more of the incoming traffic is coming to the west rather than just carrying on. There are things that are on the other side of the river, but I'm not sure that that's much different than the Lethbridge-West riding that currently exists.

6:30

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you. Those are my questions.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your time tonight and speaking with us. I wanted to share with you that we were actually in Lethbridge in person, and what we heard from the people who live there is that they wanted to maintain the status quo. To be fair, we did hear that right across the province. Lethbridge is an easy one to maintain the status quo because of the numbers and because of the deep history of two ridings. I can suggest to you that that isn't always going to be something that any commission can do in the future because Lethbridge is seeing growth, and that isn't always going to be nicely balanced like it is now. I think for my own self I struggled with: what do people tell me, and what works? Man, there was a lot of controversial stuff all around the province. I wanted to share that with you. That's not really a question. It's more, like, to let you know how things come to be, and I understand there are two sides to every story.

Thank you.

**Mr. Slingerland:** Thank you, Mrs. Samson. I appreciate that. I was unfortunately not able to make it to the in-person sessions, though I wanted to, last time around. Yeah. The status quo is attractive. There is a history here. I would argue that history is not determinative for effective representation, and I've tried to explain why I think a change would be an improvement.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you, and thank you for your presentation. It's spurring quite a lot of thought for me. I wanted to direct your attention and run perhaps a thought experiment with you about hybrids. My thinking is this, that rather like we have a lot of the common rhetoric divides, urban and rural – it's posited that there's a dichotomy, and I don't believe it for a moment because there's a whole spectrum of forms of life in between something sort of classically rural where they bail hay, say, and living in a condo and a skyscraper. There are lots of forms of life in between.

It seems to me plausible that a similar story could be told about hybrids also, that you have really big ones and you have relatively small ones that capture what ostensibly are bedroom communities to bigger towns. My thought experiment for you is: if you were doing a minimalist hybrid, would you be looking at, say, Coalhurst, at Coaldale but maybe not looking at Raymond? Would that be how you'd tackle it?

**Mr. Slingerland:** Yeah. I think so. That makes sense. The highway corridors are the connections, right? The distance is not so much as the crow flies but by way of travel pathway. Certainly, Coalhurst is close. There are certainly people who live in Coalhurst because they don't want to be part of Lethbridge, but there are plenty of them who make that commute every single day. Coaldale is functionally an extension of Lethbridge. That entire corridor is developed. There's not really a single mile there that doesn't have some kind of commercial or industrial property.

You know, Diamond City running up, Nobleford I mentioned already goes a bit further out. Then the next bigger set of communities like Fort Macleod doesn't feel as naturally connected to Lethbridge. Again, the Fort Macleod residents: Lethbridge is going to be their service centre – right? – out as far as Pincher Creek, for that matter as far as Fernie. The connection extends out quite a long ways, but indeed it weakens as you get further out.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Slingerland. You know, our Lethbridge round the first time around I think is seared in our memory because it was our first evening, and to some extent I don't think any of us knew what was coming. There were very strong – extremely strong – positions that Lethbridge has been like this since 1909 and why change it, et cetera, et cetera. Then at the end of that evening someone came up with this idea, and it got us thinking, certainly. But change for the sake of change is not a good thing. It's unnecessary in many cases. When you look at the city, it kind of hits the sweet spot. Each side is, you know, well in that target range. In my mind – I'm somewhat thinking out loud here – the only reason that we would move to that situation that you're proposing is if it prevents taking a riding out of the areas outside of the metropolitan areas of Calgary and Edmonton, so to preserve the loss of more rural ridings. We're very cognizant of that. That's a rambling preamble to my next comment.

The individual who presented late in the night – I know we sat till 10 o'clock in Lethbridge; that's memorable – he presented and said: "Look, you've got a model in southeastern Alberta. Medicine Hat is cut into two pieces, and it's mixing with smaller centres and agriculture. Why didn't you do the same with Lethbridge and cut it into four?" Then you had a very strong mix of MLAs that all represent and know both urban and rural issues. It's quite attractive symmetrywise. There's extremely virulent opposition to this idea. We've noticed a campaign, quite frankly, in that area. But what about walking before we run? What if we took half, for example, of Lethbridge-East and hived that off this round? Then the next time there's an electoral redistricting, the other half could be created into two hybrids. What are your thoughts on that?

**Mr. Slingerland:** Yeah. You're talking to me like I'm an expert on where the districts should go, and I guess I am thinking about it more high level, from a principle side. I don't have the maps and the population.

I would say that, if I may quibble a bit with your intro, you know, to preserve rural ridings elsewhere in the province, I think there's an argument to be made for some kind of hybrid in the south also to preserve the viability of the southern rural ridings. The surrounding areas south of Calgary don't quite seem to add up as neatly as the Lethbridge population does, as you said. The last time around this was already a problem, and from the interim to the final report in the last redistricting we ended up with Cardston-Siksika, which is this concave, very, very strange riding. Again, there's a difficult problem there of making all the pieces fit and add up properly.

Now your proposal has Livingstone-Macleod extending to include all of Lethbridge county, which – you want to talk about historical continuity? That isn't it. You do manage to tie back together the Cardston-Magrath-Raymond-Warner link that has been there historically, but there's not really a nice, neat division of the rurals around Lethbridge. I would posit that bringing in a hybrid model in this area would assist with representation of these rural areas irrespective of its impact on rural representation elsewhere.



**The Chair:** Yeah. Okay. Well, thank you. As you know, hybrids are a topic of some discussion leading up to our interim, and we've dealt with them in the interim, and we're hearing a lot about them this time around as well. Thank you very much.

If I could ask you one thing. I don't know if you've provided a written submission, but your comments about the boundaries if we do not change it, your criticism of the tinkering: please send that in so that we can fine-tune whatever we have to do, or we can look at that at least. Thank you very much. You've given us a lot to think about.

6:40

**Mr. Slingerland:** Wonderful. Thank you for the opportunity.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Please stay if you're able to hear the other presentations.

Our next one is Elizabeth Strange.

**Ms Strange:** Hello. Can you hear me?

**The Chair:** Good evening. Yes, we can hear you.

**Ms Strange:** Perfect. Am I good to start?

**The Chair:** Yeah. Please identify yourself and tell us what riding you live in and what ridings you wish to comment on.

**Ms Strange:** Okay. I'm Elizabeth Strange. I live in the Edmonton-Glenora riding, but I'll be commenting on the Medicine Hat ridings. I was born and raised in Medicine Hat and spent most of my life in Medicine Hat, so I feel quite passionately about the Medicine Hat riding despite living in Edmonton. I want to thank the commission for hosting these meetings and for listening to me a second time. I presented in Edmonton in the first round, but still again about Medicine Hat.

My concern is the same that many people from Medicine Hat have expressed, that the boundary simply does not work for the city. I expressed this concern in the first round, that cutting the city in half is not working. People are very confused about which riding they're in, and don't understand why: if you're in this neighbourhood, you're in the north; if you're in this neighbourhood, you're in the south. One is in Brooks; one is in Cypress. It just becomes very confusing. I understand the commission's report that the existing ridings for Cypress-Medicine Hat and Brooks-Medicine Hat are kind of right in the benchmark of where you want the numbers to be, but I think we need to be talking about more than just numbers. We need to be talking about people's actual experience of where they live, where they're working, like, what their connections are in the community.

The preferred solution, in my opinion, is for there to be a Medicine Hat riding, and I had previously proposed that, if needed, you cut off some of the neighbourhoods north of the river and have the Medicine Hat riding be mostly south of the river, and then everything surrounding, so Cypress county and Newell county and Brooks, be a rural riding. The other proposal would be for it to go back to the way it was before the last redraw, which was that it is the city of Medicine Hat but some of the neighbourhoods that are south of highway 1 are cut off and included in the rural.

If those are not acceptable solutions to the commission, then please, please, please make the boundary the river. It simply makes sense for it to be the river. If you have to cut the city in half, it should be the river. It makes no sense for it to be three blocks south of the river downtown and then the strange little triangle that exists around the hospital. That makes no sense. It is incredibly confusing for constituents.

Also, there's a little tiny community called Veinerville that is just east of Medicine Hat. On the map it's this weird little dip that happens in the boundary. Veinerville is a community of about 70 people. It is three streets. They only really go into Medicine Hat and they go into the Cypress side of the Medicine Hat boundaries, but for some reason they were included in Brooks. Veinerville should be included in Cypress-Medicine Hat, not Brooks-Medicine Hat.

That's all I will say. The only other thing I'll add is that I looked through the submissions from the first round, and overwhelmingly the opinion of people commenting on Medicine Hat is for it to be a Medicine Hat riding and a rural riding. However you need to divide the neighbourhoods to make that happen, that was the overwhelming opinion. The overwhelming opinion was also that if you need to divide it, let it be the river. Only one person in the first round said that the current boundaries are great, so for the commission to then propose, "Great; the current boundaries are great," is not reflecting what the feedback of the public is.

**The Chair:** Ms Strange, thank you. You're the first person that's mentioned Veinerville. That tells me you really know Medicine Hat.

Okay. Let me open it up to the panel. I'm going to start off with Dr. Martin. Any questions or comments?

**Dr. Martin:** I've not been to Medicine Hat very many times, but I myself, personally, find that little niggling in the old town rather confusing, but I blame that on geography and the historical circumstances of how the town grew up and the layout of the old town road grid.

**The Chair:** And the previous commission.

**Dr. Martin:** And the previous commission. It's a long-standing issue, isn't it? You know, it is confusing, I suppose. I'm not going to debate that. Although if you go to some of the really big towns, the lines, one could argue, can get equally confusing. It's about respecting and enhancing natural boundaries, I think, and so I think your point is well taken, that if we choose to look again at our interim solution, such as it is, for the Medicine Hat area, that we would again – because we did – debate amongst ourselves this whole business of drawing the line in the middle of the historic part of town rather than at the river, because that is, of course, the great natural boundary. So thank you for your presentation tonight.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark, any questions of this presenter?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you. I know it's maybe more just an observation than a question, and we must have done this earlier, but I'd forgotten. The population of Medicine Hat is 68,000. The population of Grande Prairie is 70,000, but Medicine Hat is split in two, as you say, straight down the middle. Well, maybe not exactly straight down the middle, as you say – shout-out to the good people of Veinerville – but Grande Prairie has a one urban and one hybrid constituency, so it's different approaches for the same set of circumstances.

Now, that said, there are other circumstances that surround the other – you know, there is, as we've discovered here, and the word we use all the time is "a cascading effect." You know, you knock one domino and a bunch of other things fall over, so it isn't quite that simple, I will fully acknowledge. I guess it has just prompted me to think again about that in terms of consistency.

You know, it is very much art, not science, in what we're doing here as well, but it's certainly given me something to think about, so thank you.

**Ms Strange:** Can I comment on that as well?

**Mr. Clark:** Please.

**Ms Strange:** Two things. I think you could solve Brooks-Medicine Hat and Cypress-Medicine Hat without having a knock-on effect of any other riding. Like, within those two ridings, just refigure the internal boundaries, if you will, and it wouldn't have a knock-on effect on the rest of the province. I think there's a solution that can be found just in that little corner of the province. You mentioned Grande Prairie. Sherwood Park is another example where you're proposing a boundary that's a slight difference for Sherwood Park, but it's still giving Sherwood Park their own riding, and then one that's a rural with some of the urban. That's just what Medicine Hat would like to see as well.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you.

Is your concern with Medicine Hat over a hybrid riding? Is that what you're concerned about?

**Ms Strange:** It is the concern of the hybrid riding, and Medicine Hat has long felt like the forgotten corner. I'm sure you will hear that phrase used about Medicine Hat often. When this first boundary was put in in the last commission and then with this report, it certainly feels like the opinions of Hatters are not being heard. It's like you start elsewhere, you start in the cities, and then the cascading effect is, "Well, I guess Medicine Hat gets what Medicine Hat gets, and we're not actually going to listen to the concerns expressed," and Medicine Hat continues to feel forgotten.

**Mr. Evans:** It's an interesting point about Grande Prairie. When you ask the mayor of Grande Prairie and the reeve of Grande Prairie county, they consider Grande Prairie to be two hybrid ridings, and when I look at it, it appears that that is the case albeit slightly. I'm just trying to nail down your concern as to – they say that that hybrid representation strengthens them, and we've heard the same thing from Medicine Hat today and in other presentations. But you're saying that that's not the case, that they are concerned about this hybrid riding concept.

6:50

**Ms Strange:** Well, certainly, to say that someone that lives in the neighbourhood of Kensington in Medicine Hat has the same concerns as someone who lives on a farm right near the Saskatchewan border: like, there's some overlap. But to say that someone who lives in Kensington doesn't have the same concerns as someone who lives in River Heights, that's only a few blocks away: like, that's what doesn't make sense.

**Mr. Evans:** Concerns would be different.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans, we've got to get going.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your time tonight to spend with us. I guess I'm sort of stuck on the same idea. We've had so much input on hybrids. Can you comment on the representation you've had from your MLA in your hybrid riding of Medicine Hat plus the surrounding rural area?

**Ms Strange:** Right now I live in Edmonton-Glenora. But before I moved to Edmonton-Glenora, I lived in Cypress-Medicine Hat

when it was – south of highway 1 was Cypress. Like, that was the line. So Medicine Hat proper had a riding. Then I lived in the part that was included in Cypress-Medicine Hat, and I will say that I did not ever feel represented by my MLA.

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Ms Strange, I appreciate your presentation because you've given us alternatives. You've not just said: oh, what you've done is wrong; change it. You've given us alternatives.

Now, I recall specifically that you probably presented and others did, too. I'm somewhat familiar with the city. I know Mr. Evans and I looked into why we can't use the river as a border and boundary. We ended up concluding that it would be worse than the alternative that we proposed, which is basically the same as what the last commission proposed. I undertake to do this: seriously look at the river issue again. There's a reason why we didn't do it, and I can't remember what it is. That's the one thing.

Secondly, to go back – you've given us another option – and at least use the 1993 boundaries, which would've been the old Medicine Hat-Cypress riding. I don't know what the rationale for the Bielby commission was, as to why they proposed this. If we do that, we've got to unscramble some eggs that are very baked in, if I can say that.

Anyways, the Veinerville thing is just a forgotten little detail that we'll try to correct. Yeah. We cannot give any guarantees. But we appreciate your interest and your stick-to-itiveness on this and making us do some more homework as to why it is the way it is.

Thank you very much.

**Ms Strange:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. We're running short of time here. Sorry.

Our next presenter is Robert Duiker. We're a half hour late. Mr. Duiker, are you present?

**Mr. Duiker:** Yeah. Well, thank you for the opportunity to speak here. I'm from Rocky Mountain House or eight kilometres east of Rocky Mountain House. The caller Laura, two or three people before me: we agree that we don't want to be in the same riding.

I'll just go. I did e-mail just tonight a copy of the presentation. I'll be using it practically verbatim. As I understand it, the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission is using a 2024 mid-year provincial population – I think you spoke about that in the front matter of this meeting – a number of 4,888,723, making the average population of a constituency to be just below 55,000. And of course, you know, section 15(1) of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act allows for the division of population to range from 41,198 all the way up to 68,662. There is some provision for four outliers to be as low as 27,465. I guess to my purposes right now I'll assume that nothing in central Alberta is going to be among those four outliers.

I understand that the commission has had some tension between representation by population and effective representation. My experience with the previous Electoral Boundaries Commission was that rep by pop was its highest priority, with a goal to bring every electoral division as close to the mean as possible. The legislation act, however, doesn't really support this priority. The provisions of section 14 are there because there is an expectation for effective representation, and previous presenters have, I think, indicated that you are pursuing that quite well, so thank you for that.

It is my recommendation, which is supported by the act, that the commission ought to make use of the full range of possibilities available to it in terms of electoral division population in order to achieve the most effective representation possible. In the

presentation I made to the previous commission, I recommended a formula which took into account both land area and population. I'm not doing that tonight. Section 14 of the act includes other factors, which I'm sure you're aware of. My strong contention is that the legislation doesn't just invite you, but directs you to use the full range of constituency populations, all the way from 41,198 to 68,662, as necessary to achieve effective representation.

In my current riding, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, it's geographically large and I believe – although I don't know this for sure; I don't know its current population – it has a population within those parameters specified within the legislation. Therefore, the status quo is possible, and an argument can be made for exactly that. The current boundaries respect communities of interest like school division boundaries, municipal boundaries, geographic features, and transportation corridors better than the proposed boundaries for Lacombe-Rocky Mountain House.

Rocky Mountain House and Clearwater county get a particularly bad deal from the proposed new boundaries. The proposed boundaries disregard many communities of interest, including religious communities, school communities, and patterns of economic activity where the town of Rocky Mountain House is clearly the economic and social hub for Clearwater county. Provincially funded services like hospitals, schools, and social services are all housed in Rocky. Communities such as Nordegg, Caroline, O'Chiese First Nation, and Sunchild First Nation all maintain close ties with Rocky Mountain House. Our hearts and our wallets are tied to the west country and the Rocky Mountains. Please keep Clearwater county intact. Our identity is closely bound to the mountains and the foothills. That is who we are.

Wildfire management and search and rescue services also have a long history of shared responsibility and co-ordinated efforts all across Clearwater county to the Banff boundary. Policing for Clearwater county and the west country is based in Rocky Mountain House.

I work in a school in Rocky. The new boundaries create a new reality where every class in every school in our town will include students who live in three different electoral divisions. School jurisdictions are in almost constant communication with their political representatives. The proposed boundaries are disruptive. It can be argued that the school division boundaries may be better indicators of communities of interest than even county lines.

The act makes reference to means of transportation and geographic features. Highway 2 is a prominent geographical feature in our province. Connecting Rocky Mountain House to communities on the other side of highway 2 appears to be an attempt to create a community of interest where currently there is none, and this was also a point made by Laura, one of the previous participants.

7:00

For most rural citizens highway 2 is a wall that is seldom scaled. The agriculture is different. The tourism is different. The dependence on oil and gas is different. The recreation is different. Lacombe and Rocky may share rural roots, but we are in reality two very different rural cultures. Furthermore, creating an electoral division where highway 12 is the spine of the riding disregards that communities of interest tied to Rocky Mountain House flow along highways 11 and 22. Please consider building whatever riding you were going to build along either highway 11 or the highway 22 corridor or both.

In summary, please use the full range of population possibilities from 41,198 to consider the status quo with respect to the boundaries in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. Keep Clearwater county together. Recognize highways 11 and 22 as transportation corridors and geographic features that bind communities of interest better than

highway 12 does, and do not create electoral divisions that cross highway 2.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, sir.

**Mr. Duiker:** Sorry for going past time.

**The Chair:** Well, just minimally.

Mr. Clark, any questions of this presenter?

**Mr. Clark:** No, thank you.

I do have a couple of points I'd like to make. Thank you for getting it in under the line there at the end. You've obviously prepared, and thank you very much for your thoughtful submission. You know, how we balance out the geography of rural Alberta, the unique challenges of representing rural communities, far northern communities as well is a big, big challenge for us. The fact that 800,000 or so people have moved into primarily the two big cities over the last eight years or so: there's a whole bunch of balls in the air that we're really trying to juggle.

Just for reference, one thing I've just looked up while you were speaking: in the 2017 report non-Calgary-Edmonton constituencies excluding the north were on average about 1.4 per cent above the mean, the average. We've shifted that down to 1.4 per cent below, so that's about a 2.8 per cent sort of difference in favour of the non two big cities. When you include the far north, that shift is 4.6 per cent more in favour of the remote areas. Now, those are just numbers. That's probably not going to make you, you know, satisfied. It's about much more. I think your core point is that this is not just a mathematical exercise. There's a question of effective representation, but I just wanted to put that out.

The one thing I wanted to pick up on that I thought was interesting is the differences between Lacombe and Rocky and why those are not communities that should be together in a constituency. Can you just tell me a little more about that?

**Mr. Duiker:** Sure. Because of my work I happen to have, you know, friends in Lacombe, but I don't know of anybody else that ever travels to Lacombe from Rocky. When we have something going on at the school where I work, the Lacombe people, like, we're used to driving a lot, and they're used to the highway 2 corridor where everything is kind of conveniently located, so Rocky seems farther from Lacombe than Lacombe is from Rocky. I think that is part of it, but I think the geography does shape us a lot. We are people who live outside. There are a million trails between Rocky and the Rocky Mountains, and we are on them all the time. It's a different people.

Our commonality is with people up and down the foothills. Our shared understanding of each other is throughout the foothills, you know, is along highway 22. I tried to intentionally, like, even though I favour the status quo and I certainly think that Clearwater county must stay together, allow some flexibility, if you want. A better hybrid choice would be Sylvan Lake than Lacombe. I still don't think that's ideal, but it's better than what you presented. Drayton Valley is in the same school division as us, so there is a community of interest that's actually shared if you went north and south. Wild Rose school division includes Breton and Drayton Valley and goes down and includes Caroline, Condor, Leslieville, and Nordegg for that matter. In terms of honouring the criteria that you are endeavouring to follow, like, I understand the difficulties that you face.

I don't know if this is even relevant, but I would say that our whole area has electoral boundary committee fatigue, particularly with respect to the federal electoral boundary commission, which kind of used Yellowhead to solve every problem all the way down

the highway 2 corridor and created a riding that, you know, extends all the way from Cache Creek all the way down to Springbank, including Banff. It's just a ridiculously large riding, but there a hybrid model would have helped us because the avoidance of hybrid just created this vast, crazy riding that should have been called Forestry Trunk Road because that's the only thing that binds it.

I guess I would like to see you take it easy on Rocky because we've been, you know, kicked around a little bit. Yeah.

**The Chair:** Okay. We're going to move to more questions, sir.

**Mr. Duiker:** Yeah. Go ahead. Sorry. I'll stop talking now.

**Mr. Evans:** This has come up a number of times from other presenters. It's about school districts and those boundaries. You said this, and I think I got it down, but I want you to explain this to the commission. You said: school district boundaries are possibly better indicators of communities of interest than county boundaries. Tell me about that.

**Mr. Duiker:** Yeah. I think schools are community hubs, and the schools do – like, you know, I was at an administrator meeting today of Wild Rose school division principals, and that meeting was in Drayton Valley. We communicate all the time. We share ideas, so our schools sort of become a little like each other. Our school communities start to mirror each other a little bit.

**Mr. Evans:** Mr. Duiker, your school boundaries, the school district that you're in: how do they run in relation to where we are with this proposed Lacombe-Rocky Mountain House electoral district?

**Mr. Duiker:** Yeah. You can see that, like, Rocky Mountain House itself is in Lacombe-Rocky Mountain House, but there are two of your proposed electoral divisions which are very, very close to Rocky Mountain House. One includes Caroline and another one includes Nordegg, and I have kids in my classes from both of those places. So there's that.

There's certainly a case that if a division is lobbying your MLA for new schools, you know, then I don't know if it's better to have three MLAs lobbying halfheartedly or one wholeheartedly, but I think the model that we have is working very well, and the legislation really kind of points to sort of these kind of communities being preserved. Yeah. Like, I throw out Drayton as a possibility because it just gives you one more thing you can consider. My preference is the status quo, actually, but I have a pretty good hunch that's not the way it's going.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your time tonight. I was of the impression that people along the highway 2 corridor in the area of Red Deer – and when I think about it, I'm thinking about Lacombe, Blackfalds, Red Deer, Penhold, and that area – use highway 11 and highway 12 to access the Rocky Mountains and come through Rocky Mountain House. We know that there is a twinning of the highway that's going to continue to occur that has ended just outside of Eckville and is going to continue from Eckville into Rocky Mountain House. Can you talk about the importance of that transportation corridor and what linkages to central Alberta that gives Rocky?

**Mr. Duiker:** Yeah. Like, I don't know if I'm the best person to actually sort of advertise for it. I do think better corridors are important. I mean, there is a lot of traffic that goes through Rocky. Personally I would favour a bypass around Rocky. It doesn't seem

that I'm in a majority there. On a summer day or on a holiday weekend it's extremely busy, that east-west corridor, so it makes a great deal of sense. I don't know if there's any eventual plan to twin it further to the west, but the traffic does at Rocky distribute to the north to Drayton Valley and to the west, so it does make some sense to continue on two-lane highways after Rocky both north and west. Yeah. It's a lot of tourist traffic that goes through and stops for gas. I guess that's helpful, but I don't know if there's going to be a new buildup of businesses along that highway because it's still a highway that goes from somewhere to nowhere in a way.

7:10

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** I have no questions. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Duiker. You've compressed a lot into – I know I've been a little pushy on the timeline here because we haven't had dinner and we've got 10 more presenters. Thank you so much, and please remain and hear the presentations of the other members of the public if you can.

**Mr. Duiker:** If you want to eat, just turn your camera off and you can eat.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Our next presenter is Anna Hanson.

**Mr. Roth:** She's not here.

**The Chair:** Oh. She's not here. We're all good to skip the break and keep soldiering on? Okay.

Cameron Galisky.

Well, we've made up 10 minutes right there.

**Mr. Galisky:** Hello there, Justice and Commission. Thank you very much. You know, they do say if you're going up for trial ahead of the judge having lunch, your conviction rate is substantially higher, so I hope that doesn't apply tonight.

For a bit of background, I'm a fifth generation central Albertan, and I'm also a councillor for the town of Penhold. I've lived here since 2009.

In regard to the proposals I believe there is a very unique opportunity that has yet to be considered for the central Alberta region, and I found it very fascinating that there was a strong focus on communities of interest. Now, that being said, Blackfalds: the mayor illustrated earlier a remarkably good point of that community being centred mostly on the QE II corridor. Penhold is a remarkably similar story. I consider Blackfalds our twin community in many respects. There's been an exponential amount of growth in this region of the province, and particularly for the Innisfail-Sylvan Lake riding situated with Red Deer; in between there has been a great deal of growth.

With that being said, when I looked at historical data for our riding, notwithstanding the period for the 1940 to the 1971 elections where we were within the riding of Red Deer, there was this east-west access going from Innisfail out to the communities adjacent to highway 21 and the communities along highway 2A, which is particularly the hamlet of Springbrook within Red Deer county, the town of Penhold.

What I would like to suggest for the commission's consideration is that we end up incorporating the community of Blackfalds – I think that would be a remarkably good addition to the riding – and

transitioning it more towards that corridor basis with the communities along highway 2, highway 2A, and highway 21.

The communities of the highway 21 area are all very interlinked with concern to their agricultural backgrounds and demographics. They have very similar trajectories of growth and challenges, and that commonality of challenges and demographics is actually shared amongst all of the communities proposed within that map. Penhold, Innisfail, Delburne, Elnora, Pine Lake area, the community of Trochu and Blackfalds: we all have these commuter patterns and work patterns that flow in and out of the city of Red Deer. To put things in perspective, for example, my brother has his job commuting to Blackfalds every single day around the city of Red Deer. For another perspective, the community of Delburne has a doctor that practices both within the community of Delburne but also has a practice within the town of Blackfalds.

These communities have a blue-collar, bedroom-community oriented mindset with an agricultural mix in between as well. I think a riding with those proposed boundaries would actually align very well with those communities of interest, which I think is the key principle here, without significantly diminishing the population scales that make it a suitable riding. The community of Sylvan Lake would, of course, be shifted out of the riding, but I don't believe that's necessarily an unwelcome development for them either.

As it might have come across your ears as well, recently Sylvan Lake initiated the process of investigating becoming a city. Sylvan Lake's trajectory of growth is quite large and it's actually one of the most recent additions to our riding as it stands, which I believe was as of the 1979 or 1981 elections. Sylvan Lake has a strong tourism industry. Its demographics are significantly varying on account of the tourism industry and the investments within the community. The demographics and communities of interest are not as congruent to the population trends for the rest of the area and would be much more congruent with the proposed map.

Churchill said that brevity is the soul of wit, so I don't want to steal any more of your time, but I'm very interested in any particular questions you may have. I'm just reading my notes to see if there's anything else I'm missing. I think, you know, I would just echo, perhaps, that the east-west proposal for the riding north of us might not be as congruent to communities of interest, and Eckville, Caroline, Lacombe, and Sylvan Lake not bisecting the lake would be a pretty appropriate option as well.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Galisky. While I remember, tell me: what's the population of your proposed riding?

**Mr. Galisky:** The population, as I understand it, with some variation – for example, the previous census information from my town illustrates 3,500. We've done a municipal census illustrating it's 4,000. I suspect it's around 51,000, 52,000. If what the map itself has incorporated, it probably could be as high as 53,000, but it would be very difficult to say with absolute certainty. What I would say is that Blackfalds and Penhold have very exponential growth rates. Innisfail has a modest growth rate. Delburne and Elnora have modest growth as well, but you can reliably count upon, by the end of this cycle, that riding being very well within the target. As I know, the Supreme Court set out that there can be a roughly 10 per cent variance at the minimum, so that would be my rough educated guess.

**The Chair:** Actually, the Supreme Court said 25, I think. What would you name it?

**Mr. Galisky:** Well, you know, that's a great matter of contention. What I would suggest is perhaps Blackfalds-Delburne-Innisfail. I

would always selfishly love, as a councillor, to have my town's name in the riding, but I believe that is unnecessary at this juncture. I would leave it to the prerogative of the commission, however.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Everybody leaves us with the difficult problems, right? Yeah. Thank you.

I'm very interested in this, and I'm glad that you had a PowerPoint presentation so that we will be able to review it at greater leisure as we deliberate further. I agree that communities of interest have to be a very prominent part of our deliberations, and you, like many submissions we have received in the last round, point out, first of all, the nature of the agricultural communities divided by highway 22 and so on and so forth.

To come back to one of the things you asserted, and that is your set of connections with Blackfalds. Perhaps you could say a little bit more about that. Is that part of your work as councillors, to discuss planning arrangements and the like?

**Mr. Galisky:** Thank you very much, Doctor. To put things in perspective, when we were all doing our municipal training at the start of this term, following the most recent election, we all did so in Blackfalds. They definitely are a matter of discussion. We mingle and mix at quite a great deal of events. We do collaborate quite frequently when the opportunity arises on account of the very similar demographic and economic profiles that our communities appreciate. We're both known as bedroom communities. It's very seldom you'll run into a resident of either my town or the town of Blackfalds that does not have a primary occupation within the city of Red Deer, so that commuting lifestyle, the distance is very comparable and the economic measures of growth are very similar, although my town is a smaller one by all means.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**Mr. Galisky:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

Good presentation. I wanted to ask you: how important do you think it is to have a look at the county boundaries? Right now Red Deer county is encompassed entirely within the new Sylvan Lake-Innisfail riding. How important is it to maintain that connection and continuity to the area?

7:20

**Mr. Galisky:** Well, I suppose from a matter of personal perspective, what I would say is that the opportunity to have representation from an additional perspective in the Assembly may not necessarily harm. What I would also say is that as a matter of fact, I believe to the best of my knowledge, going back to the 1971 election and until this proposal, Red Deer county has always had at least one or two MLAs representing it in the Assembly in some degree.

Now, I believe the current proposals, well, have their logic to them as well, and my map has its logic as well. It keeps the majority and the broad strokes of the county together, but I think it's an opportunity for it to be a force multiplier rather than a diminishment of the county's congruence. The boundary in the east has always been the boundary of Red Deer county. As for the west, there are opportunities with that, I would say. I don't believe it would be to their harm or detriment.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah.

Thank you very much for your presentation. What I'm interested in in terms of your proposal: where would Sylvan Lake go?

**Mr. Galisky:** Thank you for that good question. I think Sylvan Lake would be most appropriate being grouped into Lacombe, as it actually handily remedies some of the discussion points that Mr. Duiker raised with concern to representation for the Rocky Mountain House region. Sylvan Lake and Lacombe have very established commuter patterns. There are a lot of folks who go from Lacombe to relax at the beach at Sylvan Lake, and there are a lot of people who do their commercial business from the agriculture sector surrounding Sylvan Lake up in Lacombe as well as the Red Deer area.

I think with Sylvan Lake branching out towards the possibility of becoming a city, it opens a unique opportunity to create a hybrid riding in central Alberta that has very meaningful commonalities. There is a lot of intermixing with that community as well. But that would establish a stronger basis for that east-west axis proposed and would allow for more space to ensure effective communities of interest across the central Alberta region.

**Mr. Evans:** I don't know if you heard one of the presenters – it was the mayor of Blackfalds – this evening talking about the connectivity between Lacombe and Blackfalds. What do you say to that?

**Mr. Galisky:** Well, I would say that connectivity – there definitely would be those links with those communities. But as well what I would say is that Lacombe's circumstances are rather unique respective to Blackfalds. I believe that their challenges in terms of effective representation from a member would be somewhat different to that extent. Lacombe is more of an academic community with its college. It's very agricultural service based whereas with Penhold and the surrounding area of Red Deer county south of the city there in Blackfalds there is a very specific focus on commuter patterns for industrial activity and blue-collar work, which is less so in Lacombe. I believe it fits very strongly with Sylvan Lake compared to for that.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark, any questions?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you very much. First off, I assume Aaron has a copy of that slide deck so we can see it up close. I'm at a bit of a disadvantage here, being online, to see it up close. That is an interesting proposal. I wanted to ask you about your thoughts. Mrs. Samson asked about Red Deer county. What about Red Deer, the actual city? I mean, what if we created a hybrid constituency that had a piece of Red Deer city and combined that with Penhold and some surrounding areas?

**Mr. Galisky:** I suppose the challenge that one might find with that – it is a very interesting quandary, and I have given it some thought – would be that the corporate limits of the city of Red Deer are a very strong indicator of where the residential population presently exists. If you were to expand it towards Penhold to create hypothetically such a hybrid riding, it would create the dilemma of needing to splinter up all of central Alberta as a cascade. Immediately south of Red Deer's Gasoline Alley, which has residential growth now, 200 or 300 residents I could imagine are living in Liberty Landing area and acreages interspersed, but you would have to amalgamate a significant

amount of territory south down that corridor to make that hybrid riding hit the population targets.

Red Deer's growth right now kind of varies. There are periods where it has explosive growth and less so because of its role with the oil and gas industry, and I'm just not sure if in 10 years' time that would be within the targets in a meaningful manner, or it would diminish that opportunity for the smaller outlying communities, the county, and these towns to continue to have representation broadly reflecting their overall interests compared to the remarkably different ones of the city, I would say.

**Mr. Clark:** Can you just speak a little more to what you mean by the difference in interests between the city and those other communities?

**Mr. Galisky:** Certainly. For example, right now with the majority of the developments occurring in the county immediately adjacent to the city of Red Deer, it's a lot of light industry, logistics, and retail businesses that mostly service the city. The county is planning growth more on the outlying areas towards the north, which is very congruent with the population patterns north of the city and east of it. That's a lot of acreages, and for a lot of the annexation period proposals it's actually been going more west towards highway 11.

The interests of the area for the city and the rest of the area are a bit different, because we're trying to focus on improving affordability. We have younger demographics, we have less established economic demographics, but we also want to keep our ability to, well, have that meaningful rural connection. For example, if I was at my house right now, I could go out the back door and point towards the cattle farm just down the street from me. That's a remarkably different experience from those living in the Red Deer-South constituency.

**Mr. Clark:** That's very helpful. Thank you.

**Mr. Galisky:** My pleasure. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, commissioners, and thank you, Mr. Galisky, for your fine presentation and question-and-answer.

We're going to want to move on to the next presenter. We've got several to do yet this evening, but you may have all noticed that we've got some technical issues. In other words, Mr. Galisky has frozen. All video has frozen. So we're going to have to, I'm told, shut down the meeting and have everybody re-enter in about – what? – two minutes. Okay. So give us, let's say, four minutes, and we're going to shut it down and then re-enter.

[The hearing adjourned from 7:28 p.m. to 7:31 p.m.]

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you, everyone.

Our next presenter is Marle Roberts.

**Mrs. Samson:** Oh, no. He just said she's not here.

**The Chair:** Oh, she's not.

Valerie Boese.

**Ms Boese:** Good evening.

**The Chair:** Good evening.

**Ms Boese:** Thank you for having me. Mine is going to be very short and brief so you can all go for dinner hopefully.

I'm Valerie Boese, and I live in the Innisfail-Sylvan Lake constituency. Is it your intent to switch the name from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake to Sylvan Lake-Innisfail, or is that a typo?

**Mr. Evans:** Susan, you want to answer that?

**The Chair:** Okay. Why are you asking? Sorry. Let's get to it.

**Ms Boese:** Well, I was just wondering. Has there been any consideration done on the cost effect regarding the name change?

**The Chair:** Go ahead. Anybody can answer.

**Mrs. Samson:** We know that when there are name changes to constituencies or to electoral divisions that it affects constituency associations. Every party would have an association, and then everything attached to it, any marketing materials, letterhead, business cards: all of that would become void. When I look at the 89 ridings across the province, with all the changes proposed, that's going to happen to a lot of them, and whatever . . .

**Ms Boese:** Yeah, but it's . . .

**Mrs. Samson:** Go ahead. Sorry.

**Ms Boese:** Sorry. No. Like, it's the same constituents. It's just that the names are switched around. They're usually in an alphabetical order, and to switch them, the same two names but just switched around, is going to cost us a lot of money.

**The Chair:** Okay. Ma'am, I think I can maybe answer from where the commission is coming from. So existing right now, the riding is Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, right? We've not changed the boundaries materially at all, but we've changed the name to Sylvan Lake-Innisfail. Is that your concern?

**Ms Boese:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. It's basically a policy decision. Historically it's not been alphabetical. I think maybe historically it's been a bit of a mosaic or a mixed bag, but we've taken the policy that the larger municipality or centre shall go first. That is the reason for the name change, and it affects a small minority of electoral divisions. For example, it used to be Brooks-Medicine Hat and Cypress-Medicine Hat. We've changed it to Medicine Hat-Brooks and Medicine Hat-Cypress. So it's the predominant, larger centre. That name goes first. Does that make sense?

**Ms Boese:** Well, not financially, it doesn't because it's still the same two names, and it's going to cost thousands of dollars, taxpayer dollars, which we don't like spending. Taxpayers don't like spending our money foolishly if we don't have to, and it will cost thousands of dollars. Being on the constituency board, we have spent a lot of money on different things with our brand, right? So these kinds of decisions impact the taxpayer, and they're not taken very lightly.

**The Chair:** Could you maybe just flesh that out a little bit? Where is it costing taxpayers money, this name change?

**Ms Boese:** It's going to cost money. Our bank account has to get changed. Our cheques have to get changed. All of our branding that we've done has to get changed. Our pens, our notebooks, our banners, all that stuff will have to get changed, and it's going to cost a lot of money.

**The Chair:** That's for the constituency association, you mean?

**Ms Boese:** That's correct.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Okay. So it's not taxpayers' dollars necessarily.

**Ms Boese:** Well, it is donors' dollars.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Okay.

**Ms Boese:** I've been contacted by different people in our constituency, and they're quite concerned about that. Earlier I heard one of you saying the comment: change for the sake of change is unnecessary. I know you say it's because a larger town coming first for branding and whatever, but this will cost us a lot of money, and I don't see the point.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Any questions or dialogue from the commissioners? Come on. Help me out, commissioners.

**Dr. Martin:** Well, I'm sympathetic to this situation, having myself been in a similar situation with a federal riding. Yes, it does cost money, and reregistering the constituency association takes time as well. It plays havoc with marketing and messaging and so on and so forth, so I am sympathetic to it.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The other thing, if I'm not mistaken, is that once the new boundaries are established by the Legislature, even if we didn't change the name, if we kept it as Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, you would still have to have your reorganization meetings and all that process. You still have to go through it. But you're saying it's the cheques and the pens and that kind of thing that costs money. Okay.

**Ms Boese:** That's correct. The bank accounts. All of that, yes. Rebranding, more or less.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Okay. Well, this was our policy – actually, you're not the first. There is another complaint along those lines that we've received in writing. I don't think we can promise anything, but we'll take a look at it. That's the best we could do or the best we can say.

**Ms Boese:** Thank you. Your consideration in this matter would be greatly appreciated. Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** If you could actually give me an idea what the costs would be, or give us an idea what the proposal, like, what a bank would charge to change those cheques and that kind of stuff.

**Ms Boese:** Well, I can look into it to see and send in what I can come up with. I know that just for our constituents it's going to probably cost us around – I don't know – maybe \$5,000. I'd have to talk to the CFO to find out what it would cost to rebrand at the bank and all that. We don't like to spend any extra dollars if we don't have to.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, thank you.

**Ms Boese:** Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** Our next presenter: Michelle Goldsmith. No? Laurie Miller from Bowden.

**Ms Miller:** Yes. Hi. Good evening.

**The Chair:** Good evening.

**Ms Miller:** Sorry. I was just kind of a little distracted. I was thinking about you all getting out for supper.

**Dr. Martin:** We weren't. No, not us.

**The Chair:** Now that you mentioned it.

**Ms Miller:** You didn't need the reminder. Okay.

Good evening. Thanks for having me. Thank you for the work you're doing on behalf of Albertans as a province. My name is Laurie Miller. I'm proud to serve as the mayor of the town of Bowden, and as a relatively new – actually, let me rephrase that. As a brand new mayor and a person to municipal politics, I'm still learning how all of the pieces fit together and all about the provincial processes as well. But I do know my community and how our residents live day-to-day and how closely we are connected to our neighbours in Innisfail, Penhold, and central Alberta. I'm here today to speak about that strong and long-standing relationship and why Bowden and these communities clearly form a community of interest that should be recognized as you consider future electoral boundaries.

Bowden and Innisfail are closely linked geographically, economically, socially, and historically. The connection didn't happen by accident. It's developed over generations and continues today through shared infrastructure, shared services, and shared daily life. At the centre of that connection is highway 2. For us, it isn't a dividing line; it's a lifeline. It connects our communities and makes it possible for residents to move easily between them in just minutes.

7:40

Historically both Bowden and Innisfail grew alongside the railway in the late 19th century, and that expansion shaped settlement across central Alberta and established our towns as service centres for surrounding and agricultural areas. We grew together, supporting farmers, ranchers, and local businesses that relied on transportation networks to move goods and people. That shared agricultural foundation still influences our economies and our identities today. Transportation has always been central to our relationship, from the railway then to the highway now. Highway 2 enables our residents to shop, commute, attend appointments, and participate in community life across municipal boundaries.

In practical terms, Bowden, Innisfail, and Penhold function as part of the same regional system. Innisfail in particular serves as a key service hub for Bowden residents. People regularly travel there for medical clinics, pharmacies, dental care, senior services, shopping, and professional services. These are not occasional trips. They're part of our everyday life, and they reflect just how integrated our communities truly are.

Education and recreation also demonstrate this shared community of interest. Students from Bowden attend schools in Innisfail, and sometimes the other way around as well. Families participate together in regional sports leagues and arts programs, and our youth grow up playing on the same teams and attending the same events. These shared experiences create strong social bonds that don't stop at municipal borders.

From a governance and economic development perspective, our communities face many of the same opportunities and challenges. We share concerns around highway 2 transportation planning, regional growth, agricultural sustainability, and long-term economic resilience. Decisions affecting one community often have direct implications for the others, which reinforces the importance of shared representation.

I'd also like to speak a little bit to the broader issue of rural representation. Rural communities like Bowden rely heavily on provincial infrastructure and services, particularly the highways and transportation corridors simply because of distance and

geography. Effective representation for rural residents requires MLAs who really understand those realities and who can give them a strong voice at the provincial level. As Alberta continues to grow, especially in the major urban centres, there is a real concern in rural Alberta about losing that voice. Maintaining communities of interest within central Alberta helps ensure rural perspectives remain well represented and well understood.

Equally important are the personal connections between our residents. Families often have members that live in both Bowden and Innisfail. People attend the same churches, volunteer with the same organizations, and support the same causes. This shared regional identity is meaningful, and it matters when considering effective representation.

In closing, I respectfully urge the commission to recognize the importance of keeping Bowden connected with Innisfail, Penhold, and central Alberta within the same electoral boundary. Our communities clearly meet the definition of community of interest, and keeping them together would reflect how our residents actually live, work, and interact every day.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. On behalf of the town of Bowden I appreciate the opportunity to present our perspective.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms Miller.

**Ms Miller:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** If you could just stay for some questions.

Dr. Martin, any questions?

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

Mayor Miller, I wonder if you could speak a little bit about the economy and the particular industries that drive Bowden.

**Ms Miller:** Bowden is basically driven by our agricultural neighbours. We have a large part of our population that is working away because we don't have a huge economic structure within the community. We have about 22 per cent of our population aged 65 and older, so we rely on our neighbouring communities for so many services.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your time tonight. I appreciate it. You mentioned a strong connection between Bowden and Innisfail. I note that Penhold is in that linkage as well, but Penhold is off the highway. It's also a small community of 3,500. Is that a strong linkage to Bowden?

**Ms Miller:** The link goes mostly – with everybody travelling, we have a large percentage working in Red Deer as well, so there's travel with the 2A connection as well.

**Mrs. Samson:** Just one other thing. I just wanted to say that the map that we are proposing for the new electoral division called Sylvan Lake-Innisfail, because Sylvan Lake is the largest municipality in it, currently shows Bowden, Innisfail, Penhold all together with Sylvan Lake. That's what we're proposing, and you're endorsing that, are you?

**Ms Miller:** I am. Yes.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**Mr. Evans:** I want to know: is there any connection with Bowden and Trochu? I want to know about how things move east and west



or if they move east and west, you know, from Bowden's perspective.

**Ms Miller:** You know, I really don't have an answer to that question. I know that I travel frequently to the Three Hills-Trochu area myself, but as a community as a whole, as I said, I'm still learning all the dynamics, and I don't have a proper answer for you. Sorry.

**Mr. Evans:** What about movement of people from Bowden to Olds, so going south instead of north on highway 2?

**Ms Miller:** That does happen, of course. With the retail availability in Olds there is quite a bit of travel that way. I believe, though, that most of the work – with our seniors the travel is mostly to the north for medical in Red Deer and through Innisfail.

**Mr. Evans:** I wrote down Red Deer, but then I thought it was Innisfail that you mentioned that they were going to for medical. It was Red Deer, correct?

**Ms Miller:** Well, specialists are usually in Red Deer, but a lot of the family doctor scenarios are in Innisfail, particularly for our . . .

**Mr. Evans:** Is there a family doctor in Bowden?

**Ms Miller:** There is no medical available in Bowden.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** No. No questions for me, but thank you very much.

**The Chair:** I have a question. You've got a prison in Bowden, right?

**Ms Miller:** Just north of Bowden, yes, along the highway 2 corridor, 2A access.

**The Chair:** What percentage of your population of your town would be employed by the prison?

**Ms Miller:** I don't know what that is right now. I know in the past it was considerably higher. I worked there myself for 30 years, but a lot of my age group are retired, and I don't know the numbers right now.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, thank you very much, and thank you for the endorsement and the exposure in getting to know a little bit more of central Alberta. Appreciate it.

**Ms Miller:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Our next presenter, Leah Nelson.

**Ms Nelson:** Good evening.

**The Chair:** Oh, good evening.

**Ms Nelson:** I'm not going to turn on my video because the Internet in our area has proven that it freezes and knocks me off, if that's okay.

**The Chair:** Sure. No problem.

**Ms Nelson:** Thank you, Chair and commissioners. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Leah Nelson, and I'm honoured to be here on behalf of the village of Elnora and

our surrounding communities as part of your review of the Alberta provincial electoral boundaries. We appreciate the important work that you're doing. Electoral boundaries shape how effectively communities are represented and how well our voices are heard in Edmonton and how responsive – sorry; I wrote it down so I wouldn't miss anything – our provincial government can be to the realities on the ground. For rural Alberta especially thoughtful boundary design is essential.

7:50

I'm here today to speak in support of keeping our communities along highway 21 – specifically Trochu, Huxley, Elnora, Lousana, and Delburne – within the same provincial electoral boundary. These communities are not just close on the map; we are deeply connected in our daily lives, our institutions, and our challenges.

Elnora is a small but proud rural village, like many communities in Red Deer county and Kneehill county. Our identity is shaped by agricultural volunteerism and strong family ties. We rely on our neighbours, and we function as part of a regional network rather than isolated towns. One of our clearest examples of this interconnectedness is education. Families in Elnora are proud to send their children to the Elnora elementary school. It is a cornerstone of our community and a place where lifelong friendships begin.

When these students reach high school age, however, they do what every rural student has always done; they have to travel. Students from Elnora, Lousana, Huxley, and Pine Lake attend high schools in Delburne, Trochu, and Innisfail. These aren't arbitrary choices; they reflect long-standing transportation routes, school divisions, planning, extra curricular activities, and social networks. Our children play on the same sports teams, they attend the same graduation ceremonies, parents attend the same school council meetings and fundraising events, and these shared experiences knit our communities together in ways that matter deeply. When decisions are made at the provincial level about education funding, school transportation, or rural school viability, these decisions affect us collectively. We have one MLA, who understands the full picture of how these communities function together, and this leads to a stronger, more informed constituency.

The same is true when we look beyond the schools. Rural medicine is one of the most pressing issues in our region. Residents from Elnora-neighbouring communities rely on a shared network of clinics, hospitals, and emergency service. Access to doctors, nurses, paramedics, and lung care facilities is a challenge we all experience regardless of municipal boundaries. Senior care is another critical concern. Our aging population depends on services that often span multiple communities. Families are navigating wait-lists, transportation challenges, and limited options together. These are regional issues, not local ones.

Road infrastructure also connects us, quite literally. Highway 21 and the surrounding road network are vital corridors for our work, school, education, emergency service, and commerce. Maintenance, safety, and long-term planning for these roads affect all of our communities in similar ways.

Because our issues are shared, our representation should be shared as well. When rural communities are divided across multiple electoral boundaries, our voices become diluted. An MLA may be forced to represent areas with very different priorities or communities that do not naturally interact, and that can make it more difficult for rural concerns to compete for attention and resources. By keeping Trochu, Huxley, Elnora, Lousana, and Delburne within the same provincial boundary, you enable more effective representation. You give our MLA the opportunity to truly understand the region as a whole, to see patterns, advocate

consistently, and build long-term relationships with leaders, school boards, health providers, and residents. It's not about politics; it's about practicality. It's about recognizing how people actually live their lives.

We understand the population numbers and the legal requirements must guide your work, and we respect those constraints, but within them we ask that you consider the real-world connections that already exist along the highway 21 corridor. Within Delburne, Pine Lake, Trochu, Innisfail, and Bowden our recommendation is simple and sincere: keep these communities together so that one MLA can effectively represent our shared interests.

On behalf of the village of Elnora and in solidarity with our neighbouring communities, I thank you for listening, and I thank you for all the work you're doing on behalf of Albertans. We appreciate your time and consideration.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you, Ms Nelson. I'm not sure I understood at the beginning. Are you the mayor of the village of Elnora?

**Ms Nelson:** Yes, I am. Sorry. I think I forgot to tell you that when I started.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Now, I've got a clarification question. The proposed riding puts you in Sylvan Lake-Innisfail, which is predominantly east-west.

**Ms Nelson:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Trochu is not in there. What other communities along highway 21 do you want to stay with and are not in this new proposed Sylvan Lake-Innisfail riding?

**Ms Nelson:** None. My proposal was to have Trochu as an addition, just to go down that little bit. The reasoning is that we do work a lot with not only Trochu but the county of Kneehill. A lot of our people are employed in that area, including me. We go that direction quite often for senior care, for the – well, Three Hills isn't in it, but we go down that direction. Trochu is now in the process of putting in a new senior housing in which Elnora played a big part in advocating and supporting and fundraising.

**The Chair:** As I understand it, you want us to bring Trochu into this Sylvan Lake-Innisfail riding. Is that right?

**Ms Nelson:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Any other community?

**Ms Nelson:** No.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

**Ms Nelson:** Well, actually, I will say this. After listening to Laurie, it makes sense that Blackfalds would be in it because we do go back and forth quite a bit with Blackfalds as a municipality, as a village office, you know. It's shared all the way up and down.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Well, we'll start with Mr. Clark. Any questions of Ms Nelson?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah.

Thank you, Ms Nelson. I appreciate it. It's always great to have elected representatives who speak for or on behalf of, at least, a larger population. It is especially helpful for us, so thank you for that. I guess a couple of points.

You know, one of the challenges we have is that, if you've been listening, I'm sure you realize, we have to draw a line somewhere.

**Ms Nelson:** Yes.

**Mr. Clark:** It would be great, you know, I think, to – because you're right. There are connections between many different places, especially somewhere like Blackfalds, that has 12,000 people. While it might be nice to put everyone together plus Trochu, plus Blackfalds, you start to get a bit too big, so that's part of our struggle.

The other thing. About Trochu, interestingly, we chose to follow a county boundary quite deliberately, so Trochu being in a different county. I recognize that these boundaries, neither county boundaries nor provincial electoral boundaries, are – to borrow a saying from my colleague Mrs. Samson, it's not a brick wall. It's not that you can't go through it, or it's not the only definition. I guess I'm just curious about your thoughts on the importance of respecting a county boundary versus saying: well, that might be a different county, but we still are very integrated.

**Ms Nelson:** We are very integrated. Because we're on the very edge of the Red Deer county, we work great with Red Deer county. I can't say enough about that, but we do work with Kneehill county. Our RCMP comes from that direction. Our long-term senior care comes from that direction. Our hospital comes from that direction, and a lot of our people actually work in Kneehill county. I guess that's where I'm kind of arguing. Cameron brought up the interesting idea of maybe having Sylvan Lake go to the other and bringing Blackfalds in. I know you can't take a magic marker out there, but in our world that actually makes a lot of sense just with how we work within each other as communities.

**Mr. Clark:** All right. Thank you.

**Mr. Evans:** I'm interested in the highway 21 corridor, but you kind of lost me in terms of how you guys end up in Blackfalds because it seems like you'd be more inclined to be in Three Hills. Am I accurate there?

**Ms Nelson:** I guess I'm talking on the municipal level. We go back and forth with Blackfalds a lot. Like, we took our training there. When you go to all your different functions, that's kind of the group that you – I don't know. I'm kind of losing my words here. I find we go to Blackfalds a lot more on that level than Three Hills.

8:00

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thank you. I appreciate that. Thank you for answering my questions.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** No questions. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** No question; just a comment.

Mayor Nelson, we have received many letters that focused our attention on the highway 21 corridor and the various towns and villages along it, so I'm very grateful to you for having rehearsed some of that and giving us a bit more gritty understanding of the day-to-day realities of life in your area. So thank you.

That's it.

**The Chair:** Okay. Yes. Thank you, Mayor Nelson.

**Ms Nelson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** I'm not sure, but we must have had six or seven mayors present today. We had a very good municipal turnout, so thank you so much.

I believe that is the last presenter that we have in the meeting room, so we'll adjourn the public hearings for today and reconvene tomorrow at 9:00 a.m.

[The hearing adjourned at 8:02 p.m.]















Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Public Hearings

Virtual

Wednesday, January 15, 2026  
9:02 a.m.

Transcript No. 35

## **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

Administrator

Manager of Corporate Communications

Supervisor of Communications Services

Managing Editor of *Alberta Hansard*

## **Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Virtual**

### **Public Participants**

Todd Beck

Jackie Clayton, Mayor, City of Grande Prairie

Scott Cyr, MLA, Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul

Jason Javos, Deputy Reeve, County of Northern Sunrise

Terry Ungarian, Reeve, County of Northern Lights

Ken Vanderwell, Vice-president, Lesser Slave Lake United Conservative Constituency Association

Glenn van Dijken, MLA, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock

Bob Willing, Reeve, Municipal District of Peace

Brenda Yasinski, Councillor, County of Northern Lights



9:02 a.m.

Thursday, January 15, 2026

[Justice Miller in the chair]

**The Chair:** Well, good morning, ladies and gentlemen and everyone that is already tapped in to the online hearings of the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission. This is our fourth day of hearings in the province, our first day for online presentations.

Of course, the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission was established by way of the statute of the Legislature of Alberta, and we were all appointed back in April of this last year. You can see from the names on the screen that your commission is before you. There are five of us, and you can check out everyone's biography on the website.

Our task as a commission was to do two things. The first one was to provide a proposal for a reorganization of the electoral boundaries to the Legislature by way of moving from 87 electoral divisions to 89. The Legislature gave us only two new seats to work with, and, as you probably have read in the interim report, those seats are justified and laid out in that report. Of course, in Alberta residents or eligible voters in each electoral division elect the actual MLA to sit in the Legislature.

The second aspect of our task is to deal with the increased population of Alberta, and the increase is substantial. From the last electoral boundaries report in 2017 Alberta has grown significantly in approximate numbers of over 800,000 residents. To give some perspective in terms of where we were in 2017, fast-forwarding to this year, in 2017 the population was just over 4 million people. If you take the quotient of the total population divided by the number of electoral divisions at that time, 87, it brings you to an average of 46,697 voters. However, the average is not the target for each electoral division. The target is the range of population of below the average down to 25 per cent and plus 25 per cent. That range is 35,000 to 58,000 for 2017.

For this Electoral Boundaries Commission the population is 4.8 million divided by 89 electoral divisions; that yields an average of just under 55,000. You'll see it on the screen: 54,929. Again, the target population range reaches from 41,000 to almost 69,000. That's our target for the purpose of reaching the goal of effective representation in Alberta.

We've heard a lot of submissions and comments about the need for one person, one vote. However, that is not a Canadian concept. That is not a parliamentary concept. That is a concept from our neighbours to the south. We do not operate on one person, one vote. Rather, we work towards effective representation. That's our task as a commission, to come up with a boundary map that includes 89 electoral divisions that provide effective representation to Albertans.

To give you some background as to what we have done since we've been appointed, first of all, we met, starting in April and May of this past year. We came to an agreement as to the population source for Alberta. By way of background we relied on the most recent decennial census, which was conducted by the federal government in 2021. That census is then updated regularly and routinely by the Office of Statistics and Information of the Alberta Treasury Board. We settled on a figure for population that had a cut-off of July 2024.

In addition, from April on we reviewed hundreds of submissions that were presented to the commission. We went on the road and travelled across the province and listened to hundreds of presentations across Alberta all the way from Peace River, Grande Prairie, down to Medicine Hat and from Lethbridge up to Fort McMurray. Then after we conducted that road trip, we met with the mapping people at Elections Alberta. We worked throughout

August and September and October, and we came up with our interim report. That interim report was provided to the Speaker of the Legislature in late October. It is an interim report. It is issued for the purposes of public comment and provided to the public.

By way of background we truly did follow the legislative criteria in terms of coming up with the boundaries. Our ultimate goal was to provide understandable and clear boundaries for Albertans with the goal of effective representation for each and every electoral division.

We also opened it up for public submissions and comments in written format. In early November to just before Christmas we opened a portal on our website for those submissions. Over 1,100 submissions have come in, and we appreciate the interest and the uptake that our report has had in the province.

Now we head into our final stage as a commission. Again, the five of us are conducting public hearings, starting on Monday of this week. We spent two and a half days in Calgary. Today and tomorrow we are dealing with online submissions. We're not going out into the communities outside of Calgary and Edmonton because of the winter, and technology provides us with this opportunity to conduct virtual hearings. Next week we'll be doing in-person hearings in Edmonton, and we look forward to hearing from all those that have signed up. We had very fruitful and lively discussion in Calgary, and we look forward to the same online and in Edmonton.

I want to note that we're interested in feedback to our interim report. If you've read the philosophy or the background, the first 40 pages of the report, we have basically outlined our legal basis and the approach that we're taking. If you are concerned that we don't have enough electoral divisions – sorry – we can't do anything about that. We're limited to the 89. We don't need to hear a lot about whether 89 is the appropriate number. Plus, we are looking very specifically for comments and suggestions and corrections that you think need to be made in the interim report. If we can liken it to a hockey season, we're past the regular season. This is the playoffs, and we need to focus on the actual report that we've issued.

9:10

With that, I know we're starting maybe a little earlier than our projected time, but some of the presenters are already here, so I'm going to call – and the time limit. Sorry. Per presenter we will operate fairly strictly on the time limit, about six to seven minutes, of which we will then allow two or three minutes of questions from the panellists, so a maximum of 10 minutes. I have not been the best timekeeper so far this week, so sometimes we may veer off and allow people to go on. If we have some flexibility in the schedule, I don't think that's a problem.

Our first presenter is here early, so we're starting five minutes early. Mr. Glenn van Dijken, MLA from Barrhead.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Okay. Thank you. I am pleased to present. I have a brief presentation. I'm actually not in the country at this time – I'm in Mexico – but I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the commission with regard to the proposed boundaries report.

I must say that I am happy that the commission took into consideration, in a way, from my standpoint in the riding of Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock, that the number of municipalities that are encompassed in any one constituency can have a significant role in challenging the MLA to provide effective representation. Under the proposed report, my riding would change significantly based off the fact that the Lesser Slave Lake riding was being eliminated.

I guess I have grave concern with regard to the fact that we are reducing representation in northern Alberta. Fellow MLAs and

myself did a written submission. All commission members have been able to have access to that. I believe the public has access to that as well. The concern we have is that we're representing a very large geographical area. By reducing the number of constituencies in northern Alberta, we're reducing the ability for each of those representatives to engage with their constituents effectively.

Right now the geographical centre of Alberta is a little bit west of the middle of my riding. Probably two-thirds of the geographical area of the province is in northern Alberta, yet we have currently, I believe, nine representatives representing that entire area, all the municipalities within that area and industry within that area. To dilute that by losing a northern riding would be catastrophic, I believe. I believe it goes against what the commission is trying to accomplish with regard to achieving effective representation throughout the province.

The legislation is clear. It does give the commission the opportunity to adjust the number of citizens that each MLA will be charged with representing. As you've mentioned, Your Honour, that range can be within the guidelines anywhere from 41,000 to 69,000, and I do believe that geography has a huge impact on the ability to effectively represent constituents in northern Alberta.

I also want to highlight – and I mentioned this when I did my presentation in person in Westlock – the amount of eligible voters. Currently in the Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock constituency if we look at the 2023 election list, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock has more eligible voters than about half of the constituencies in Edmonton, and also more than many of the constituencies in Calgary as well. While eligible voters is not a criteria that is outlined in the legislation, I do believe that the commission needs to have some consideration towards that.

For effective representation of our citizens, each MLA probably has more of a duty of effective representation to a citizen than to those that are not citizens as of this time, so it is a consideration, I believe, that needs to be looked at in the future. It could be considered at this time but not made decisions on, so I implore the commission to recognize that losing a riding in northern Alberta just puts that much more load on the leftover MLAs, the ones that are remaining, and that becomes quite problematic as it's already been very challenging to effectively represent the people within the constituency of Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

That's what I would like to highlight, and thank you for the opportunity to speak.

**The Chair:** Mr. van Dijken, congratulations on coming in on time on your presentation.

I have two quick comments or questions I'd like you to respond to. Number one, oil wells don't vote, and you've got all this technology. Why can't you adapt to the technology and represent your people with fewer MLAs given the fact that, you know, those tools are available to you?

**Mr. van Dijken:** Well, you're correct. Oil wells do not vote, trees do not vote, wheat does not vote, cows do not vote, but the people that take care of them and maintain them and provide the opportunity for this province to thrive do, and they deserve the representation that allows them to be effectively representative. Now, sure, we have technology that allows me to take a lot of my constituent meetings virtually, but it's never the same as driving out to a site and meeting one on one with the reeve of a county, with the councillors of the county, with a town mayor, one on one with an industry representative, whether that's an aggregate removal industry, forestry industry, energy industry, meeting with them with concerns that they have on site in the constituency.

I don't know if it's truly understood how much on-site representation a rural MLA is charged with. You know, even when we take a look at the water projects, which is a big part of the file that transportation does with rural municipalities, each of my counties will have two or three high-priority waterline projects. For me to understand what the need is, I do have to go to the site to have a good understanding of what they're looking for. Currently, one of my municipalities is trucking water into a hamlet, and they would like to put a waterline in there, and then, you know, we have to learn the dynamics around that and the pros and cons to doing that.

9:20

There are always a lot of decisions that have to be made based off of the limitations that we have within provincial funding. In order for me to have an accurate interpretation of what's going on in the field, being there is important.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Any other questions knowing that we've got only probably about a minute left? Starting with you, Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** No, but thank you very much for your presentation.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** I just wanted to echo my thanks. We read your submission on October 29 with the combination of the other MLAs from the north. Well written, and I understand your concerns. Thank you.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Good. Thank you for your time. Thank you for this opportunity.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark, any questions?

**Mr. Clark:** I do, yes.

Hello, MLA van Dijken. Good to see you again.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Yeah. Good to see you.

**Mr. Clark:** You know, I just want to echo Susan's comments. We really struggle with the way we have drawn the north, and we have tremendous empathy for just the vast distances. I guess I'm curious, and maybe just to Justice Miller's question, I mean: how often are you doing Zoom meetings? You're obviously not in Alberta at the moment by the looks of it, as you said. Are you doing work right now, like, where you take a call if a constituent calls? I mean, MLA is a 24/7 kind of job.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Yeah. To give you an idea of yesterday's activity, we had caucus meetings in the morning, all virtual. Well, some were in person, of course, but I was able to do that. I had phone calls. One of the phone calls was with regard to the automotive apprenticeship program and some of the concerns around that. Then I contact the minister with the concerns that I've been hearing, and we'll present a file to him when I arrive back home. Yeah. We're able to do some of the work while we're away, but that doesn't mean that all of the work is able to be done virtually. Otherwise, why do we even have representation out in the rural areas, then, if we can all do it virtually? We could all live in Edmonton or Calgary, I guess.

But the reality is that I believe strongly in being there as a rural representative, being able to meet quite often with municipal representatives or industry representatives on site so that we have a good understanding of what's needed and are able to go to the

minister's office and present the concerns and the ideas that are coming forward to our office.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. I appreciate that very much. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Dr. Martin, anything on this?

**Dr. Martin:** Yes. Just a comment.

Mr. van Dijken, your submission to us in the spring dwelled as you did today on the complexities presented to you by the huge footprint of your riding. You outlined then and in your letter to us more recently the difficulties of effective representation in such a large riding with so many complexities of counties, mayors, reeves, and the like. I take that point very seriously, and I take it that Justice Miller's point about technology is very apt because I agree that many decisions are best done face to face or seeing the site that's under question. Again, I thank you for reinforcing these points for us today.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. van Dijken. We always appreciate people that knock on the doors and seek the support of electors. They know better than anyone what effective representation is, and we've heard from several throughout this week. Thank you so much for presenting.

I have to comment that the letter that came in was pretty prompt. Within – what? – 72 hours we had that very detailed letter, and it was impressive.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Yeah. Thank you. Thank you for your time.

**The Chair:** We'll now move to the next presenter.

Our next presenter is Jackie Clayton.

**Ms Clayton:** Good morning. Forgive me. I couldn't turn my camera on.

**The Chair:** Good morning. Please identify yourself and tell us which electoral division you're speaking to.

**Ms Clayton:** For sure. All right. Well, good morning, everyone. My name is Jackie Clayton, and I appreciate the opportunity to be here today. I'm the mayor of the city of Grande Prairie, and I'm here today to clearly state our position on the proposed electoral boundary changes.

To begin, we support maintaining the status quo for Grande Prairie. The commission's interim report recognizes that Grande Prairie and the current boundaries logically work and that preserving them supports effective representation, and we agree with that conclusion. Where we have serious concern is with the broader recommendation to reduce northern representation.

Grande Prairie is the largest municipality in northern Alberta. With that, we are a regional service, economic, health care hub for a vast geographic area. The communities that are around us rely on Grande Prairie for specialized medical and hospital services, postsecondary education, employment, transportation, retail, recreation, and government services. The reality must be reflected in how representation is structured. For that reason, our position is very clear. This region deserves two dedicated MLAs. This is not a preference; it's a necessity.

Representation in northern Alberta is fundamentally different than representation in urban or larger centres. Our challenge is not necessarily density; it's the distance, the geography, and the sheer land mass. Northern ridings already cover enormous territory. Some take eight hours or more to drive from end to end, and

reducing representation would create constituencies so large that a single MLA could not reasonably maintain access, visibility, or responsiveness across the region. At a certain point, representation becomes physically impractical. Effective representation requires more than a seat count based on population. It requires the ability to be present in person, to travel to communities, to meet constituents, and to understand regional realities on the ground. With fewer MLAs covering more land, that standard simply cannot be met.

Grande Prairie's region also supports significant shadow populations that are tied to industry, resource development, and major infrastructure, activity that is not always captured in census data but places that have real and ongoing demands of representation and service co-ordination.

The Electoral Boundaries Commission Act recognizes that effective representation is not based on population alone, and in section 15 it allows flexibility to account for geography, access, and communities of interest, particularly in regions with large land areas and dispersed population. Northern Alberta clearly meets those thresholds. Applying those variance tools is not an exception to the rule; it is exactly what they were designed for.

Looking specifically at the Grande Prairie-Wapiti riding, this is an example of how communities of interest are shaped by how the region functions day to day. Surrounding communities within that riding rely on the city of Grande Prairie and Grande Prairie proper for labour mobility, health care, education, service delivery, and economic co-ordination. These connections are essential to effective representation. Historically, our boundaries have been reflected in how the community functions on the ground. Electoral lines have been followed by practical divisions while preserving strong, coherent representation. The principle that remains relevant today is that boundaries must reflect lived reality, not just mathematical balance.

Our request is straightforward and grounded in practicality: maintain the status quo for Grande Prairie, preserve two dedicated MLAs for this region, do not reduce northern representation in a way that undermines access and effectiveness. Northern Alberta plays a critical role in this province's economy and infrastructure. Its residents deserve representation that is realistic, accessible, and workable in practicality, not just on paper.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to share our perspective, and I look forward to continued dialogue as this process continues.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms Clayton.

Mrs. Sampson, any questions or comments with this presenter?

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your time today and your comments. We've heard very clearly from across Alberta that the changes to the north are challenging, so thank you for your input today.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** No questions. Thank you very much for your presentation, Mayor.

**The Chair:** By the way, did you provide a written presentation as well? You did, didn't you?

**Ms Clayton:** Yes, we did.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Dr. Martin, any questions?

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

Mayor Clayton, thank you for your remarks that highlight the complexity of the relationships that are a necessary part of not only your work but those of the MLAs in order to ensure effective and probably decisive representation. I wanted to ask you a question about your anticipated growth in and around the city of Grande Prairie. What is your current understanding of the forward growth probabilities?

9:30

**Ms Clayton:** In the city proper we're approximately about a 4 per cent growth increase over the last few years, but in the rural municipalities – the city of Grande Prairie services about 300,000 people from northeastern British Columbia and northwestern Alberta. That growth in the rural areas is even at a greater increase. With large-scale projects on the horizon in this region it's hard to get an exact anticipated number, but the growth in the county of Grande Prairie, the MD of Greenview, other specific areas that surround and use Grande Prairie as a service hub are greater than that 4 per cent. I think that it's realistic. We've seen growth rates between 4 and 10 per cent over the last 15 years, and there's no reason to think that that is reducing.

Right now in my city we have about a zero per cent vacancy rate in multifamily, so there are significant projects in the ground right now, which we know has been a little bit of a hindrance on growth. With that availability of multifamily being such a significant increase in the next few years, we know that our growth will probably be greater than it's been over the last three years.

**Dr. Martin:** Impressive. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you very much.

Mayor Clayton, good to see you again.

**Ms Clayton:** Nice to see you.

**Mr. Clark:** I've loved every single minute I've ever spent in Grande Prairie. It's a beautiful part of the world. A couple of questions. Grande Prairie is interesting. It has an urban constituency, and then it has a rural hybrid. Do you feel it's valuable to have that urban Grande Prairie only portion? Tell me about that.

**Ms Clayton:** Actually, no. The current model is great. The model that was prior to that was actually my preferred one, where we had two MLAs and it was split down the middle of the urban city, but I think that the reality is that although we're the urban proper centre, many industries have their offices here while they work in the rural, where their projects per se are in the rural areas. The average resident or company doesn't see the boundaries per se, and with that come unique issues.

There are times that I work with my MLAs on very specific urban concerns, homelessness, mental health, addictions, while there are times that I'm working with my MLAs because an industry proponent may call me and say: we have these significant concerns with land use in a rural area. So to not have access to MLAs that represent both urban and rural when we're the centre for those types of industries, those types of employees would be a miss. To have an urban-focused MLA strictly I think would be a miss because of the fact that that MLA would never get calls from rural areas, and then it wouldn't integrate between the health care and postsecondary. Right now both of our MLAs are very versed on

urban issues and rural issues, and that kind of works well for us because they're very blended together on a day-to-day basis.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you. You'd mentioned the sort of status quo from 2017. The effective representation kind of mix that we're sort of working to – interestingly, this draft map for the 10 constituencies in the north, including Grande Prairie, actually has a greater variance. It's about 10 per cent below the provincial averages. I'm sure you know, and as you've seen, Grande Prairie has really experienced these growth pressures. The number of people who moved to Alberta in the last eight years – you know, largely, not exclusively, a lot of those people ended up in Grande Prairie, but most of that population growth is Calgary and Edmonton. The difference between the 10 northern constituencies in 2017 was about 8.4 below the average. In our interim report it's actually 10 per cent below the average, so it's actually a little more kind of effective, I guess, if you put it that way.

I guess I just wanted to ask your kind of thoughts on – do you feel like that's sort of an appropriate balance? I know it's difficult when the growth is concentrated and the issues are different, but I guess I wanted to ask you about that. If it worked well in 2017 and it's actually better now, I guess I'm wondering if you feel like that's a fair balance.

**Ms Clayton:** Yeah. I think there are a few realities there. There are times when we're represented from an MLA on various issues. The collaboration within this region is very unique, and we're very proud of it in the sense that we're very integrated in our service delivery. We're integrated in many things, so in that MLA piece I think it serves well. Historically our MLAs have always worked well together and provide context to conversations and legislation that is diverse.

In the growth piece history shows that growth happens primarily first in the urban centres, Edmonton and Calgary, and then over time as people get located in the province, get used to what the offerings are, they realize that maybe Edmonton and Calgary aren't for them, and they tend to move to the mid-sized cities. That could be for various reasons. It could be for recreational offerings. It could be for the price of housing. It could be for job opportunities. That flux of people movement in our province is historically very notable, and I think that when you see people land in, say, Edmonton and maybe move to St. Albert or move to Red Deer and then realize, "You know what? There's an opportunity," they come to Grande Prairie.

We have a statistic that shows that it takes about 2.4 times for you to visit Grande Prairie before you'll move here. You know, maybe you've come for a recreation opportunity or to meet somebody, and you're quite impressed with what this region has to offer. As you mentioned, it's a great place to live, work, and play. When you get that movement of people within our intraprovincial movement, you really note that people have lived in more than one location quite often in our province, so those numbers move quite often.

I think that to think that an MLA could serve more people is possible, but to Mr. van Dijken's comments earlier, I think you have to recognize that when an MLA comes home on a Friday from a work week to meet with their constituents, there's a lineup of people that want to see them because they don't have the opportunity to run into them at the hockey rink or the grocery store. So when that MLA comes home and they have so much work to do on that Friday, Saturday, Sunday before they head back to Edmonton, it's not about getting 30 people on a Zoom.

The people that want to meet with you can be volunteers who actually want to see face to face and deserve that time with their elected official. There are people that have organizations that base



their work week around waiting for the MLA to get home. To jump on a Zoom isn't conducive to good conversations. As you know, Mr. Clark, this region is very warm and welcoming, and with that they want to see people in person. So if you were to increase those areas, it'd be very hard for an MLA to honestly say that they were aware of the issues in their constituency.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thanks for that. I concur, having been up there. Like, the north is something, as I think all the commissioners have indicated a couple of times, where, you know, frankly we're not sure we got right. I'll be completely frank on that.

**Ms Clayton:** Yeah. You know, it was mentioned by the chair earlier on that you've been given the number of 89, and I appreciate that. I just would say that the growth can't be at the expense of the north. To increase those seats: it can't be at the expense of the north.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you so, so much. Appreciate it.

**The Chair:** Mayor Clayton, a lot of criticism has been levelled at the concept of hybrid ridings in that members of the Legislature can't handle representing two different groups; i.e., a rural, agricultural, nonurban and an urban group. What's the experience from your perspective as mayor watching two MLAs represent your region historically?

**Ms Clayton:** Well, actually, I think that's a great bonus for us in the sense that the MLAs are very versed in both urban issues and rural issues. Take the MLA for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, who lives in a rural area but literally day-to-day operates in the urban area. When you are from this region, as I mentioned, you don't see the boundaries. You may live in a rural situation and work in an urban, so with that inherently you just are aware of the realities of both. It's not like you would have an MLA that is very versed in urban issues and one that's very versed in rural because the integration is so evident. It's just naturally inherited as a skill.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much. Your presentation is most appreciated. We value municipal leaders presenting to us. Thank you for the warning, 2.4 visits. I've only been to Grande Prairie twice, so I have to realize my third visit: it may be . . .

9:40

**Ms Clayton:** Next time you come, I'll take you straight to a realty agent.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you so much.

**Ms Clayton:** Thanks so much.

**The Chair:** Please remain in to hear the other presenters if you're able.

Our next presenter is Mr. Kenneth Vanderwell. It's a little early. You're only scheduled to be at 9:50, but if you're here, we're happy to hear you.

**Mr. Vanderwell:** Great. Can you hear me okay, Your Honour?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Vanderwell:** Great. Okay. Yes. I'm a little bit early, but that's fine.

As mentioned, my name is Ken Vanderwell. I'm a long-time resident of Slave Lake, and I'm also the vice-president of the Lesser Slave Lake United Conservative Party association. The commission may recall that I was the only individual that made an in-person submission to the commission when you were in Slave Lake back

on June 18. In attendance with me was president of our association, Mr. Mike Skrynyk.

As the only presenter Mike and myself did have a fairly lengthy discussion with the commission on the topic of required population representation options for the Lesser Slave Lake electoral division. At that time the commission – I believe that you had indicated we are about 209 or 210 people shy of being able to be considered a special electoral division under the act. Then we did speak about adding some of the smaller communities along highway 88 within the municipal district of Lesser Slave River such as Chisholm, Tieland, and Flatbush, but you know, to be honest, Commission, the population of those areas was quite sparse and would not likely reach the required population numbers.

The day after our meeting with the commission it occurred to President Skrynyk that the addition of the town of Swan Hills – in 2024 the population of Swan Hills was estimated at 1,366 people. The addition of that would allow the Lesser Slave Lake electoral division to meet the minimum population requirement. Skrynyk did contact the commission and ask that this possible solution be made aware to Chairperson Justice Miller. Subsequently, President Skrynyk was in conversation with the mayor of Swan Hills – that's Mr. Craig Wilson – on this development, and there was a development with the town of Swan Hills actually supporting the addition of their town into the Lesser Slave Lake electoral division. The town of Swan Hills is actually already part of the municipality of Big Lakes county, which is the High Prairie end of the lake, so to include it into the electoral division would actually be a great solution.

My submission today to the commission is in support of modifying the existing boundaries of the Lesser Slave Lake electoral division with one change to add population to our division and to enable us to continue to be considered as one of the four special electoral divisions under the act. That change is to expand the electoral boundary to the south to include the town of Swan Hills.

Aaron, if you can put up the map that I had there. I did submit a map. I don't know if you can see it or not.

**The Chair:** Just for clarity purposes, sir, when you say the existing, you mean the 2017 map, the map that you're living under now, not our proposed . . .

**Mr. Vanderwell:** That's right, Your Honour. Yeah.

**The Chair:** Okay. Good.

**Mr. Vanderwell:** Yeah. I took that off your own website there.

This is the existing Slave Lake electoral division map. I outlined in yellow at the very bottom: that includes the town of Swan Hills. That is really what my submission is. The impact of moving that population of 1,366 to Lesser Slave Lake would decrease the deviation from a negative 50.04 per cent to 47.55. Of course, there would be an impact on the Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock electoral division, and that would increase their deviation from 14.83 to 17.32. However, I would submit that the town of Swan Hills should be part of the Lesser Slave Lake electoral division. This one change was proposed to the commission after our in-person meeting in Slave Lake, and again it was submitted by the constituency association in our online submission in December 2025.

Why would this work? It's continued effective representation by the MLA. It's a serviceable geographical size and takes into consideration the geographical properties, municipal boundaries of our area; understandable clear boundaries; addresses existing business integration, transportation across and within the area; recognizes our large, growing Indigenous population, the Treaty 8 trading and traditional areas.

I'm sure the commission is aware that Alberta's Indigenous population is actually expanding at double the rate of non-Indigenous populations, a trend expected to continue due to the inherently younger age structure. There are 11 communities within the existing Lesser Slave Lake electoral division.

And, of course, as many others have said, it maintains the voice and interests of rural electoral divisions within the government of Alberta.

In closing, I would submit that the existing Lesser Slave Lake electoral division be modified to include the town of Swan Hills. This would increase the population to allow it to be considered one of the four exempt electoral divisions under the act and continue as a rural electoral division due to the five reasons that I outlined above.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Vanderwell.

We're less pressured for time than I expected, but I'll turn it over to Dr. Martin for any questions or comments.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Vanderwell. I do recall when we were in Slave Lake and you presented; I learned an awful lot about the forestry industry. I wanted to press that point a little further here with your present suggestions about adding the Swan Hills area. Are they presently involved in the orbit of the forestry industry?

**Mr. Vanderwell:** Absolutely, they are. Yeah. They were quite severely impacted by the forest fires between Slave Lake and Swan Hills. The timber at that elevation, a large portion of it, is lodgepole pine. That will flow through to Whitecourt, flow down towards Blue Ridge Lumber, the facilities, Alberta Newsprint, the old Millar Western facilities that are in Whitecourt. That wood basket: actually, even though we're here in Slave Lake, we do have the rights to a portion of that. That whole boreal forest area coming out of Swan Hills right through to north of Slave Lake is all part of a wood basket, and lots of trucks and timber move every day amongst the local highways here.

**Dr. Martin:** Am I right to infer, thereby, that you need an MLA who is sensitive to the needs of that industry and the people who work in it?

**Mr. Vanderwell:** Yes. That's always helpful. Of course, you know, Slave Lake and the area here around the lake in the electoral division is pretty fortunate. We really do kind of run on three cylinders. We have oil and gas, we have forestry, and we have tourism. All three of those have really helped our area perhaps not see some downturns that would occur if one industry is doing worse than other industries.

**Dr. Martin:** I have one follow-up, and that's about population. The town of Slave Lake has been badly damaged twice by fires, and I take it that is one of the reasons why the population growth has flattened or stunted, so to speak. Do you anticipate a recovery in residents coming to the town of Slave Lake?

**Mr. Vanderwell:** Well, it's been, you know, coming up over 10 years now since the devastating fires in Slave Lake. I think that the building that's occurred is – more people perhaps are not going to move back. I think the greater opportunities for the town of Slave Lake and the whole electoral division are the continued development of the resource sector, oil and gas in particular, which would bring people to High Prairie, Slave Lake, the Wabasca area,

and the native communities north of the Lake, where I see the biggest growth occurring.

The town of Slave Lake itself: I mean, since I've lived there for many, many years, I'd love to think that it's going to grow, but we didn't see that. We had I think about a thousand people leave after the fires, and they didn't come back.

9:50

**The Chair:** Thank you, sir.

Mr. Clark, any questions or comments?

**Mr. Clark:** Sorry; just getting off mute there. Yeah. Thank you so much. I genuinely appreciate both your first presentation in person and now here online.

Just thinking a bit about growth. Justice Miller won't love this. Saskatchewan and northern Ontario have actual legislative carve-outs, and they say that parts of the province are just different than others. I'm only saying that not because it's anywhere in our direct control; it is just something we've talked a bit about as a commission. You know, maybe future boundaries commissions could look at something like that, that says specifically that we acknowledge and recognize that it's just different in the north, and we'll maybe add some specific seats that are dedicated to that. But that's a different issue for another day.

I don't really have a question beyond just saying what I've said to the others, which is that we have tremendous empathy and try our best to understand what it means to be in the north. It is different.

**Mr. Vanderwell:** Yeah.

**Mr. Clark:** It is different. I think that's a conversation we've had, and, without making any promises for specifics, you know, it's something we're thinking deeply about. Your presentation and the others really do have a big impact, so thank you.

**Mr. Vanderwell:** I appreciate that.

Just to follow up on your comment, I did do a personal submission to the commission as well, and I said: what's the long-term solution to what we're going to face every eight years as rural electoral districts not only in northern Alberta but southern Alberta? I think it's time for the government of Alberta to really look at some more permanent electoral divisions outside of the rural areas. I know it's outside the scope of the commission, but I do not personally see any other solution to maintain the voice of the rural areas in the province of Alberta going forward. Otherwise, we're going to face this every eight years.

I presented in 2017. It's a different story now and going forward as the population grows. I don't see any other way of really dealing with this appropriately. I appreciate your comments on that.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Just for interest, the MLA for your region will be presenting next week, Mr. Vanderwell, so we look forward to hearing from him.

**Mr. Vanderwell:** Oh, okay. Yeah. Mr. Sinclair. That's great.

**The Chair:** Yes.

What's that noise? Oh, okay. Maybe if you could mute, Mr. Vanderwell, until you speak. There's a bit of feedback, so if you could mute, that might help. Good.

Okay. I'm going to turn it over to Mrs. Samson.

Just indicate that you can hear us still, though. Yeah. Okay. Good.

**Mrs. Samson:** I think what we were hearing were the sawmills going in the background there.

Thank you again. It's a pleasure to see you and interact. I want to thank you for two things. I like the suggestion of Swan Hills. Thank you for going out and doing the leg work to get their approval of that inclusion into the north. As you know, when the final report comes out, we don't get a chance to interact again. And we know that that one is already approved.

I do agree with your last suggestion about permanent boundaries in the north. We see that in other provinces like Saskatchewan. So at least when electoral boundaries come, they know that that's untouchable. I really do believe that we have to quit having these conversations every time. It is completely different from the rest of the province.

Thank you so much for your input today. I really appreciate it and enjoyed seeing you again.

**Mr. Vanderwell:** Thank you very much. I agree with you, too. But, again, I think not only the north; you know, all the southern rural areas certainly need to be included in any changes that would be coming forward.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

**Mr. Evans:** Mr. Vanderwell, thank you for your tireless efforts in doing what you've done. It's been very helpful for us as a commission. I have one concern with respect to fixed permanent boundaries in electoral districts in the north. I say that only because there are two areas in the north that I think will have significant growth potential, and that might actually end up as a limiting factor on effective representation in the north. That would be Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie and the regions surrounding both of those, not to exclude other significant growth opportunities in the north as well. Although, it seems to me that I think we should be cautious with that. It may be a short-term solution and cause us a long-term problem.

If every eight or 10 years we have to wrestle with this fact and, you know, following our historical success we continue that into the future, I don't know that we need to necessarily be concerned that five individuals have to struggle through this and gain a little more grey hair or lose some hair. It's worth doing it just to get it right. Thank you very much for all that you've done. Appreciate it.

**Mr. Vanderwell:** Okay. Thank you. I much appreciate that.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

We are actually on time. Our next presenter is Mr. Scott Cyr.

Thank you, Mr. Vanderwell. I appreciate it. Please stay on if you can.

Mr. Scott Cyr.

**Mr. Cyr:** Well, hello there, Commission. I am thankful that you've given me the opportunity to be able to speak before the commission. Now, I just want to reinforce to the commission that I'm very thankful that you heard loud and clear my June presentation before you. You took all of the recommendations from my proposal seriously and clearly brought that into the current draft that we're looking at. So thank you for that. I'm very thankful that the commission was reactive to my constituents and myself that had brought those forward.

I will say that I'd like to make a correction. I think that there are three constituencies that are looking at rapid growth and that Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul would be one of those with rapid

growth as well. So it's not just Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie, but my area is looking at the F-35 program that's going to be bringing in some pretty big growth here. Plus, the Pathways project is looking like that's going to be moving forward. Plus, we've got a remarkable amount of resource development happening in my backyard. So, again, thank you for that.

Now, again, my constituency is just above the provincial average at 1.6 per cent over. Clearly, that is one of those things that is going to be a challenge for any MLA, including myself, for the size and the number of individuals. I want to build off what MLA van Dijken said, that it is a different walk that we've got as rural MLAs. I've got 18 high schools or outreach programs in my constituency. I've got four hospitals, several seniors' lodges. When you start adding all of that up, that's a lot of advocacy that you need to do.

One of the things that was brought forward in the 2017 commission – I sat before that commission – was that we lost the Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills constituency up in the northeast. That one there was catastrophic at the time, and in the end we all were able to absorb the extra region that we were taking on. But what I will say is that this seems to be a recipe that the boundaries commission continues to utilize. In the last one, the 2017, the northeast lost a seat, and now we're looking at central, looking like they're going to lose a seat. This is a very troubling trend, especially for what MLA van Dijken was mentioning: almost two-thirds of our land masses to the north.

One of the things that had come up with the 2017, and I heard this loud and clear earlier during MLA van Dijken's speech, was: do you know what videoconferencing is? I will say that that came up in 2017. I actually had a direct question from the commission: do you know what Skype is? I wish it was that simple.

MLA van Dijken, again, building off what he was saying, and Mr. Vanderwell: what happens is that our local farmers, ranchers, oil fields expect me to be out on-site. It is difficult for me to be able to not go and see the issues at hand. One of the concerns that was brought forward was – it seems like culverts are the bane of my existence, but it is an important part of my job.

When it comes down to our Edmonton and Calgary constituencies, I don't think they have the same level of infrastructure that we've got in rural, and I'm going to use highway 28 as a good example. When it comes down to the weather that northeast had, we had freezing rain and then a freeze, and then almost all of my provincial highways went into ballistic mode for all of my local constituents saying: we need to be dealt with. That is not something that a typical Edmonton and Calgary MLA would need to deal with, but those are an example of how rural MLAs are working closely with our local constituents to address some of these concerns.

10:00

Now, again, I'm very pleased with the draft that the commission had brought forward, but I'm very concerned that Lesser Slave Lake is going to be, I guess, removed from the northern constituencies. As a man that was born and raised in Lesser Slave Lake, I can tell you that, when it comes down to it, that MLA has always been something they can access. I don't know how an MLA is going to be able to meet the needs of that area, especially with the fact that a lot of it is First Nations and Métis in the area, which usually has very specific representation getting in front of local concerns there. My constituency also has significant rural First Nations and Métis presences here, too, so working with those groups is important as well as my MPs.

I have done a lot of the presentation already for you in June. The last thing I'd like to mention is that I just want to reinforce that the Cold Lake air weapons range: I would hope that would never be considered to be removed out of Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

That is something that I hope that you saw in my letter, reinforcing the importance of maintaining that. It's within the MD of Bonnyville, and maintaining the entire MD plus the county of St. Paul was always the goal of the commission, so I would hope that you would take that into consideration.

I'm at six minutes. I'm open to taking any questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Well, thank you. Mr. Cyr, I'm very grateful for your presentation in the spring, your letter more recently, and your reiteration of the main points in your current presentation. You had stressed, and continue to stress, the rapid growth in your electoral district, and you sound excited and happy that it's happening. Like so many of your colleagues in northern ridings, we have heard the argument about ensuring a strong northern voice, if I may encapsulate the general motivation behind those letters that way, and I'm sure that you fully participate in that opinion of matters. As my colleague Mr. Clark had mentioned to an earlier presenter, we're very seriously looking at those letters and expressions of dismay about our interim report.

I wanted to press you again on the relationship that you just mentioned between Cold Lake proper and the air weapons base. As I dimly recall, in your most recent submission you say that the commander – would that be the correct rank? – would be the person who allows or doesn't allow permits for natural resource exploitation in that area. Is that correct?

**Mr. Cyr:** I believe that that's still within the province's mandate to be able to do that, but access to the range is controlled by the base commander, so if you want to get onto the range or off of the range, you need to get permission from the range control.

**Dr. Martin:** And range control is in Cold Lake itself?

**Mr. Cyr:** Well, the base is. It definitely is, yeah, but, again, they do have facilities at the entrance of the range where they do a lot of that, so it's not done on the air force base. They do it outside, but it's the air force that does take the leadership role in this process, yes.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation. You've put a lot of effort into it by talking to us numerous times. I also want to let you know that former Mayor Copeland wrote a very detailed letter about the relationship of the Cold Lake air weapons range and its importance to Cold Lake, which I found to be very valuable. Coming from Sylvan Lake, I did not know a lot of the information he presented. Can you tell me with a yes or no: do you like the expansion that added on to your riding of Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul? I see we've added more on the bottom. What are your thoughts on that?

**Mr. Cyr:** Well, yes, if you're going to limit me to yes or no. I will say, though, that if it means to save the Lesser Slave Lake constituency that we have to carve into my western side of my constituency to be able to make up populations, I believe that Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul would accept that simply because we don't want to lose another voice in the north. So if there needs to be a population moved from Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul with the newest draft that you're doing simply because you're trying to get populations, say, shifting over, I believe that is something that we would consider. While I'd be disappointed to see that, I do

recognize the importance of continuing that Lesser Slave Lake constituency.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Evans, any comments or questions?

**Mr. Evans:** Yes, thank you. I didn't forget about you specifically with respect to the growth, and that's why I phrased it the way that I did. I was actually thinking about you because I remembered your presentation in person and how compelling it was. Especially, I think it was you and MLA van Dijken that mentioned the percentage of GDP of the province that actually came out of your area. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I think it was 85 per cent or something, 80 per cent.

**Mr. Cyr:** Again, when it comes to the oil and gas industry, the northeast definitely plays a large part in all that. I will say that the northwest is definitely ramping up as they open up more of it. It is exciting to see, say, the connection between Peace River and Fort McMurray, the highway that Minister Jean and Minister Loewen are working towards to connecting those two, and once that kind of happens, that opens up a lot of opportunity for both the town and the city, but also it opens up opportunities for our First Nations partners up in that area as well.

**Mr. Evans:** The other part that I'd like to hear your comments on: if you recall, MLA van Dijken made some comments with respect to eligible voters and whether or not that is, you know, a factor, a characteristic that we should be taking into consideration when we're assessing electoral districts and effective representation. What are your thoughts on that?

**Mr. Cyr:** Well, again, when I presented the first time, I was talking about shadow population, and it actually is noted on page 61 of your report that it is estimated that my constituency is about 75,000 with shadow population involved.

This is the struggle that rural north has got when it comes to this. We still have to deliver justice. We still have to deliver health care. We still have to deliver a lot of education in these situations, and that seems to get ignored when it moves forward. And it's not your fault. I recognize that the shadow population isn't a consideration within the legislation, but I do believe that is an important part.

I also would like to say that, when it comes to the 2017 boundary commission, they had said, "Well, you know what? Because we're expanding your constituencies, we're going to recommend that we give you guys a whole lot more money," and I heard that last time as well, and that never seems to follow. Again, from my constituency because it's so spread out – and I only imagine my colleagues to the north – how do you deal with that with one office within a constituency as large as mine and one and a half staff? It is difficult to manage that, especially with the number of eligible voters and the shadow population.

**10:10**

Going back to that shadow population, when we had that ice storm, I was getting all kinds of people e-mailing my office saying: you need to talk to Emcon to get this. Again, some of them were from all over the province that were driving up to my area just to get into the camps. That's where the thing is. We still do need to hear and be able to be reactive to the shadow populations and be able to work through their concerns just as much as the citizens and eligible voters in my area.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.  
Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. I wanted to build on that. Two things. Just your last point about money, I don't know if you said "on Members' Services," but it has come up before. I agree with you completely. I look back at the past reports, and it's report after report after report, and eventually – it's not the only solution. I completely acknowledge the north is a vast territory. Being an MLA is about being in the community. It's not a replacement. I agree with you on that. But increasingly, even different from 2017, the fact that we're doing this presentation on Zoom instead of coming out to the communities because of the weather, I think is telling. It's possible to do some of the work, not all, and it's not a replacement. I do agree with you on that.

I wanted to build on what Mr. Evans was asking on the shadow population and eligible voters. You seem to spend a lot of time, I imagine – or do you? – with people who can't vote for you and never would, but they count as part of your population. Is that fair to say?

**Mr. Cyr:** Absolutely. Especially with the upgrades that are coming into, say, the Cold Lake air force base with the hangars. We're looking at in 2027-2028 an additional 2,000 trades workers coming into my constituency just in Cold Lake alone. Likely they're going to bring families, but some of them are going to be living in hotels and stuff like that.

Again, that's the big concern here. When we ramp up, all my hotels go full. Plus people start sleeping on couches and renting rooms within households. That's what happens when my area starts to get hot, and they still need to have some level of ability to be able to get, I guess, advocacy through the province. Fortunately, when they spend a lot of their time up here, that means talking with me. They don't go back to their Edmonton or Calgary MLA to talk about a Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul problem, which is where they're at.

**Mr. Clark:** Great. Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** Just following up on that, Mr. Cyr, I hope you appreciate that, well, we got good representation to the commission from the north since our interim report, but almost every problem manifests itself in different ways in different parts of the province. I'm very sympathetic to the shadow population problem. In fact, we jokingly coined that the "representation without taxation" problem. But there are similar problems in the big cities, too, with noneligible voters that put a tremendous strain on the representatives. Your problems are unique, yet they're not unique. I guess I just want to remind you that we've got a whole province to deal with, and it's a challenge.

**Mr. Cyr:** I am hearing you loud and clear, but I would, I guess, push back a little bit on that by saying that when you're looking at Edmonton and Calgary, you're looking at – what? – 25 MLAs that are all carrying the load together. For a lot of these MLAs they might have a hospital. They might have a large school. They might have some provincial infrastructure possibly in their constituency. I have it in almost every municipality, and it's spread out significantly throughout the region. All of those pieces of provincial infrastructure have need for advocacy. When that advocacy happens for our area, it's through me whereas for Edmonton and Calgary you've probably got three or four or even five MLAs carrying that load, and that's the difference in my opinion.

**The Chair:** You reminded me of something else that I've been wanting to raise with northern presenters. It seems to me that when MLAs like yourself describe the work that you do and having to be on the ground, having to be in the riding, that you in a sense do some of the work that is performed by municipalities in the big cities like Calgary and Edmonton that MLAs there would not have to deal with. I'm not diminishing or criticizing your counties or municipalities, but it seems that you've got more of a provincial investment or concern. Respond to that for me.

**Mr. Cyr:** Yeah. Let's talk about my municipalities just with health care alone. In Cold Lake my emergency rooms are overflowing, and that's affecting Bonnyville, St. Paul, Elk Point, and even Glendon because they can't get care here. Now, we've got the urgent care centre that I'm very thankful was announced, and that's coming. Long-term care is a big problem in Bonnyville, so I've got seniors going from Bonnyville over to Cold Lake, Elk Point, and St. Paul and Lac La Biche and Two Hills and even up to Grande Prairie because they just can't find spaces.

When it comes to mental health in St. Paul, I've got a huge homeless issue there. Every one of my councils has got a very specific advocacy they're looking for, and each one of those advocacies is important to get through to the government. Again, when it comes to the Edmonton and Calgary MLAs, they all know they want a hospital in, say, northeast or southeast, and they all jump on there and they all write and meet with the ministers. That is not an option that we have in rural. It's me with the municipality.

We're going in and seeing the ministers. A lot of times I'll even see a minister with municipalities a couple of times in a week. Transportation is a good example, with Minister Dreeshen. I'm very thankful for him. What happens is that I could be with Minister Dreeshen with two or three municipalities in that time frame for advocacy for what their needs are. You don't have that same level of, in my opinion, advocacy when it comes to Edmonton and Calgary.

I'm not suggesting in any way that they're not working hard. I'm not hoping that you come out of that with this message. They work in a different way. I'm just saying that when it comes to rural Alberta, we have different challenges that need to be recognized, and continuing to add more and more onto our shoulders is very problematic.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Cyr. Your presentation is very helpful. Thank you. Please remain to hear the other presentations if you're able.

We'll now move to, I believe, Brenda Yasinski. Brenda, are you present?

**Ms Yasinski:** Yes, I am. I wasn't expecting to be speaking today.

**The Chair:** Oh, we've got you in at 10:10. Sorry.

**Ms Yasinski:** Okay. Sorry. Yeah. I wasn't aware of speaking today. I know our reeve, Terry Ungarian, was planning on speaking for our municipality.

**The Chair:** He's coming up soon.

**Ms Yasinski:** I just want to reiterate what was said already. I think most of the main points that we were trying to make have been covered, but I will let our reeve speak for us.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Just to confirm, ma'am, you're from the county of Northern Lights, correct?

**Ms Yasinski:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Did you present last time when we were up in that part of the world?

**Ms Yasinski:** No. Sorry.

**The Chair:** Okay. When you say that you wanted to reiterate what was said, can you be a bit more specific? Has it to do with the need to put one more riding back in the north? Is that the essence of it?

**Ms Yasinski:** Yes. We want to keep the current representation right now. We believe that, yeah, definitely dilutes the voices of rural and remote communities, including the Indigenous communities. It's harder for elected representatives to travel within their ridings. Right now our representative, Dan Williams, has a huge, huge geographical area and is always on the road. You know, I feel it just splits up regions and communities that currently share common economic and social interests, for example the forestry towns, oil and gas industry, pubs, et cetera. And then what MLA Cyr was just saying about: how will they meet the needs when these geographical areas are even so much larger?

10:20

**The Chair:** Any questions? Any dialogue?

Seeing as I've called you out, Ms Yasinski, I'm going to ask the commission if they have any comments or conversation with you. Yeah.

**Mr. Evans:** Brenda, thank you for surprisingly being part of this. I'm interested to, you know, get your experience in terms of using Zoom and et cetera to connect with your MLA. Have you experienced that, and if you have, can you tell me what your experience was like or if you know of others that have experienced it and if they've shared to you what their experience was like?

**Ms Yasinski:** As far as using Zoom or any videoconferencing software, whatever, it's worked very well. Like, if we can't see him in person, I think that's the next best thing, of course. As far as we've experienced, I think it's worked pretty well as long as our Internet connection stays stable.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Susan.

**Mrs. Samson:** No questions. Thank you.

**Ms Yasinski:** You're welcome. Thanks.

**The Chair:** Okay. Greg, any comments?

**Mr. Clark:** No, beyond a thank you for being here and being willing to talk with us even though that wasn't plan A for you for today. Thank you.

**Ms Yasinski:** No problem. Thanks.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Yes. As Mr. Clark said – and we'll wait to talk to your reeve since that was the general aim you had – again, I'm glad you're on the line, and again thank you for participating.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, that takes us, fortuitously, to Terry Ungarian. Is Mr. Ungarian present?

**Mr. Ungarian:** Yes. Good morning.

**The Chair:** Okay. Good morning. Now, I'm calling you up a little sooner. Are you able to present now?

**Mr. Ungarian:** Yeah, I am. Sorry for the confusion. We weren't really sure that we were all presenting. Our deputy reeve is also online as well, so we just don't want to be overlapping each other. I can speak on behalf of our council.

Yeah. My name is Terry Ungarian. I'm a reeve of the . . .

**The Chair:** Sorry, sir. Who's your deputy reeve? Can you identify him?

**Mr. Ungarian:** Kayln Schug.

**The Chair:** Okay. He's not on the list. Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Ungarian:** Yeah. Okay.

Yeah. Lifelong resident of our municipality. I won't give my age away, but you can maybe guess by the lack of hair, and what's left is kind of turning grey, that I've been here a long time. I've been through many Premiers and ministers in my lifetime in our province.

I guess one thing about being one of the later speakers is that I've already listened to MLAs van Dijken and Cyr and Mayor Clayton, and they've kind of sent the same message that our municipality feels. We're not in favour of these proposed boundary changes in our region. We're a large geographical region, huge geographical region. Our municipality alone, county of Northern Lights, could fit Edmonton and Calgary both inside our boundaries and have room left over, but we don't have people. I mean, our municipality is, you know, 3,600 people.

As Councillor Yasinski just stated, we're represented by MLA Minister Williams. He has a huge area to look after. To divide that up and make a new boundary change that he would not be representing us anymore, that we would now have Minister Loewen as our MLA representing from Fox Creek to Spirit River up to Paddle Prairie Métis settlement and all points in between: it makes no sense, right?

I mean, we talk about technology has advanced. I certainly agree. We're able to have this meeting today by technology. I'm fortunate; I actually have decent Internet connection. There are places in our municipality that have zero Internet connection. I mean, with the advancement of Starlink and some of these other services that is changing, but technology is no replacement for an MLA's role. These are very important people within our government. A meeting like this – don't get me wrong. I attend several meetings virtually and it's great. A lot of meetings require minimum of an hour. A lot of times it's three, four hours of travel time to attend a meeting that may last one hour, so you're spending six hours on the road to have a one-hour meeting. If there happens to be a freezing rainstorm or a snowstorm, it's kind of nice to sit in the comfort of your home and do that. But I don't think that we're ready for that with a legislative representative.

Now, there's nothing that can replace – I mean, I'll go back to an example. Dan Williams attended our local parade in one of our communities. I had an old '53 car that I put in the parade. He jumped in with me, hung his signs on the door, and away we went. We had a great conversation while he was throwing out candy for the spectators. You don't get that same connection if you try to do it through a keyboard.

You know, I look at Alberta's kind of ongoing – and I know this isn't a political organization or commission of the government. Alberta seems to have an ongoing dispute with Ottawa over a lot of things, whether it's pipelines, whether it's equalization payments.

There's a whole list of things. One of them that we always hear is that we don't have a strong voice in the west. Federal elections are decided by the time the votes are counted at the Manitoba-Ontario border because we just don't have enough representation. Well, I can kind of see the same model echoing for rural northern Alberta, that if we lose another seat or two, then we're going to be underrepresented more.

I get it. You mentioned at the beginning of this presentation that the population has increased by 800,000 people over the last 10 years or whatever the time frame was, and that's great. I mean, that shows good things for our province, that this is a place to do business and work. So we need maybe more representation. The population seems to be increasing in the urban centres more so than in the rural, remote areas. We've been pretty static on our population growth. But you can drive across Edmonton or Calgary and cover, you know, four or five constituency boundaries within an hour if the traffic isn't too heavy. Here in the north, I mean, you'd have a good, long day to cover that many ridings of an equal amount just because of our huge geographical area. That's understandable. That's the nature of urban versus rural. That's where the people are. But we can't use that as the only matrix for defining these boundaries.

It's been pointed out by the previous speakers that the GDP of the province is – a lot of it comes out of the north. NADC has prepared a report kind of outlining where the revenues for the province come from. In fact, the NADC report even has a recommendation that we should have a minister of northern Alberta that would, you know, be a boots-on-the-ground minister that would represent the north, understand the needs of the north. What happens in Pincher Creek or Milk River or Airdrie isn't necessarily the same as what happens in High Level or Fairview or Bonnyville. We have some different needs. So to expand boundaries and even narrow that down to within a proposed boundary: what happens in Fox Creek may not be the same as what happens in Peace River. I just think that we're asking a lot for MLAs to try to balance everything when they have such big ridings already, and to increase them or change them: we don't agree with that. Our municipality has submitted comments to the commission, and you've probably seen them.

10:30

I mean, centralization has hurt us. It's been, you know, a slow death of centralizing services in rural remote areas right from health care to postsecondary institutions, government services – we have provincial buildings now that have vacant offices in them – victim services. A lot of these things that we all had in our communities at one time are slowly fading away. This just seems like another move towards calling a region northern Alberta, and eventually, I mean, we could just have one representative working out of an office in Edmonton and not have local MLAs. I mean, that's kind of overstating it, but that's kind of the trajectory I see.

Respectfully, I disagree that permanent boundaries would be beneficial. I mean, the only thing that's certain in politics is change, right? We don't know what those changes may be for our children or our grandchildren, so to draw permanent boundaries would not probably be – it would be a great thing to try reversals in the future. Having these reviews periodically, you know, if you do them once every 10 years or whatever, and maybe make some adjustments if they're necessary would be a better solution.

We talk about economic growth or population growth in the north. I know Mayor Clayton personally. We see what's going on in Grande Prairie. It's our closest large centre. We get a lot of services out of there for our region, and there is a boom going on there, I'll call it. I mean, it's not hard to recognize. Go to any Tim Hortons in the city and see the lineup of service vehicles that are

going to work every morning in Bonnyville, Cold Lake, Fort McMurray area. I mean, that's what's been driving the province, been driving the whole country, really, economically, and that's still booming.

In our region we're kind of a three-pronged economy. We have forestry, which, honestly – and maybe Mr. Vanderwell would agree. They're under some tough times now economically with our neighbours to the south putting tariffs on top of duties and then just with everything that's going on. We know there are, really, challenges there, so to have a MLA not connected to those, trying to represent those industries, would not be fair to them. I think that those face-to-face conversations are important.

Our other pillar of economics is agriculture. We're kind of founded on agriculture. I mean, it's grown in economy, but it's diminished in people. The old 600-acre farm that we had ...

**The Chair:** Sorry, Mr. Ungarian. I'm going to stop you there. Can you just wrap up with the third issue? I want some time for the commission to be able to dialogue with you, and you've run over your time. So agriculture, energy, and what was the third industry? Forestry.

**Mr. Ungarian:** Forestry. Yeah. Three pillars.

I want to just make mention, that nobody has mentioned yet – and I'm not sure if anybody is aware; I know some are – that we do have probably the largest capital project that is being proposed in our municipality as we speak, a nuclear energy plant, and I'm not talking about a small modular reactor. I'm talking about a full-scale reactor plant that is being proposed and will have a huge economic ripple throughout our region, throughout the province, throughout the country. This is not a small – this would surpass anything that was happening in Fort McMurray individually. I mean, combined all the projects in Fort McMurray are huge – I recognize that – and in Cold Lake as well, but this would be a single project that would impact municipalities, obviously, near the project but within the greater radius of the project as well.

So we can't be underrepresented when these types of projects are being proposed. We need somebody to step up and support us. We've had great representation in the Legislature in my lifetime, and we want to continue to see that and not have it watered down.

Yeah. I don't know if I've used up my time or not.

**The Chair:** Yeah. You have, actually, but it's partly my fault.

I want to open it up for some dialogue. I'm going to ask Mr. Clark if he has any questions or comments of Mr. Ungarian.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Just to thank you very much for being here. We really appreciate the input. I mean, we've heard a lot about – and I think it's entirely justified – the unique challenges of representing the north, and it is different, I think, given the vast geography and a lot of the issues you've raised. Then we have different issues and challenges in, say, central Alberta and some of the rural areas. Grande Prairie has its challenges.

I guess I'm just reflecting a bit on some submissions we heard from some urban MLAs, some big-city MLAs about some of the challenges they have. They're different challenges. The geography is small, but they have people in their constituencies who speak eight, nine, 10 different languages in that one area. It may be a small area, but they've got all the challenges that come with those sorts of things, so their MLA is constantly stretched in different directions on those sorts of issues. It's a very different kind of challenge than you have in the north, but it is still a challenge and those folks need representation, too. Any thoughts on how we balance out all of these different competing challenges?

**Mr. Ungarian:** Well, that is a challenge. You're right. I mean, the challenges or what MLAs have to deal with in a large urban are certainly different than in a rural, remote area. I don't think there is an easy answer to how you balance that, but certainly the MLAs are familiar with their ridings and their constituents, and that's why they stepped up to put their name forward to represent those areas, so they would be aware of those challenges, and they would have to deal – I wouldn't expect an MLA from, you know, somewhere in central Calgary to understand the challenges of the Peace River constituency or vice versa although our MLA now being Municipal Affairs has obviously dipped into the whole province's municipalities.

Yeah. I think that the MLAs need to be people with local knowledge, and that local knowledge will drive their agenda and what they represent. I mean, I know that caucus meets as a group and makes group decisions, no different than municipal councils, but they certainly have to be more in tune with their region than what they would be somewhere else in the province if that makes any sense.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah, that's great. Thank you so much. Appreciate it.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** No, but thank you very much for your submissions.

**The Chair:** Susan.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you again for your submission and the importance of the north. I think that we heard loud and clear from across the province, not just people who live in your region, about the concerns of the north not having a voice. Again, thank you for your time. It is certainly high on our list of things to look at in the next coming weeks.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** No questions, but thank you for your presentation. You have reiterated many of the themes we've heard again and again in our public-faced meetings of the last several days as well as in the, well, hundreds of letters we've received from residents of the north about the importance of keeping a strong northern voice, so thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Ungarian, sorry I had to kind of cut you off, but your presentation is very appreciated. Especially, we love it when people who are actually governing in the regions step up and tell us what it's like to work with MLAs and the challenges that they have in their regions, so thank you so much for presenting. Yeah. Much appreciated.

**Mr. Ungarian:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We're going to have a break now, I believe, for 10 minutes, so we'll reconvene at 10 minutes to 11.

[The hearing adjourned from 10:39 a.m. to 10:51 a.m.]

**The Chair:** Okay. We're going to start the second half of this morning's presentations, and our first presenter is Mr. Robert Willing from Peace River. Mr. Willing, you're on the screen.

**Mr. Willing:** Good morning. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to present to the commission. My name is Bob Willing. I'm the reeve for the municipal district of Peace, not Peace River, just municipal district of Peace. I've got a few comments, and I'll just go through them quickly. I know the time is short. As a

municipality we are not in favour of the changes that have been made for numerous reasons, some of them which you've already heard from some of the other representatives.

You know, we've looked at the report and read it, and your own report acknowledges that travel distances in the rural areas are a problem. I know from talking to the northern MLAs past and present that they typically travel approximately 80 days a year to service their ridings. I mean, this kind of equates to about 20 per cent of their time, so it's not really a fair comparison to their southern colleagues. The new proposed riding for Minister Williams also has a driving time of about 10-plus hours from north to south, and I don't know how he's even going to be able to cover his own riding given those kinds of distances.

We don't feel that the flexibility was fully used in the determination here. Population and variance exceptions are allowed under section 15(2), and only one exemption was used despite northern Alberta clearly meeting multiple criteria.

We're also concerned about loss of community cohesion in the Peace region. Changing these boundaries also changes the myriad of connections that these MLAs have collected over the years. Changing the boundaries will make them have to establish these new relationships and take away yet more time from their valuable time, so we're concerned about that.

I mean, we feel that northern Alberta shouldn't lose a seat, you know, when its issues are the most acute. Now, I know we've heard that and I know that every municipality has issues that they feel are more acute than everybody else, so that can be taken with a grain of salt as well. We understand that, but we have extreme distances, limited transportation options, sparse populations, intermittent Internet service, some areas having none whatsoever. We feel that for northern Alberta to lose a seat while Calgary and Edmonton gain representation: they're gaining at our loss.

We also have concerns with the hybrid ridings. Urban issues are completely different from rural. There are some carryovers, obviously, but while these hybrid ridings appear to solve the population issues, priorities tend to go to the most and loudest voices. Unless there's a balance of population, the rural voice is going to be lost. You kind of lose your ability to look at options in the area.

**The Chair:** Can you specifically point to a hybrid riding that's problematic for you in the north?

**Mr. Willing:** Yes. I mean, our municipality, actually. I'm quite blessed because I actually have two MLAs because our municipality straddles Minister Loewen's and Minister Williams's ridings. We do have the opportunity to contact one or the other, but at the same time when issues are extreme, we have to contact both. So we have to kind of do double the work. It's kind of a two-edged sword there.

We're also a little concerned that the commissioners did not make it up here first-hand other than the chartered flight that you took. I understand, you know, travel concerns being what they are, but our municipality and our MLAs have to work with that on a daily basis. It would be really nice if in future boundary revisions maybe the commission should have to drive up to High Level and see how far it actually is.

That's pretty well all of my comments. I know that some of these other presenters have also echoed these and others. There were some very good comments. I especially liked Mr. Cyr's comments about multiple MLAs being able to work on problems where we only have one, and in our case I guess we have two.

That's it. If there are any questions, I'm certainly happy to answer.



**The Chair:** Okay. I've got a couple of clarification questions. When you say that we didn't come up "here," where's here for you?

**Mr. Willing:** Oh, sorry. The municipal district of Peace is just outside of the town of Peace River. I do understand that you did come up here for the hearings in the summer, but it was a charter flight. I think that, you know, you're asking MLAs – I mean, MLAs have to drive. They cannot fly. We don't have scheduled service into Peace River, so there's no flight ability there anyway. So it would have been nice for the commissioners to drive up.

**The Chair:** I think we made a comment in the report to that effect. Yeah. Your point is well made. I think it was commented on when we were up there, "How did you get here?" We said, "Oh, we flew." "Oh, that's too bad," was the response. It would have been an object lesson for us. I know that.

I want to push you back on the hybrids. Which hybrid don't you like?

**Mr. Willing:** Well, it's just the concept of hybrids. I feel that the rural voice is getting diluted by mixing it with urban. I know we're all Albertans and we're all supposed to be represented by our MLAs, but I just feel that when you split up ridings or try to balance out the population – and I understand the logistics behind that – it becomes difficult. It's just the concept of hybrid ridings, where the rural voice gets diluted by the urban voice.

**The Chair:** Okay. It's a bit of a hobby horse for me, so I'm going to respond to that and tell you what I said to a presenter in Calgary who criticized hybrids as well. We only have three tools in our tool box for changing the boundaries based on population. One of them is to add a lot more representatives so that we can have a large Legislature so everybody has a local MLA. That's one. Unfortunately, we were only given two more seats, from 87 to 89, so we don't have a lot of room to play with on that option. The second one is to face reality and realize that the areas outside of the major metropolitan cities, Calgary and Edmonton, are sparsely populated and we take ridings away from the rural areas. Our third option is hybrids, and it's the only option we have short of taking away more nonmetropolitan seats.

I hear what you say, but I felt I had to make this explanation because I approached and addressed somebody else who criticized them from the other perspective yesterday.

**Mr. Willing:** I understand your task is a very difficult one. I get it, you know, numbers being what they are and trying to balance out equal representation. My task as a representative of my population is to try to push forward the rural voice as best I can.

11:00

**The Chair:** I want to open it up for questions and comments of the commission to have a dialogue with you.

**Mr. Evans:** You were asked to provide an example of a specific hybrid that you had a concern with so that we could really dive into that. You didn't do that, and I think Justice Miller asked you again. I'm going to ask you a third time: is there a specific hybrid riding that you could point to, and then we could talk about your concerns? Why I say that is – and maybe you didn't hear the mayor from Grande Prairie, but the mayor from Grande Prairie actually said that she preferred the ridings as they exist right now, where there are, in fact, two hybrids.

**Mr. Willing:** That's fair. I'll reiterate: I don't have one in particular. To me, it's just the concept. Maybe it's because there seems to be a little bit of a split within the province between rural

and urban, and a lot of it has to go around funding for urbans, which is a sore point for rurals. These are political issues that, obviously, the commission doesn't have to worry about, but we feel that the rural voice is just getting diluted by hybrid ridings. In some cases, yes, absolutely, it has to work, and in some communities it probably does work very well. I know Mayor Clayton, and I think it does work very well for them given the makeup of the city and the county of Grande Prairie and the way things work there. It was just a comment on hybrid ridings.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Susan.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you, and thank you for your presentation. We've heard a lot about the north. For me personally I live in Sylvan Lake, so I've learned quite a bit about how unique and how different and how things that I for one might take for granted do not exist there, so I appreciate your comments. We're certainly going to have some more discussion on the changes we made in the north because we've heard loud and clear from more than just your area about how this doesn't work for not just the north but probably for Albertans in general. Again, thank you.

**Mr. Willing:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Willing, I do have to interject this as well. I hail from Lethbridge, and since I've started this commission work, I've stopped describing Edmonton as northern Alberta, okay?

**Mr. Willing:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much, Reeve Willing. I wanted to ask you about growth expectations in your municipal district, both population, obviously, but in terms of the economic growth.

**Mr. Willing:** Well, I can give you what I hope happens. I know that Reeve Ungarian mentioned the possibility of a nuclear power plant. We are very, very hopeful for that within our area. The area of the province I live in is actually quite depressed economically. There's been no real growth in 20-plus years. People talk about housing crises. We've got lots of houses. There's no problem, housing crisis in our area.

The nuclear power plant, however – we're looking at doubling the population in the Peace River area probably conservatively: the town of Peace River, town of Grimshaw, and the surrounding municipalities. I mean, we're hopeful for that. Economically, oil and gas is still relatively big amongst at least my neighbours, not in my municipality. We're basically an agricultural municipality, so nothing fancy going on. It's just steady farming work, and that's pretty well it for us. The nuclear power plant is a game changer for our area.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you, sir.

**The Chair:** What's the main centre in the Peace Country, and where do you live?

**Mr. Willing:** I live just outside of the town of Peace River. That would be the main centre with a population of 7,000. Grimshaw is 2,500. Well, it's probably almost equal distance between the two.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Dr. Martin:** And as for your point about us driving up there, I would welcome it, but you know, I don't write the budget for the commission.

**Mr. Willing:** Well, give me a call. I'll come down and drive you up and we'll have a nice talk.

**The Chair:** By the way, I remember fondly. I had never been to Peace up until June of last year, and I was blown away at the sunshine all over. We were there at a great time. I hope you don't take offence that we didn't drive up there this year or this time around for the submissions. Thank you.

**Mr. Willing:** Yeah. And just to reiterate how big the north is, a member of Mackenzie county put it so very aptly, and if Mayor Clayton is still online, she might understand. There's a conference in Grande Prairie every year called Growing the North. This member from Mackenzie county has to drive six hours south to go to a Growing the North Conference, so it kind of puts it in perspective as to how big we are.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Okay. Thank you so much. Please remain and hear the other presenters as well.

**Mr. Willing:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Our next presenter – and we're bang on schedule – is Jason Javos.

**Mr. Javos:** Good morning. How are you today?

**The Chair:** Good morning. Please identify yourself and tell us where you live and what ridings or electoral divisions you're commenting on. Unmute if you can.

**Mr. Javos:** Oh, sorry. Can you hear me now?

**The Chair:** Yeah.

**Mr. Javos:** All right. Deputy Reeve Jason Javos with Northern Sunrise county. It's a municipality just south of the town of Peace River, a fairly large county but very sparsely populated. I'll be talking about everything up in the north, I guess. I have a written submission. Do you want me to start?

All right. My name is Jason Javos. I'm the deputy reeve of Northern Sunrise county. I'm here today to express our profound concern and severe discontent with the Electoral Boundaries Commission based on October 27, 2025. The proposed electoral boundary changes, particularly those affecting northern Alberta, reflect a fundamentally urban-centred approach that diminishes the voices and lived realities and democratic representation of the northern residents.

The absorption of ridings such as Lesser Slave Lake into significant larger northern ridings sends a troubling and unmistakable message that northern voices matter less simply because our populations are low. This approach reduces representation to a numeric exercise and ignores the practical, geographical, cultural, and economic realities of the north. The implication is clear: because few people live there, our ability to have meaningful representation is negotiable.

This is deeply ironic. The resources the province has welcomed with open arms – oil, gas, forestry and agriculture, energy and minerals – are predominantly resourced from northern Alberta. The province's economic prosperity has been built in large measure on the contributions of northern communities, yet when it comes to representation, those are the same communities that are repeatedly asked to accept less with less access, less voice, and less advocacy.

Effective representation is not determined by population alone. Geographic distance, infrastructure, travel realities, communities of interest, and the sheer feasibility of constituency service must be

integral considerations. When ridings expand, immense geographic areas encompassing dozens of districts, communities, representation become diluted to the point of ineffectiveness. At that scale, representation risks becoming symbolic rather than functional.

The proposed ridings outlined in the report clearly illustrate this concern, for example the Slave Lake-Athabasca-Westlock proposed riding. While similar in geographical size to the current Lesser Slave Lake riding, this proposal removes the town of Slave Lake, the municipal district of Lesser Slave River, and the Sawridge First Nation from their closest neighbouring communities. These areas share long-standing economic, social, and service relationships. Separating them fractures established communities of interest and disrupts Indigenous and non-Indigenous neighbours who rely on shared infrastructure, governance, co-ordination, and regional collaboration.

**11:10**

The Peace River-Notley area proposed riding raises the most serious concerns for us. In this proposal Northern Sunrise county is included in the riding, that combines two full existing ridings and a portion of another. The boundary stretches from Paddle Prairie Métis settlement south to Fox Creek and includes Manning, Peace River, High Prairie, Falher, Donnelly, McLennan, and numerous other communities. In effect, this riding encompasses all of Dunvegan, Central Peace-Notley, a significant portion of Peace River, then Manning through Shaver and parts of Grande Prairie-Smoky.

The geographical dimensions of this proposed riding are immense and wholly impractical. For a single MLA to travel between communities would require extraordinary time commitments over poor road conditions and long distances, fundamentally limiting the MLA's availability, responsiveness, and presence. This is not a theoretical concern; it is a daily operational reality in the north.

Mackenzie. The proposed Mackenzie riding is approximately double the size of the current Lesser Slave Lake riding and removes High Prairie and Slave Lake from their surrounding municipalities. Once again, regional hubs are disconnected from the communities that depend on them for service, employment, and co-ordination. These restructurings disregard how northern residents actually live, work, and access services.

In reviewing the transcripts of our previous submissions to the commission, it is particularly striking that these changes were clearly acknowledged by the panel itself. Mr. Clark, a panel participant, noted the vast geography of the Peace River region and emphasized that there is no scheduled air service available. He fully recognized that an MLA simply cannot charter a flight when travel is required. These are not minor inconveniences; they are fundamental barriers to accessibility and effective preparedness in the north. As Mr. Clark aptly stated, proper representation: there is tremendous value to that, in my opinion. Despite this acknowledgement, the commission's proposed boundaries move in the opposite direction, assigning an even larger territory to a single MLA. This contradiction is deeply concerning. If the panel recognizes that geography, travel limitations, and isolation already strain representation, expanding riding sizes furthermore undermines the very principles of effective representation that have commissioned its mandate and project.

At the core of this issue is a simple but critical question: when northern ridings become so large, will our MLAs truly know who we are, what matters to us, and what challenges we face, or will northern residents become distant names on a map competing for limited attention across vast territories?

Rural and northern communities face realities that large urban centres do not. These include limited access to health care specialists and long emergency response times, aging and vulnerable infrastructure, workforce shortages or volunteers for them, vast travel distances, limited public transportation, and fewer social programs. Discussions made in Edmonton often have immediate and disproportionate impacts on the north.

I think I had a timer there.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you for that presentation, Mr. Javos. Much appreciated. I'm going to turn it over to our panel members to have dialogue and questions with you.

Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much, and thank you for being here today. You very succinctly outline a whole range of issues that many speakers and more than 100 letters recently have pointed out to us. I'm particularly concerned that those historical relationships for decision-making and planning be preserved. We, obviously, take seriously the logistics of providing constituency services over these vast distances and a whole range of small communities. You know, we wish as a commission that we'd had the opportunity to travel further in the north to further impress upon ourselves the scale of the footprint of the existing, let alone the proposed electoral districts and to see the difficulties of travel and communication in the north.

Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your time today. I appreciate your detailed submission. I want you to know that we have been overwhelmed by comments like yours from people who live there who disagree with our first draft of the north. We're going back to the table in a couple of days, and this will certainly be a high priority that we will look at. Thank you again.

**Mr. Javos:** Thank you.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you for your submissions, for taking the time to present to us. Yeah. I echo the comments of my fellow commissioners.

**The Chair:** Let me maybe give you – this isn't devil's advocate, but we had a presentation by an MLA earlier this week in Calgary who expressed concern for an unreasonably large riding, and he, of course, was meaning population. He had in excess of 60,000 people in his electoral division. So unreasonably large is in the eye of the beholder to some extent. I put to him the unreasonably large problem that we may have created in the north with an electoral division where the southern boundary, I am told, is closer to Montana than it is to Northwest Territories.

**Mr. Javos:** Correct.

**The Chair:** I haven't verified that; I've been told that. But it does, you know, put a different perspective on what exactly is unreasonably large. We are cognizant of both of those problems and challenges. Sorry; the population isn't only one thing in a large urban riding. There's a multitude of challenges for representation. But we've heard you. We're hearing voices from the north, and we appreciate the candour and the manner in which the presentations are made. Thank you very much, Mr. Javos. Much appreciated.

**Mr. Javos:** If I could just say one more thing. You know, population obviously has to play a role in this, but maybe in the matrix we could give some weight to Alberta's GDP, if you understand where I'm coming from.

**The Chair:** We hear you. Yes. Okay. Thank you very much, sir.

**Mr. Javos:** Thank you for the time.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Please remain online, if you can, to hear further presentations.

Our next up is Mr. Rick Smith.

**Mr. Roth:** Mr. Chair, the next presenter isn't online, but Mr. Beck is just joining us right now.

**The Chair:** Oh, so Mr. Smith isn't...

**Mr. Roth:** I don't have him online, no.

**The Chair:** Okay. I'm not sure I told all the commissioners this, but we've got a late edition this morning. Mr. Todd Beck from Medicine Hat is wanting to present.

Mr. Beck, are you present?

**Mr. Beck:** Yes. I just signed in. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Please identify yourself and tell us – well, we already know you're from Medicine Hat – what particular ridings you wish to address.

**Mr. Beck:** Okay. Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen of the commission, my name is Todd Beck. I am a CPA with over 25 years in public practice as a partner in a Medicine Hat public accounting firm with clients located both inside the city of Medicine Hat and the surrounding rural areas. I'm also the vice-chair of the Monarch Group of Companies, which is owned by Bill Yuill, operating as a private equity firm with businesses in transportation, real estate, and sports franchises. I serve on the board of the Bill and Elizabeth Yuill Family Foundation, which is a private foundation that in 2025 committed over \$12 million in funding to health education and youth programs offered within both the city of Medicine Hat and Cypress county.

With all the submission slots for the hearing on Friday covering the south boundaries being full, I appreciate the courtesy of being allowed to present today. Thank you for your time and the important work you are undertaking.

I am presenting today in support of maintaining the current electoral boundaries of the Cypress-Medicine Hat and the Brooks-Medicine Hat constituencies. Medicine Hat and the surrounding communities are often referred to as the forgotten corner of Alberta and have become increasingly integrated across economic, educational, cultural, and service lines. The current urban model, part rural, part urban, is not only functional but foundational to how representation is delivered in this part of Alberta. The current constituency boundaries blend urban and rural communities effectively.

11:20

This model strengthens democratic representation by balancing urban priorities for infrastructure, health care, and innovation with rural concerns of transportation, agriculture, and land use. This model allows for a balanced discussion to occur within the constituent associations, which is a refreshing change from the polarization we see in almost all aspects of our society. This balanced representation then flows up to the candidates nominated for that region, resulting in a consensus level of needs and concerns for that region, a result far superior to that of a more defined and polarized split between urban and rural ridings.

The result of two constituencies each serving rural and urban areas of southeastern Alberta helps to off-set the common but

accurate perception of this being a forgotten corner. It ensures that constituents in the region have voices they need for proper accessibility and advocacy of their complex issues. It is critical for managing regional issues, including economic development and diversification, health care investment, education, infrastructure programs, and energy needs, including diversification.

The city of Medicine Hat is the only major economic service hub between Regina and Calgary. It is the major trading and service area for southeastern Alberta, resulting in a sharing of common issues and needs with the rural areas in the service area. To this end, Medicine Hat provides shared critical regional infrastructure in areas of health care, with a regional hospital and specialists serving southeastern Alberta; education, Medicine Hat College with satellite campus in Brooks; economic leadership, the Southeast Alberta Chamber of Commerce, which was formerly only the Medicine Hat chamber of commerce, which demonstrates the inclusiveness of this region.

The Palliser Economic Partnership is another prime example of success resulting from the combination of rural and urban populations working together to achieve results that meet the needs for everyone. The Palliser Economic Partnership serves the area from Oyen to the U.S. border and the Saskatchewan border to the county of Forty Mile. This footprint matches the current constituency boundaries.

Similarly, the Prairie Rose school division serves nearly the entire rural territory of both constituencies thereby benefiting from representation from two MLAs. Education is one of the most pressing issues constituents face, and redrawing these lines would result in confusing representation, policy fragmentation, and less effective local advocacy.

While it is true the current election boundary lines provide Medicine Hat with more direct representation per capita than other cities like Red Deer, Lethbridge, Airdrie, and Grande Prairie, I feel this is fair considering that Medicine Hat is serving as the regional capital, supporting the needs of numerous rural communities to a greater extent than other cities in Alberta do, and therefore is not isolated from the interests and concerns of those rural communities.

I conclude by restating my position, which is also consistent with the organizations that I represent. We argue the election boundaries should be left status quo as the current boundaries reflect the sharing of interests in economic, education, cultural, and other services across the region. Maintaining two Medicine Hat anchored constituencies ensures effective representation for both urban and rural communities in southern Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Beck.

I'm going to allow the commissioners to dialogue and have some questions. Do you want to go first, Susan?

**Mrs. Samson:** Sure.

Thank you for your presentation today. It interests me greatly because we received over 1,100 submissions after the interim report came out, and Cypress-Medicine Hat, Brooks-Medicine Hat remained unchanged. Well, we did change the name to put Medicine Hat first because it is the largest centre, so there was a change; I should say that. But what I did read in the submissions were people who lived in Medicine Hat who accused or suggested that we were gerrymandering the maps because we would not look at one single electoral division. Just for your information because you're well versed on this, the population, which is one of the overlays we look at, is too large. The city of Medicine Hat, sitting at 68,000, is split to accommodate the rural around you whereas

cities like Red Deer and Lethbridge can be nicely split in half and fall within the target population that we look at.

It is refreshing for me to hear from you that you like the fact that it remained the way it was since the last time it was looked at. I don't know if you have any comments on that.

**Mr. Beck:** Yeah. Thank you for that. I guess the reason I am presenting is that there had been some rumours or we've heard that the organizations I represent wanted a change. To clarify that on the public record, I felt it important that we make a presentation saying that we would like the boundaries to remain the same. We think it works well. We think the integration between the rural and the urban populations works well the way they're at. It's how we operate economically. It's how we trade. Other organizations are using those same boundaries. We all work together. Yeah. We are requesting that the boundaries stay the same, and that's why I am presenting.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah.

Mr. Beck, thanks for your presentation. You're a numbers guy, so I want to bring up something that you made reference to in terms of that you've heard or there's been comment that Medicine Hat is overrepresented in the Legislature as compared to other cities like Red Deer, Lethbridge, and Grande Prairie. Would you agree that that's because you are, really, two hybrid ridings and that gives you a bump? And would it not be the case then, you know, by using the numbers, if that was Lethbridge's complaint, that they weren't receiving sufficient representation, that the solution there would be to add hybrid ridings to the city, thereby increasing their representation in the Legislature?

**Mr. Beck:** I think so. I think what works here is that in our trading areas it's an awfully big rural area with, you know, not much population. It's pretty barren out here. It's a big area, so I think it helps – these people come into Medicine Hat to trade. I think your MLA representing the area can better represent the people that are all trading in the area.

As for Lethbridge, I can't really comment on those areas. But what we have in this society is a lot of polarization, urban versus rural. I think any attempt at the grassroots to get those issues boiled down sooner rather than later will be an assistance in governing the province.

**Mr. Evans:** You think hybrid ridings are a mechanism to achieve that, to depolarize. Is that what you're saying?

**Mr. Beck:** Yes.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you. I'd like to follow along that line of conversation if I might, sir, your remarks, then, about having MLAs that by necessity of their work become very sensitized and aware of the issues of both urban and rural communities of interest. Much of the discussion we have had and continue to have among ourselves about hybrids – you know, we have very large hybrids, as it were, such as the one with Brooks-Medicine Hat and Cypress-Medicine Hat, and we have relatively small ones that we see in other parts of the province.

11:30

Hybrids can be different. They're not a thing in themselves any more than urban and rural are an adequate description of the forms of life of people in Alberta. There are loads of suburban. There's a whole spectrum of communities, and so, too, with hybrids, I suspect.

I'm most interested in your assertion that even prospective MLA candidates will be pretty much assessed on their sensitivity and awareness of both urban and rural issues. Could you comment more on that particular theme?

**Mr. Beck:** Well, I think it comes from the constituency associations. They will be made up of people from the rural and from the urban, and they all bring their ideas and their concerns into the constituency association, which then, you know, is a form of information and governance for the MLA, certainly for the nomination process. So I think that's a real benefit, having the input at that level.

**Dr. Martin:** If we were going to characterize it in our classification scheme, is Redcliff suburban or is it urban? It doesn't feel rural to me. It's one of those in-between sort of communities. Would you agree with that?

**Mr. Beck:** Yeah. It's part of Medicine Hat. It's viewed as part of Medicine Hat. We have development now that is contiguous. It's not separate at all. It would be no more different than Bowness is different than inside of Calgary, in my opinion.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Beck, you touched on something, and I'm not sure if another presenter ever said this, that is the bridging of a contentious divide that's developed in our society not only in Alberta, not only in Canada. We're all aware of that. You're saying that by having hybrids with city folk and country folk together in an electoral division, that helps bridge the divide. Is that what you're saying?

**Mr. Beck:** I'm saying that in this area it does. It's how we operate our Medicine Hat and district health foundation, how we operate our economic development. So in this area it does. Medicine Hat only has 65,000 population, but it is the major trading area for the entire southeastern corner, so we're all affected. Businesses in Medicine Hat are affected by the rural issues. Rural issues are affected by the infrastructure and other demands of the urban individuals or the urban concerns. So in this area it does. We operate together.

**The Chair:** Now, I don't know the exact numbers in terms of population. Kind of both electoral divisions are right close to the average, but I don't know the breakdown between urban and country in each riding. But you don't feel that one is drowning out the other? That's not a problem?

**Mr. Beck:** No, we do not feel that.

**The Chair:** Okay.

One more. You're the last presenter before lunch, so we have a couple of minutes. Someone actually proposed early on your two ridings as a model for Lethbridge in the south, recognizing that it's very likely we're going to have to take out ridings from the areas outside the metropolitan cities of Calgary and Edmonton. That person said: well, let's look at Lethbridge. If you look at the southern band of the province, you've got Medicine Hat divided into two. Let's take Lethbridge and divide it into four, and we'll have a block of six ridings basically across the south that are exactly on the model that you're endorsing. We got tremendous push-back on that. What do you say to your cousins in Lethbridge on this issue?

**Mr. Beck:** Well, again, I'm not familiar with their trading and their interaction as much between the rural areas and the urban areas. I think their towns are much larger to the south than we are. You take a look at Elkwater, Irvine, Seven Persons, Schuler. You know, those are small hamlets, and they all come into Medicine Hat as opposed to the communities that surround Lethbridge.

I don't think it's a fair comparison that the model that works here will work there. I wouldn't want to say it would in all instances, but what I do like is that if you have that discussion of local needs in an area that all have a common interest, whether you're rural or urban, if you have that more at the local area and you filter that up through your representative to the government, that can be nothing but good, as opposed to a polarization between urban needs and city needs all chasing funds from the provincial government.

**The Chair:** Thank you. The way I describe that band of the south: it's amazing what water will do. What a difference water makes; irrigation in the Lethbridge region versus much less so in the southeastern corner.

**Mr. Beck:** I couldn't agree more, and we're hoping in the near future that there may be some projects that, you know, save us some more water. It's such an important resource. Couldn't agree more.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Beck, so much for coming in, and we're pleased that we could fit you in on late notice.

**Mr. Beck:** Thank you very much again for fitting me in. Yes, you know, we had heard that we were being misrepresented, and we really wanted to get this on record. I really appreciate it.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

I'll just make a shout-out to see if there's anyone online that was scheduled to present, who I may have neglected to call out. Anyone?

Okay. We will adjourn this morning's proceedings and reconvene at 1:30 this afternoon. Thank you.

[The hearing adjourned at 11:38 a.m.]











Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Public Hearings

Virtual

Friday, January 16, 2026  
1:27 p.m.

Transcript No. 39

## **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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Manager of Corporate Communications

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Managing Editor of *Alberta Hansard*

## **Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Virtual**

### **Public Participants**

Bill Cocks, Councillor, City of Medicine Hat  
Devin Dreeschen, MLA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake  
Kevin Ferguson, Mayor, Town of Ponoka  
Kim Harris, Mayor, Town of Crossfield  
Kevin Henderson  
Helen Holder  
Sean Krausert, Mayor, Town of Canmore  
Penni Lougheed, Trustee, Wild Rose School Division  
Heather Spearman, Mayor, City of Airdrie  
Alison Van Dyke  
Justin Wright, MLA, Cypress-Medicine Hat



1:27 p.m.

Friday, January 16, 2026

[Justice Miller in the chair]

**The Chair:** Well, good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to our final public hearing session for this week. This is our first week of the second round of public hearings for the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission. As everyone is probably no doubt aware, we are an independent commission established by the Legislature of Alberta. The commission members are listed on the following slide, and you can check out our biographies on the website.

The task of the commission is to deal with two main issues; that is, the impact of expanding the Legislature of Alberta from 87 electoral divisions to 89. Of course, we all know that voters who reside inside an electoral division are the ones that choose the member of the Legislature. The current map provides for 87 members in the Legislature. Changes to the legislation over a year ago have brought in two more ridings, so it's 89 electoral divisions that we are dealing with and planning to apportion throughout the province. That's the one issue that we must deal with as a commission.

The second one is the vast increase in population that Alberta has experienced. Nine years ago was the last Electoral Boundaries Commission, headed up by Justice Bielby, and that commission dealt with a population of slightly over 4 million Albertans. Since that time the population has increased such that it is well over 4.88 million in population. So how we apportion those 89 ridings given the fact that the population has increased so significantly is our task.

Now to give you some perspective at the local level. The 2017 Bielby report, as I said, had just over 4 million people, and dividing that between 87 electoral divisions gave an average of 46,697 per electoral division. That is not the target for the commission. The target, rather, is the population range of below and above that average amount, so that population target gives us a range of 35,000 to just over 58,000. That was the 2017 commission.

This time around, as you can see, the formula is 4.88 million over 89 constituencies, that reveals an average population per electoral division of 54,929. Again, that's not the target for our commission. The target population range per electoral division is minus 25 per cent of that average to plus 25 per cent. As long as we're in that range, we meet the requirement of effective representation, and that's just over 41,000 to 68,000.

The task of this commission is not to apportion the ridings according to the formula of one person, one vote. We do not have a rep-by-pop principle in Canada or in Alberta, and we never have. No Canadian jurisdiction has ever had a strict one person, one vote formula. That is a U.S. concept, and they have adopted that and utilized that, but that is not a Canadian concept. The Canadian concept, rather, is effective representation, and it's based on several things. First of all, Canada's history, Supreme Court and appellate court jurisprudence, and legislation. So the marching orders for our commission are to come up with a map that provides effective representation for all Albertans given the fact that we have increased the ridings from 87 to 89 and we have a mass influx of new Albertans.

Our commission was appointed in early April, and since that time we've been busy doing several things that give rise to our sitting this week and next week. First of all, we met and we dealt with the issue of population. We came up with an agreed-upon population standard that is based on the last decennial census of 2021, a federal census, which is updated and corrected regularly by the Office of Statistics and Information of the Alberta Treasury Board. The rationale and the way we approach the population can be seen, I

believe, on pages 15 to 17 of our interim report if you want more background information on that.

Once we decided on basic ground rules such as population, we then started receiving public input and suggestions to our task leading up to our interim report. We reviewed all those submissions, and we then started, in late May, conducting public hearings throughout the province. We started in Pincher Creek, went as far up as Fort McMurray, went over to Grande Prairie, Peace River, and back down to Medicine Hat and Brooks and several days in between at Calgary and Edmonton. We heard from a broad cross-section of Albertans, and we had the privilege of being in many of the great communities that we're going to hear from today and next week.

After we completed those public hearings, we worked with Elections Alberta personnel who provided us with incredible assistance in terms of maps, population allocation, and all the technical tools that we needed to come up with a report. According to the legislated schedule we then issued our interim report, and on October 27 we provided the interim report to the Speaker of the Legislature, and he tabled it and provided each member of the Legislature with a copy almost immediately.

In completing our interim report, we considered the many factors in the legislation. I won't go through them, but you can review them if you so wish. You may already have. They're inside the introduction of our report. That's an interim report, and our goal not only in the interim but in the long-term, permanent report is to provide boundaries and electoral divisions that give Albertans effective representation and boundaries that are understandable and clear to the public.

1:35

After our interim report was tabled, we opened a portal on our website to receive public feedback to our report, and we heard public feedback. We have over 1,100 written submissions. I'm told it's one of the most responded-to reports of any legislative committee. We're pleased to know that the public has been engaged and very interested in what we had to say. We closed the portal for public input just before Christmas.

This week and next week we are dedicated to hearing further from members of the public specifically in response to our report. Our report contains several changes. Very few of the electoral divisions remain the same, and we're looking for input on specific changes and specific ridings that we've dealt with.

We as a commission have very few tools available to us in terms of what we can do to allocate boundaries. One is outside of our control, and that is the number of seats that we can use. We were just directed that we have two more seats, so we're limited to 89. We have to work with the legislated mandate of only two new seats. The second thing that we have at our disposal in order to meet the goal of effective representation is we can take ridings out of the rural areas and provide them into the more populous metropolitan cities, Calgary and Edmonton. The third option and the third tool that we have is to use hybrid ridings, and hybrid ridings are very simply those ridings that contain part rural areas and part urban areas. Alberta has had hybrid ridings for decades, and we are only now starting to – there has been some strong opposition to use of hybrids, but they are a valid legislated tool that we can use, and we have expanded their use in this report.

We look forward to feedback. We've got a fairly long list of presenters this afternoon, this Friday afternoon of a long week. I'm going to turn it over – I see our first presenter is present – to Mr. Sean Krausert. Please identify yourself and tell us what riding you are from and what riding you wish to comment on.

**Mr. Krausert:** Great. Thank you very much. I'm Mayor Sean Krausert of the town of Canmore. Therefore, I'm currently located in the Banff-Kananaskis riding, and I'm commenting on proposed electoral division 53, which has been called Banff-Jasper. I want to thank you for the opportunity to present today and thank you for that summary. You've definitely got a huge workload ahead of you and that you've already accomplished so far, and it's really important. It's the foundation of our electoral system, and I thank you for that work.

I want to speak today on two issues: one, support for the new boundaries, and two, concern with the described naming protocol not being followed in this case. First of all, turning to my support for the boundaries, I very much support the inclusion of Jasper along with Banff and Canmore and some of the foothills. Canmore is connected so very deeply with Banff and Jasper already. We meet together as councils. We meet together when we go to AB Munis socially. We have similar issues and similar contexts.

Canmore and Banff in particular are really two municipalities but one community in many ways. We work together on transit, seniors' lodging, waste management, wildfire mitigation, emergency preparedness, human-wildlife coexistence, and much, much more. This isn't just, you know, one admin contacting the other to see what they're up to. This is formal. Our Bow Valley Regional Transit Services Commission is the third-largest transit system per capita in the province. We just passed 3 million riders here in the Bow Valley. The Bow Valley Regional Housing, the Bow Valley Waste Management Commission: these are all formal things that we're connected to each other on, so it's such a good idea to have us connected as the three mountain communities.

I have heard that there is a suggestion that was presented from a mayoral colleague of mine in Sundre to include Sundre with Banff and Jasper and perhaps place Canmore elsewhere, perhaps with Crowsnest Pass. While I'm sure this is well intentioned, I suggest that it's impractical to separate Canmore from Banff and Jasper, and it's not a good idea to loop us in with the beautiful Crowsnest Pass as there is a very different sentiment there with respect to tourism. In fact, there is a sentiment that they don't want to be another Canmore, so I see a future MLA having a very difficult time reconciling either end of a riding that wants different things. So that's my support for the new boundaries.

My second issue is a concern with the proposed name. I recognize that the changing of names was done very sparingly for historical purposes, but where there is – am I being asked to turn something off here?

**The Chair :** Keep going.

**Mr. Krausert:** Okay.

Where there is a change, a new name is justified, and in this particular case, a change of name was suggested of Banff-Jasper as opposed to the old name, Banff-Kananaskis. Since there is a change of riding sufficient enough to change the name and a new name is proposed, I very much recommend following the naming protocol that you've described on page 39 of the draft report. Canmore is the largest municipality within this proposed new riding by far. It would contain about one third of the population, and Canmore is larger than Banff and Jasper combined. So I suggest a new name could be Canmore-Banff-Jasper, or some other combination with Canmore as the largest municipality in the name and positioned first.

With that I want to thank you for listening today in my support for the boundaries and my concern about the name, and I would be pleased to answer any questions as best as I can.

**The Chair:** Thank you for your succinct submission.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

**Mr. Evans:** Yes.

Thank you for your submissions. I have a question about the formal municipal agreements that you referenced. Can you tell me what formal municipal agreements exist between the three parties, Jasper, Banff, and Canmore?

**Mr. Krausert:** We don't have a formal agreement between the three. Jasper, Banff, and Canmore have worked together on a lot of advocacy with regard to mountain communities and especially with the very unique circumstances that we face that, really, nobody else in the province does, being tourist destinations and tight footprints and a massive amount of tourism infrastructure that has to be funded on the backs of our ratepayers. So we've worked together in that regard.

The formal agreements are mostly with Banff and Canmore, as well as some of them including also the MD of Bighorn. We are the partners for the Bow Valley Regional Transit Services Commission. We are the partners for the Bow Valley Regional Housing. We are partners for Bow Valley Waste Management Commission.

**Mr. Evans:** This is all Banff and Canmore?

**Mr. Krausert:** Yeah. All Banff and Canmore.

**Mr. Evans:** That's what you're listing off right now?

**Mr. Krausert:** Yes. All Banff and Canmore, and many of them also include the municipal district of Bighorn. We sit on the human-wildlife coexistence round table. That is our body. We also are part of a Bow Valley Corridor Alliance with regard to mass transit. There are a number of others that are just evading me right now, but we try to take advantage of the fact that we have similar needs and we're in close proximity, so we do a lot together in order to create efficiencies for our communities.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you.

1:45

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation. Most interesting. We heard a lot about the Banff-Jasper new riding, and we heard some comments, more than one, from West Yellowhead who want to keep Jasper out because they have such a close alliance, probably similar to what you have with Banff. Can you speak to that and just offer us your opinion?

**Mr. Krausert:** Well, I can certainly understand that because just as I think that it would be a real travesty to have Banff and Canmore in a different riding, I can understand if that is also the case with those in proximity to Jasper. Our connections with Jasper are more about similar context and past advocacy, but we don't have the formal arrangements like we do with Banff.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, and I very much appreciate, Mr. Mayor, you joining us. It's always good to hear from elected officials in your communities who have a good, broad view of what's happening in your communities and then neighbouring as well.

I have a couple of quick questions. Picking up on your earlier statements, you talked about the connection of Canmore to Banff but also to Jasper. Whether it's sort of formal agreements or not, what sort of work do you do with Jasper?

**Mr. Krausert:** Well there's, you know, informal sharing of best practices. Our three CAOs meet, the mayors and I meet at regular intervals to share what's going on in our communities. Of course, we're all very popular Rocky Mountain destinations. We have very similar issues to deal with, so while those are more formal and much more extensive between Canmore and Banff, we do share a lot in common with Jasper.

You know, I like the idea of Jasper being part of the boundaries. I understand if they weren't, but I think that the real travesty was the suggestion that Canmore and Banff be in a different riding.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. That's great. Do you have similar relationships with Crowsnest? You referenced that it's sort of a different, you know, kind of feel, a different sort of place. Can you maybe just expand a little bit on your earlier comments?

**Mr. Krausert:** We have no contact whatsoever with Crowsnest. I have heard through provincial representation that there is a strong resistance to the developing of a tourism-based community in Crowsnest, and I can understand where that comes from. Certainly, within Canmore we've had such resistance in our past. The thing is that, you know, specifically, they don't want to be another Canmore, so I would just hate to be the MLA that represents Canmore and the community that doesn't want to be Canmore. You know? It's a tough position to be put in.

**Mr. Clark:** Who wouldn't want to be Canmore?

**Mr. Krausert:** That's what I said.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Mayor. I appreciate it.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you, Mayor. I wanted to ask you about the linkages with Kananaskis country. I mean, immediately surrounding you and certainly south of you: wow, eight or nine provincial parks and wilderness parks. I take it that in your community, the tourism industry at the very minimum faces into Kananaskis country heavily as well as into the national park. I wonder if you could describe the management of relationships with the provincial park organizations?

**Mr. Krausert:** Yeah. Absolutely. We have good relationships in all of those areas that you just described. From a tourism perspective we share a destination management organization, Tourism Canmore Kananaskis, and they represent Canmore and Kananaskis, with about 80 per cent of the tourism spend being in Canmore and 20 per cent being in Kananaskis. Now, that's not visitation; that's visitor spend. Obviously, Kananaskis gets a lot of day trippers and hikers and whatnot.

We sit together on a Bow Valley leaders' caucus with the KID group. Now, they're a little bit of a different animal than us. This is the Kananaskis improvement district. They only control a portion of their operations. A lot of it is directly from the province. But we also work well with Alberta Parks and the national parks. We sit together on the human-wildlife coexistence round-table, that aims to ensure that we have good connectivity of wildlife rates throughout the Bow Valley. Obviously, you know, with Kananaskis, the Nordic Centre is in Kananaskis Country, and that is a huge element of life in Canmore as well.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mayor Krausert. If I could maybe wade in a little bit, when the idea first came before us of one electoral division, I was quite enamored with it and maybe for – it's almost like the English Lake District. Why would you want to break up the English Lake District? I mean, it's got a bit of romanticism to it and beautiful symmetry. However, we've received some pretty

significant push-back for the idea of the one electoral division. I can think of an earlier presentation today and one about two or three days ago in Calgary, and these were from individuals who are intimately involved with the national parks. For example, the one a few days ago expressed the need to have strong provincial interface with whoever is representing the federal parks. Your presentation really has solidified the Kananaskis, Banff, and Canmore connection. But is it fair to say that you could take it or leave it whether Jasper is in the riding? Then I have a follow-up question.

**Mr. Krausert:** Pretty close. Fair to say that.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Krausert:** I'd rather go with the status quo in that regard, of them remaining separate, although I am supportive of them being together. I don't want to misrepresent that.

**The Chair:** Sure.

**Mr. Krausert:** But the big thing is that I really truly believe Banff and Canmore have to stay connected.

**The Chair:** Oh, yes. Yeah. Okay.

Now, let me take you to what we heard this morning.

**Mr. Krausert:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Well, I haven't driven through Hinton – well, I guess we did on our tour. But, you know, 30 years ago I used to drive through Hinton a lot, and predominantly now it's always been Canmore or Banff. I used to live in Canmore. I had a place in Canmore for a few years. There was a presenter this morning that indicated that Hinton was aspiring to be like Canmore. In other words, Hinton should be Jasper's version of Canmore. I have to say that, you know, maybe that's where Canmore was 60 years ago or 50 years ago. There's some merit to that. The push-back that we've received has not been just idealistic or romantic; it's been discussing a real connection going east from the national parks.

**Mr. Krausert:** Yeah, and I expect that that connection has only gotten stronger since the tragedy that struck Jasper, especially since Hinton served such a huge role in providing housing for a lot of employees and a base for operations. I can totally see that, and I think that would be something that you should really take into account.

**The Chair:** Okay. Not to stretch the analogy of siblings, but you would be viewed as Hinton's big sister.

**Mr. Krausert:** There you go. Well, I've always liked the people of Hinton. If they want to be like Canmore, it just endears them to me even more.

1:55

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, thank you so much for presenting. Like I believe one of my colleagues said, we always value municipal leaders who step up to the plate and give us their perspective.

**Mr. Krausert:** Thank you very much for listening. I do want to underscore that while I dealt with it second, actually, my primary thing is about the naming. I want to make sure that that's been heard and that you'll give that some consideration.

**The Chair:** Yes. Okay. Thank you so much, and please remain to hear the other presenters. It's always instructive for presenters to hear each other's comments. If you're able, please remain.

**Mr. Krausert:** I will stay for a while. I'll just turn off my camera and mic. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

That now takes us to our second presenter, Mr. Bill Cocks. Please turn on your mic and tell us what ridings you wish to comment on, Mr. Cocks.

**Mr. Cocks:** Thank you, Justice Miller. I am a city councillor for the city of Medicine Hat, and I make these representations on behalf of city council. I've consulted with my colleagues on council, given them a summary of the things that I discussed with the mayor that we wanted to bring up in this representation, and I'm actually joined this afternoon by two of my fellow councillors. Councillor Dan Reynish and Councillor Brian Varga are here with me.

We are of course representing the city of Medicine Hat. The two current ridings are Brooks-Medicine Hat and Cypress-Medicine Hat, which you propose basically to leave in their current configuration but change the name so that Medicine Hat comes first in the naming. They will both be Medicine Hat ridings with one Medicine Hat-Brooks, one Medicine Hat-Cypress. I make these submissions on our behalf to urge you to consider creating one main riding that would represent the urban population of Medicine Hat.

Our feeling is that sort of the north side and the south side of the river have more in common with each other and deserve an MLA who represents the urban core of the city of Medicine Hat as opposed to dividing the city almost in two and creating two hybrid ridings, as you called them earlier, rural-urban ridings with Cypress and Medicine Hat. We would like to see that originally – well, I don't know about originally. Before the current iteration Medicine Hat was its own riding, and Cypress-Medicine Hat was a riding that was comprised mostly of the county of Cypress and the southern portion of the city of Medicine Hat with the boundary more or less running along Carry Drive. I'm not quite sure where it deviated there, but basically there was a section of the city in the southeast that went with the rural riding of Cypress, and the rest of Medicine Hat was a significantly urban-centred riding. We would like to see a return to that.

I make a couple of points here. One, I think we have more in common with Cypress than we do with Brooks. Cypress is, of course, the riding in the far southeast corner of the province. That is our service area. That is an area that aligns with our recreational and business and economic development interests. Brooks is, of course, a city of its own, and to combine two cities in one riding I think is perhaps creating a divided loyalties scenario, the possibility for that.

Medicine Hat is probably the oldest urban centre in the province. Settlement and colonization, if you will, reached Medicine Hat before it reached Calgary certainly in a significant way. We've been a city since about 1912, I believe. We were incorporated as a municipality shortly after the province was created in 1905. We're an old city. We have a strong urban identity, and I think that history and our sense of unity as an urban centre serving the southeast corner of Alberta augur in favour of creating such a riding.

I note that the purposes of the municipality are outlined in section 3 of the Municipal Government Act. They include a number of points. One of them is to provide for "economic development of the municipality." Another is to "provide services, facilities or other things that . . . are necessary or desirable for all or a part of the municipality." We believe these urban issues deserve to be presented fairly and effectively by a single MLA whose responsibility is primarily to the city of Medicine Hat, which he or she represents.

It would not be deemed appropriate, I think, although there may be arguments that will be made, for significant portions of Calgary or Edmonton to be divided out of the city and included with significant rural populations. I think Medicine Hat deserves the same respect for its urban identity. The interests of Medicine Hat south of the river and Medicine Hat north of the river have much more in common with each other than they do with the rural components of either riding.

There is, of course, the numerical balance and equitable representation, and that is a major consideration which must be borne in mind by this commission, but my argument would be that while the numbers need to remain relatively equal from riding to riding, the alignment of interest, the alignment of the population, the coalition of interests between urban and rural is a more important distinguishing factor than creating the numbers that would be more or less equal.

I think those are my basic points. I'm certainly prepared to answer any questions you may have.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, actually, your presentation is timely because we had one if not two presentations this morning on Medicine Hat or a couple yesterday. We had three or four in the last day or so.

I'm going to open it up for the commission to ask questions. Mr. Clark, any questions of this presenter?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you.

You know, quantity is not always the only indicator of what we should be taking into account, but I just think it's noteworthy that I think we've had, between the written and verbal submissions, so far perhaps two or three in support of the current configuration in the first round and, I would say, maybe two or three in the second round between written and verbal submissions so far in support of the way Medicine Hat has been drawn and substantially more than that in opposition to that. That's just an interesting point.

I'll also say the same thing to you as I said to Mayor Krausert. We really appreciate when municipal officials come and tell us the lay of the land in their community, so I want to say thank you for that as well.

You referenced the Municipal Government Act in your presentation. Would you mind reiterating that and just expanding a bit on, you know, the role of municipalities and how you feel that bears on our decision?

**Mr. Cocks:** Well, certainly, when I was reviewing the direction I wanted to take with my submissions, I consulted the Municipal Government Act.

There are a number of items, subsections in section 3 of the Municipal Government Act. I think to promote the economic development of the municipality, there's not much to link Medicine Hat and Brooks, for instance, in terms of economic development. We're 100 kilometres apart. We have very different strengths, different weaknesses, and we've got our own interests there, which I think deserve to be appropriately represented, and I think having an MLA who can speak for the urban centre of Medicine Hat, the city of Medicine Hat, does create some strength there for economic development.

2:05

I think, too, that the services that we provide as a city, while they're similar to what needs to be provided in a rural setting, are provided for in very different ways. We have a long history here in Medicine Hat of owning all of our own city utilities, so not just, you know, the sanitary utilities but also our own gas and electric, so we



think that that's a significant consideration that sets us apart from Brooks and from our rural neighbours.

Then, certainly, the other kinds of things that a city is called upon to provide – in terms of recreational opportunity, we have Medicine Hat College here, which we try to work closely with and keep in touch with so that our interests and our advocacy on behalf of one another can proceed jointly. I think those are the things that I would consider. I don't have the Municipal Government Act right in front of me at this point, but I would commend perhaps your reviewing the terms of section 3.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much. Appreciate it.

**Mr. Evans:** Good afternoon, Mr. Cocks. I happen to have the Municipal Government Act in front of me. Surprise, surprise. I don't know that it really helps your argument given that it outlines the responsibilities of the municipality and doesn't deal with what the MLA would do. Section 3: yeah, I'm not sure I understand. Section 3 says

The purposes of a municipality are

- (a) to provide good government,
- (a.1) to foster the well-being of the environment,
- (a.2) to foster the economic development of the municipality,
- (b) to provide services, facilities or other things that, in the opinion of council, are necessary or desirable for all or a part of the municipality,
- (c) to develop and maintain safe and viable communities, and
- (d) to work collaboratively with neighbouring municipalities to plan, deliver and fund intermunicipal services.

That doesn't really tie in at all with what the MLA does. These are responsibilities that attach to the city council of Medicine Hat and to the municipalities that surround Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Cocks:** If I may, I would challenge that in this regard. An MLA that represents Medicine Hat needs to be able to advocate for the things that the city of Medicine Hat is advocating for. For instance, in safety, with one of the last references you made there: we have our own city police service whereas the rural area is represented by the RCMP. I think that our alignment of our MLA with our city council with regard to policing in Medicine Hat would be something that – there could be interests of the city that the MLA could advance on our behalf. That's but one example that I'm coming up with as I'm addressing your point.

**Mr. Evans:** Are you suggesting that currently the city of Medicine Hat hasn't been represented well by two MLAs and that it would somehow be better represented by one MLA, so you have one voice instead of two?

**Mr. Cocks:** No. I think either way part of Medicine Hat is going to be represented in a hybrid writing, but my argument would be that two ridings that are hybrid dilutes the urban component of what an MLA for Medicine Hat should be bearing in mind.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Two lawyers arguing about legislation is not unheard of in my world.

Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your submission today. For my benefit, because I don't live in Medicine Hat and know it that well: with our interim report we showed the division of the city with the South Saskatchewan River. Would it still be appropriate

to consider that if we looked at one urban and one southern hybrid?

**Mr. Cocks:** I think it would become difficult to create, say, a mainly urban riding. The bulk of the population would be south of the river.

**Mrs. Samson:** Oh, I see. I got it backwards.

**Mr. Cocks:** I don't think that that would align. The boundary actually goes up 3rd Street or Gershaw Drive, at least to a certain extent, from the city centre, and that's what becomes highway 3. So anything to the north of 3rd Street, basically 3rd Street southeast-southwest, is in Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Mrs. Samson:** Right.

**Mr. Cocks:** What we're suggesting is a return to the Carry Drive alignment that would take a portion of the south side of the city, place it in a hybrid riding with Cypress. Medicine Hat proper: the downtown core, the most significant part of the populated part of the city on both sides of the river, would be the urban riding of Medicine Hat. Brooks would entail the city of Brooks and obviously some rural components as well.

**Mr. Evans:** Mr. Cocks, what's your proposal for Redcliff?

**Mr. Cocks:** I think Redcliff and Medicine Hat are quite aligned. Now, numbers-wise, I don't know just what that might do to it, but I would argue for the inclusion of Redcliff with the city of Medicine Hat. We supply the utilities. At one point we supplied their policing. They're now RCMP policed. We're contiguous. Redcliff I don't think wants to be part of Medicine Hat, and we're quite happy to have them remain their own municipality, but someday there may be a pressure to join those two. Our interests in terms of economic development and identity are very closely linked.

**Mr. Evans:** You have the Carry Drive boundary. Are you including Redcliff in that?

**Mr. Cocks:** That's to the northwest of Medicine Hat, so I would be including Redcliff with the city of Medicine Hat. Otherwise, if you needed to balance the numbers, it could be aligned with Brooks, but I don't think they'd be that pleased about that either. They would certainly recognize Medicine Hat as a core part of their identity, even if they love their own small-town way of life and their own history and so forth. I think they feel quite conjoined with the city in many ways.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.  
Anything else, Susan?

**Mrs. Samson:** No. I'm good. Thank you.

**The Chair:** No questions from Dr. Martin.

Mr. Cocks, there are several – well, first of all, I want to be sure everyone's aware that this configuration of Medicine Hat-Brooks and Medicine Hat-Cypress was not this electoral boundary commission's idea.

**Mr. Cocks:** I certainly appreciate that, and I'm aware of that, but nonetheless that's the position. As I say, this is something that I've consulted my city council on and unanimously received support for the idea of creating one significant urban riding out of Medicine Hat that would represent first and foremost the city.

2:15

**The Chair:** Yeah. But there are cascading issues whenever we make these decisions. I can imagine how the previous Electoral Boundaries Commission arrived at this configuration.

Having some experience, you know – you didn't mention it, but others have mentioned Medicine Hat being the forgotten corner. I suspect that they left that corner last, but I'm not sure, and then they just kind of shoehorned this arrangement in. We've had kind of three-part or three-layer submissions on Medicine Hat from someone yesterday, and they said: at the very least – at the very least – make the river the boundary between the two. I know we looked at it, and we have to go back as to why we didn't, but would you be content with at least a minor change making the river consistently the boundary to overcome confusion in that area that you've identified?

**Mr. Cocks:** It might be preferable. The river is a natural dividing line but only geographically. It is not a natural dividing line when it comes to economic development, when it comes to the provision of services to this area, and when it comes to identity as a community.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, thank you very much and thanks for bringing that perspective of the city leaders.

**Mr. Cocks:** I'm wondering, if I might. I did not get a written submission file primarily because I wanted to consult with council. We reserved the time to speak to you, but I didn't have time to get an endorsed submission in writing ready to present. I'm wondering if you would be open to accepting a summary of the points I've made this afternoon in written form.

**The Chair:** Certainly. If you can get that to us by – we've got it in *Hansard* now, but as soon as you can get it to us, make sure it goes to Mr. Aaron Roth, and it'll be distributed. That would be helpful.

But I hope you appreciate, and we often tell people this, that every decision has cascading effects. We've got a Brooks problem then, which leads to a Drumheller problem, which leads to another problem. It's not as easy as taking a marker out and redrawing the lines. But it's very helpful to know this. Like I said, we've had other submissions from Medicine Hatters, some very similar, some endorsing the current status quo. Please submit something in writing, and we will review it.

**Mr. Cocks:** Thank you very much. I do appreciate the difficulty of your work, and I appreciate the objective manner in which you're conducting these proceedings and making your recommendations to the Legislature.

**The Chair:** Please remain in the meeting if you can to hear other presenters.

After Mr. Cocks is Megan Stewart, our next presenter.

**Ms Spearman:** Good afternoon. Hello, everybody. This is Megan Stewart's camera, but I'm actually Mayor Heather Spearman from the city of Airdrie. It is my pleasure to be here today. Happy Friday to all of you. With me today, like we said, is Megan Stewart and our intergovernmental liaison, Leona Esau. We're simply here to ...

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. Could you identify yourself again? I missed your name.

**Ms Spearman:** Yeah. My pleasure. It's Heather Spearman, mayor of Airdrie.

**The Chair:** Oh, okay. Great. Thank you.

**Ms Spearman:** Of course.

We're here today to just let you know that we are very supportive of the proposed ridings in the report. We do recognize all of the very hard work you've been doing in order to pull this off, with lots of opinions, of course, so thank you very much for doing this.

I think it's no secret that Airdrie is experiencing astonishing growth, and the commission has truly recognized that, so we very much appreciate it. We do feel like this representation of the Airdrie area within the two ridings, which are Airdrie-East and Airdrie-West, simply is the right choice for right now in terms of our growth because you have essentially looked to have a goal of 54,929 population per riding. We are thrilled that this reflects what is happening in Airdrie. Essentially, with our growth, we're adding a town of Crossfield every year, and even with the market softening, that doesn't seem to be projected to be going away for Airdrie. We are just simply a hot spot for growth. We have a very affordable living realm here, so we anticipate this to continue, and we'll talk about those numbers in just a moment.

We do feel like the Airdrie representation is technically underrepresented today as it stands, but with these amendments to the areas for our ridings we're confident that this will reflect in 2027 exactly where our growth is projected to go and that it will create fair and equal representation, which leads me to my next point. We believe that the choice of the commission for these ridings truly does represent voter parity for us, ensures that every single vote across the province has the opportunity to have equal and effective representation. That's certainly true for Airdrie.

If you pop to our second and final slide, I just want to talk a little bit about the actual population that we're seeing here in Airdrie and what our projected growth tends to look like. Today the city of Airdrie population – and just for your information, we do a census every single year to ensure that we are staying up on our growth. As of today we're actually a bit over 90,000 in terms of population. By 2027 we expect the city of Airdrie to get 98,490. When we're looking at Airdrie-West today, as that represented riding stands, we're looking at about 48,145, and Airdrie-East is reflecting 53,952 people. Of course, this is reflecting the areas around us.

If we look forward to the blue numbers on the page there, you can see that the city of Airdrie's population, as I mentioned, is going to be well over 98,000. For Airdrie-West that means a projected population just in Airdrie of 52,214. On the Airdrie-East side of things we're looking at 54,450, and that is only reflecting the growth within the city of Airdrie limits. That is not reflecting the growth that is projected for Crossfield, Irricana, some of those smaller villages, or any of the rurals in that area. Just want to share those volumes with you because I think it's important to recognize that.

We can't confidently project the growth for 2035 for the broader area, but for Airdrie we expect to be at over 141,000 residents within the city of Airdrie boundaries by 2035, which, as you know, is likely going to be the next time for a review of these electoral boundaries. That being said, because we add roughly 5,000 people per year to the city of Airdrie, we do feel like this current riding layout that reflects Airdrie's population is going to be very effective for us in terms of a very equal representation. While currently Airdrie-West may start a little bit below the provincial average, we are confident that by the time we hit, we will be right in the sweet spot, if you will, and certainly by 2035 we will be well beyond it.

We do feel like this is forward-thinking design. We do feel that everything you've considered here is an exact reflection of the projected growth for Airdrie. It does ensure that there is equal representation, that there is sufficient room for growth in terms of

even the rural capacity around us. We know that Crossfield is also a going concern in terms of their growth projection as well. Even though we don't have the data to reflect that, we are seeing a lot of the developers moving towards Crossfield and north from there.

That's really it in a nutshell. Grateful for your time, grateful for your consideration. Airdrie is the fastest-growing city in Alberta, so this is a great layout for us, and we're very appreciative of everything that you've done for that. We are open to taking any questions or clarifications from you.

2:25

**The Chair:** Well, thank very much, Mayor Spearman. Much appreciated.

Dr. Martin, any questions?

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

Mayor Spearman, I just want to congratulate you and commiserate on the burdens of having such a fast-growing city. I want to say as well that in your first round of presentation your colleagues made a splendid presentation. It was right on the mark on all its points. I think you've got a strong team to help manage the growth that is tumbling in at you all the time.

**Ms Spearman:** I agree. We have excellent staff here.

**Dr. Martin:** I wanted merely to ask about the rural components of the current interim configurations. Do you feel that they are sort of truly rural, or are they suburban?

**Ms Spearman:** I mean, I'll speculate. I'll say that as sweetly as possible. It is Friday, after all. There are truly rural aspects to the surrounding communities around Airdrie. Anecdotally, there is a lot of farming. There's a lot of ranching. Even when you are on the city limits of Airdrie, you're seeing livestock. We truly are surrounded by an agricultural and rural landscape, and that extends in every direction save for maybe southbound. That's where Balzac and the broader Rocky View county are growing, so that's a little bit different. Then, of course, just south of that is a very, very different demographic within the northern boundaries of Calgary and really not representative of what our interests and growth challenges are.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation, and thank you for liking both electoral districts. It makes our job a little bit easier. Thank you.

**Ms Spearman:** I'm sure.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

**Mr. Evans:** No, but thank you very much for your submissions. Appreciate them.

**Mr. Clark:** I can vouch first-hand for Airdrie city staff, so congratulations and, yes, thank you for the kind words. You know, in all seriousness we really appreciate hearing from elected officials generally, and we especially like when potential solutions are provided for us. Your initial submission of providing multiple options was incredibly helpful as we worked to draw the boundaries. So just a thank you to you, Mayor, and to your staff in particular for putting this submission together.

**Ms Spearman:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mayor Spearman and staff. I just have a couple of clarification questions. Partly it's poor

eyesight. I couldn't see the actual, according to your numbers, current population of Airdrie, of this entire city.

**Ms Spearman:** Yeah. Thank you for asking. We would have seen the census done in March of 2025, and at that time our population was a reflection of 90,040 people. But as previously mentioned, we see about 5,000 folks added to our population each year. That would have been the first three months of 2025, so you can imagine we've probably added about 3,500 people since then.

**The Chair:** Okay, then in 10 years you expect over 141,000. That's the other figure I was looking for.

**Ms Spearman:** Yes. That is correct. Yeah, and those are conservative numbers.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Okay. Good. Thank you very much. I'll excuse you now, but please remain in the virtual room if you wish to hear other presenters.

**Ms Spearman:** Thank you very much for your time, everybody. It's been a pleasure. Best wishes with this whole process.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Okay. Our next presenter is Alison Van Dyke.

**Ms Van Dyke:** Yes. Thank you. Thank you so much for giving me this opportunity to speak. I'm going to read into the record the letter that I submitted. It's very brief. Then I'm happy to answer questions and expand on any of the information included in that letter.

Okay. I grew up just over the line from Cypress county on a farm north of Whitley, in the county of Forty Mile, but have spent all but eight years of my adult life in the city of Medicine Hat. I had the privilege of spending the last four years of that time, from 2021 to 2025, as a Medicine Hat city councillor. I am keenly aware of the concerns of the city's urban residents while still having a contemporary understanding of rural issues. My parents and brothers still live and work on the family farm, which received the Alberta century farm and ranch award in 2009.

The city of Medicine Hat shares regional concerns with the surrounding area. However, the issues facing rural and urban constituents are not the same. Representing both effectively requires a breadth of knowledge and ongoing compromise by an urban and rural MLA, which can dilute the impact of their advocacy within caucus and in the Legislature. While strong provincial services benefit both rural and urban residents, the delivery of those services can vary wildly between the two environments and can look significantly different in rural and urban settings.

Given the complexity and uniqueness of the city of Medicine Hat, it is a disservice to constituents to have the attention of their MLA divided between often disparate urban and rural concerns, particularly if the best interests of one are in opposition to or come at the expense of the other. Medicine Hat deserves the same level of focus from its elected MLAs as other mid-size cities receive and the courtesy of at least one fully urban riding, as is afforded to other mid-size cities such as Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Red Deer, and St. Albert, communities frequently used as comparators in decision-making and service provision.

I'm happy to elaborate on any of those points or answer any questions. I would like to say that while the overarching themes are consistent between urban and rural residents, the issues and their solutions can be quite different. Some examples of this might be, like, public health care, public education, safety, and water issues, but under those things the concerns are significantly different. For example, in the country issues around water are irrigation

expansion and sufficient water for livestock, whereas in the city the concerns might be around industrial use and water quality.

In educational settings I know that some of the issues facing my family are: how long are their kids, little children, going to be riding on the bus, and are their rural schools going to have the same opportunities afforded to the students as in an urban setting? Whereas in an urban setting we're seeing crowded classrooms and other issues that are completely different than what they're having in rural school settings.

In public health care, for example, towns like Bow Island are not even able to have their emergency rooms open and doctor access at times, and, of course, if you asked an urban resident if it would be to their benefit to close a rural health centre and move all of those resources to the urban setting, they will say yes, but that is not in the best interests of rural residents.

So while I speak actually as an urban resident on behalf of other urban residents, from a rural perspective I think it's also to the detriment of those constituents as well.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you, Ms Van Dyke. We are happy to engage in conversation.

Mr. Clark, any questions or conversation with this presenter?

**Mr. Clark:** Maybe you could just tell me a little bit about your time as a councillor and, you know, what some of those issues are. Presumably you would work with other councillors from the surrounding municipalities and counties. Maybe in just a very brief minute or so: what were the differences in the issues you dealt with as an urban councillor versus what you saw your colleagues dealing with in rural areas?

**Ms Van Dyke:** Well, the city of Medicine Hat is very unique in how it operates as well. The city runs a lot of business units that other municipalities don't, so there's a significant learning curve and a requirement of knowing extensive information about a lot of areas that wouldn't occur in a rural setting, in rural municipalities. Just that level of focus is slightly different. Like, the example I gave, irrigation, I think is a good one. Residents in the city don't think about water in the same way, I guess. From a leadership perspective the concerns are around having adequate water for economic growth, so bringing in industry, whereas in a rural setting a lot of the focus on water is on irrigation, like I said, and then drought-related issues. There's a more significant agricultural focus in rural areas than there would be in the city of Medicine Hat even though we are based in an agricultural kind of area.

2:35

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** No. No questions.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation, but I don't have any questions.

**Ms Van Dyke:** Thank you. I just want to apologize. My Internet is not great, so my video wasn't on because I was scared of losing you in the middle of presenting.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

Thank you for being here today. We've heard quite a few presenters on several issues relating to Medicine Hat, and I wanted to press you on a relatively small matter, but that's where the boundary might lie between the two electoral districts. There's some sentimental and psychological value of having it just uniformly at the river. What do you say to that opinion?

**Ms Van Dyke:** I did catch a little bit of Bill Cocks' presentation when he was near the end there, and I think it's a natural boundary, like he has mentioned, but because service delivery – like, we don't have two hospitals. We don't have really clear services on both sides of the river, so I don't know that you could just say that that's the urban division of the city.

I'm not sure what the answer is. I think it would be less complicated for constituents. I think right now people are often very confused about which constituency they're in because it doesn't follow a natural boundary. It veers off. Even within a single neighbourhood it divides a neighbourhood. I think there does need to be a more natural boundary if there is one, but I strongly believe that there needs to be at least one solely urban riding.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you. I'm not sure if you were in the morning session, but we had a similar presentation from Mr. Wanner. The conundrum we have is that the city itself, the urban population is just outside our target population, so it's too big for one and too small for two. That's why I presume the previous Electoral Boundaries Commission came up with this configuration. I want to be clear that that was not our idea. Are you suggesting we revert to the boundaries that were in place prior to 2017?

**Ms Van Dyke:** I'm not clear on all of the numbers. I'm not a statistician or a geographical whoever that does all this stuff. I'm not, and I don't have a clear solution for you. I haven't looked at that. I'm here just, like, representing what my experience has been as a person who grew up in a rural area, lives in the city, has represented the people in the city. I think to me there are a few things that don't make sense to me at all in the current boundaries, and I'm not sure if the answer is to go back to the way it was before. I'm not sure what percentage – I don't know if you have that in front of you – the population would be over the recommended amount if you went back to the previous boundaries. I don't know if anyone knows that.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Well, it's a bit complicated because Brooks is now in this situation and, you know, we didn't put it there.

**Ms Van Dyke:** Right.

**The Chair:** My understanding is that Medicine Hat's population right now is right around 68,000 to 69,000. The upper limit for us for one riding is 68,000, but then that doesn't solve the problem for us because we've got all the surrounding area.

Anyways, I appreciate your comments. It's not unlike several other presenters from Medicine Hat, but we had a desperate plea from someone presenting from Edmonton saying: at the very least use the river as the boundary because it doesn't make sense. So we'll look at that. For sure we'll look at that.

**Ms Van Dyke:** Thank you. Yeah. I think it is very confusing to people.

One thing that I would say is that the boundaries, the way they currently are, definitely don't align with my life experience of kind of like natural catchment areas for this area. If it was following that,

Bow Island would be part of one of these ridings and not Bassano. It doesn't adhere to our regional health care system, our regional economic development programs, our watersheds, our irrigation systems, any of those things.

**The Chair:** Refresh my memory: is Bow Island in county of Forty Mile or Cypress?

**Ms Van Dyke:** It's in the county of Forty Mile.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Okay. That's why it's not in there, then.

Thank you very much, Ms Van Dyck. Much appreciated. Please remain because there is going to be another Medicine Hat presenter coming up later this afternoon.

**Ms Van Dyke:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Our next presenter is Devin Dreeshen.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, commissioners. Can you hear and see me?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Great. Well, thank you very much. I'm not sure if there have been many MLAs that have presented to you yet, but I have the great honour and privilege of serving as the MLA for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. Since this whole process I've had many constituents writing in and calling in to my office wanting to participate. Obviously, the gravity of the work that you guys are doing is well recognized across the province. I just want to thank all commissioners for your hard work to date.

I would say that there are some concerns that I've been hearing from a central Alberta standpoint. I guess the first issue is the loss of a rural MLA in central Alberta; that is very concerning to not just municipal elected leaders but to constituents as well. There seems to be a trend of one less rural MLA in northern Alberta and then one less rural MLA in southern Alberta.

Just a little plug for rural MLAs, that I hope isn't lost in this kind of race to 55,000 people or squares for 89 different MLAs or constituencies across the province. A rural MLA is a lot different than an Edmonton, Calgary urban MLA. You will have one MLA – for my example, I have seven mayors that I have to engage with. I have 40 councillors that I have to engage with. I have hundreds of kilometres of provincial road networks that have to be maintained and countless calls from constituents that drive on those provincial road networks, to make sure that the roads are clear and they can get to work safely from where they live. So a rural MLA has a lot of engagement with municipalities and people that live out in rural Alberta.

Conversely, compare that to an Edmonton MLA: well, they all share one mayor. You would have 30 or 40 MLAs sharing just one mayor, not multiple, and also it's the opposite when it comes to a city councillor where they would, again, share one city councillor with four or five MLAs in a larger urban setting. Also, you could have an Edmontonian that within a 15-minute radius of where they live would not actually use any provincial assets, wouldn't go to a provincial park, wouldn't go to provincial Crown land, wouldn't go on a provincial road at all in their daily life.

The importance of having rural MLAs in the Legislature just due to their basic daily life is very important so that there's great engagement of an MLA with people that actually use provincial assets and use things that are in the provincial purview on a daily basis. Obviously, there's education, there's health care, but for

regular folks that maybe don't have any kids or they're not in the hospital setting, it's daily life to use provincial road networks.

Obviously, the changes that I'd like to see from the proposed Sylvan Lake-Innisfail constituency – and it has been reiterated by a lot of municipal leaders and mayors and councillors that have already submitted applications or suggestions to really prioritize economic corridors or highways. Obviously, highway 2 running up and down the riding of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake or Sylvan Lake-Innisfail: the communities along there, not just the history of being CP towns, that had to have a certain amount of distance so that the steam trains could be able to operate, but how they've been developed over the years and the types of people that live there are very similar when it comes to Red Deer being that hub. You have communities like Blackfalds, which are very similar to Penhold and Innisfail, that – you know, Blackfalds and Innisfail have lots of industrial. There are lots of oil and gas businesses that are in and around those communities, and it's also a bedroom community to Red Deer.

2:45

The proposal that I would have is that the Innisfail riding, essentially, would include Blackfalds and Innisfail and Penhold of that highway 2 corridor. Obviously, 54,000 is the target. Where I think you can make up that population gain is with a swap, with Blackfalds for Sylvan Lake. Then, obviously, to the north from Lacombe, it could be able to gain that population going into Sylvan Lake. It does actually have a nice highway 20 connection of Gull Lake, Sylvan Lake. Sylvan Lake would then be under one MLA instead of three MLAs, and you would have a much better connection with that lake country in the northwestern part of the province. And, obviously, whether it's ranchers or forestry workers that are in that Eckville, Caroline area going out to Rocky Mountain House, they're much better connected to that Sylvan Lake area versus, say, the highway 2 corridor. It's not just that it rains more there, but it does have more connections with communities that grew up and built along highway 2.

Then looking farther east, the Red Deer River to Drumheller-Stettler, obviously the population concerns that Drumheller-Stettler has of just being a large land mass but not having a lot of population: it's hard to expand any farther east beyond the river. On highway 21, again, a north-south highway: Delburne, Elnora, Huxley, Trochu. That's on the CN line. The CP line obviously going along highway 2. The CN line going along highway 21. Very similar story of those towns and communities having spaced out over a certain area so that the trains could operate, as well as just the local communities working together, whether it's through seniors facilities or just the agricultural nature of having grain elevators along that corridor, and that large catchment area being very similar.

Those would be my – I hear the buzzer – amendments to the proposed Sylvan Lake-Innisfail riding. Very happy to field any questions from you, commissioners. Thank you again for your time.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you. Sorry. I was slightly distracted when you were making your first point about adding Blackfalds into your riding. Were there any other communities to be added, from your perspective, before we get to the eastern boundary?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** I would say a switch from Blackfalds to Sylvan Lake. Again, you get that highway 2 corridor for Blackfalds, but the population that would go to Sylvan would go farther north and then into Kneehill county, into that Trochu area down south. Are we hitting 54,000? I think we're still maybe a little shy, but there are some areas along the city of Red Deer, Westerner Park for example,

that are near Gasoline Alley in the development in the south side of Red Deer. There could be some population gained there by the Westerner Park, which is a large ag society that is probably better represented by a rural MLA.

**The Chair:** Okay. But only as far south as Trochu, not Three Hills?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Correct. I think that just the population numbers – you had mentioned before, the cascading effects. I think that makes that old riding that much harder to get population as well when you get into that southeastern part of the province.

**The Chair:** Thank you. I just needed that for clarification.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** In terms of the addition of a portion of south Red Deer, can you give me an idea of where the cut-off would be on that?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Yeah. The southern part of Red Deer would be essentially south of 19th Street in Red Deer and highway 595, or the Delburne highway, the Coal Trail. That area to the south of there is – a lot of people think that Gasoline Alley is part of the city of Red Deer, but it's actually the county of Red Deer and within the actual Innisfail-Sylvan Lake riding. There are some industrial areas along the south side and some communities near the ag society, the Westerner Park, that could be included into a central Innisfail riding. I always say that Innisfail-Sylvan Lake made a protective moat around the city of Red Deer, but I think, obviously, if there is some addition into Red Deer just for population gain, I think it would be on the south and the east side that you could go into some of those communities.

**Mr. Evans:** Sorry; you said south of what?

**Mr. Dreeshen:** South of 19th Street.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you, Minister Dreeshen, for coming out today. I appreciate your comments. Of course, this is going to be no surprise to you: I'd like to focus some questions to you on Sylvan Lake. When I think about Sylvan Lake and its economic focus on tourism, are you suggesting that because it's tourism focused as opposed to ag focused that it doesn't fit nicely in there? And then I have a follow-up question.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Yes would be the short answer to that. Sylvan Lake always wants to expand their tourism, not just during the summer but also in the winter. And you look at that lake country to the west – Gull Lake, Sylvan Lake, highway 20, Bentley, and Rimbey – they have car shows over the summer where lots of people from Sylvan Lake are travelling up and down highway 20. Yes, it is beautiful in kind of the beginning of the foothills. That area is very distinct, just in geography and the types of people that live there and recreate there. It's a lot different than when you go farther east, closer to highway 2.

**Mrs. Samson:** Just a follow-up, along the same lines. It's difficult when a community like Sylvan Lake and its size sits so close to Red Deer on a twinned highway – well, actually two well-functioning highways, 11A and 11, but 11 being twinned and going to continue to be twinned past us – and the historic connections, to suggest that it's not a good fit with Red Deer.

Just another point in reply to your tourism. The tourism that Sylvan Lake is focusing on and its pursuit of possible city status and its pursuit of an urgent care facility and those kinds of things,

does not create the same kind of linkage with Gull Lake, which has no services around it or points beyond into the north. I'd like your comment on that.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Well, I agree, and obviously Sylvan Lake is looking to achieve that city status, as you said. It's obviously important, highway 11 and the twinning project that's halfway complete going out to Rocky, and the ultimate goal of hopefully getting across to the Howse Pass into B.C. as another major way to get to the Pacific through Alberta and through B.C. Obviously, highway 11 is very important, not just because I'm the transportation minister and got over \$200 million to twin highway 11 – put in a shameless plug for myself – but it is a very important corridor.

I do think, though, that that Sylvan Lake area is very similar to Gull Lake, and the people and the industries and the tourism and even the agriculture is a little different. You do have a lot more of boutique-type agriculture, direct on-farm sales individuals that are in that Lacombe, Sylvan Lake area. You don't get that same type of agricultural mix when you go farther east to highway 2 or east of highway 2.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much, and thanks for being here, Minister Dreeshen. I can tell that you've well embraced your portfolio with Transportation and Economic Corridors since that really is a core focus of your presentation to us today.

I want to address a couple of issues that derive from that, but first I should mention that population balancing, so to speak, is not really a primary factor for us. We're much more concerned, I think, with community cohesions and economic linkages and the like. So I come back to asking you about the economic corridors theme, particularly with respect to, in the first instance, Blackfalds, and you assert the economic linkages with many of the other communities in your electoral district. And then I have a similar query with respect to Trochu.

Thank you.

2:55

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Yeah. I would say for Blackfalds, again, the highway 2 corridor is, obviously, so important, and that's why I see so many similarities with Innisfail as well as with Red Deer county. Junction 42 right by the Red Deer Regional Airport, near Penhold, actually is something that has major trucking logistics. There are lots of trucking companies in Blackfalds as well. The focus on oil and gas as well as transportation logistics along that highway 2 corridor: there's so much that is very similar.

I think when there's, obviously, the economic side but even the social side of things on the health side – there's actually a doctor that has a clinic in Blackfalds and in Delburne, the same doctor that organizes in both areas. He'd tell you that there are, obviously, very similar individuals and folks and needs in both the Delburne area as well as Blackfalds. So there are obviously economic connections but social connections as well.

In your question about Trochu and Elnora and Delburne: I know the Elnora mayor presented last night to you folks saying how they work with Kneehill county. So many people in Elnora work in Kneehill or in Trochu. The agriculture businesses that are in Trochu as well as the grain elevators along that highway 21 corridor – pretty much everywhere in the middle of that riding is hauling their grain to either the CN line or to the CP line, but there's more on that CN line going to highway 21 and to Trochu and Huxley.

Those are, you know, obviously, the economic ties and linkages as well as even to the north of the Red Deer River to Joffre. There are so many people that live in the Pine Lake area, kind of in the

middle of that map, that drive north going into Joffre as well as from Blackfalds going into Joffrey, so there is a lot of manufacturing and logistics in that central region around Red Deer.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, Minister Dreeshen. You're more than welcome to stay or – oh, Mr. Clark. Sorry. I didn't have you ask any questions.

**Mr. Clark:** No worries at all.

Minister, thank you so much. You know, I just wanted to sort of make a quick comment. I've been looking at the map here, what your Innisfail-Sylvan Lake was previously and the changes that we proposed. One of the principles is clear and understandable boundaries and also almost, if I could borrow a phrase, first do no harm. So if we don't need to change something, we're going to try hard not to. I think in your case, in Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, really, we've just encompassed all of Sylvan Lake instead of slicing it in half and just nudged things a little bit west. My arithmetic says it's give or take about 1,500 extra people. That is just so you kind of have some insight into what we're trying to do. When we can, we try not to change things if we can avoid it. That's sort of part of the rationale anyway.

I want to come back to some of the first comments you made about the challenges of being rural MLA, which are many. It's a different thing than being an urban MLA. Urban MLAs, I'm sure you know from your colleagues, have their own challenges. They may not be geographic. There are many different languages spoken, different social complexities, transit, all sorts of different kinds of challenges.

I guess what I wanted to ask you about is that when you talk with your colleagues who are in the far north and you compare notes on what it's like to be an MLA in rural central Alberta, where, you know, I presume, in most of your area you've got decent cell service, you've got roads that are reasonably passable most of the year round and probably plowed compared to some of the stuff the folks up north go through, I guess I'm just curious because this is what we're struggling with a bit. There are complexities and challenges everywhere in the province, regardless of what part of the province we're talking about. You know, yesterday we were talking about the north, and I just wonder if we've got that right. Maybe if you can comment a little bit on some of the challenges that are similar and some that might be different with the folks in the far north.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Sure. I think the biggest issue is that it's not so much a north-south difference as well as an urban-rural difference. The point I was trying to get across is that we have 25 highway maintenance contracts across the entire province, and those are obviously all in rural areas. If you were in Edmonton and you wanted to get your street or your road plowed, you'd call the city of Edmonton and they, well, hopefully, should be clearing your streets, where in a rural setting you have these provincial highways. You're calling your MLA's office to make sure that you can get to work on time. Obviously, yes, the distances, the highway lengths are longer. The commute times are longer. That's all true, but you as a citizen, if you're going to pick up the phone and ask or demand better public services, you're calling your rural MLA, not an urban councillor.

I think it's not so much a north-south but an urban-rural difference, and that's just comparing notes with MLAs to know that they're getting calls about the highways being blocked or closed or not being able to get to work where Calgary, Edmonton MLAs: that's just not the same issue for their constituents.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, Minister Dreeshen. I'm the clock watcher. I am going to restrain asking any questions. I'm going to excuse you, but please remain in the room to hear other presentations. It's always helpful to hear people from other perspectives.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** I will. Thank you so much. Just a quick question: if I have constituents that are writing into my office, should I continue to send them into the commission?

**The Chair:** Send them but without any promises. We don't have a lot of spots next week. In fact, we have no spots, I'm told.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Perfect. Well, thank you so much. Appreciate it.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Is Kim Harris in the room, or have we dealt with her when we heard from the Airdrie mayor? Okay. Going once; twice. No Kim Harris.

Penni Lougheed, Rocky Mountain House.

By the way, commissioners, I'm barging through without a break. Is that okay? One speaker at a time. Okay. We'll discuss it after the next presentation.

Ms Lougheed?

**Ms Lougheed:** Sorry. Yes. I'm here.

**The Chair:** Oh, good. Thank you. Please identify yourself and tell us where you're . . .

**Ms Lougheed:** I'm going to leave my camera off, though.

**The Chair:** Okay. That's fine.

**Ms Lougheed:** Yes. I'm going to leave my camera off because of rural Wi-Fi. I'm hopeful that you can hear me through this whole presentation.

**The Chair:** We can hear you well.

**Ms Lougheed:** My name is Penni Lougheed, and I – pardon?

**The Chair:** Yeah. Sorry. We can hear you well. Thank you.

**Ms Lougheed:** Oh, good. Okay.

My name is Penni Lougheed, and I'm from Condor, Alberta, but I am here today representing Wild Rose school division. I'm one of the trustees on that board, and I really thank you for the opportunity to speak today. We are here to respectfully request that the current electoral boundaries affecting Clearwater county remain as they are. Our concern is not simply about the lines on the map but how communities function and how services are delivered and how residents are effectively represented.

Clearwater county operates as a single connected community. Families live, work, attend school, and access services across the county every day. The existing boundaries reflect these shared patterns and respect the community of interest that already exists. Dividing the county would separate people who rely on the same systems and networks.

Transportation corridors play a significant role in daily life in our region. Highways such as 11 and 22 connect our communities and are used daily by residents, students, and workers. To propose boundary changes divides these corridors, creating artificial separations that do not reflect how people move through and rely on the region.

From an education perspective school catchment areas extend across the county and serve both urban and rural families. Students frequently attend school outside of their immediate community. Splitting Clearwater county into multiple constituencies would result in families being represented by MLAs who may not represent the communities where their children attend school. Effective representation is another key concern. Under the current boundaries community leaders and school boards can clearly and directly advocate to a single MLA. This clarity strengthens communication and accountability. Dividing the county would require engagement with multiple MLAs, which dilutes advocacy and makes it more difficult to effectively represent the needs of residents.

There's also a risk that rural voices will be diminished. When rural communities are split across multiple constituencies, particularly those with more urban centres, their unique needs such as transportation, education, access, and infrastructure can be overlooked. Keeping Clearwater county intact helps ensure rural concerns remain visible and heard.

Finally, stability matters. Residents understand the current boundaries and have built relationships and systems around them. Unnecessary changes create confusion and can weaken public trust, particularly when the existing boundaries are already functioning effectively. Clearwater county is geographically large but socially and economically interconnected. Maintaining it as a single constituency best reflects the realities of the region and supports fair, effective representation.

3:05

I do appreciate what Minister Dreeshen has been saying about the twinning of highway 11, and we do anticipate that at some point our population will rise because of the highway being twinned and the west country being more accessible. We do have proposals from communities in the west for more schools. Yeah. It's not growing quickly, but we're hoping that our population does get a boost.

That's all I have to say. Are there any questions?

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you, ma'am. You were quite right about your Internet connection. Your voice was garbled the last couple of sentences.

Okay. Just so I can encapsulate your position, ma'am, you would like a return to the Rocky . . .

**Ms Lougheed:** Oh, I'm sorry.

**The Chair:** Yeah. You would like a return to the Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre riding. Is that what you're saying?

Hello?

**Ms Lougheed:** The Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. Yeah.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Okay.

I'm going to open it up for questions from the panel.

**Ms Lougheed:** Yes, please. So that Clearwater county itself can – yes? Sorry. Hello?

**The Chair:** I think we have to talk slow because of technology.

**Ms Lougheed:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark, do you have questions of this presenter?

**Mr. Clark:** No, I don't. Just thanks, and know that we have heard similar feedback from others. Thank you.

**Mr. Evans:** One question about the boundaries of WRSD. What are those boundaries like, and are they all contained within the Clearwater county?

**Ms Lougheed:** Well, I know that we had sent a letter previously, but we were heard.

The Wild Rose school division?

**Mr. Evans:** Yes.

**Ms Lougheed:** Our school division goes into Brazeau county and Clearwater county, so we are quite a wide, big county. It's 100 kilometres. Currently work has been very active. We were able to get representation when most rural school divisions were not. That means that we were able to be more student effective, and we would like to continue those relationships.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Ms Lougheed, for today I have no questions. Thank you.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you, and thank you for your presentation. I, too, have no further questions. No, I guess I do. Highway 11: tell me about the twinning. What are your anticipated effects of the twinning of highway 11?

**Ms Lougheed:** Well, so far we've been able to move a high school off highway 11. David Thompson high school was located along that highway, and with the twinning of that highway the land that the high school is set on will actually be part of that.

The other effects we are thinking will happen is the way our transportation and buses use that highway. That is something that our transportation department is working on all the time, the way that the highway is used. When it's twinned, it will be revisited, and a plan is also being developed, I'm sure, by them right now.

**Dr. Martin:** I'm being mischievous, but I think you should ask your MLA for some fibre-optic cable.

**Ms Lougheed:** Actually, Clearwater county has been blessed by the provincial government giving funding for some of that to happen. So we're hoping, yes, that the fibre-optic cables will go in. They are being put in different areas along highway 11 now.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms Lougheed. Thank you for your presentation and for the object lesson of some of the challenges in the rural area. You are excused.

**Ms Lougheed:** Yeah. Being a rural trustee is much different than urban. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Yeah. I'll excuse you, but please remain in the virtual rooms to hear other presenters if you could.

Okay. It's 3:15 p.m. Quick word to the commissioners. Do you want to break, or do you want to soldier on through on a Friday afternoon? Keep going? Okay.

Kim Harris. Yeah, please introduce yourself and tell us what ridings you're referencing.

**Ms Harris:** Kim Harris, mayor of Crossfield. I'm referencing Three Hills riding and Airdrie-East.

**The Chair:** Okay. Please proceed.



**Ms Harris:** Great. Thank you.

The city of Airdrie submitted a response during the second round of public engagement on the proposed electoral boundaries. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the commission's preliminary report, particularly in the recognition of Airdrie's exceptional growth and its commitment to effective representation.

We support the proposed Airdrie-West and Airdrie-East electoral divisions. The city of Airdrie strongly supports the commission's proposed creation of Airdrie-West and Airdrie-East electoral divisions, including the incorporation of the town of Crossfield within Airdrie-East. These proposed boundaries align closely with our initial submission and reflect a forward-thinking approach to electoral representation that accounts for both current population realities and anticipated future growth. We appreciate that the commission recognized what it described as the astonishing growth that Airdrie has experienced since 2017.

Our comments are intended to support, reflecting our shared regional reality. Crossfield's submission has three clear purposes: first, to formally support the commission's proposed redistribution scenarios; second, to reinforce the importance of equitable representation in a region experiencing sustained and accelerated growth; and, third, to explain why alignment with Airdrie-focused electoral divisions best reflects Crossfield's community interest and lived experience.

Crossfield and Airdrie are deeply interconnected communities. Our residents regularly commute to Airdrie for employment, education, health care, and commercial services, and those connections continue to strengthen as both communities grow. In return, Airdrie residents commute to Crossfield's strong industrial area for work and consistently use our arena for recreation.

Crossfield's growth rate for the last 10 years has been 4.43 per cent between 2014 and 2024. From Crossfield's perspective we are part of a shared regional system, and electoral boundaries should reflect that reality rather than treating our communities as isolated. For that reason, Crossfield supports redistribution scenarios that are centred on Airdrie and include Crossfield, with an Airdrie-aligned electoral division. This approach aligns with real-world travel patterns, economic relationships, and community identity. It also improves residents' access to representation that is aligned with their daily lives and regional affiliations.

**3:15**

Like Airdrie, Crossfield has experienced sustained residential and commercial growth. We appreciate the commission's recognition of both current population levels and projected growth across our region. We also recognize that existing electoral divisions in this region significantly exceed the provincial population average, which undermines equitable democratic participation. Redistribution is necessary to ensure that representation keeps pace with growth and that residents' votes maintain meaningful weight over the electoral cycle.

From Crossfield's perspective, the commission's submission is thoughtful, data driven, and future orientated. It strikes an appropriate balance between population equity and community cohesion. Importantly, it offers a sustainable approach that can accommodate continued growth within required repeated boundary adjustments. The town of Crossfield strongly encourages the commission to consider the commission's proposed redistribution scenarios for Airdrie-East and Airdrie-West. These proposals support voter parity, effective representation, and reflect the lived reality of a rapidly growing, increasingly integrated region.

We thank the commission for its careful work and consideration and commitment to effective representation and voter parity, and we appreciate the opportunity to provide our perspective.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mayor Harris. Thank you so much. Any questions, Dr. Martin?

**Dr. Martin:** Yes.

Thank you very much, Mayor Harris. I very much appreciate the fact that you liked what we did. We may not be as clever as you suggest we are because we seem to make mistakes all over the place, but I'm glad to hear that this one meets the approval of you and your colleagues on the council.

I wanted to ask you in particular to expand upon the economic character of Crossfield such that there are, as you say, very strong social and economic linkages with Airdrie. I mean, many small towns get jealous living in the shadow of a very large and growing town even though, as you say, yours has been growing very large as well. Do you see the strategic future for Crossfield as being linked, not merely socially but economically, with the more dynamic town immediately to your south?

**Ms Harris:** That's a great question, and I think the simple answer to that is yes. We are so close, we're only 17 kilometres away, and that gap is closing very quickly for us. The QE II corridor, as you know, is very important to any town that is along there, and to have shared resources and shared jobs and that growth within both of our communities is going to be very important to us in the future. Right now Crossfield has about a 70-30 per cent split in industry to residential, and I know a lot of municipalities would be jealous of that as well. But if Crossfield and Airdrie can continue down that path on commercial and the industrial side of economics, I think that we will have great synergies in the future.

**Dr. Martin:** If I may follow up, Mayor, you know, Crossfield is more industrial, you suggested, than one might loosely expect. It's not rural and agricultural industry, but it's something beyond that.

**Ms Harris:** We have some of the rural farming community here as well, but right within Crossfield's boundaries we have a vast industrial area.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**Ms Harris:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** No. Thank you so much for your submissions.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Sampson.

**Mrs. Samson:** No. Thank you for joining us today. It was most informative.

**Mr. Clark:** Beyond a word of thanks, Mayor, it is always, frankly, helpful, I mean, when we receive feedback from the folks who represent those who live in those communities, and it's nice to know you're working so well with your neighbours and, also, that you feel we've got the boundaries correct. That is actually more helpful than you know. So thank you so much.

**Ms Harris:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mayor Harris. I'll excuse you. We've got four more presenters. But please remain in the room to hear other presenters. It's always helpful.

Our next presenter is Kevin Henderson.

**Mr. Henderson:** Good afternoon. I'm going to leave my camera off as well. I'm not too sure of my Internet here. Can you hear me okay?

**The Chair:** A little louder. You're fairly faint.

**Mr. Henderson:** Okay. Sorry, I'll talk up a little bit here.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Henderson:** My name is Kevin Henderson, and I specifically wish to speak about the riding changes proposed to the West Yellowhead riding. I'm not here as a representative from any agency or organization. I'm just here as a resident. I'm a resident of the town of Jasper. I've lived in Jasper now for over 20 years. We raised our two children here, both of whom still live in the riding, one of them in Jasper, the other in Hinton. Prior to Jasper I also lived in Hinton, and I also lived on the Dunster side of the B.C. border, so I've been living on the Yellowhead highway for quite a few years.

I'd like to express my opposition to removing the town of Jasper from the West Yellowhead electoral district. With all due respect to our neighbours in Banff and Canmore, the travel patterns, trading, shopping routes, et cetera, run east-west in this area. We in Jasper go to Hinton, for example, for our medical appointments. Our children are born in Hinton as they're not born here in town. By going to a Costco, Superstore, or Walmart, we mean we're heading east. We're not heading south. When someone talks here of going to the city, they mean Edmonton. There are a number of individuals who live in Jasper and work in Hinton and vice versa. This is especially true since the fires of 2024, but it's always been the case. It's been the case for the last 20-plus years. It's to such an extent now that there is scheduled transit service running – that's very recent – between the two communities multiple times per day.

Aligning Jasper with Banff and Canmore, for example, would mean having them connected by one single roadway, and that's highway 93 that runs from Lake Louise to Jasper. This highway has a couple of differences from, say, highways 1, 2, or 16 in the sense that there are weight restrictions on it year-round. Large trucks are not permitted to be driving on it. There are, of course, no rail lines or scheduled air services connecting the communities, which means there's no direct access for goods and services to travel between Banff and Jasper on a large scale. The highway as well multiple times a year becomes impassible due to heavy snow, avalanche control, and it also falls down the list of priorities when it comes to snow plowing. This was shown last December, this recent December, when the highway was closed for 10 days straight. Since New Year's Day it's been closed twice more, and we're only halfway through January. It's a fairly regular occurrence that happens during winter months, and by winter in this area it means late October until early May, so it accounts for over half of the year.

What it means also, though, is that our elected representatives would face more challenges and more time commitments trying to visit a significant portion of his or her constituency. Not being able to use that one highway at certain times, that connects not just Jasper but also parts of Edson, Hinton, et cetera, directly with, say, Banff or Canmore, means a much longer journey, adding four or five hours of travel time in the winter. One of my concerns is that this will inevitably lead to less direct contact with our elected representative, be they from the north or from the south, and

conceivably less awareness on their part as to the issues and challenges faced by some of us that are living in the given riding. It's to be noted that the world has changed and that, of course, you can use Teams or Zoom meetings, but virtual meetings, reading briefs or newspaper articles just doesn't provide the same deep roots that can be developed in having in-person discussions, direct contact, and direct observation as to what is going on in a riding, especially for some of us that are more remote. At least, in my opinion it shouldn't be a substitute for political leaders meeting constituents face to face.

We in Jasper have a very recent exact example of this occurring federally. The federal Yellowhead riding was changed in some ways similar to what's being proposed here. Jasper as of the last federal election is now part of the riding, where a majority of the population is south of highway 93, and it's also where our new Member of Parliament lives. I'm certainly not taking anything away from him, his duties, or responsibilities, but the sheer geography coupled with the highway closures has meant that he has not visited our community anywhere near the number of times that his predecessor did, who did live along highway 16.

3:25

With respect to the proposed alignment, it's also easy to assume that Jasper and Banff are very similar and should be aligned. Yes, they're both located within national parks, and the federal jurisdiction and Parks Canada are at the fore of a lot of our daily lives. However, it should be noted that Banff and Jasper are separate national parks and have their own superintendent and that different regulations exist for our communities. For example, the town of Banff has authority over land-use planning, but the municipality of Jasper does not. That is in the works of changing, but it isn't completed yet. Jasper and Banff also have tourism as a main economic driver.

I personally don't believe that economies should be a base reason for changing or reassigning political boundaries. If they did, you'd be assigning Medicine Hat in with Fort McMurray in one long, eastern border riding, for example. Economies change, as do economic drivers. It wasn't long ago that Jasper was thought and referred to as a rail town, and many that still live here still refer to it as such. Those lines run east-west, not north-south. The recent decision from CN Rail to keep their station and employees in Jasper is evidence of the importance of this reality.

There are some that argue that Jasper and Banff having a unified voice provincially would be a good thing, that that voice would be louder and stronger. I'm sorry, but as someone who lives in Jasper, I have to disagree with that. I believe that having two individuals speaking on an issue would be a louder voice than only one. Also, Jasper and Banff are not the same community. We have different challenges, different issues, and are very different communities, each with our own strengths and issues, but we're not the same.

Calgary is an hour from Banff. Canmore is 10 minutes. Edmonton is four hours away, and the airport is considerably farther. Our tourist economies are different, and I should say that I do work in the tourism industry, and I've seen the ebbs and flows. Banff has the Calgary International Airport close by. We have Via Rail that comes through here year-round, that Banff does not. Jasper relies on the northern Alberta economy when it comes to skiing. Banff has much more of an international clientele. Overall, even though our tourism boards work together, we are different.

I stated earlier that both personal and business trips go east-west as opposed to north-south. As a long-time resident I really don't see that changing. In order to keep the political continuity sort of

aligned with what the social and economic realities are, I really think it should be kept the same.

Thank you for your time.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Henderson. We realize you're on a late Friday afternoon, but you've delivered your presentation with lots of verve and spunk, and we appreciate that.

Time for questions. Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you. I'll try to meet that energy as best I can.

Thank you so much for your input, and we've heard, really, a range of perspectives on this question. Hearing from folks who live in those communities is really very helpful.

I am just curious. We did receive a written submission from the town of Jasper supporting the concept of a Banff-Jasper constituency. You may not have any insight into that and are not required necessarily to develop any if you don't have any, but I'm just curious if you had any thoughts as to – you know, they felt there was value in being connected with another of the major national parks. Canmore as well was part of what they felt was kind of a common interest. I wondered if you had any thoughts on that.

**Mr. Henderson:** I do. I'll get in trouble for this because a number of my friends are on council. It's my own opinion – again, this is just my opinion – that they're being a bit short sighted. They have a common interest along with Canmore and Banff on the financial side of things and looking at changes to the Municipal Government Act to look at taxation being allowed, et cetera. I think that they think they'll have a stronger say if they're sort of combined together. Again, I understand where they're coming from, but I think there are larger concerns and more important concerns to the people and those of us that live here.

**Mr. Clark:** That's great. Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** No. Mr. Clark took my question, and I got the answer. Yeah. Thank you very much.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation, Mr. Henderson. I would like your comment on the thought that Jasper could learn or share or discuss challenges that are totally unique to mountain communities in Alberta. It's completely different from anywhere else, and that guidance, experience, exchange, that kind of thing: can you comment on that?

**Mr. Henderson:** Do you mean that would be increased if we were . . .

**Mrs. Samson:** Well, that would be valuable to Jasper and its future growth and development, being able to share the same common concerns and learn by being tied closely to Banff-Canmore.

**Mr. Henderson:** I'm sorry. I respectfully disagree. We already have a voice, and we have it through MLAs that we've had over the years. Again, I think that Banff having a voice and an MLA from up here having a voice gives stronger presence than just having one person sort of giving that same message from both communities.

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.  
Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** No questions. Thank you very much for your presentation.

**Mr. Henderson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** I have a few questions, but I'm going to not pose them because of the hour, but thank you for your presentation, Mr. Henderson.

**Mr. Henderson:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Our next presenter is Kevin Ferguson.

**Mr. Ferguson:** Thank you very much. I'm mayor of Ponoka, so our electoral division would be Lacombe-Ponoka.

I'm assuming that you can all hear me?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Ferguson:** Okay. Thank you.

I would say this. I know that what's going to happen to us is that we'll be lopped off and put in with Wetaskiwin and Maskwacis, and we can make that work. My issue, though, is that we can make that work, but right now I have a very good rural MLA that I work with quite a bit. I also know that the MLA out of Wetaskiwin is somebody we can work with as well. My concern is, and I guess I'm going to push this envelope here a little bit: I started listening today about how your mandate is effective representation, and I do want to address that because I do have my concerns.

When I look at my electoral division and I look at the surrounding ones, there are six and they're going to be reconfigured into five, my concern as a rural mayor – and I'm going to read here in a minute – is that Minister Dreeshen is correct. From my perspective, when dealing with the provincial government, I would far prefer to deal with as many rural MLAs as possible not because city MLAs are bad or that I don't trust them or anything along those lines; it's just that what happens when we mayors, especially rural mayors, are trying to get across our points, our concerns, our needs: I find that if I end up meeting with a cabinet minister and I have 25 minutes, I'd far prefer to meet with a rural one because I can get going right off the hop, whereas usually it takes me about 15, 20 minutes just to clarify the problem. There just is a difference in terms of lived experience in between both the urban and the rural environment. I would put this out to you as well that, most definitely, if I were sitting, say, as a cabinet minister and urban mayors came to me, I think I would be challenged as well.

I'm just going to read this here. I understand that electoral boundaries are heavily influenced by population, but by not giving full weight to other factors such as economic indicators, I think we're going to lead ourselves into bigger problems. For instance, I know that Alberta has other, very dynamic things going on in our economy, but from our perspective it's energy and agriculture. Of course, this is the big player for us along in Ponoka and throughout our community as well.

My concern is that disproportionately – and here's what I mean by this. Back in my day, when my grandparents farmed, they farmed a section, and so did all their neighbours, and there were a whole lot more folks out there. Now you're probably looking between 12 and 15 sections to farm, so that means that disproportionately we have less people contributing to agriculture. We have less people doing these contributions to Alberta's GDP. However, disproportionately I don't feel like they're being equally represented. What I see is this disproportionate representation, not seeing the benefits of their contributions through commensurate services and amenities that urban centres receive.

3:35

For instance, consider Ponoka as a microhub for those that work in the energy and agriculture sectors around here. Those people live around the town, and they rightfully should be expecting access to doctors, nurses, hospitals, arenas, swimming pools, schools, and on and on. But for a rural mayor it is all economy of scale. I have a much smaller tax base, by far smaller than a city. When I look to the province for help, I am now competing for resources with other towns, other cities, and now it appears two more seats that will be urban ridings, and then it looks through configuration a loss of three.

The problem here is this. If I have to build a new arena, the new arena costs just as much in Ponoka as it does in Calgary, yet I do not have the access to the funds to go that route. Then, as well, I'm also looking at an uphill climb in terms of being able to lobby, which is my job to of course look for more funds to go along that route. I am a little bit concerned about seeing 89 seats, two of them going urban and then, of course, three, you know, through reconfiguration being lost.

I'm just going to finish by saying this, kind of the bigger picture that I see. I feel in terms of elections in Alberta that there's always been an existing scenario where you could have a governing party where they only field urban MLAs. I think what happens here when I read through what's happening here with our boundaries, that possibility is being increased. Now, I'm not saying it's going to be totally bad, but from, you know – yeah. I'm done. Thank you. It's a long afternoon. I think you guys get my point. You've heard it from other rural as well.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mayor Ferguson. This is mayors week, I think. We've had many mayors, not Calgary's, not Edmonton's, but many mayors present this week.

Dr. Martin, any questions?

**Dr. Martin:** No. I've got nothing to ask.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation. You started out by saying that the proposed riding of Wetaskiwin-Maskwacis-Ponoka, you could live with if you had to. That wasn't your first preference, but you could live with it.

**Mr. Ferguson:** You know, that's us in the rural communities, right? Like, I don't think in the end I have a choice. I'm going to have to make it work. I do know the MLA in Wetaskiwin, and I can work with them as well.

My concern, once again, is that I feel like I'm seeing rural MLAs decreasing and urban ones going up. Like I say, I've got nothing against urban MLAs. It's just that we feel that at our level, simply because as a mayor of a rural town, a small town: we're about 7,500 people. It's tough being a mayor of a rural town and finding a way to fix things, buy things, and so on and so forth. We don't have the same advantages that cities have. I watched Airdrie, and good for them. I'm glad for Airdrie. I kind of wish I had some of their problems, but I don't, and therein lies my problem here. I want to play nice and I want to get along with everybody because I think we live in a great province, but I also think, too, that we have to start understanding that the rural small towns and rural Alberta are really, really kind of treading water hard on this one.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** No, but thank you so much for your presentation and helping me remember what it was like to sit on a municipal town council.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark, any questions or comments?

**Mr. Clark:** Mrs. Samson beat me to the punch and asked my question, but thank you so much.

**Mr. Ferguson:** Thank you so much. I know you guys have a tough go here.

**Mr. Clark:** No, we appreciate your input, especially as a mayor. It does make a big difference, so thank you.

**The Chair:** Mayor Ferguson, your concern about the decline of rural is noted, and if you look at appendix D, it's been happening since 1960. So there's not much we can – well, we'll do what we can. Put it that way.

**Mr. Ferguson:** Okay. Thank you very much. I'm just glad it's noted.

**The Chair:** Okay. That leaves us with two more presenters.  
Justin Wright.

**Mr. Wright:** Well, hello, everyone.

**The Chair:** Good afternoon.

**Mr. Wright:** Everything coming through okay on my end?

**The Chair:** Yeah, we can hear you.

**Mr. Wright:** Perfect. Well, it's so great to see each and every one of you again. I know we had an opportunity to speak during the summer rotation and shortly thereafter, where I was able to make a presentation. I appreciate the information you put into your decision on the first round of drafts for the boundaries, and I was just jumping online to speak again to it.

I did some reflection on Mr. Clark's questions in regard to what he had presented in regard to some of the Forty Mile county and/or Bow Island moving into Cypress-Medicine Hat. I just put the same submission in as what I did during the summer with a little added piece of, you know, should you as the commission feel that Forty Mile county and Bow Island were to move into the Cypress-Medicine Hat constituency, that you look at keeping it as a whole piece and not split that up. When I looked at the population density and where Forty Mile's majority of their population comes from, it's predominantly the Bow Island area and Burdett, and at about 3,800 people total for that area and county, it just makes sense to keep the municipal governments together.

Ladies and gentlemen of the commission, I thank you for your time and for the important work that you are undertaking. I submitted this report in strong belief of maintaining the current electoral boundaries within the Cypress-Medicine Hat and Brooks-Medicine Hat constituencies. This submission reflects not only the practical argument but also a principled one that representation should reflect real regional cohesion, 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 rural model, as I joked in our last presentation, part rural, part urban, is not only functional but also foundational to how representation is delivered in this part of Alberta.

If you'll remember in the previous presentation, I did comment that I as the MLA for Cypress-Medicine Hat represent approximately 60 to 65 per cent of Medicine Hat's overall population. Blended ridings such as Cypress-Medicine Hat and Brooks-Medicine Hat are more than just geographical compromises. They representationally

provide a robust approach to the region. As the MLA representing both urban and rural communities, it enriches the legislative process as you're able to bring forward the concerns you hear from both those living in urban environments but also those who are feeling the pressures of rural communities, as we heard from Mayor Ferguson as well.

When we really take a look at understanding the diverse needs of Alberta as a whole, blended ridings give a better representation of understanding the blend of both Alberta's economy as well as urban and rural settings. Urban settings often drive economic growth, while rural areas supply resource, cultural backbone, as well as new and innovative ideas coming from rural ridings. 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 innovations are harmonized with rural concerns such as agriculture, transportation, and land use. It also provides more versatility and grounded legislators.

3:45

On to the next point that I have. Two MLAs representing the area as a regional approach is a necessity, not just a luxury. In a time where regional voices risk dilution, maintaining two constituencies anchored in the Medicine Hat region is not just a luxury; it's necessary. When you look at the voice and advocacy, having two representatives with equal or similar representation numbers in regard to the split of Medicine Hat's population doubles the advocacy, gives better accessibility to constituents, and makes for more resiliency in pushing local priorities forward, whether it is represented by two members of the same party or a split between one of the government side and one of the opposition side.

Considering the challenges of the region, and our region specifically is actively managing urgent care investments, postsecondary innovations, major infrastructure upgrades, school expansions, and energy diversification, these files are complex and demand more than just what a single MLA can reasonably manage across the vast and diverse region.

Medicine Hat has been the anchor for southeastern Alberta and acts not just as a capital for services but also as a major economic hub and capital. It's the only major centre between Regina and Calgary. From its industrial base to its health care services and cultural institutions, it reaches as far away as north and west of Bassano and into Saskatchewan all the way to Swift Current. It provides critical infrastructure and leadership as it engages this large geographic area. Health care region: we look at . . .

**The Chair:** If you could wrap it up, Mr. Wright.

**Mr. Wright:** Sorry.

In conclusion, the long and the short of it is that it's not just 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.

With that, I will turn it over to the great members of the boundary commission.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Clark, any questions of Mr. Wright?

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much. Yeah.

Thanks again for your submissions, both written and verbal. It was good seeing you in Medicine Hat when we were there in the first round, and thanks for coming again here.

You know, one of the things we're – I've asked this of others, and it's interesting. We've received a lot of feedback on, well, really, constituencies throughout the province, but a fair bit around

Medicine Hat, and almost all of it, like 10 to 1, is saying: we really want an urban Medicine Hat constituency, including the city of Medicine Hat. We had a councillor earlier today, we've had former councillors, we've had lots of former Speakers – as you well know, you're very well set in that part of the province with former Speakers of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta – and ordinary Albertans and citizens of Medicine Hat as well.

I'm curious what you make of that. You know, their argument being: listen, there's an urban element to Medicine Hat and issues that are unique and specific to Medicine Hat – housing and homelessness, transit issues, unique education issues, transport-type issues that are specific – and then there are issues that are really more rural. People live in Medicine Hat because they live in Medicine Hat; people live outside because they don't live in Medicine Hat. So I just am curious on your perspective as someone from that part of the province on why you think that might be.

**Mr. Wright:** Well, you know what? I understand where some of the conversation comes from. I had an opportunity over the last week to be very fortunate to connect with a number of city councillors. There's quite a divide on this piece.

You know, when we take a look at the urban representation, as I mentioned before in my opening remarks there, I have 65 per cent of Medicine Hat's urban population already. This is the urban riding that represents Medicine Hat, and the lion's share of my attention does certainly go there. When we look at how it is currently split, we are certainly gaining better advocacy and better representation from the perspective of that we have two equally invested MLAs. If you were to take it down to an urban riding that has, let's say, 90 per cent of Medicine Hat's population, and you have one other riding, let's say it's the rural only, with 10 per cent of Medicine Hat's population, you are going to get a vastly different representation model as there's only really one elected representative who will have vested interest in meeting with the constituency base that they represent.

Should this type of model be moved forward with, where, let's say, the urban setting is in opposition and the rural member, who's only got about 10 per cent of the population, goes into the government side, you lose the voice at the table by not having equal or near equal voice in the voter base of the riding. What I mean by that is right now the way the split is, at about 35 to 45 in Brooks-Medicine Hat of the per cent of the population and 60 to 65 per cent in my riding, there is a vested interest for both parties to be advocating for the needs of Medicine Hat in near equity from both of those members.

By having a larger piece of the pie, Medicine Hat itself as an urban setting benefits from the representation splits that the Lethbridges of the world, the Red Deers, the Airdries do, which are these much larger population centres where they have only two representatives representing, you know, 90,000 to 120,000 people in those splits. It gives Medicine Hat a bit of a representational advantage over others, as we have the same say with a smaller population than what some of the other ridings across the province have. So I think it's a strategic disadvantage for us to go that route, as you'll have much less advocacy power in a split similar to that.

**Mr. Clark:** Just another very quick question. We've proposed to make the names by size of community as opposed to alphabetical. Do you have a strong opinion one way or the other over Medicine Hat-Cypress or Cypress-Medicine Hat?

**Mr. Wright:** I kind of do, and it's strictly from a cost to the taxpayer perspective. If we're swapping names for the sake of swapping names, I think that that's fiscally irresponsible, but I

would defer to the council. My preference would very much be to leave it as is, as any of the literature, whether it's through Elections Alberta or whatnot: just to change a name seems like we're fundamentally doing away with fiscal restraint on that.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah.

MLA Wright, thanks for presenting. You're doing something that we've heard time and time again is the impossible. How can you possibly represent urban and rural? How is that humanly possible? What are you doing different that all the naysayers say can't happen with a hybrid riding?

**Mr. Wright:** Well, you know what? Simply put, it's about time management. When we look at the southeast corner, we are really very much focused on the regional representation, whether that is the trimunicipal agreements between Redcliff, Cypress county, or the city of Medicine Hat, whether that is down to the social side of things with the Community Foundation of Southeastern Alberta. The chamber of commerce is no longer the Medicine Hat & District Chamber of Commerce; it's the chamber of commerce of southeastern Alberta.

The reach of Medicine Hat, mainly due to its isolation from other major centres, really forces its fingers to go out and represent and influence all surrounding areas. So it's more cultural than just the impact of one MLA. It is very much the sum of its parts, the collective municipal education, health care parts all fitting together in that regional approach that makes that representation of both the urban priorities as well as the rural pieces. Everybody has a part to play.

Whether you live in Dunmore, Alberta, which is about 15-ish minutes away from my place here out in Cypress county, or Walsh, you're doing all your shopping in Medicine Hat. You're doing your doctor's appointments. You're doing all of those pieces in here. Your kids are going to play sports: they're in Medicine Hat. It is very much a piece where we win collectively as the region, and that's very much been the mindset of both our previous council, our current council, as well as the social and economic organizations and how they impact.

3:55

Another key piece I would look at is how well we've been able to as a community work with the economic partnerships, whether it's Paliser Economic Partnership or whether it is APEX. It's always looking from that regional focus, and that's how we've been able to really advocate appropriately for both the needs of the urban folks but also the rural folks. It impacts in both directions here.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Wright.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for coming out today. I appreciate your insight again, and it's good seeing you for a second time, but I have no further questions at this time.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

Mr. Wright, you had mentioned in your broad survey of the riding that Medicine Hat and the rural parts are increasingly linked, and

you just immediately a few moments ago gave some illustrations of that. Would you say that that is not just because of the various governance and planning structures that you just alluded to but also because of the habits of the people who live in the penumbra, if I can call it that, immediately south of Medicine Hat's town boundaries? Are you seeing the development of a suburban ring around the south of the town?

**Mr. Wright:** Yeah. You know what? That's a great point. Yes, we are. If you were to take a look at South Boundary Road, you will see an increase in Cypress county development along that. In fact, one of what I would call the suburbs, if you will, of Medicine Hat is called Desert Blume, and that is having one of the largest growth areas in that growth around the ring.

You know, we can continue further to the east with Dunmore, which I talked about earlier. We can even push a little bit further west, where we're seeing significant investment on highway 3. Within that five- to 10-minute drive from city boundaries, we're seeing an exponential number of houses being built in that area compared to the last 20 years, so there is certainly that suburban approach that's already happening within the Medicine Hat region.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you, sir.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Wright. I do have one question.

**Mr. Wright:** Yes, sir.

**The Chair:** We have a lot of complaints about the boundary between the two ridings, and several people, even those who wanted to create a strictly urban riding, said: at the very least, if you don't do that, use the river as the boundary. Now, I know we looked at that quite closely as a commission, and I don't have my notes as to why we didn't do that. My recollection is that if we would have taken that region that is in your riding that is south – no. Let me think. Sorry. The portion of Brooks-Medicine Hat that is south of the river and put into your riding: do you have a sense of how many people that would be?

**Mr. Wright:** Yeah. I believe when we talked during the summer and when I looked at the data beforehand, it was because Brooks-Medicine Hat wouldn't have the population necessary for that riding, and that's why that carve-out was given.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Okay. So you would have way too many people then.

**Mr. Wright:** From my understanding, yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. Yeah. Well, we'll look into that. Thank you very much for your presentation and for staying late; you are excused.

**Mr. Wright:** Well, thank you very much. Have a good rest of your day, everyone.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

It is now 4 o'clock, and our last presenter on my list is Helen Holder.

**Ms Holder:** Yes. Hi, there. Thanks so much. I will try to keep it brief since we're right at the end of the day here.

Good afternoon. My name is Helen Holder, and I'm here today as a resident of the Highwood constituency, a mother, a neighbour, and someone who has taken leadership roles in my community. I speak for myself, my family, and for the many Highwood residents who asked me to be their voice today in this hearing. I have served

as a director on the Davisburg Community Hall board, and last year in Foothills county I ran several school board trustee campaigns as a campaign coach and actively supported several other municipal campaigns. I speak to residents of Highwood every day, and I have spent months listening to their concerns.

I have reviewed the interim report on the proposed electoral boundary changes, and while I do support much of the commission's thoughtful work, I have come to a clear and unavoidable conclusion. The primary proposal before us is not in the best interests of Highwood residents nor Albertans in general, so today I am here to strongly support the secondary proposed boundary, Okotoks-Diamond Valley, found in appendix H of the report. This alternative protects the integrity of our rural communities and respects the will of the people.

Some changes that I do fully support in the proposed commission boundary include the decision to add Millarville into Highwood. Millarville shares our rural character, our community rhythms, and our land-based priorities. Its residents shop, volunteer, worship, and build community all within the same networks as the rest of Highwood, so their inclusion strengthens the unity of our rural region.

Just as Millarville is a natural fit for Highwood, Diamond Valley must remain with us as well. Diamond Valley and Okotoks are deeply intertwined communities. Okotoks may be urban, but they are very much connected to their rural neighbours. Their families share schools, recreation, health services, sports, cultural programs, and day-to-day life. These towns are connected economically, socially, and historically, and their residents see themselves as part of the same community fabric. Removing Diamond Valley would fracture a decades-old community of interest and artificially divide a region that functions as one. Keeping Okotoks, Diamond Valley, Millarville, and the surrounding rural areas together is not only logical; it reflects how people actually live day to day.

Highwood has always been a rural constituency at its heart. The land stretching from Calgary's southern edge to the long-standing Highwood boundary at 434th Ave has for generations been defined by rural life, by agriculture, ranching, open land, and communities built on stewardship and shared values.

Highwood residents have been crystal clear about the future that they want. In the 2025 municipal election they voted decisively for responsible development. Every councillor who campaigned on slowing down growth kept their seat. Every councillor who failed to prioritize responsible development was not re-elected. Even Okotoks, despite rapid population growth, chose a council committed to a more measured pace of development. The message from the people could not be clearer. They want responsible growth, they want their rural identity protected, and they want their voices to matter. Dissolving Highwood into a Calgary-Okotoks urban riding does the opposite of that. It disregards the choices our residents have already made and blends rural communities into an urban system where their voices become overshadowed.

This isn't hypothetical. We know what happens when rural and urban communities are merged into the same riding. Number one, we get unequal representation, dense urban populations, unintentionally overshadowed rural voices. Rural residents lose access, visibility, and priority.

Number two, misaligned policies. Urban-focused policies like transit, density, and rapid development don't fit rural realities and often can harm agricultural and land-based communities when applied broadly.

Number three, conflicting land-use priorities. Urban expansion causes pressures that clash with rural stewardship and property

rights. This creates direct competition for the same MLA's attention and makes it difficult for rural to be represented.

Number four, public safety differences. Rural emergency response, volunteer fire, RCMP, policing, wildfire, and flood preparedness require unique advocacy that gets lost in mixed ridings. As we've seen with other presentations today, that seems to be a common thread.

Number five, economic divergence. Highwood's economy is built on agriculture, small businesses, and land-based industry. Southwest Calgary's economy is urban, service driven, and density focused. One MLA cannot advocate effectively for both.

Number six, loss of community of interest. Highwood's communities are connected east, west, and south, not north into Calgary's urban core, so combining us with Calgary breaks long-standing relationships and weakens civic engagement. It also takes away our identity by removing the name Highwood. Let's keep the name, save costs, and preserve Highwood pride.

**4:05**

At the heart of all of this is the simple truth that rural residents are not asking for special treatment. They are asking for appropriate representation or effective representation, as your mandate stipulates. They want boundaries that reflect their identity, their priorities, and the communities that are undeniably part of Okotoks: Diamond Valley, Millarville, and the rural areas surrounding Okotoks. Okotoks may be urban, but Okotokians are very much connected to their rural neighbours.

However, for Calgarians removing the communities of Silverado from other ridings will also weaken Calgarian residents' voices and is not representative of Calgary either. As someone who grew up in the far southwest corner of Calgary, I can tell you there is not much in common between southwest Calgary residents and those in rural Foothills county. They live in different worlds, so the division boundaries in Calgary should be reconsidered as well.

As leaders, as stewards of our democratic system we have a responsibility to protect that representation. Today on behalf of the people who entrusted me to speak for them, I respectfully urge the commission to adopt the boundary option that preserves rural communities of interest, keeps our interconnected towns together, and ensures that Highwood continues to have strong, effective, dedicated rural representation.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms Holder. Tell me again: where do you live? Do you live in Okotoks?

**Ms Holder:** No. I live rurally between Calgary and Okotoks, further east in the county in the constituency and closer to the eastern boundary.

**The Chair:** And you make a pitch for reverting to the old name, Highwood. Well, what's the history of Highwood there?

**Ms Holder:** Yeah. Highwood had previously – I mean, it has changed boundaries a few times, but the Highwood River is really the historic significance. Highwood River is closer to the eastern boundary of the constituency. Previously we did include High River as well in the Highwood constituency, and High River does have a lot of connection with the area as well, almost as much as Diamond Valley does, actually. We understand that we can't have it all. You know, that is a loss that I think is reasonable. We've been without High River for some time now already, so that's understandable, but there is a lot of deep connection in the area, and I think it's worth preserving.

I mean, really, it's just from a cost perspective, right? You know, we'll have to change a whole lot of naming, and there are just some costs associated with that.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Dr. Martin, any questions?

**Dr. Martin:** No.

Thank you for coming. We've had several letters – more than several – and several presenters as well on very similar themes. I'm glad to hear you reinforce them. Thank you.

**Ms Holder:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Yes. Thank you for coming out tonight. Exactly that. We laid this out with an A and B scenario in hopes that we could get the feedback and you could feel like part of the process. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** No. Nothing.

Thank you so much for your submissions.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Not so much a question. You know, you've given us a new bit of information today, which I didn't know. I think you may have been on for most of this afternoon's presentations, and there's been a lot of back and forth on this question of rural-urban hybrids, some in favour, some not in favour. Part of what we're trying to do is establish a community of interest, quote, unquote.

I think you've effectively made that case for the Highwood area specifically, but the one example you used that I found really compelling was the results of this most recent municipal election, that the folks who were opposed to growth in that area won the election. The folks who were pushing for growth were turfed, and that just says a lot, I think. We're looking for demonstrable evidence of: how do we define this community of interest, and what evidence do we have of what a community of interest is? That really struck me as one of those examples.

I don't have a question beyond just to say thank you very much for bringing that to our attention, and thanks for your presentation today.

**Ms Holder:** Oh, you're very welcome. Thanks for having me.

**The Chair:** Yes. Thanks for finishing off our day, Ms Holder.

We will reconvene on Monday, 9 o'clock, for in-person presentations in Edmonton.

Thank you so much, everyone. Have a good weekend.

[The hearing adjourned at 4:11 p.m.]













Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Public Hearings

Virtual

Friday, January 16, 2026  
9 a.m.

Transcript No. 38

## **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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Manager of Corporate Communications

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Managing Editor of *Alberta Hansard*

## **Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Virtual**

### **Public Participants**

Earl Graham  
Genny Mehlhaff  
Cameron Mills  
Rob Miyashiro, MLA, Lethbridge-West  
Richard Nichols  
Brent Ramsay, Mayor, County of Red Deer  
Jason Reckseidler, Councillor, Village of Delburne  
Nathan Schneider  
Bob Wanner





9 a.m.

Friday, January 16, 2026

[Justice Miller in the chair]

**The Chair:** Well, good morning, everyone. Welcome to day 5 of our first week of public hearings of the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission.

We, of course, are an independent commission established by the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. You can see our nameplates in front of us. If you wish to know any background information, you can go to the Alberta electoral boundaries website and get that information.

Our task as an independent commission is basically to deal with two issues. Number one, the increase in the number of seats in the Alberta Legislature. The legislation passed in late 2024 increased the number of seats from 87 to 89, so there are two more electoral divisions in the province. Of course, we all know that within the boundaries of an electoral division the voters in that division elect the member of the Legislature, and that person represents them in the Legislature in Edmonton.

The second issue that we must deal with is the increase in population in Alberta. The last Electoral Boundaries Commission report was issued in 2017, so nine years ago. Since that time Alberta's population has increased roughly over 800,000 people. To put some perspective to the challenge that's before us, the average population in each electoral division at the time of the 2017 report was 46,697 people.

Of course, the average is not the target for our task. Alberta, as all Canadian jurisdictions, operates on the principle of effective representation, not one person, one vote. The average is not the target. Rather, the legislation, the jurisprudence, and Canadian historic practice has provided us with a range of population in order to meet the target of effective representation. That range goes to as low as minus 25 to plus 25. You will see in 2017 that that range started at 35,000, up to just over 58,000.

Now, to give some perspective on the challenges that we have, the increased population certainly has manifested itself notwithstanding the two additional seats. The population of Alberta is 4.88 million for our purposes. We've used the Statistics Canada last decennial census from 2021, which was regularly updated by the Office of Statistics and Information of the Alberta Treasury Board. We have used as our baseline population 4.8 million Albertans. You can see, when that's divided over 89 ridings, the average population per electoral division is 54,929. Again, that's not the target. The target is the range of minus 25 per cent, as low as 41,000, to as high as 68,000. That is the range that empowers the Electoral Boundaries Commission to find effective representation in the various electoral divisions.

Effective representation is, as I said, a Canadian concept. It's not one person, one vote. That's certainly an American concept. Effective representation gives us a tremendous amount of flexibility to ensure Albertans from across this vast province have representation in that target range, and then there are some additional exceptions as well.

The commission was formed in April of last year, and from the time of our formation we have been busy. We started off by dealing, as I said, and coming to terms with the appropriate population figure for Alberta. That was done early on in our life as a commission. We received hundreds of submissions, written submissions, from the beginning. We reviewed those carefully.

Then in late May and June we travelled the province, holding public hearings. We sat in Fort McMurray across to Pincher Creek and from Grande Prairie, Peace River to Medicine Hat and, of course, the two major metropolitan centres in between. We got a

taste for what Albertans wanted to see in a new electoral map. After we conducted those public hearings, we then worked closely with Elections Alberta and their map people to create a proposed electoral map that provided for effective representation across the province. We then finalized that in the form of an interim report. That interim report was submitted to the Speaker of the Legislature in late October, and each member of the Legislature received a copy of that report. Then we opened up a portal for public hearings.

I should advise that in preparing our report, we considered the factors in the legislation. I won't go over them now, but you can certainly review that in the report. Really, we only have three choices when we redesign electoral boundaries in this province. The first choice is out of our control as a commission. It is the number of seats that are allocated. The Legislature has only given us two more seats, so we have very little room to move because the margin is only two seats.

Another tool that we have is to remove seats from less-populated areas. That has been a consistent trend historically in Alberta, and to some degree that's what we have done in this report. We have removed seats from outside of Calgary and Edmonton.

The third option is a very valid and legal and legitimate option, and that is hybrid ridings. We have tried to focus on certain areas of the cities, all cities, Edmonton and Calgary included, to develop hybrid ridings.

We issued that report in late October, and then we opened up a portal on our website to receive written responses. We have received over 1,100 responses, and I'm told that that is one of the highest numbers of responses of any legislative commission, so we have heard loud and clear from Albertans. Our goal in this process was to create understandable and clear boundaries and provide for effective representation for Albertans.

That portal of public submissions was closed just before Christmas, and now we're in the process of hearing from the public directly. We spent two and a half days in Calgary earlier this week. We're conducting two days of online hearings, yesterday and today, and next week we move to Edmonton to hear public submissions. We have provided through the online process an ability for Albertans to submit to us even though we're not in their particular community. The wonders of technology allow us to stay in the big cities during winter, but I have no doubt that the public has had a chance to respond to us from across the province.

That's where we are today. We've got a full day, and we're going to have to limit presentations. I believe all the presenters were advised that you have about a six- to seven-minute window and two or three minutes of interchange with the panel members. We are strictly adhering to the clock, or we're trying to, and I'll open it up now for our first presenter.

Our first presenter is Rob Miyashiro. Please identify yourself, and tell us what riding you wish to comment on.

**Mr. Roth:** He's not on, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Oh, okay. Who's our next – let me ask. Is Earl Graham present?

**Mr. Roth:** No.

**The Chair:** Okay. Bob Wanner, I know you're probably scheduled to be just after 11, but we have a schedule to adhere to. If you're able to present, I welcome you to come forward or open up your mic, I guess. That's what it is. Sorry, Mr. Wanner. Please proceed if you're ready.

I'm not sure if you're frozen, Mr. Wanner, or if you're muted or what, but we can't hear you.

9:10

**Mr. Wanner:** Let me try that.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mr. Wanner, did you hear my comments?

**Mr. Wanner:** Yes, I did. You just didn't hear me.

**The Chair:** Okay. Good. So it's not a technical problem. Thank you.

Please proceed.

**Mr. Wanner:** First of all, thank you for your service to our province. It's a difficult task that you have. I hope that my comments are received with the intention of the commission's stated goal to ensure effective representation across the province. With the greatest respect I must point out that the interim report identifies several errors, I would submit, and unsubstantiated statements in the rationale for the Medicine Hat-Brooks and Medicine Hat-Cypress constituencies which I would like to address today.

On page 70 the report editorially omits that the former Deputy Premier Jim Horsman and the former Speaker Dr. David Carter along with former minister Renner and myself, a former Speaker, and numerous others all supported one urban and one hybrid constituency for southeastern Alberta.

Secondly, reflecting on your opening comments, Mr. Chairman, the boundaries particularly have some shortcomings with respect to an understandable and clear boundary for those two constituencies. The report on pages 69 and 70 states that many submissions requested that the electoral divisions be kept as is and that the submissions in Medicine Hat were clearly divided. I stand to be corrected, but to the contrary, the numbers clearly, to me, demonstrate that the vast majority oppose carving up Medicine Hat and Cypress county to resolve what we perceive as a population problem in east-central and south-central Alberta. The commission may have heard divided submissions in southwestern Alberta, but from my perspective, they did not hear that in southeastern Alberta.

On page 70 the report states that all of Cypress county is recommended for inclusion in Medicine Hat-Cypress. That statement is not correct. Boundary map 74 illustrates quite clearly that the boundary is not the Cypress county border but township road 132. The rationale for this meandering line is difficult to comprehend.

Furthermore, the Medicine Hat-Brooks boundary is now more than 340 kilometres wide from the Saskatchewan border to the west border of the proposed boundary. If you keep the county together, it is only 130 kilometres north to south, and if you include Forty Mile with Cypress, it is about 160 kilometres wide, about half of the current proposed Medicine Hat-Brooks boundary.

The commission seemed, in my perspective, selective in considering that the only option to the current boundaries proposed was a single electoral division for all of Medicine Hat. The commission seems to have dismissed the submissions, including four former MLAs, who recommended one urban and one hybrid riding respecting the cohesiveness of southeastern Alberta. By ignoring one urban and one hybrid option, the report states that "this has not been the reality since the 1980s." This is simply not correct. Dating back some 40 years the mature portion of the city had one urban and one hybrid with the city south, Cypress county and Forty Mile.

The written submissions of the current MLA, Mr. Wright, recommend that southeastern Alberta has two representatives and that this is a nonpartisan matter. I agree with him on both points. His goal can be achieved with an urban hybrid solution recommended by

the other former MLAs, who represented southeastern Alberta for more than 40 years. The McLachlin ruling states that the one person, one vote principle is not mandated. In fact, it is forbidden, yet from my perspective, appendix E seems to emphasize how successfully the population average target was achieved. I recognize that your opening comments were, Mr. Chair, that that is a target range, but nonetheless.

On page 69 the word "compromised," was used in my perspective to cut and paste Medicine Hat in southeastern Alberta to resolve a population challenge in east and south-central Alberta. Effective representation must be decided equitably. Compromising fairness risks public confidence. Of all the major centres in Alberta with the possible exception of Airdrie, Medicine Hat is essentially a minority of one that does not have at least one urban seat. Lethbridge and Red Deer have two. Grande Prairie has one. Sherwood Park is the dominant urban population in Strathcona county with its municipal boundaries respected. Spruce Grove and Stony Plain share a common urban boundary.

I have re-examined Airdrie more carefully and acknowledge that I was partly in error. As I looked at it more closely, I believe that the Airdrie situation is that it has some similarities to Medicine Hat. It probably deserves one urban seat and one hybrid seat. Their population is too large to be one riding for the entire city, but they, too, deserve one MLA exclusively representing the majority of their city and one representing a portion of their city in a hybrid model.

I also re-examined the Fort McMurray proposed boundaries. I, too, was in error. It is divided. However, Fort McMurray is unique and distinctively different from southeastern Alberta. Its more recent history, its development, its vastly different economy, its population, its transportation network, and its culture ought not to be compared to southeastern Alberta. In fact, in the northern section of that constituency it is air service that largely connects the urban population to the rural north.

A more effective representation solution. Key words: effective representation. The option preferred by some was a single riding exclusively representing Medicine Hat, but the population of Medicine Hat is too high for that to be accepted.

The other recommended solution consisting of one urban and one hybrid is fair and equitable and represents more effective representation for southeastern Alberta is as follows. Do not connect dissimilar and distant Brooks and the central Alberta region to southeastern Alberta. We are different in so many ways. I respectfully submit that it is not effective representation.

Solve the problem of Brooks, county of Newell, Taber, Warner, and possibly Drumheller on a north-south axis. Brooks is closer to Taber than Medicine Hat. The number 36 highway ties the regions together already. The proposed Drumheller riding is nearly 25 per cent below the target average, and Livingstone-MacLeod is some 10 per cent above the target. Please look again.

Revert to a version of the effective representation model for southeastern Alberta that existed for decades prior to 2017 with one urban riding in the mature north and central sections of Medicine Hat, and one urban riding with the south portion of Medicine Hat and all of Cypress county and Forty Mile county. Both fit within the population guidelines. Do not subdivide Cypress county. Leave it intact, and in fact consider moving the Medicine Hat-Cypress county to the Red Deer River. Its population is served by Medicine Hat. Restore Medicine Hat, Forty Mile, and Bow Island to its closest neighbour, partner, and trading centre, Medicine Hat and Cypress county. The distance from its west border, the Saskatchewan border, is about 150 kilometres. Bow Island's distance to Medicine Hat is a travel time of about one half hour, but to the east boundary of the new constituency it is 1.25 hours.

I respectfully submit these comments and hope you reconsider your situation, your recommendations with respect to southeastern Alberta.

9:20

**The Chair:** Thanks, Mr. Wanner.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** No.

Thank you for your submissions, though.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your time this morning. I appreciate it. We've had more than just yourself come back to us with that very same suggestion, so we will certainly be having another look at Medicine Hat.

Thank you again for your time.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** No.

I think you have comprehensively, even with page references, laid out the points of vulnerability, so to speak. Thank you for your presentation.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark, any questions?

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I genuinely appreciate your continued engagement in affairs of the province and your submissions to us previous round and this round again. I also appreciate that you come to us not just poking holes in what we have proposed but also with proposed potential solutions. So I very much appreciate that.

I guess maybe I'll just ask you to comment on a little bit of population balance. I mean, it's an interesting and, I wonder, maybe persuasive point that Medicine Hat and Grande Prairie are roughly the same size. I think Medicine Hat's population is 68,000 and Grande Prairie's 70,000, yet we've treated them quite differently and historically have not. Up until the 2017 boundary redistribution both had had a fundamentally urban constituency and then one hybrid.

Now, we have different perspectives on that. It's not 100 to zero in the perspective as to whether that's a valuable thing or a challenging thing, but maybe I'll just give you another minute or two to tell me, you know, one more time why you feel, specifically in the Medicine Hat and southeast Alberta region, it's important that there's a community of interest you feel – not to put words in your mouth, but that's certainly what I've taken around Medicine Hat specifically as it relates to its surrounding communities.

**Mr. Wanner:** Thank you, Greg. By the way, coincidentally, I lived in Grande Prairie when I first moved to Alberta many, many years ago, so I have some sense of northwestern Alberta. I have lived in Medicine Hat since 1972. I even remember crossing paths frequently with the current commission chairman.

Medicine Hat is distinctively, in my view, the heart, if you will, of the Palliser Triangle. We are a zone that's quite distinct and different. I affectionately used to refer to us as the forgotten republic of territory of southeastern Alberta. We have a dependency on ourselves. We've always had to do things that are distinct and different from other sections of the province. In other sections, even in the case of Grande Prairie, there are very many smaller urban centres near Grande Prairie that are of some significant size, whereas down in southeastern Alberta, particularly with Bow Island and the county of Forty Mile and Cypress county, there are smaller urban centres, but they all connect to that magnet of Medicine Hat.

Our economy is different. We have developed differently. We have a distinctive electrical system down here. The partners that have been formed on an economic alliance include everything except Brooks. It's not a part of that economic – it's a new relationship that's been established that includes Bow Island, both counties, as well as the city and Redcliff. I think if you ask the vast majority of Medicine Hatters, would they say that we have a lot of similarities with our good neighbours in Brooks and central Alberta? They would probably say: no; we more have a connection to Cypress county and Forty Mile and the northern sections of Cypress county.

That big boundary, Medicine Hat to Brooks: it's huge. It's almost the size of the ones that are in the far north. You have other solutions, I respectfully suggest, and that is to respect effective representation and speak to the wishes that you've heard. I stand to be corrected on the submissions that I read and heard, but I think, Mr. Chairman, you said that Medicine Hat was one of the best well-represented presentations back in June, more than I think you said was in any of the Calgary submissions. I think that spoke about a distinctive sense of identity and representation that exists in southeastern Alberta.

I don't want to repeat myself, but I hope I've answered your questions on both an economic, cultural, and social relationship.

**Mr. Clark:** Thanks so much.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Wanner, for presenting, and please feel free to remain in the meeting and follow the rest of the presenters.

I believe our first presenter is now here. Rob Miyashiro?

**Member Miyashiro:** I am.

**The Chair:** Please identify yourself and, of course, tell us where you're from and what ridings you wish to comment on.

**Member Miyashiro:** Good morning, everyone. My name is Rob Miyashiro. I'm the MLA for Lethbridge-West, and I'll be commenting on Lethbridge-West and Lethbridge-East.

**The Chair:** Okay. Please proceed. We have a six-minute timer, so we'll be trying to watch the clock. We've got a long list today.

**Member Miyashiro:** For sure.

So I just want to thank the commission first for the attention that you've given to the insights offered by people in various communities and all the experts during that initial stage for Lethbridge-West and Lethbridge-East. I also want to emphasize, too, that my perspective also reflects my upbringing in the town of Taber, in a rural community. Combined with my experience living, working in Lethbridge and being a city councillor and now the MLA, I think I bring a different kind of perspective than most.

I do maintain, and I heard what Mr. Wanner said as well, that wholly urban constituencies are certainly more representative of the people who live in them than blended urban and rural because – again, and I don't need to go through this because you've heard this about the often competing challenges with urban and rural – MLAs in rural areas frequently address issues related to services while MLAs in urban areas are more likely to manage challenges related to capacity. For example, education access is a major concern in rural communities while capacity pressures in urban centres represents a different and competing reality. I think we can go to the first slide, Aaron. Thank you.

While it's true that Lethbridge-West is growing at a faster rate than north and south, I must say that three of the most established

developments in the west side are pushing up against the county of Lethbridge boundary. I'll talk about that more in a bit. In Lethbridge-East there are also two large area structure plans, or ASPs, that are beginning to be developed or yet to be developed, which are in the southeast and in the Royal View area structure plan.

In looking at the preliminary report for the commission and speaking with many people in Lethbridge, I'd like to suggest some changes. Now, I'm not opposed at all to what the commission has recommended in the preliminary report. All I'm saying is that after speaking with people and taking a better look at what this could look like, I just want to suggest some changes to east and west for the commission's consideration.

If we go to the slide on the Lethbridge – can we go back one? Maybe I'll just try to explain it. Yeah. If you look at that slide, on the left side is Lethbridge-West. You're showing that the little bump out that was added to Lethbridge-East.

9:30

Then if you look at the top part, what I'm suggesting is that if we make the Oldman River – and I know one of the commissioners was talking about using the Oldman River more as a boundary in parts of Lethbridge. This is what I would suggest. Make the Oldman River the western boundary of Lethbridge-East north of Crowsnest Trail or highway 3. You're bringing all of north Lethbridge literally into Lethbridge-East, which isn't a big stretch because most people in north Lethbridge think they're in Lethbridge-East anyway. In fact, most people in Lethbridge think they're in Lethbridge-East. So that would add that piece. Then we would look at south of Crowsnest Trail and we can look at just below that line in the right picture. Anything below the blue line would just stay in Lethbridge-West as it is now.

If we can go to the next slide, please, Aaron. If you look at where it says 034, that is actually part of the county of Lethbridge. There's a little line. You see the vertical line going north-south, and it has a right angle jog right underneath the four. That is 2nd Avenue West and rural route 91. What I would suggest is that we bring in that part of the county of Lethbridge into Lethbridge-West.

I know this is counter to what I just said about rural areas being part of urban, but they're not a true rural community. What they are are acreage communities, and there are a couple of smaller farms in that area. Everything that those people do in order to get to anywhere else: they have to go through west Lethbridge. For those people to vote in a provincial election, they have to drive through west Lethbridge to get to Coalhurst. There's no direct route other than if you want to take a gravel road along the river and up through Coalhurst, which, really, no one wants to do.

What that would mean is that the western boundary – I think the next slide might show it better, Aaron. That's the area. You can see that it's mostly undeveloped. That's county land. There are a couple of small residential communities. You can see towards the middle top and towards the bottom of that circled area. Again, the change moved the acreage communities of Sunset Acres and Mountain Meadows from Cardston-Siksika or, in the new Livingstone-Macleod, to Lethbridge-West.

What we're doing is that we're making the adjustment. It also addresses the fact that the commission said earlier that yes, there's more a factor for growth in west Lethbridge, but then we're adding that part to the east to even out that growth. Like I said, there are some pretty big growth areas as well in Lethbridge-East. I think this would actually bring that more into sync. In that picture the right most vertical line is the county line in that greyed-out space, so you can see that the subdivisions are pushing right up against that already.

The other thing I think I need to say is that . . .

**The Chair:** Sorry, Mr. Miyashiro. Can you wrap it up in the next couple of minutes?

**Member Miyashiro:** I will wrap it up in 30 seconds.

We also know of the exponential growth in the large urban centres of Calgary and Edmonton, and it's really important, I think, that those communities are represented properly. When we have ridings with 70,000-plus, 80,000-plus, I think it's important to give them the best representation possible and to make sure that the people in the Legislature are there for the people and that land does not vote.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, thank you very much for your presentation, Mr. Miyashiro.

Mr. Clark, questions?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you very much. I was just doing a little bit of drawing with our mapping tools here and determined there are approximately 300 people in that area there you've suggested to take out of Lethbridge county. I guess my question is that that area there – your comments about 13th Street and the more eastern boundary of Lethbridge-West and then using the river as a more logical or natural boundary for Lethbridge-East north of highway 3: one of my only shortcomings is that, I guess, I'm not from Lethbridge, so I don't know it as well, obviously, as you do. A couple of my commission colleagues have an unfair advantage on me in knowledge of Lethbridge, so they probably have some thoughts on this as well. But, I mean, that seems, in terms of our objective of creating understandable boundaries – I guess what I'm interested in is this portion of the county that you're suggesting. Tell me how that's different from the communities around north of that like Coalhurst, for example. What's different about that area than, say, Coalhurst?

**Member Miyashiro:** They're actually not municipalities for one. They receive most of their – just about everything they do is in the city of Lethbridge. Like I said, for those people to vote – let's just even look at that in terms of voting – they have to drive through Lethbridge to get to Coalhurst in order to vote. Does that mean some don't vote, some aren't interested in voting? I couldn't say, but I wouldn't hesitate to guess that if they were able to vote somewhere closer to them, like five minutes away in Lethbridge or less, then they would tend to vote more, and I think the representation would be a lot easier going that way as well.

**Mr. Clark:** Do you know: do they share any services with the city of Lethbridge, waste water or water?

**Member Miyashiro:** At this point I'm not sure about water. Some of them could be on well. I know the city of Lethbridge treated water goes north into Coalhurst and beyond and out towards Picture Butte. I actually don't recall whether they've run water lines to Sunset Acres or Mountain Meadows.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you for the presentation. I want to ask you some questions on Coalhurst. If I understand your submissions today, you're saying that Coalhurst should not be part of a Lethbridge riding. Is that right?

**Member Miyashiro:** That's correct. The fact is that there is a separation – and yeah, you're right; if you're not from here, you can't see that – on highway 3. Things north of that are still in the county, just west of Lethbridge. I don't think the people of Coalhurst as well, the ones that I've talked to, feel that they would

be represented well, especially a couple of people that are on Coalhurst town council that didn't think that they want to be lumped in with an MLA from Lethbridge. They think they would be better served by someone that has a more rural bent.

**Mr. Evans:** You don't think you would have the ability to serve them as an MLA with your rural background?

**Member Miyashiro:** You know, I'm not always going to be there. I'm sure I could because I do have that background in rural community, but if I get hit by a bus tomorrow and there's someone that's Lethbridge-centric and really isn't knowledgeable about some rural issues, then perhaps that wouldn't work as well.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your comments today. It was a quite detailed submission. I would just ask that you make sure that it comes into us so we can look at it more closely because in your descriptions – I'm not sure. I think I've captured it all, but I'm not positive. So if I could have your submission in front of me when we're looking at Lethbridge again, that would be great.

**Member Miyashiro:** I think we sent it in the other day. Aaron, is that correct? Was the written text sent in as well?

**Mr. Roth:** No, not the written text, but *Hansard* will have caught it.

**Mrs. Samson:** Right. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you, and thank you very much for your presentation. I'm very pleased that you understand the ripple effect of any changes of borders. I'm very pleased to see that you have been very attentive to some of the domino effects that occur.

I wanted to ask you in particular about what you understand to be the growth potential in that far western plot of land that you have suggested may be appropriate to add to your riding. I'm particularly interested – I mean, growth potential can be, if I may say so, airy fairy; it can be very tangible and imminent. I'm much more interested in the latter.

9:40

**Member Miyashiro:** Well, so there are two ways to look at growth potential. Especially, you know, as someone that's been a former city councillor, I can look at it that the development that's pushing up against the county border in the western part of west Lethbridge is the under the auspices of the city of Lethbridge, obviously. There's nothing to stop the county from approving a residential development west of the county line, right? The fact is that if they do that, then it's more likely that they're going to access city wastewater and treated-water services than have people use wells and septic fields – right? – so then it would, in a sense, start to amalgamate better with the city of Lethbridge.

You can look at that actually in the city of Lethbridge's eastern border, the northeast corner that butts up against the county. The county has developed an industrial park adjacent to Lethbridge's north industrial park. What that has meant is that they're using all of the city's water and waste-water facilities as well as an upgraded intersection to accommodate it, so the growth potential in there depends on the county. However, the city, I don't think, has the ability to annex that land for a number of years, just for the fact that there is some more developable land in west Lethbridge proper as well as in the southeast and as well as the north.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you, sir.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Miyashiro, thank you so much for presenting. We always say that we're very grateful to have people who knock on the doors in the constituency and know the riding come and present. And thank you for giving us solutions. That's helpful at this stage as well, so much appreciated. Please remain and listen in on the other presenters if you can.

We'll proceed to the next presenter.

**Member Miyashiro:** Thank you. Thanks for the time.

**The Chair:** Yeah.

Mr. Earl Graham.

**Mr. Graham:** Good morning. My goal today is to express the need for a single west-central Alberta electoral riding which will ensure effective representation of a population that shares common economic ties, networks of transportation, shared history, and communities of interest.

My name is Earl Graham. I'm a lifetime resident of Clearwater county and of the current Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre constituency. Some background on me. I was 13 years as a councillor for Clearwater county and three years as a director on RMA, and I currently serve on two provincial boards, five volunteer boards, and three municipal boards.

The proposed constituency of Mountain View-Kneehill will not work. It divides Clearwater into three separate constituencies. Justification: Clearwater county is tied economically and socially to the west country and the Rocky Mountains' eastern slopes. Industries such as forestry, oil and gas, livestock, agriculture, and tourism are important to the economy of the entire county, whether it's Mountain View or Clearwater. Clearwater is actually a one-town county, and you've currently got it divided into three.

The town of Rocky Mountain House acts as a central hub for commerce and provincially funded services like hospitals, schools, and social services. Strong common ties between Nordegg, Caroline, Rocky, and other rural county residents that are not shared by communities east of Rocky. For example, what does a Rocky resident have in common with someone living in Three Hills, and how would an MLA conceivably represent those distinct interests?

In my judgment, you should connect the west-central Alberta eastern slopes region into one single constituency. The justification for this: it's a common economy, common geography, municipal relationships, culture, and history connecting the people living in west-central Alberta, foothills, and the mountains.

We have a shared geography. West-central Alberta shares the foothills region with western Mountain View county along highway 22 currently. The MD of Bighorn all consider themselves to be mountain, foothills communities with a common geography.

Economic drivers in this region are forest management zones common west of Rocky and Sundre; expanding tourism to the mountains has operation bases in Sundre, west of Rocky; oil and gas; and gravel extraction.

Public land use. Similar pressures from Crown land recreation across the eastern slopes. Combination of public land-use zones, grazing leases, privately owned land, provincial parks, and national park designations across west-central Alberta.

Emergency services. Wildfire management shares common priorities and mutual aid agreements between the municipalities. Search and rescue units are responsible for covering all of Clearwater to the Banff boundary. Policing for Clearwater county

is based out of Rocky Mountain House and Sundre, but their responsibility for all communities in the county goes as far west as the B.C. border.

Transportation networks. Several provincial highways and major transportation corridors run in a north-south fashion, not the east-west corridors that are created by the proposed new boundaries. Rocky Mountain House, Caroline, Sundre are connected by the high-load corridor on highway 22. Nordegg and communities west of Rocky Mountain House connect by highway 11 to the east. The west-central Alberta eastern slopes region is connected by highway 40 between highway 1 in the south and highway 11 in the north. Highway 93 is not a reliable transportation network between Banff and Jasper for any MLA to travel. As you have noted in the very close past, it was closed this winter at least twice that I know of and avalanches during the winter.

Mutual aid agreements between Sundre, Mountain View county, Clearwater county, and the MD of Bighorn for emergency services and infrastructure. Clearwater county and local residents advocate to their MLA and the provincial government for county-wide infrastructure improvements such as broadband, pipelines, and rural electrification.

The history. Rocky Mountain House has been connected to the rest of Clearwater county area since the boundary commission created the Rocky Mountain House electoral division in 1940. Rocky Mountain House and Sundre were both founded as gateways to the west for industry and exploration.

The proposed boundary between Lacombe-Rocky Mountain House and Banff-Jasper would put the town of Rocky in a different riding from the site of the Rocky Mountain House national historic site, the original fort site which is located a few kilometres west of town.

To add to that, you have put the dividing line on the river. There's a fair population west of the river. The way it's currently drawn, they'd be going into the Banff-Jasper area, which is not fair to those residents at all.

Redraw the boundaries to create a single riding encompassing the entirety of Clearwater county, including Rocky Mountain House, O'Chiese First Nation, Sunchild First Nation, western Mountain View county along highway 22. Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre and Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills do not have anything in common at all, whether it's farming practices, the type of farming, whether it's cattle, grain farming. The town of Sundre and the former village of Caroline, the MD of Bighorn, excluding the town of Canmore and Banff national park, should include the Banff townsite.

9:50

Now, I'm going to give you a little rant. I understand every vote is to be equal, but in reality every vote is not equal in rural areas. In urban areas an MLA can drive 15 minutes and be across his whole constituency to cover his area. Here it is a three- to four-hour drive even currently. This means the larger rural areas will be underserved through no fault of the MLA. I'll give you an example. In the current constituency I believe there are eight Legions. An MLA during his term, if he stays for two terms, will probably not get to all the Legions on Remembrance Day. I don't believe that is fair to rural communities in any stretch.

I want to thank you for my time to voice my opinion. Looking forward to your questions. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Graham.  
Questions, Dr. Martin?

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. Thank you, and thank you, sir. I was really taken by one remark of yours, that this county is a one-town county, and

I want to press on that point a little bit in perhaps unexpected ways. From your experience as an elected official sitting on many boards in and around the county, I wonder if you could comment on what I suspect is the necessity of county representation in Clearwater county; namely, that a representative has to be able to think simultaneously of the town's needs and that of the rest of the county. Is that a fair . . .

**Mr. Graham:** Yes.

**Dr. Martin:** Yes. Do you think that it has ever proved difficult for members of the council to juggle both of those things as they come to determinations?

**Mr. Graham:** Speaking from past experience, two councils will always have varying views, yes.

**Dr. Martin:** But those are the things that they have to juggle while they come to those varying views, correct?

**Mr. Graham:** Correct. They do.

**Dr. Martin:** The reason I ask is that we have an ongoing discussion among ourselves and with all our presenters and their letters as well about hybrids large and small, and it would seem that at the county level they are absolute common events.

**Mr. Graham:** It is. Speaking for Clearwater county, Rocky is the only urban municipality. Caroline was just dissolved and taken into the county. There are other hamlets within Clearwater boundaries – Leslieville, Alhambra, Withrow, Condor, Caroline – and they all have something in common for sure, with the municipal council governing all of them.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much. Again, always great to hear from folks who have had some experience representing their communities because you've got a good sense of the experience on the ground. I'm curious. At Clearwater county you talk about: our proposal would have you split across three different constituencies and therefore three different MLAs. Have you historically only had one MLA for Clearwater county?

**Mr. Graham:** No. In the past, not the real recent past, we've had two.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. Do you find there's some value in having more than one MLA and a couple of different voices up in the Legislature advocating for you?

**Mr. Graham:** Speaking as a rural councillor, I did not find that advantage.

**Mr. Clark:** Because you were having to bounce back and forth between two instead of one?

**Mr. Graham:** Yes. The MLAs between the two of them are representing different people and different needs and wants, and they have to balance it. I wouldn't want to be in their position either.

**Mr. Clark:** So you're saying that you find that when you blend together too many different areas, it tends to distract them and split their attention.

**Mr. Graham:** Correct.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** I don't have any questions, but thank you for your time coming out today. I appreciate the information you gave.

**Mr. Graham:** You're welcome.

**Mr. Evans:** I don't have any questions. Thank you so much for your presentation.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Graham.

**Mr. Graham:** Thank you for allowing me.

**The Chair:** I invite you to stay because it's our experience that more Albertans should hear each presentation so they understand what we're going through, and there'll be a variance, I'm sure.

Richard Nichols is our next presenter.

**Mr. Nichols:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to thank the commission for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Richard Nichols, and I live in Okotoks. I'm here to express my strong support for version 2 of the proposed electoral boundary that includes the town of Okotoks, the version that places Okotoks and Diamond Valley together in the constituency rather than the one that combines Okotoks with Calgary-South.

My preference is grounded in three considerations. First, that Okotoks and Diamond Valley have always been distinct from Calgary in history, culture, and pace of life. Two, that both towns are about to enter a period of accelerated growth with the opening of the new regional water pipeline, and that will require focused representation in the Legislature. And three, through four years of interviewing local families as editor of a local monthly magazine and seven years as a monthly columnist for the local newspaper, the Okotoks *Western Wheel*, I heard repeatedly that people choose Okotoks precisely because it is not the big city. These points all lead to the same conclusion to me. Okotoks and Diamond Valley form a coherent community of interest, and version 2 reflects that reality far better than a riding that merges Okotoks with Calgary-South.

Let me elaborate. First of all, a distinct history, culture, and pace of life. Okotoks and Diamond Valley have long been foothills communities with identities shaped by ranching, local business, and a small-town rhythm that has endured even as both towns have grown. Their histories are intertwined with each other far more than with Calgary.

Residents here have consistently expressed a desire to maintain a distinct community character, one that is neither suburban Calgary nor rural in the traditional sense, but something uniquely in between. That distinction shows up in many ways. It shows up in local governance that emphasizes managed growth, environmental stewardship, and community-driven planning. It shows up in a cultural life built around market programming and recreation that reflects foothills values. It shows up in everyday expectations of shorter commutes, slower pace, and stronger neighbour-to-neighbour connection.

While it is true that many residents of Okotoks and Diamond Valley commute to Calgary, that economic link has never erased the cultural and civic separation between the communities. Okotoks and Diamond Valley have their own priorities, their own rhythms, and their own sense of identity. By contrast, Calgary-South is shaped by dense urban development, metropolitan and large-scale service delivery. By definition it's part of a big city. Now, these are important issues, but they are fundamentally different from the

concerns that dominate civic life in Okotoks and Diamond Valley. A constituency that spans both would inevitably force a representative to balance two very different sets of needs.

Let me give you an example. Say the constituency chosen was the one that combined Calgary-South and Okotoks. What would happen if down the line the city of Calgary makes an application to annex the town of Okotoks? Not beyond the realm of possibility. Which faction would the representative for that constituency represent? You can't do both. You have to choose one or the other. That division of focus would serve neither community well.

**10:00**

Secondly, growth pressures require focused representation. The opening of the new regional water pipeline marks a turning point for both Okotoks and Diamond Valley. For years water capacity has been the limiting factor in local development. With that constraint lifted, both towns are poised for significant residential and commercial growth. This growth brings opportunities but also challenges that will be specific to the foothills communities.

Infrastructure expansion, including roads, schools, recreational facilities and utilities; environmental management, especially around water stewardship and land conservation; housing pressures and the need to balance affordability with responsible land use; economic diversification as both towns work to attract new businesses while supporting existing local enterprises: these issues require a representative who understands the nuances of small-town growth and who can advocate effectively for the region's needs. They also need a representative who can focus solely on their community's priorities without being distracted by the competing concerns of a large city.

If Okotoks were combined with Calgary-South, the MLA would be responsible for two very different developmental environments. Calgary-South faces its own set of urban challenges, densification, transit planning, and large-scale commercial development. These are not the same issues facing Okotoks and Diamond Valley. Version 2 avoids this conflict by grouping together two communities with shared growth trajectories and similar development pressures. It ensures that the MLA's focus remains on the needs of the foothills region.

Third, for four years I served as editor of *North Okotoks Living*, a family-oriented monthly magazine circulated in the north part of our community. Each issue featured a profile of a local family. Throughout those interviews I gained a deep understanding of why people choose to live in Okotoks and what they value most about the community.

The most common theme expressed again and again was the desire to raise children in a place that feels fundamentally different from the big city. Families spoke to me about the slower, more intentional pace of life, the sense of safety and community connection, the ability to know your neighbours and to participate in local events, the balance between access to amenities and preservation of the small-town character and the foothills landscape surrounding the community and the feeling of being close to nature.

These values are not incidental. They are central to the identity of Okotoks and Diamond Valley, and they shape residents' expectations of local and provincial representation. A constituency that merges Okotoks and Calgary-South would not reflect these lived experiences. It would place families who deliberately chose a small-town environment into a riding dominated by urban concerns that do not align with their priorities.

Version 2, by contrast, respects the reasons people choose to live here and ensures that their voices are represented within a constituency that reflects their community identity. Therefore, my conclusion is that version 2 of the proposed Okotoks constituency

boundary is the configuration that best aligns with the historical, cultural, and practical realities of the region. Okotoks and Diamond Valley share a distinct identity, face similar development pressures, and are home to residents who value a way of life that is different from that of Calgary. Grouping the two towns together ensures coherent representation and respects the community's longstanding desire to maintain its unique character.

It is for these reasons that I strongly support version 2 and respectfully urge the commission to adopt it. Thank you very much for this opportunity to speak with you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Nichols.

Now we can have some questions. Mr. Evans, any questions or comment?

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah.

First, I want to say that you have an incredibly soothing voice.

**The Chair:** It should be on radio.

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah. It should be on radio. It should be reading books on tape or whatever.

**Mr. Nichols:** Actually, I do.

**Mr. Evans:** That doesn't surprise me.

My question for you, Mr. Nichols, is: can you tell me about the connectivity as a community of interest between Okotoks and High River?

**Mr. Nichols:** Yes. There is the same connectivity of interest as there is with Diamond Valley. You know, they're roughly the same distance apart. The reason I didn't discuss High River was that the combination of High River and Okotoks was not included in either of the two versions that were presented. If I were asked, "Would High River and Okotoks be a good combination?" I would probably say that it's probably as good as Diamond Valley and Okotoks. No better and no worse. They share a lot of the same characteristics.

**Mr. Evans:** If the three were lumped together, would that even be better from your perspective?

**Mr. Nichols:** Probably. But I think the population figures would be too high if that were done.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you. I appreciate your answers and hearing your soothing voice.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation today. This is exactly what we were looking for, that people gave us feedback on the options, which was new to us. They're tough choices. You've given us stuff to think about. Thank you again.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** No questions. Again, I'd just echo my colleagues. I know that you built your presentation because you wanted to stress a particular option, option B, and you did that, I think, quite successfully. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you. Yeah. I'll, you know, echo that as well. The one piece I picked up on, which I thought was really an interesting point that I hadn't quite heard previously in the way you made the

point: just because a significant number of – again, I'm paraphrasing, so please don't let me put words in your mouth. What I heard was: just because a significant portion of people in our community happen to commute to Calgary doesn't make us Calgary.

**Mr. Nichols:** That's correct.

**Mr. Clark:** We very much have a culturally distinct identity, which you and your fellow Okotokians could probably describe. I've heard that there are a number of things to do in Okotoks: my favourite ad campaign of all time. I guess, maybe just very briefly, if you wouldn't mind expanding a bit on how you feel about that cultural difference between Okotoks and Calgary notwithstanding the fact that there are lots of folks who would commute between the two communities.

**Mr. Nichols:** That's right. First of all, it is a policy of our town council to try to maintain the small-town community feel of Okotoks. That is why Okotoks, with a population of over 30,000 people, has never applied to be a city. It wants to still be called a town because it wants to maintain that small-town image. Now, you know, it's going to be harder as the population increases, and the population is going to increase very much over the next 10, 20 years.

There are things that we that happen here in Okotoks that bring the community together. I will just mention two. One is the annual Light Up Okotoks festival, which takes place in the middle of November. It is an occasion where people gather in the town square, which is right in the centre of Okotoks, and there's a big huge pine tree that is planted right in the middle of that square. It's a living tree, and it's covered with Christmas lights, and every November 15, 16, 17, around there, the town gathers in an evening, and they have the lighting of that Christmas tree.

There are booths set up all along the main street, Elizabeth Street here in Okotoks, where people can buy food. Vendors of jewellery and soaps – you know how those markets work – sell their wares there. Local charities have booths set up to explain what their services to the community are and accept donations. That is something that you can't do in a big city. You can attempt it, but you can't do it with the intimacy that you can do in a smaller community. While Okotoks is not necessarily a tiny village anymore, it still is maintaining that feel by maintaining those types of programs through the year.

The other one I want to mention takes place in the summer. Every Thursday evening during the summer in Okotoks in the town square there is a stage set up and there is a concert that people can come to. It's a free concert. People bring their lawn chairs. Businesses that serve ice cream and soft drinks set up booths around the town square, and everybody has a wonderful time listening to some concert. It may be classical music; it may be country; it may be rock, but everybody is there.

**10:10**

It started last year in 2024, continued last summer in 2025, and it got to the point where the town square was not big enough to accommodate all the people with lawn chairs. They had to actually block off the street that was adjacent to the town square so people could put out their lawn chairs and sit there. Those are the types of things – and there are others – that make a small-town feel, in a community even as large as Okotoks, exist.

**Mr. Clark:** Right. Thank you so, so much. Appreciate your time and your contribution.



**Mr. Nichols:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Mr. Nichols, thank you so much. It really helps us make that decision that we threw out to the public in the two options. Please remain to hear the other presenters if you're able.

Our next presenter is Barbara Bodiguel.

**Mr. Roth:** Not present.

**The Chair:** Not present. Okay.  
Then Cameron Mills.

**Mr. Mills:** Thank you very much. Am I able to share a PowerPoint presentation?

**Mr. Roth:** No. If he can send it to me, though.

**The Chair:** Send it to Aaron, and he'll be able to operate it. Sorry about that.

**Mr. Mills:** Okay. My apologies. Do you want to maybe skip to the next person, and I'll get that done?

**Mr. Roth:** Yeah. Genny is here.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Okay. We can.  
Genny Mehlhaff.

**Ms Mehlhaff:** Good morning.

**The Chair:** Morning.

**Ms Mehlhaff:** How are you guys this morning?

**The Chair:** We are great, and we are happy to hear you five minutes earlier than scheduled.

**Ms Mehlhaff:** Excellent. That means I can get my bulls to the vet a little bit sooner, so it sounds great. Did you want me to start then?

**The Chair:** Yes, please. Identify where you're from and what ridings you wish to comment on.

**Ms Mehlhaff:** Excellent. Thank you. My name is Genny Mehlhaff, and I have lived and worked in Clearwater county, which is within the Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre constituency, for over 20 years. I am a ranching mom of four and work in emergency services in this community, and I have also had the privilege of serving on the municipal council, so I have a unique understanding of how this community interacts with the provincial government.

I'm here to express the need for a single west-central Alberta electoral riding represented by one MLA, reflecting how our region actually functions economically, geographically, historically, and how it actually operates. Clearwater county must remain whole. It is a one-town county with Rocky Mountain House serving as the regional hub for health care, education, policing, and social services. The residents of Nordegg, Caroline, and rural Clearwater shaped strong economic and social ties rooted in the west country and the Rocky Mountains. These communities have far more in common with each other than the communities east of Rocky Mountain House, and dividing them would weaken their representation.

Allow me to offer an example. My children are 40 minutes from Rocky Mountain House but go to school there. Splitting the riding would separate the representative that I vote for from the one that represents where all of our services are. More broadly, west-central Alberta and the eastern slopes operate as a single community of

interest. We share the same foothills and mountains geography, weather patterns, and access challenges as well as common economic drivers such as forestry, oil and gas, agriculture, construction, and a growing mountain tourism industry.

From an emergency services perspective the value of a single MLA is critical. Wildfire response, search and rescue, policing, and EMS already function across municipal and park boundaries through mutual aid agreements. Search and rescue coverage extends from Clearwater county to the Banff boundary, and policing is based out of Rocky Mountain House, serving communities to the B.C. border. A single MLA provides clear accountability, consistent advocacy, and faster coordination during emergencies rather than splitting responsibilities between multiple MLA offices.

Our transportation corridors reinforce this reality. Highways are the routes used for commerce, emergency response, and MLA travel. Proposed east-west boundaries ignore how people and services move on the ground. For an example, highway 93 in particular is frequently closed in the winter and cannot function as a reliable corridor. In fact, 93 has been the most closed this year out of any other season. Even though the rest of the province isn't seeing the snow, those mountains sure are, which will be great to have a good snowpack and hopefully a good runoff for the waterways.

Historically Rocky Mountain House has been connected to the rest of Clearwater county since the electoral division was created in 1940. Rocky and Sundre were founded as gateways to the west, and separating Rocky Mountain House from the Rocky Mountain historic site undermines both history and identity. The ideal outcome is one west-central Alberta riding, with one MLA representing all of Clearwater county, western Mountain View county, including Sundre and Cremona and the MD of Bighorn, excluding Canmore and Banff national park, including the town of Banff. A single MLA ensures coherent representation, effective emergency advocacy, and a strong voice for communities that truly do belong together.

Thank you so much for your time. I'm happy to take any of your questions.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you, Ms Mehlhaff. Thank you for taking the time to present since you do not have a lot of time on your hands given your background.

Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much. Yes, you do seem very busy, and I'm really appreciative of you taking time out to speak with us. I'm intrigued by your multiple kinds of perspective: municipal councillor, rancher, nurse. You cover a lot of the functional areas that we hear about, but usually it's only one person representing one of those views.

I'm interested in what you might call the westward-facing sentiment and orientation of services and industries. We've heard quite a lot about this, actually, not least in submissions. Would you also be of the opinion that, roughly speaking, highway 22 divides functional areas as well as agricultural zones?

**Ms Mehlhaff:** In the sense of travel or just the way that the actual topography exists, just to clarify the question?

**Dr. Martin:** Well, we've heard that sort of east of 22 it's grain farming, to put it crudely, whereas west of there the agricultural patterns change into ranching and, of course, oil and gas – everybody has got some of that – but also forestry; moreover, that the governance patterns are different.

**Ms Mehlhaff:** Well, the governance patterns: all of Clearwater county is represented by one council. But absolutely the topography changes when you go west of 22 as opposed to east of 22, with weather patterns and just sheer ruggedness of the land itself. Definitely it's more of a ranch-based environment. With the weather pattern changes there is some mixed-use agriculture there now as well. But definitely a different form of agriculture east of 22 than west of 22.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much.

**Mrs. Samson:** In the changes that we put forward, we talked about the consideration of Nordegg tying into the mountain parks. Can you expand on that, your thoughts on that area?

**Ms Mehlhaff:** Absolutely. In particular, if you ask the communities of Nordegg if they themselves identify with the other mountain parks, they would tell you unequivocally that they do not. They are unique in themselves and actually would not like to see themselves like Banff and Jasper. They prefer to be Nordegg and be identified as such. Highway 93, that would be supposedly connecting them, is closed a lot of the winter months; therefore, an MLA that represented them would actually have to leave their constituency in which to get to a piece of it.

**Mrs. Samson:** That's correct, yes. Thank you for your thoughts on that.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah.

Thank you so much for your submissions. I want to ask you about – my colleague was talking about 22, but I want to direct your focus to east and west of highway 2. My understanding is that there's a difference in terms of both oil and gas and agriculture on the east versus the west of highway 2. Would you agree with that?

**Ms Mehlhaff:** Of highway 2?

**Mr. Evans:** Highway 2.

**Ms Mehlhaff:** Yes, absolutely. Absolutely. Actually, there would be significantly more large-scale grain operations east of highway 2 than there would be even west of highway 2, and then that gets even more on a microscale west of 22, like we were talking about earlier. You're going to see a lot more larger agricultural equipment east of 2 than you will west of 2 for sure. Just the sheer topography changes that.

10:20

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you. Appreciate the answer to my question.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah.

Thank you. No questions from me beyond a word of thanks. Just to let you know, we've received some great submissions from the folks in and around Clearwater county, including yourself and others today and plenty of written submissions as well. I feel like you're punching above your weight, as usual, in Clearwater. Thank you.

**Ms Mehlhaff:** We're just a little passionate out here about this province and what it means to us.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Well, thank you for your participation. It makes a big difference. Thank you.

**Ms Mehlhaff:** Thank you so much for having me.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, Ms Mehlhaff. You're welcome to stay, but I understand you're a busy person, so feel free to leave if you so desire.

Okay. Now Cameron Mills.

**Mr. Mills:** Thank you very much. I did have the opportunity to send that along to Aaron. Aaron, if you can get that loaded up.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak to the commission. I had the opportunity to speak during the original round of meetings down in Lethbridge. I am a resident of Lethbridge. I'm speaking as a resident of Lethbridge with respect to how the boundaries for this part of southern Alberta should be drawn. Specifically – Aaron, if you can move to the next slide – the presentation here and the letter that I'd submitted respond directly to the commission's request for further analysis on hybrid urban-rural electoral divisions in southern Alberta. In the interim 2025 report the commission rightly identified these divisions as conceptually strong and structurally coherent but noted that additional work was required to demonstrate the integrated economics of the agrifood industry in the region. The purpose of this presentation is to provide that work by showing that what is being proposed electorally by myself already exists economically, institutionally, and operationally.

Next slide. The starting point is a simple but critical reality. Lethbridge is the urban anchor of the largest agrifood corridor in Alberta. This is not a symbolic claim. It is a measurable economic system. The corridor encompasses more than 4 million acres of farmland, including over 900,000 irrigated acres. It supports over 4,400 farms and produces more than 65 specialty crops. In total the system includes more than 11,000 businesses, serves a regional population of roughly 342,000 people, and generates approximately \$8 billion in annual GDP for our province.

Next slide. Unsurprisingly, agriculture and ag-related industries account for nearly 20 per cent of the region's total GDP, making it the single largest economic sector anchored in Lethbridge. This integration is also visible in daily movement patterns. More than 20,000 people commute into Lethbridge each day, increasing the city's daytime working age population by roughly 25 per cent. That figure is in fact increased when you consider the number of folks that commute out of Lethbridge into the surrounding region such as myself.

Postsecondary institutions in Lethbridge are deliberately structured to supply skilled labour for agribusiness while professional services – financial, veterinary, marketing, logistics – are centrally located in the city to serve rural producers. Ask any bank manager in the city to list their most important clients; they're going to list farmers, feedlot operators, farm implement dealers, et cetera. Lethbridge Polytechnic recently received a \$5 million gift from a local cattle producer to establish the southern Alberta agribusiness program to provide specialized training for the next generation of agribusiness professionals. Major transportation routes likewise converge through Lethbridge, making it the indispensable transfer point for both export and domestic markets.

Next slide. Because Lethbridge functions as the urban anchor of the corridor, it already governs regionally in practice. The city routinely enters into regional waste, recycling, utility, fire and rescue and disaster response partnerships with neighbouring municipalities. It has secured significant funding for region-serving infrastructure such as the \$25 million provincial contribution to the Agrifood Hub and Trade Centre. It leads the regional economic initiatives like Canada's premier food corridor, co-ordinates regional physician recruitment. The city of Lethbridge even takes formal policy positions at the council level such as opposition to

coal mining projects that extend hundreds of kilometres beyond the city boundaries. In short, Lethbridge already acts as a regional authority even though its electoral structure does not formally recognize this role, which limits the capacity of the city to effectively represent its interests at the provincial level.

Next slide. This regional role is not only recognized locally; it is consistently, in fact, relied on by the province of Alberta in its governance. If you track provincial capital investment patterns, they clearly already treat Lethbridge as the institutional and infrastructural anchor for southern Alberta. This includes major funding for the Chinook regional hospital, the Agrifood Hub and Trade Centre, the University of Lethbridge's rural medical education training centre, the dialysis modernization upgrades at the regional hospital in 2025, the water treatment infrastructure, which serves the surrounding region, including the value-added agricultural industry, and that list goes on. These are clearly not city-only investments that the province is making; they are regional investments routed through Lethbridge because the province already understands the region as a single, integrated system.

Next slide. Dividing the city of Lethbridge into four urban-rural hybrid electoral divisions would not create a new regional structure; it would simply formalize the one that already governs southern Alberta in practice. In reality, Lethbridge functions as the command centre of a single agrifood system where rural production and urban processing, research, logistics, and export activity operate as one integrated whole. In reality, labour markets, health care, emergency services, and transportation networks already cross municipal boundaries daily, and in reality provincial policy and investment decisions already treat the region as unified. Hybrid electoral divisions, in the case of Lethbridge and southern Alberta specifically, would therefore align representation with reality, bringing du jour structure into line with de facto governance.

Next slide. Thank you for the opportunity to provide the additional analysis, and I welcome any questions and appreciate the commission's careful consideration of how electoral boundaries can best reflect the lived economic and institutional realities of southern Alberta.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Mills, for that very succinct presentation and for following up on what you presented the first night we held a public hearing.

Mr. Clark, any questions or comments of Mr. Mills?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah.

Thank you very much. The timing of your presentation is really good because we just heard from some folks from Clearwater county and earlier today also Clearwater county. Their point is that in rural Alberta it's important to keep like with like. We've got to kind of keep the folks who have similar interests all together, and there's a value in having a single MLA that really focuses in on the issues that are specific to their area. Just curious whether you think that's not the correct perspective.

**Mr. Mills:** I would suggest that having an MLA provide representation that's specific to the issues is very important, but then I think the question becomes: what are the issues, right? I understand that the hybrid model may not be appropriate for, say, the Okotoks region or certain other areas, but Lethbridge and this particular region is a little bit different. So what are the key issues that are in the news for this region? What are the key issues that affect what the province does in this region?

I would argue that if I've got a kid graduating high school and I live in Picture Butte, my son is attending the University of Lethbridge; he's not attending the university of Picture Butte. We

recognize that Lethbridge is the university for the region, as is Lethbridge Polytechnic on the college side. If I get injured and I need to go to the hospital, I'm going into Chinook regional hospital. It's right in the name, right? It is the hospital for the entire region.

Hospital and health care is the number one issue in Alberta in terms of the overall spend. If you look at the Alberta provincial budget, health is number one. Why wouldn't I want my MLA to have some representation where my health care is delivered, right? I've got transportation corridors. Water is a huge issue down here. Water treatment is all done at the city of Lethbridge, so if I'm living outside the city of Lethbridge and the province is looking at funding water expansion and the ability for me to either access water for my business or access water for my home, it ultimately is routed through the city of Lethbridge, where I have no representation, right? So I would want my local MLA to also have the ability to affect where the investment is happening at the provincial level. If you look at every single issue that the province directly gets involved in in terms of how they spend their money and how they operate, at the end of the day in southern Alberta it all flows through Lethbridge.

10:30

**Mr. Clark:** I guess I'm curious. You talked about the economy and the economy of the region. By that logic, the economy of Calgary relies significantly on downtown Calgary, or Edmonton or any of the larger cities, but we don't generally draw a wagon wheel where we have multiple constituencies pointing into the inner city of Calgary. We recognize neighbourhoods. Same thing with Red Deer. Red Deer is two constituencies. Would you advocate that we build a wagon wheel in Calgary and we hybridize Red Deer?

**Mr. Mills:** No. I believe that, you know, Calgary's issue is the difference between someone who is in one riding in Calgary versus another riding in Calgary. There's enough cross-contamination between those two districts that you don't really need to see that sort of wagon wheel approach to recognize that someone who's advocating for a riding in south Calgary obviously has some impact in the downtown as well. It's not like anyone pretends that a hospital in downtown Calgary doesn't somehow serve the rest of Calgary.

Red Deer's issues are, obviously, specific. I don't know everything about the city of Red Deer to say whether or not the hybrid model is appropriate for them.

Okotoks, for example, is very different from Lethbridge in the sense that Okotoks is, you know, a town of 35,000 people. Black Diamond, for example, has its own hospital. The regional hospital program within Okotoks – if I'm in Okotoks and I need to take my kids to the emergency room, I go to Black Diamond, right? There's representation there. We're talking in this very commission meeting about putting those two districts together, so it makes sense.

Southern Alberta is – I mean, the crossing of economic realities exists everywhere. That's obvious. But in Lethbridge it's massively more apparent, right? The entire region is driven on this hub-and-spoke model of centring around Lethbridge. It's all based out of Lethbridge. All of the financial services are in Lethbridge. All of the investment for major infrastructure is in Lethbridge, and all of that spills out to the region.

From my perspective, I would want my representative to have the ability to speak to issues that are regional in level, because I already have local representation, right? As a resident of the city of Lethbridge I have someone to represent my interests that are local, that are specific. That's what my council does, and they do a great job of it. But I do believe that the city of Lethbridge has a very keen interest in, for example, you know, the mining impacting the

waterways that ultimately affect the Oldman River. That's something that's happening outside of Lethbridge that's impacting within Lethbridge at a very significant level, and our local MLA, Mr. Miyashiro, has spoken extensively about that issue, and I'm glad he does. But I also think it would be better if he had some authority or some interest in that area so that he could speak directly to the issue where it's happening, because that connection between the two is so readily apparent down here.

**Mr. Clark:** Sorry. Apologies to jump in, but I just want to ask one more thing. I want to press you a little bit because what I've heard is intellectually kind of inconsistent, right? On one hand, Picture Butte and Lethbridge should be together because there's a regional interest and a commonality, but on the other hand, well, south Calgary is actually different than downtown Calgary even though they both have an interest in health care. Okotoks is different because, well, that's a little different. But Picture Butte, Coalhurst, Coaldale, Lethbridge county, those places: their interests are the same even though those places don't have transit whereas Lethbridge does. They don't deal with the same kind of, say, homelessness-type issues that Lethbridge does and those sort of larger urban-type city issues. I just want to press you a little bit on that because I'm not sort of hearing a consistency in argument between different parts of the province.

**Mr. Mills:** Well, I think I am being consistent. Again, my point is that the difference between each individual riding needs to be considered on its own merits. The reality is that the merits of the argument to say that, you know, water distribution in southern Alberta is centred around Lethbridge is specific to Lethbridge, right? Why would we compare that to, you know, south Calgary and downtown Calgary when that's, like, a totally different system? You already have one local representative or one group of local representatives that cover that entire region in terms of the local city council, right? Lethbridge doesn't have that. You're not voting in Picture Butte for someone who manages the Lethbridge water system at the local level. That's where the province, who generally funds oftentimes half these capital projects, can provide that input for those stakeholders.

**Mr. Clark:** Thanks so much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Mills:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson, any questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** Yes, I do.

Thank you for your presentation today and the detail. I want to share with you that we've had lots of input on Lethbridge and both ways, divide it into hybrids or stay as it is. I must say that when you give us your presentation on the successes you've had in the agrifood industry, you are doing exceedingly well with Lethbridge staying historically the same, with two electoral divisions staying in an urban setting. It seems to work really well. So yes, you have a compelling argument. But I say: when we're tasked to provide clear distinct boundaries that residents recognize and follow and it's working well and it's historically well, why would I change it?

**Mr. Mills:** Right. That ignores the reality that anything could be better, right? To say that something is good so we shouldn't chase great: I don't believe in that at all. I think the province has massively more potential than it is achieving right now, and I think that utilizing the structure of the provincial elected officials and these

ridings would help us reach another level so that we could compete in the agrifood industry with, you know, the Idahos of the world and the other jurisdictions. While we're having success, other jurisdictions are outperforming us, and while it is true that we've had economic growth down here with respect to the agrifood development industry, we are starting to run into concerns.

With respect to that industry specifically – and I mentioned this briefly in my presentation previously – one of the issues we have is that something like 97 per cent of the water rights within this region are held by rural areas, but 100 per cent of the water production capacity is done in the city of Lethbridge. So you've got this balance between water licensing and regulatory requirements and the realities of production capacity where you're talking about \$500 million investments, which obviously small towns and counties aren't able to make. So that's where, you know, we've had some growth, but we're starting to run into those challenges precisely because we've got interjurisdictional issues which the province could do a better job of helping us get over if the MLAs were representing across these local boundary lines.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Mills:** You're very welcome.

**Mr. Evans:** Mr. Mills, thank you for your presentation today and your previous presentation. My takeaway from both presentations and the strength that you're talking about is an increase or a constant – I'm going to say an increase in representation of Lethbridge and the Lethbridge region in Edmonton. Is that fair?

**Mr. Mills:** I mean, I wouldn't say that it's an increase, certainly not from a sense of volume. I think that it's about properly aligning representation in our region relative to the issues. While I understand that there's no single system which is going to work perfectly, if you look at the issues within our region, they are almost exclusively crossjurisdictional, right? They are health care delivery . . .

**Mr. Evans:** Let me interrupt you for just a minute, Mr. Mills. As it currently sits with two MLAs from Lethbridge, you have two MLAs that are going to be able to represent, for example, Lethbridge interests on a water issue. The surrounding MLAs in the electoral districts around Lethbridge may not be interested in that issue and may not be there in Edmonton representing that issue. In terms of accepting that Lethbridge is an economic anchor and having four MLAs tied to it, you would increase or concentrate your representation strength in Edmonton on a single issue. Is that what you're suggesting?

**Mr. Mills:** That's potentially true. At the same time, those four MLAs would need to balance their decision-making with the fact that their decisions are going to impact beyond their local borders. While on the one hand it would certainly provide four voices for the city of Lethbridge at the provincial level, it would also ensure that decisions aren't made exclusively for Lethbridge to the detriment of the surrounding regions, which rely on the city of Lethbridge for the delivery of provincial-level services.

10:40

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thank you very much for answering my question.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you. Mr. Mills, I was particularly taken by the sweeping number of themes as you survey the economic geography of the entire region.

I want to focus particularly on your mention of commuters because it seems like a large number, 20,700 commuters daily coming in to Lethbridge and going home at night, one presumes. How do you collect that data, if I may be technical about it? Are those short commutes or long commutes? Are they from the north? Are they from the east? From the south? Can you characterize this a bit further?

**Mr. Mills:** Great. That actually comes from a report published by Economic Development Lethbridge, which is an arm's-length organization operated by the city of Lethbridge in an economic development capacity. I believe those are 2025 numbers. The data that they capture from within the region extends to the west as far as Pincher Creek, to the south down to the border, to the east, I believe, as far as Bow Island as well as to the north. So it is within a region. Now, obviously, a greater number of commuters are going to be within a short – just using logic, I'm sure that there are more people commuting 15 minutes than 50, but generally speaking you do find that broader extension.

The interesting thing is that the number is a 25 per cent increase because you have 105,000 people of working age within Lethbridge during the day compared to 85,000 people living here, so it's a 20,000 person increase, but that also doesn't take into account that in that 85,000 number there are people that leave Lethbridge to work in the surrounding area. I do that, for example. I live in Lethbridge and work in Coaldale. So that number, that 25 per cent increase, is likely conservative in terms of the daily number. That 25 per cent increase could be as high as 30 per cent.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Mills:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Mr. Mills, thank you for following up from your original presentation. As you know, you presented, I recall distinctly, at about a quarter to 10 that evening we were sitting Lethbridge. It was a long evening, and you certainly caught the attention of the commission in your presentation and in the theoretical aspect of it. In your exchange with Mr. Clark – of course, central planning loves one-size-fits-all-type solutions. Effective representation can be an ambiguous term that adjusts for regions, geography, everything. You're recommending wholesale surgery to a challenge that we as a commission have.

Now, let me give you some background. Our concern: we only received two more electoral divisions in our mandate. It's really simple to just say: "Okay. One seat has got to go to Calgary; one seat has got to go to Edmonton because of the vast population increase." But there's more to it. We reluctantly have taken seats – and we knew that this was coming – out of the province outside of Calgary and Edmonton, and that is very controversial for those. You may have heard a presentation or two from Clearwater this morning. That's part of what we did, and we're getting some criticism on that. We took a riding out of the north. We received tremendous push-back for taking a riding out of the north. Our province-wide concern is doing things to avoid eliminating rural ridings.

You didn't comment on what I see as one of the advantages of your proposal. You didn't say it today, but as I recall the last time around, your theory would basically create a southern band of six seriously hybrid ridings whereas now we have seven or seven and maybe a fraction.

**Mr. Mills:** Yes.

**The Chair:** But that is drastic surgery.

**Mr. Mills:** Of course. But if not now, then when, right? I would argue that doing what is easy is not necessarily what is good, right? The mandate of the commission is to attack this issue in a wholesale way and to be analytical and to think about what's best and not rely on what's easy to make that decision.

I think I've made very clear arguments. I haven't heard any significant push-back to the validity of those arguments when I've read, you know, from folks opposing them. Even in the commission's report it seems to me that the reluctance to seriously pursue the model is based on the volume of the people speaking against the issue rather than the calibre of the arguments presented by folks speaking against the proposal, which may be political in nature.

I'm not attacking this from a political basis. I'm not a member of a political party. Like, that's not my issue. My issue is about saying that I want to live in a province that is governed the most effectively possible. I want to achieve the potential of my region. I want to achieve the potential of my province. I want the province of Alberta to be the most successful province in Canada, and I want southern Alberta to be a big part of that. I believe fundamentally that governing the southern Alberta region this way, specific to southern Alberta, is the correct approach. Whether or not this model applies correctly to Calgary or Okotoks or Red Deer really isn't up to me to decide. I'm not an expert in those areas. But I am an expert in what's going on down here, and I believe wholeheartedly that this is the correct way to do that.

The advantage of it is fundamentally that it does free up an additional seat to address some of the significant challenges that the commission has in dealing with population increases in Calgary and Edmonton, and I think that's beneficial. As a Lethbridge resident, obviously, I want my region to be powerful within Edmonton. You could say: well, I have six MLAs instead of seven; that's worse. But I would argue that I would rather have six extraordinarily effective MLAs than seven who have, you know, ridings that extend from the border up to east of Calgary, which is what we have now currently in Livingstone-Macleod, or other issues like that. I'd rather have six folks sitting around the table who understand the region and who can govern the region in a way that is appropriate for the way this region is organized, and I believe fundamentally that the hybrid model is a more effective way of doing that for down here.

**The Chair:** Okay. But you realize that – I don't know the mileage. I've driven it several times. Lethbridge to the Pass: I mean, you can't be suggesting that a section of Lethbridge be included with the Crowsnest Pass.

**Mr. Mills:** I can and I do. We already have ridings that extend far in excess of that. We already have a riding that extends from the Canada-U.S. border to east of Strathmore. We're talking about a region that is fundamentally interconnected. We're also talking about a region where people regularly commute that distance. Folks in Crowsnest Pass and Pincher Creek regularly come into Lethbridge. Like, Lethbridge is where they come in to do their shopping. It's where they come to go to the hospital when they need major health care work. It's where they go to university. It's where they go to college. It is all fundamentally connected.

I realize that it is not – I mean, obviously, if there was a single solution which was obviously perfect in every respect, then we wouldn't have to have these conversations. The reality is that no single model of organizing this is going to work perfectly. It is unfortunate that there would be some commuting involved in that, but we already have that commuting. The only difference is that the Lethbridge-specific MLAs don't have to do it.

**The Chair:** Okay. One of our concerns, you know, not in the legislation but we're certainly sensitive to it of course, next to Lethbridge is one of the largest First Nations in the country. Where do you see the Blood Tribe fitting in this process and having any affinity at all to the city? Have you looked at that? Have you talked to members of the Blood Tribe?

10:50

**Mr. Mills:** Well, I haven't personally, but, at the same time, I think if you did, I'm certain that the folks at the Blood Tribe would tell you that they have a substantial tie-in to the city of Lethbridge. There are, you know, First Nation service delivery vehicles based out of Lethbridge, which recognize the fact that the populations are fundamentally interconnected between those areas. Again, this is another region where we say that we've got local representation for the Blood Tribe dealing with local issues with respect to the Blood Tribe, just as the city of Lethbridge councillors deal with local issues. But shouldn't the province be able to recognize that there's also interdependence between those communities and have someone at the provincial level that can help act as a bridge between that local representation in order to develop more effective policy and implement more effective solutions to regional problems?

**The Chair:** One more question, and I think there may be another question. What's been the push-back or the opposition that you received to this proposal?

**Mr. Mills:** Well, I mean, if you come back to the previous meeting, you know, folks were fundamentally – I was trying to make an argument about multibillion-dollar investments in water capacity and regional health care delivery, and it felt like the counter arguments were: there aren't enough diverse restaurants in small towns relative to what's in Lethbridge. Like, that was brought up at the meeting.

This idea that the people who live in Lethbridge-East or Lethbridge-West are fundamentally different people that are incompatible with their rural neighbours: I think that's a horrible way of looking at the world. I think that we all are people. I believe that everyone in southern Alberta are reasonable people that recognize that what we need our government to do is to lead in terms of issues and facts and policies and programs, and those aren't necessarily local in nature and down here they're very much not local in nature.

It seems like the arguments against this come back to comfort. They come back to ideas of ideology, which I don't think are appropriate for an independent, neutral commission to consider. I think we should be looking at facts and issues and how the government spends its money and how it operates. For me, I haven't seen a lot of effectiveness there. There's been some talk about concerns about how people vote, but again I'm not considering how people vote at all. I don't think that should be the basis of decision-making because voting changes over time. People have the ability to campaign and address people and their issues. I have no political affiliation myself. That's not why I believe in this so strongly. I believe in it because I work in a field where I see the interconnectivity and I deal with this on a daily basis and I know that I can get more effective governance from the province if I have provincial voices speaking on a regional level down here.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you. I've kept you longer than I probably should have. Actually, it's prompted one other question from a commissioner.

**Mrs. Samson:** I just have a follow-up to the thought that we talked about earlier, and that is that you're extremely successful right now

when I think about the agrifood business, and so is the city of Lethbridge. What you're compelling us to think about is that with the hybrid situation we will have MLAs focused collectively on the challenges. Why does that not happen now? Like, you're suggesting that what we have now is not good and if we do it this way, it'll work, but it's not working now. I don't get it. I'm talking about the MLAs now. Are they not working collectively?

**Mr. Mills:** They are. Like, they're all good people, working effectively within their scope. But working well doesn't mean it can't be done better, right? That's fundamental. That argument basically suggests that any form of change anywhere is inherently bad, right?

**Mrs. Samson:** I would disagree.

**Mr. Mills:** This is working fine. It's working well. The MLAs do a reasonable job, but I believe they would all do a better job if their role in terms of how the province is governed aligned with the reality of how the region actually works, which is to say: at a regional level. We don't need to double up on local representation. We have local representation.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much. I presume we have your PowerPoint, and if you have some draft maps or proposals please send those in as well, Mr. Mills.

We're going to break now. This concludes the first half of our morning. I believe, according to my schedule, we have three or four presenters left. We're going to break for 10 minutes. Let's come back at 11:10.

[The hearing adjourned from 10:56 a.m. to 11:07 a.m.]

**The Chair:** Okay. Good morning again. We're returning from the break.

We've got, I believe, three or four presenters remaining for this morning. Is Megan Hanson...

**Mr. Roth:** No.

**The Chair:** No, she's not present.

Brent Ramsay. Are you present? Brent, could you please identify yourself. Tell us which riding you're living in and which one you wish to comment on.

**Mr. Ramsay:** Yes. Hello, commission members. I'm Brent Ramsay, the mayor of Red Deer county. I currently reside in the Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre riding, and of course our municipality is split between that and the current Innisfail-Sylvan Lake riding.

**The Chair:** Okay. Proceed.

**Mr. Ramsay:** Perfect. Well, yeah. Just a quick thank you to the commission members for your continued work and engagement on this.

Upon reviewing the draft, we did have some concern with the loss of the Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre riding and the impact that that could have on rural representation in central Alberta. I would admit, like I say, residing in that riding currently, the current boundaries: I wasn't totally happy with how they cut into Red Deer county and how that was totally working so was excited about kind of a redraft. You know, I understand the commission was looking at trying to put rural municipalities into kind of one riding. I think that was part of the mandate. But what

we noticed in the draft map was that the ridings to the north and south of the new Sylvan Lake-Innisfail riding, in my opinion, are far too large geographically and will not have effective representation based on the corridors in the region.

Even we kind of feel that Red Deer county is almost too large for one MLA. It's a very diverse region. We have six urban municipalities if you don't count the city of Red Deer, so I do feel that there would be some challenges for one MLA to represent the entire Red Deer county. Our feelings are that we would be very open to having two MLAs represent Red Deer county, as has been for the last few years, just to help restore the Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre riding in some form. We believe that having two MLAs in the past has given our municipality and region a bigger voice and would certainly benefit our constituents.

We feel the commission should strongly consider returning the riding to the west of Red Deer county. This would allow a restructure of central Alberta to have condensed representation along the highway 2 corridor. We feel that would also benefit the other corridors in the region to the west and east of us. Based on the data, we feel there are a few options that would work and meet the population thresholds. We didn't want to submit anything specific and try and narrow the focus of the commission; however, our GIS team could assist the commission if it would be helpful.

We truly appreciate the work the commission is doing in updating the boundaries, and that is important, especially with the added seats; however, it cannot come at the loss of effective rural representation. Some of the larger proposed geographic ridings will put strain on our MLAs. Rural Alberta takes care of vital infrastructure and drives our economy, and we feel it's important to have good representation. Adding seats should not just benefit our large urban centres but the province as a whole. Again, I would like to thank you for your time and hope you consider kind of reshaping the ridings in central Alberta to better benefit the highway 2 corridor and maintain our current number of ridings to allow for more effective representation.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, sir.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

**Mr. Evans:** Yes.

Aaron, would you be able to put up the proposed of ED of Sylvan Lake-Innisfail? So 86.

Mr. Ramsay, when that comes up, I just want to understand exactly what you're looking for in terms of Red Deer county. Red Deer county surrounds the city of Red Deer, borders on the Clearwater county, correct?

**Mr. Ramsay:** Yes.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Can you see that?

**Mr. Ramsay:** Yeah.

**Mr. Evans:** Am I to understand that you're not in favour of this proposal or you would like some changes to it? Can you help me out there?

**Mr. Ramsay:** Yeah. In all a hundred per cent honesty, like, having Red Deer county in one riding is not the worst case scenario. But what we see to the north and south of us in their ridings is that they are now extending very far west to kind of pick up the population and make it work with the loss of the Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre riding. To me, that's going to create some challenges. In talking to some of our regional partners we really felt that, you know, to try and condense the ridings in the north and

south of us to better fit along the highway 2 corridor, we would be willing to lose part of this riding to maybe the riding north of us, if you took, say, Sylvan Lake out of the picture and put it into the riding north so that they didn't have to extend all the way to Rocky Mountain House. Like I say, I think there are a couple of different variations or options you could look at, but what I wanted to really let the commission know is that we are open to having, you know, our municipality split into two ridings.

**Mr. Evans:** Just one more question. I think you mentioned the advantage of having two MLAs representing your interest. Did I hear you correctly?

**Mr. Ramsay:** Yeah. For sure. We've noticed that in the past having two MLAs – of course, currently they're both ministers – has given our region a lot bigger voice. I think, you know, like I say, when I saw the draft map, I was like: "Okay. Red Deer county is all in one. That's good." Then when you expand your view a little bit further, you start to see the impact of our region and losing that riding and that voice and the way that those corridors are kind of being impacted on the west side of us. That's where I think that for us we're very open to having that second MLA and second voice. To me, it helps benefit the region as a whole in bringing another rural seat. Also, like I say, you could probably condense the ridings to the north and south of us along the highway 2 corridor a little bit better.

**Mr. Evans:** Mr. Ramsay, thank you so much for your answers.

**Mr. Ramsay:** Yeah. For sure.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for participating today. That's really important to us. Your concern is that the existing Innisfail-Sylvan Lake electoral division expanded more to the west, and you feel you'd have better ties if you had two MLAs and we went more to the north? Are you suggesting that, like, containing more of those highway 2 corridor communities is a better fit for the county of Red Deer and the county of Red Deer's interests, like the things that are happening in Ponoka, Lacombe, and along that highway 2 corridor?

11:15

**Mr. Ramsay:** Yeah. I would say that, like, looking more locally, when you start to talk about the highway 2 and kind of how our municipality works, we have, you know, Bowden, Innisfail, Red Deer, Blackfalds, Lacombe and then to the south of us we have kind of Olds, and we're all very close. Even once you stretch out east and west, a lot of the people that are living rurally are coming to that corridor to access services and everything like that.

You know, like I say, I think what's proposed kind of works for Red Deer county, but when I look north at Lacombe being in the same riding as Rocky Mountain House, I don't think they're going to have effective representation. Rocky Mountain House is in a totally different corridor along highway 22. To me, we need that riding of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre in some form to kind of better condense the ridings north and south of Red Deer county along the highway 2 corridor to better benefit the representation of the region.

**Mrs. Samson:** You're speaking about the west. What are your thoughts on highway 21? Do you still like that connection?

**Mr. Ramsay:** Yeah. You know, I think once you start to look to the east, it gets a little bit more challenging populationwise. Highway 21, you know: it's not as big a corridor, so we still see those folks coming to highway 2. Obviously, some of the municipalities out that way are working on development opportunities, and it would

be great to see that corridor grow, and I think that might change things in the future. The problem is that further east of that you don't have the population, and it becomes challenging. I believe the current riding on the east side of the highway 21 corridor has kind of a special status because of the low population. I think to try and split the east off further would create more challenges because of the population. And, like I say, because that corridor is not as developed at this time, we're still seeing those people rely more on the highway 2. That's where they're commuting.

**Mrs. Samson:** Great. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you, and thank you, Mayor Ramsay, for being here today. I'm quite interested, of course, as we all are, in the significance of the highway 2 corridor. We've just spoken about highway 21 and its future potential, but we've also had a great number of letters and comments about highway 22, which is – I think I'm right – immediately west of your county boundary. It's asserted that there's a significant change in the economy somewhere along that line as you move into different types of agricultural activity and move from, to put it crudely, grain farming to ranching, perhaps those kind of shifts. It leads me back to the thought that: is it true, then, that the bulk of your county is involved in grain farming as a basic industry?

**Mr. Ramsay:** Yeah. As far as agriculture goes, we are quite diverse from the west side to the east side of our county. You know, you look at our west. It's, in my opinion – I have a farmer background – some of the best land we have in the province for arable land and growing grain crops, and that continues a little bit further west of us into Clearwater county as well. Our southern portions in Red Deer county and the east side are more of our grass- and ranchlands there.

But yeah, you're absolutely right. Going into the highway 22 corridor, it becomes a lot different topography, and I would say that you get into a lot more of those natural grasslands and even kind of, you know, foothills, mountainous ranges in some areas. If you go west of Caroline probably about an hour, you're kind of into a smaller mountain range already. So it really changes quite a bit on that highway 22 corridor. I look at the community of Rocky Mountain House: you know, very different from what we're seeing along the highway 2 corridor.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah.

Thanks very much. It's always great – and I've said it a few times, but I think it's worth saying again – when we have elected representatives here representing your communities join us. You've got a comprehensive view, I guess, of kind of conditions on the ground, if you will, and you've demonstrated that today. Thank you so much.

You've identified, I think, one of the great challenges we have, and that's balancing out the population. You know, I was actually just doing a little bit of back and forth here on our maps and some of the different ideas we had kicked around. What I'm hearing from you and I've heard from others is that the corridor really is north-south along highway 2, broadly speaking, as opposed to east-west. Part of the struggle we have around – of course, as you go further east and west from highway 2, the population really thins up. I mean, that's no big surprise. Anyway, that's more just kind of a

foundational – you've already identified that's what we're wrestling with here.

You said something right at the beginning of your presentation that I wanted to pick up on, that you weren't completely happy with the old 2017 boundaries. Maybe if you wouldn't mind just talking a little bit about what you didn't like. You've talked about a couple of possible solutions. I'm just kind of curious what – I want to make sure we don't step in and kind of make a similar error or miscalculation, in your opinion.

**Mr. Ramsay:** Yeah. A couple of points there, I guess, speaking to what I didn't like about the current draft. To me this highlights the importance of the highway 2 corridor. You know, if you just look at your guys' draft at Red Deer county, we would be quite happy with that. To me, even going to the west and the east side of Red Deer county, that is a pretty far drive, but that still all funnels to the highway 2 corridor. If I utilize services or sports or anything for my kids, typically we're going Innisfail, Red Deer. I live west of Spruce View, 20 minutes west of Innisfail, so we're always headed towards that corridor.

What happened in the last draft to try and gain population, as you mentioned, is the challenge, for that Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre: it kind of cut into Red Deer county. I ended up about a mile into that riding. I don't really feel I relate to – you know, I don't spend a lot of time in Sundre or kind of that highway 22 corridor. To me that's why it emphasizes the need to have representation on that side. That corridor: they have their own travel patterns, same as highway 2. That's what I really didn't like about that redraft. Like I say, the two MLAs from a county perspective was great, but as an individual being kind of cut into that weird corridor that you're not really a part of: it really felt like you weren't represented by your MLA. So that's kind of my thoughts on the previous draft.

I totally hear you on the population challenges. I wanted to submit kind of a map or my thoughts with this to try and give the commission, you know, more data and more to work with, but like I said, I didn't really want to limit the focus or your guys' scope on what you could look at for options. I think there are a variety of ways you can do it. Like I say, on the east side of us we kind of have a specialized status riding because of the population out there. I don't know if that's what it would take on the west side. But I do think, when you start to look at some of the communities like Rocky Mountain House, Sundre, that were already existing, that you could get the populations quite close. Then by doing that for the ridings north and south of us – you know, to me if that north one had to cut in and maybe grab Sylvan Lake, like, they kind of have the highway 20 corridor up there, going north to Rimbey from Sylvan Lake. So if that's where it kind of had to cut in to Red Deer county a little bit to try and make a rejigging work so that you could still maintain the population side on the west.

Yeah, I certainly understand the challenges there. But, like I say, having those ridings extend that far west I really think hurts those folks in those ridings.

**Mr. Clark:** That's really helpful. Thank you so much.

11:25

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Ramsay. You had a short presentation, but we grilled you for a lot of questions, took up the time.

The next presenter is Jason Reckseidler.

**Mr. Reckseidler:** Thank you very much. Hello. Good morning, everyone.



**The Chair:** Mr. Reckseidler, please identify yourself and tell us what riding you're talking about.

**Mr. Reckseidler:** For sure. My name is Jason Reckseidler. I'm a councillor in Delburne. My father was the mayor there for 35 years. Born in Innisfail, played for the Innisfail Eagles for a lot of years. Giving the Innisfail-Sylvan Lake perspective, Red Deer county perspective, and, in essence, in the argument a little bit of Clearwater county, but I might also offer a different perspective from the life of education and, in my case, a hockey referee for youth and how our travel patterns sort of reflect this shift in central Alberta. As we've seen, there's been a lot of growth in Alberta, and central Alberta is unique in how it's grown. It's been unbalanced. We've talked about east having low population and west being high. I want to kind of jump into that a little bit.

One of the biggest things is that the proposal actually keeping Bowden, Innisfail, Penhold, Delburne, and Elnora: that all works really well in how the county works with the municipal partners. Some of the things that we're starting to see from an agricultural perspective is that our grain now goes to Trochu. Viterra and GrainsConnect both operate at Trochu, and there's a lot more commerce and agriculture down the highway 21 corridor, so Trochu and Delburne municipalities end up working together quite a bit on projects and things, so Kneehill county and Red Deer county actually have that bridge.

The other perspective is that the commercial and now residential areas in Gasoline Alley are actually a lot more population for Red Deer county, and Sylvan Lake has grown to be – well, Sylvan Lake could at some point become a city, in which that skews a lot of how central Alberta has changed. You've got Sylvan Lake as a bigger growth area, east a little bit less. What we're seeing – and I'm giving my youth hockey perspective. When I'm refereeing, I'm called to Blackfalds. We've got ties from Joffre petrochemical plant east. Joffre, Delburne, Blackfalds, and Trochu sort of become this eastern-central bridge area, and we're not going to Sylvan. Hockey teams aren't playing each other. Granted, Stettler is across the river.

Then the other perspective I wanted to bring up is that the highway 21 corridor has sort of three connectors: highway 21, the CN Rail Edmonton-Calgary railroad, and then the watershed of the Red Deer River. When Delburne and Trochu have to co-ordinate on projects, a lot of it is our watershed, how that growth of the province and water in our province will be affected. I don't want to make things more confusing because it's a harder challenge that you guys have, but we're seeing in the east a lot more commerce down the highway 21 corridor with Trochu, Elnora, and Huxley being four miles apart with families connected there and Delburne and Red Deer county working with Blackfalds, I guess, in a lot of ways and Innisfail and Penhold, less so in Sylvan Lake.

Then the other thing is that kids are sending their kids to school in Trochu and Delburne and Innisfail. Back to the agricultural is that all livestock goes to the Innisfail auction market, so we're very well connected with Innisfail and Penhold and less so with Stettler, if the boundary commission tries to put us in the east, which has been proposed many times as well.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak on east-central Alberta and the village of Delburne. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Dr. Martin, any questions?

**Dr. Martin:** Yes. Thank you.

As you will have heard, sir, we have been discussing highway 21 most immediately with the last presenter and on and off over the last few meetings. I'm very interested in your description of the

emerging economic links; for example, economic links to Innisfail, particularly for the livestock, and highway 21 south of Trochu for grain movement. You also mentioned Blackfalds, but my pen moved slow, so I didn't catch the particular kind of linkage that connects your area with Blackfalds on a regular basis.

**Mr. Reckseidler:** Sure. With Blackfalds, we've seen a lot of our younger people who may get jobs in Red Deer actually choose Blackfalds. They don't really choose Penhold so much unless you're Pine Lake, but a lot of residents are moving to Blackfalds, and Blackfalds has a very call it light industrial agricultural focus that it doesn't share with Lacombe as much as it used to as Lacombe's grown bigger.

A lot of Blackfalds residents work in Joffre, a lot of Delburne residents work in Joffre, so when real estate opportunities come, the communication obviously starts around workers at the plant. But Blackfalds and Delburne are starting to build that bridge from a family and personality perspective. So a lot of Delburne residents, younger people, bought homes in Blackfalds because they can't afford Red Deer.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Reckseidler:** Does that make sense?

**Dr. Martin:** It sure does. Thank you.

**Mr. Reckseidler:** They don't go to Innisfail.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your time today. I'm glad you brought up Trochu because I could not connect Trochu. We had a few people who said it should belong to the riding, so thank you for that.

I guess I'm struggling with the Sylvan Lake disconnect. I don't really see that. Can you expand on that a bit more?

**Mr. Reckseidler:** Simply from being born and raised in this area, Sylvan Lake was a town of our size. We were all fairly similar: Sylvan Lake, Innisfail, Blackfalds, Lacombe, Delburne. But Sylvan Lake grew to become so much bigger with different issues than I would even say Innisfail having been born there and being involved with Innisfail Eagles for so long. Sylvan Lake has a tourism-perspective priority that it will always need to have, and is connected to, you know, some of the things in Clearwater county that are more tourism focused. It's different than, say, Innisfail and Penhold, its agricultural grain, part of the highway 2 corridor.

Sylvan Lake, while connected to highway 2 corridor, has become its own thing with its own priorities, and maybe the county can speak more of that. But if you talk to municipal leaders in Sylvan Lake, they have different health care issues than, say, rural Red Deer county. They're going to want bigger services. They're going to want more things. They have grown so much that there is a disconnect now in the priorities in Sylvan Lake compared to Innisfail, Penhold, Blackfalds, as I use that example, up and down the highway 2 corridor.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** Yes.

I was interested in one thing that you said about Blackfalds people. You said that people are buying houses in Blackfalds because they can't afford a house in Red Deer. Am I safe to presume that Blackfalds is a bit of a bedroom community to Red Deer? People are there because they can't afford a house in Red Deer; otherwise they'd be in Red Deer, but they work in Red Deer?

**Mr. Reckseidler:** Definitely. They work in Red Deer or they work in Joffre petrochemical plant.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. And how far is Joffre from Blackfalds?

**Mr. Reckseidler:** Twelve minutes. Ten

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Reckseidler:** I mean, I'll just expand on that. Delburne and Alix always had a strong relationship divided by the river, but there's less and less of that but more so because of Joffre and how it's grown. If you go towards Red Deer, go up the Joffre road across the river, you're involved with people in Joffre and Blackfalds quite a bit economically.

**The Chair:** Dr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** You've elevated me. I like it.

**The Chair:** Oh, sorry. I was looking at Julian.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Sorry, I just wanted to ask again about the Trochu connection, and you're proposing that we put those together. Just so I'm clear, because I'm not as familiar with central Alberta and that sort of east side there – I really probably should be – were you proposing to straddle the Red Deer county line there into Kneehill?

**Mr. Reckseidler:** Yes, definitely. I think the challenge for the committee is Three Hills, obviously, but with Prairie Bible it does have different perspectives than Trochu, and Trochu has always been lumped in with Three Hills. But from a watershed perspective and working with Bob Mills and all the Red Deer River conversations that we have, Trochu municipality and Delburne municipality and Elnora – don't want to forget them – have a lot of conversations in growth and management of water, and Trochu gets forgotten in that. As I'll say again, there are two grain distributors. There's GrainsConnect, and there's Viterra. GrainsConnect is in Huxley, the booming metropolis of Huxley, which we all love, and Viterra is between Trochu and Three Hills at the 27 junction. Grain from Delburne, Elnora, Lousana, Pine Lake all goes to GrainsConnect or Viterra, which is highway 27.

11:35

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah. Thanks so much. That's really helpful.

**The Chair:** Interesting. Thank you very much, Mr. Reckseidler. Every presenter brings a new perspective on the province, virtually, and this was most interesting.

Our next and I think our final presenter for the morning is Nathan Schneider.

**Mr. Schneider:** Are you able to hear me, everyone?

**The Chair:** We can now, yes. Tell us where you're from and which riding you want to comment on.

**Mr. Schneider:** You betcha. Again, my name is Nathan Schneider. I am from West Yellowhead number 87. Thank you, Mr. Clark and everybody, for, you know, allowing me this opportunity to speak about our democratic process.

I'm a resident of Hinton. I've been here for more than 25 years, and we've raised our family and with that I spend a lot of my time . . .

**The Chair:** Sorry. You've frozen.

**Mr. Schneider:** . . . commerce to my business has operated for 20 years in the West Yellowhead corridor, and I'm here to provide a voice as to why I believe it's a bad idea to remove Jasper from the West Yellowhead electoral district.

**The Chair:** Okay. Can I stop you there, sir? I think for whatever reason your connection may be prone to freezing. You froze just a little bit, so just be mindful of that. If we can't hear you, I'll make a motion like this, okay?

**Mr. Schneider:** I can't even really see – oh, that I can see. Would it be better if I turn off my video for you?

**The Chair:** It might be because of the strength of your connection in Hinton.

**Mr. Schneider:** Sure.

Okay. Just to pick up here, I was saying that I believe it's a bad idea to remove Jasper from the West Yellowhead electoral district. I believe that point is best made with the comparison that we would never consider removing Canmore from Banff. Those two towns are entwined in very much the same way that Jasper and Hinton is. I believe that Hinton's position is to be the next Canmore.

I'm going to make sure that I can still see you in case you're waving your hands.

This is one of the key points that I want to build on for the next couple of minutes. It's about Jasper and Hinton and, in fact, the whole West Yellowhead area. It functions as one integrated economic region, and the growth opportunities that exist in tourism depend on one representative voice who understands and can advocate for our whole system. Splitting Jasper away from Hinton doesn't just redraw a voting line; it disrupts their working regional partnership that's already producing results and is essential to our future growth.

Jasper and Hinton are both integrated in the most practical ways already: our workforce, our transportation corridors, contract services, emergency response, supply chains. People communicate between Jasper and Hinton every day in their daily lives, and highway 16 and the rail corridor are not just abstract lines on the map. These are arteries for our region with an average of 5,600 vehicles a day that travel between the segment. Hinton acts as a service and support hub, and Jasper acts as our tourism anchor. Together our whole region of West Yellowhead, being Grand Cache, Jasper, Hinton, Edson, Whitecourt: this node forms a complete tourism region with something for everyone.

I'm hoping the commission understands that because Jasper is in a national park, it operates under federal oversight and Parks Canada requirements, and that has real consequences for Jasper. Certain kinds of development, servicing, operational flexibility: these are all constrained within the parks in ways that don't apply outside the park boundary. That means that Jasper's ability to thrive as a tourism engine relies heavily on a strong partnership with nearby communities such as mine, Hinton, where provincial and municipal jurisdictions govern how services, supporting businesses, workforce solutions, and enabling infrastructure can be developed and adapted.

To make this practical, tourism growth depends on enabling infrastructure that's often easier to deliver outside the national park boundaries. For example, developing a regional travel hub such as improving the Hinton-Jasper airport to support tourism and regional connectors is more feasible under the provincial side and the municipal districts than it is within the federal park, and that's why that airport is 10 minutes outside of Hinton.

Yellowhead county has recently acquired land outside our park gates that can support visitor services and tourism developments

that are ways that are too difficult to accommodate within the federal park framework, and along the corridor the kind of things that visitors actually use – hotels, staging areas, guided experience like a ATV trips and horseback riding, and any other supporting services that make those experiences work – are typically easier to permit and expand in when you're outside of the federal park boundaries.

So I guess in other words, Jasper needs Hinton not as a rival but as a complementary partner that provides capacity that the park cannot create under federal constraints, so when my region grows, it grows as a whole system. By putting a boundary split into place, that wouldn't change how tourists travel. It only splits the decision-making that happens for my region. This is where I believe that keeping one MLA really matters to us. Tourism growth is more than just visitors; it requires decisions across multiple moving parts. We need workforce mobility. We have housing pressures. We have transportation options, corridor safety, emergency management, wildlife response planning, marketing, destination development.

A split creates two predictable problems: two MLAs with two different priority standards, and two different sets of stakeholders. So instead of one person being accountable for regional outcomes, we risk: that's somebody else's issue. Tourism and infrastructure planning suffer, I believe, when nobody owns that whole picture. With one MLA representing Jasper and Hinton together, we get that single, accountable advocate who can push for corridor-based transportation improvements that align with our provincial supports that help keep the tourism workforce and our service economy growing outside the park. We have co-ordinated emergency preparedness as one region, and we keep long-term tourism strategies coherent over multiple years instead of changing that direction with political boundaries.

This isn't theoretical. The Jasper-Hinton partnership is already operating in the real world. Through years of work in the chamber, we've worked towards building a destination marketing organization and a fund. It was a sustainable funding model for Hinton that we learned from the Jasper DMO, and we applied those lessons. Hinton's DMO is now heading into its second year, and this matters because destination development requires continuity, consistent branding, consistent product development, and consistent alignment between our attractions, our services, and our supporting communities.

We're already seeing practical integrations . . . [A timer sounded]

**The Chair:** Keep going. It was your time limit, but keep going. Nobody else has paid attention to it.

**Mr. Schneider:** We're also seeing practical integration through workforce and visitor mobility. There's now a Jasper-Hinton bus initiative that supports our workers. We provide visitor alternatives, another way to enjoy our region. Culturally and economically Jasper is often viewed as locals, and this isn't just a slogan. Because we're integrated as labour and service markets, we're more than just neighbours on a map to each other.

Now, the proposal move Jasper to Banff in a place that's really centred around Banff looks great and tidy on a map, and I understand, because it's part of a park, but Jasper and Banff are separated by 240 kilometres of unpopulated mountains, no intervening communities, no cell service, and frequent road closures. Like, the road closures happen randomly and just whenever it permits, right? It's a toll road, and it's something you require a permit from Parks county to travel on. Grouping them together because they're a park is just a mistake. It's a shared label, but it's not a shared function, and I believe that, more importantly, it creates a representation risk. Jasper becomes structurally second in a district where Banff and Canmore will naturally dominate attention and provincial focus. A boundary split

won't change this; it just makes the decision-making process harder for our communities.

So my request is just straightforward. Please retain Jasper in West Yellowhead. The district configuration reflects how we already function as a region. Having one MLA is the best thing, I think, for integrating our tourists and our service quarters, and I think it protects our long-term investments that are going to help Jasper and Hinton grow, and this is what we all want to see within the province.

Thank you guys for your time.

**The Chair:** Well thank you, Mr. Schneider. First of all, I'm going to take the lead here. Hinton being the gateway town to Jasper as Canmore is to Banff: I've never thought of it that way, so I'm going to want to know what more concrete steps Hinton is taking and what the future looks like from your perspective. From a travel perspective what you're saying kind of mirrors our own travel experience as a commission. We wanted to meet in Jasper, but for some reason I don't think we could get a hotel, so we went to Hinton. We had our hearing there. That kind of mirrors it. Tell us a little bit more about Hinton. It's been years since I've driven through Hinton because I usually go to Jasper the other way when I go up there. Tell me more about the – is it just your idea, or is it a concentrated plan by the town of Hinton to do more in that area?

11:45

**Mr. Schneider:** Well, it was our idea as a chamber, you know, when I was sitting on the board and in that direction. The challenge that Hinton always had is that they don't really seem to know what they have available. It's sort of a working community, heavy on the mills, heavy on forestry, and there are a lot of people now that are recognizing and seeing Hinton for the Canmore that it can be. I've been saying Hinton could be a Canmore for 20 years, and it's really tough, sort of, to get that mindset when you have that shift-worker-type, you know, mentality that does happen.

What I've noticed in the last bunch of years is that we've had a lot of investment, people coming from Toronto that were able to sell properties and things there, buying hotels, buying restaurants, buying everything, and they're bringing that tourism mentality because they can see it. Sometimes it's just that complacency of being in an area for so long. Generations of people that are here don't really see that forest through the trees mentality.

**The Chair:** Pardon the pun.

**Mr. Schneider:** Exactly.

But we are Canmore, and we have the ability to grow even bigger than Canmore because we're not constrained by any sort of land restrictions around it. Jasper, itself, has always sort of been second fiddle to Banff. Jasper and Banff actually have two different structures with the provincial government in how they handle things, how they handle their pine beetle response, how they handled, you know, even the fire situation that we dealt with.

I believe that with the current council that's in there, they're going to be focused on growing Hinton as a business, as a community. That was what our driving force really needed to be. Our DMO, like I said, is in its second year. We were part of that group to try to get this destination marketing fund going. This is something that all other communities do, yet we didn't see ourselves that way. Again, this is part of that branding problem that comes with Hinton. Once we were able to start saying, "Hey, listen; now we have this fund; we're participating in the same way that everybody else does," now we can start, you know, encouraging events. We can start hosting more things.

You were right. The problem you would have had with Jasper was hotels. With the fires and everything that recently happened, the hotels

themselves are at limited capacity. Hinton is the natural spot for everybody to come to. It's just that we're that sort of hidden, forgotten gem. You take that gem and you go further north on highway 40, you go up in the William Switzer park – a lot of people don't realize how many people are camping along through that region. There's probably a 600-person campground, if I had to guess, and that leads us all the way up to Grand Cache. So, when I say that we're this whole package, we're the hub, and we haven't figured it out yet. I think we're starting to, and I think that the investments are there.

**The Chair:** Okay. But you didn't acknowledge that you're a couple of generations behind Canmore, and in fairness Canmore was a coal mining town three generations ago. Nobody paid attention to it either.

**Mr. Schneider:** That's what we were as well, sir.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Okay. Thank you.  
Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** No, I don't think I have any questions.

I'm just curious. Now, did you put in a written submission as well?

**Mr. Schneider:** Yes, I did. Yeah.

**Mr. Clark:** You mentioned you're with the chamber of commerce?

**Mr. Schneider:** Yeah.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. Perfect. I just want to make sure I have the background there.  
Sorry. Go ahead.

**Mr. Schneider:** I mentioned that I'm a past president.

**Mr. Clark:** Oh, okay. Perfect. That's helpful. No questions, but thank you so much for your submission.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your time today. It's quite valuable information. We've had a lot of positive feedback about the connection with Jasper into Banff and Canmore. There's some push-back from Canmore, but Banff and Jasper: it seems like – I'm not going to go into it because you know that as well as I do – there's a natural connection there. What about think outside the box and grab Hinton into the Banff-Jasper mix? Like, I mean if tourism is your schtick and you're building everything on the basis of Jasper. When I think about moving east down highway 16, I remember when we were in Hinton there was a conversation around the disconnect of the other communities along highway 16, that you were a stand-alone tourism-related community tied closely to Jasper. Why don't you speak on that?

**Mr. Schneider:** Well, I don't actually think that that's true. I mean, our whole network, everything that goes through here, is Edson, Hinton, Jasper. Service has been moving from Hinton a bit to Edson. You know, you see we're in the Edson forestry region, so I think we're all part of that same thing. Jasper itself was just – and you say it's similar to Banff, but it's not in so many different ways, like I said, with the way Parks treats that differently. No, I don't think going in with Banff – I think then Hinton, again, would play sort of a second fiddle if we're tied again to Banff-Canmore. I don't see how that alignment, you know, really helps things out.

Like, I guess what I'm trying to get at is that some of the expansion through the rail lines and everything that has been happening are for the corridor that goes through here to the

mountains down to Vancouver. That artery exists from generations of trails and everything else.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you. I appreciate your answer.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans, have you asked a question?

**Mr. Evans:** No.

Just so I'm clear, Mr. Schneider, you're telling us that there's really not a north-south corridor here; there's an east-west corridor when we're dealing with Jasper, Hinton, Edson, et cetera?

**Mr. Schneider:** Yeah. Well, like, Hinton's a hub. You know, in Grande Cache that's their northern portion there. They have the option of going, sort of, north or south. A lot of times they would choose whichever road is actually the most open to them. But on highway 16, the traffic that comes from there: when weather is permitting, we have people that will travel from Valemount that'll come all the way through Jasper and come and do their shopping and things in Hinton because we're cheaper than the provincial taxes that they pay in B.C., and we have a few more options and services that are available to them. So, yeah, we're an east-west corridor. It's the easiest way to get to Edmonton. We're two and a half hours that way. I think, you know, tourism and growth-wise, that's the best way to keep us as well.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Schneider.

**Dr. Martin:** I've got a question.

**The Chair:** Oh, you didn't ask? Okay. Sorry.

**Mrs. Samson:** We cut our own off.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. It happens.

Thank you very much for your presentation. I know this area reasonably well, and I think I agree with your general characterizations about Hinton being known for its forestry, about the shift work, and so on, and I agree as well with the huge tourist potential up and down highway 40, for sure. I've gone through many of those parks, both north and south, and good on you for pointing this out to your colleagues in the chamber and no doubt your town council and MLAs as well. I want to commend you for this approach. I would like to see a whole lot more tourist development around the east gate of the park.

I think that I am very much in agreement with you about the connectivity and linkages that historically and currently exist between the town of Jasper and the town of Hinton and also between the park management. I have had some dealings in the past with the superintendent and his colleagues, and the linkage to Hinton is a very important one for them. Thank you.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, sir.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Sorry, Dr. Martin.

Thank you, Mr. Schneider. I see your golf shirt. What do you do for a living?

**Mr. Schneider:** I'm actually an electrician. I own a company called Logic Control. You recognize this says: Travel Alberta.

**The Chair:** Yeah.

11:55

**Mr. Schneider:** Yeah. No, I'm not affiliated in any way. Actually the shirt was given to me by a very good friend that is involved with

it. Maybe because I'm such an advocate for this, sort of, tourism and things in the area, he wanted to give me something nice.

**The Chair:** Well, good. You know, there's a lot of traffic to us in relation to this one, big, national park proposed electoral division. We've heard some interesting countervailing points this week, and your submission gives us lots to think about.

Thank you so much.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, guys. You guys have a great day.

**The Chair:** Okay. I think that concludes our morning session, all of our presenters. I believe this afternoon we have got about 13 presenters lined up. Yes. We'll reconvene at 1:30.

Thank you, everyone, and we'll see you this afternoon.

[The hearing adjourned at 11:56 a.m.]











Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Public Hearings

Edmonton

Monday, January 19, 2026  
1:34 p.m.

Transcript No. 41

## **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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Parliamentary Services

Administrator

Manager of Corporate Communications

Supervisor of Communications Services

Managing Editor of *Alberta Hansard*

## **Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Edmonton**

### **Public Participants**

Lorne Dach, MLA, Edmonton-McClung  
Jason Deol  
Tanni Doblanko, Mayor, County of Leduc  
Earl Dreesen  
David Eggen, MLA, Edmonton-North West  
Samuel Goertz  
Sarah Hoffman, MLA, Edmonton-Glenora  
Tania Kajner  
John Kolkman  
Nicholas Rheubottom  
Joanne Sasges  
David Shepherd, MLA, Edmonton-City Centre  
Maureen Towns



1:34 p.m.

Monday, January 19, 2026

[Justice Miller in the chair]

**The Chair:** Oh, we're past 1:30. We were supposed to start at 1:30. We're late.

Good afternoon, everyone. I will skip the PowerPoint and go right into our first presenter. Mr. John Kolkman is here. Please come forward, sir. Have a seat at the table. Mr. Kolkman, I'm going to do something very unusual. I'm not going to let you present. We've read your material. Why don't we go right into dialogue and asking questions?

**Mr. Kolkman:** Sure.

**The Chair:** You've gone to all this work, and it's most helpful. Dr. Martin, any questions?

**Dr. Martin:** Well, several. I have one, and of course it's raised by the details in your own presentation with respect to Edmonton-City Centre and Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. I'm curious. My colleague and I have been noodling around with maps while we read your material. The district of Spruce Avenue, as you call it, the neighbourhood of Spruce Avenue in the northeastern part of what we designated Edmonton-City Centre, is, you reckon, available to be moved into Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Let me ask you. That includes but doesn't totally include the footprint of the Royal Alex hospital?

**Mr. Kolkman:** No, it would not include that. Well, the Royal Alexandra hospital is actually south of 111th Avenue, so it would not be included. But you also have to consider that, I mean, there is residential and nonresidential. Like, for example, the long-term care centre, the Norwood extended care centre, which was, you know, significantly expanded not that long ago, does fall within the Spruce Avenue neighbourhood but not the Royal Alex. It would really only be north of 111th Avenue and then up to 106th Street and then up to Princess Elizabeth Avenue.

It just struck me as being logical for a couple of reasons. One is that I think there is a pretty strong community of interest between the Spruce Avenue neighbourhood and then the Westwood neighbourhood immediately to the north. The other reason, really, is to equalize populations. If you look at the population of the proposed new Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood neighbourhood, it's right just at 49,995. There are about 1,725 residents in Spruce Avenue, and the Edmonton-City Centre population is 54,000. So it would equalize the populations. I think it would also create a more logical boundary to include Spruce Avenue neighbourhood with the Westwood neighbourhood.

**Dr. Martin:** I can see the logic of it. The mathematical part is without dispute, but then it leaves us – I'm much more interested in your arguments about a community of interest for the Spruce Avenue area. Is this not an area that has NAIT students?

**Mr. Kolkman:** Well, probably. It's very proximate to NAIT. Although I would say it's predominantly, you know, a residential neighbourhood. There would definitely be some NAIT students that would live in both Westwood and Spruce Avenue. I would suggest they live in both neighbourhoods, which I think further increases the community of interest between those two particular neighbourhoods.

There's then a little bit of separation because of the Kingsway Garden Mall and the Royal Alexandra hospital. There actually is a little bit of separation between Spruce Avenue neighbourhood and

other neighbourhoods in Edmonton-City Centre. It's not a really big deal, but it sort of made sense to me from several perspectives to include the Spruce Avenue neighbourhood in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood rather than in Edmonton-City Centre.

I mean, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, despite the inclusion of the Westwood neighbourhood, is still the least populous, you know, electoral division in the city of Edmonton, so I think increasing the population of it a little bit is a good idea. Then particularly when you consider that the former municipal airport lands are in Edmonton-City Centre – even though it's been slow to develop in many ways, I think there's been more housing starts, as I understand it, in the last year or year and a half than there was in the first six or seven or eight years of development of the Blatchford neighbourhood, and that's in Edmonton-City Centre. I think we can reasonably expect with increased density in the downtown as well as the development of Blatchford that Edmonton-City Centre's population is likely to increase more rapidly than the population of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** That's very helpful, and I think I don't have any questions because this is exactly the kind of stuff that's really, really helpful for us, especially those of us who don't have the good fortune to be from Edmonton. It's really helpful when you have someone who's from the neighbourhood and community give us a sense. Then this also allows us to continue to follow a community league boundary as well, which I think is important. Yeah, that's helpful. No questions beyond a word of thanks for putting together a thoughtful submission and being here today.

1:40

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

I echo that. I appreciate having it in writing because it's not the kind of thing that you're going to do right this instant. It'll be there when we're ready to look at that area of the map and see what we can do. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** Yes.

Mr. Kolkman, would you agree, based on the logic that you record in your submissions, that it would make sense in terms of the urban ridings, particularly in the city centre, to get those populations to as close to 68,000 as possible, which would then allow more leeway with respect to lower populations in the rural ridings?

**Mr. Kolkman:** Well, I'm not sure what you're asking because the very premise of my submission is that the interim map gets the seat distribution correct. And 68,000 sounds like an awfully high number for an urban riding. That would definitely put it, you know, toward the 20 to 25 per cent above average. I think voter parity, population parity is perhaps the most important criteria for electoral divisions. I know some have called for an additional seat for the city of Edmonton rather than a loss of seats. I would actually say that the distribution in the interim report is correct between all these different parts of the province.

That still means, however, that there is room if somebody has got a better idea. Like, for example, with the 10 ridings in northern Alberta, if there's a better way to draw the boundaries, I think the commission should be open to that. But I don't think the commission at this point should be adding seats to the north and

taking them away from Edmonton and Calgary. I mean, that's going to throw the whole – that was kind of the job of the initial round of hearings, to identify the correct distribution of seats.

**Mr. Evans:** I don't think you understood my question.

**Mr. Kolkman:** Maybe I didn't. Yeah. Okay.

**Mr. Evans:** The population average that we're using is 54,929. We have a range from that, plus and minus, so the lowest end we can go is 41,198 and the highest we can go is 68,662. My question is: do you agree that it makes sense, based on using all the tools that we have available to us, to densify the populations in the inner-city ridings because there's a natural absence of densification in the rural ridings?

**Mr. Kolkman:** Hmm. Yeah. It's the part where you talk about the rural ridings that I'm not so sure of. I mean, I think the interim map provides 21 seats to the city of Edmonton. There is that one seat that I mentioned that extends into Parkland county where I think the boundary should be, you know, the city of Edmonton boundary on the west end, and it shouldn't impinge into Parkland county. I'm not sure I quite understand where the rural – I guess that's what I'm having a hard time wrapping my head around. How does this tie into the rural seats?

**The Chair:** Let me jump in. Because we've started your presentation in a rather unorthodox way, I'm going to jump in with a story from last week. We had someone present in Calgary, and he used the term: the riding may be outrageously large. And I said: well, can we talk about outrageously large? A proposed northern riding that we have in our interim report: I'm told – I haven't verified it by doing the math myself – that the southern boundary is closer to Montana than it is to Northwest Territories. That's outrageously large. Okay? So can you get a perspective as to how vast the north is from that little description and why there is, I would say, a bipartisan cry from the north, "Please restore the riding you took away"?

**Mr. Kolkman:** But how are you going to do that? Because you're restricted to 89 seats. How are you going to do that without – you'd have to take a riding away.

**The Chair:** Check with us on March 27. That's when we give our report.

**Mr. Kolkman:** Right.

I actually think you did a very good job with the city of Edmonton map in my view.

**The Chair:** Okay. But that leads to what Mr. Evans was getting to. The only way we can do that, if we do restore a riding to the north, is take advantage of the variance that we are allowed, minus 25, plus 25, and I believe Edmonton-Highlands is, you know, 5,000-plus below the average. So there's lots of room to grow in Edmonton-Highlands.

**Mr. Kolkman:** Yeah. Although there are other ridings in Edmonton, like on average – one of the things I would say to that is that I would be strongly opposed to removing, you know, a riding from the city of Edmonton. Frankly, if you were going to remove a riding, I personally think it should be then from Calgary, not Edmonton, especially if you stick with option A. Now, I was recommending that you go with option B.

**The Chair:** And predominantly the public feedback has been that.

**Mr. Kolkman:** Yeah. But even with option B, the average riding in Calgary is, according to my math, plus 2.5 per cent whereas in Edmonton it's already plus 3.5 per cent. I think Edmonton needs another seat, and that's why – I'm also a bit surprised. I guess if you would have let me read my presentation, I would have said that I'm aware that there is this fierce, you know, opposition to the loss of a seat, particularly in the north. I've also heard opposition because in west-central Alberta, there's also going to be a loss of a seat. There, of course, are people in Edmonton who are unhappy about – even though two seats are being added more to the west end and the south side, they want to reinstate a seat in Edmonton, something that I don't think the numbers warrant because then it would mean that adding a seat to Edmonton would basically put us pretty much right at the provincial average and give you no scope to have somewhat larger rural ridings.

No. I would be strongly opposed to removing a seat from Edmonton. I mean, I appreciate the fact that there's been quite a bit of push-back, but all five of you signed the interim map. Sort of the whole premise of my presentation was that you need to stick with that, recognizing that there is a lot of push-back, particularly in northern Alberta, and also acknowledging that some of these ridings are quite large in size. I'm not disputing that. Just because of the lack of population density, it's going to be very difficult to not have variances that I think are excessive. I support the decision, as painful as it was, to remove a seat from northern Alberta. That's what the numbers warrant.

**The Chair:** Just so you know, though, there are other legislative tools that we have. We've not utilized the concept of section 15(2) ridings really at all. In fact, we reduced them. That's another tool we could use to justify very, very, very low-density ridings that are outside of that targeted range.

**Mr. Kolkman:** Yeah, but just having said that, I would be careful because it opens up a real can of worms. Essentially, you would be repudiating, you know, the interim report and the interim map.

**Dr. Martin:** We're allowed to do that. No one else gets to.

**The Chair:** We're allowed to change it. That's no question.

**Mr. Kolkman:** Yeah. Well, then I think there's going to be some real push-back. I mean, I appreciate the fact that if you're losing a seat – I mean, the same thing happened in the last redistribution, you know, when there wasn't even an increase in the number of seats. Several rural seats were lost. There was a lot of push-back, but the commission sort of stuck to its guns. There was one person who did a minority report at that time, if I remember.

1:50

**Mr. Evans:** They were slavishly tied to population, which seems to be your focus. You're slavishly tied to population and these derivations, when in fact – and I'll quote from our report on page 12 – "There's been a clear trend towards greater emphasis on voter parity in Alberta, despite neither the case law," specifically the Supreme Court of Canada, "nor the Act historically mandating this," and that's the present legislation. So being slavishly tied to voter parity in this concept is really missing the point of what the Supreme Court of Canada stated and what our legislation states. It's one factor.

**Mr. Kolkman:** Well, I think it's the most important factor.

**Mr. Evans:** I understand that. I can see that from your report.

**Mr. Kolkman:** Yeah. I think it's your job at this point to stick with what you agreed to in terms of the distribution of seats in the interim report. That's my view. And I think the word "slavish" is a rather pejorative word – I'm sorry – with all respect.

**The Chair:** Okay. Any other questions or comments or discussion?

Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Kolkman. Please stay; it's always instructive to hear other presenters, so if you are able to please do.

**Mr. Kolkman:** I'll try to stay for a bit. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Lorne Dach.

**Mr. Dach:** Good afternoon, panel. Actually, the pronunciation is Dach.

**The Chair:** Dach. Sorry, Mr. Dach.

**Mr. Dach:** That's okay. When I sold real estate it was: Call Lorne Dach and Start to Pack.

**Mrs. Samson:** That's good.

**Mr. Dach:** It worked. You remember it.

Anyways, thank you very much for slotting me in this afternoon. I know you're busy. As I said, my name is Lorne Dach, and I've been a member of the Legislature for Edmonton-McClung since 2015. I've been a very proud west-end resident for most of my life. Before becoming an MLA, I did sell real estate in west Edmonton for 30 years, during which time I gained a very intimate and detailed knowledge of the constituency that I now represent as the MLA.

To start off, I'll say that I was pleased to see that the proposal is to rejoin two neighbourhoods in my constituency, Jamieson Place and Ormsby, which comprise the Willowby Community League, back into one riding. I was rather shocked at seeing that they got separated into two different ridings, and it made for difficult representation with two MLAs representing one community league. You'd go to the events, and both MLAs might be there or one might not be there in the community league. It was good to have the decision made, I think, to have Jamieson Place and Ormsby community leagues put back into one riding, as I feel that a single MLA representing all the neighbourhoods which comprise a community league makes common sense. As we all know, the community leagues in both Edmonton and Calgary have a long and proud and very valuable history, and they're vital organizations serving their communities and keeping them together and unique, and being represented by one MLA is a smart idea.

Also, kudos for adding Wedgewood Heights back into Edmonton-McClung, because it's located inside the Anthony Henday ring road adjacent to other neighbourhoods in the constituency. Allowing arterial roadways to bisect ridings has historically been listed as a criteria that boundary commissioners should avoid to prevent neighbourhoods from feeling isolated or disconnected from the main body of a riding. So we're welcoming back Wedgewood Heights into what feels like where they belong: inside the ring road, joined with other like, geographically oriented communities.

Bound to the west by the Anthony Henday ring road and the North Saskatchewan River valley to the south and the east, Edmonton-McClung is an easily identified and cohesive urban enclave, which represents residents who can easily identify it because it really is geographically feeling like its own community. It's just completed that way.

Now, another thing that has been proposed is the resumption of Rio Terrace, Quesnell, and Patricia Heights back into the McClung constituency. Historically they've been a part of the McClung constituency and have also had a very notable Jewish population in those three neighbourhoods, particularly Rio Terrace because the Jewish community centre used to be located in Rio Terrace. It was sold and redeveloped as housing, but consequently, because of the history of the Jewish community centre in that neighbourhood, a good percentage of the Jewish population of Edmonton located there, and this Jewish population of Rio Terrace, Quesnell, and Patricia Heights now has once again been reunited with the other west-end Jewish population centres found in Edmonton-McClung, which are anchored by the Beth Israel synagogue and Chabad Lubavitch synagogue as well as the K to 6 Talmud Torah school. This permits, in my view, a very focused representation of a majority of Edmonton's Jewish population by one MLA. It was a good move to reunite those communities, in my view.

Now the other thing I'd like to say is that the population of our city is growing and we do need an additional seat in Edmonton, in my view. There are four surplus school sites which are being developed in my riding alone. Many individuals may think that the mature neighbourhoods are not necessarily growing in population because there may not be a lot of real estate development going on, but there are other things happening, not to mention the population density that is increasing as more people share living spaces and we have intergenerational family homes and tenant roommates trying to deal with the rising cost of living, increasing the population in a mature neighbourhood. A seat count needs to reflect the population growth in Edmonton and Calgary to maintain equitable representation. If not, a number of the ridings in Edmonton and Calgary will exceed the 25 per cent variation before the next scheduled redistribution.

That's a short presentation, but I wanted to bring forth a couple of points and mention that I appreciate the consideration that you've given as a panel to the points I've listed and all those who have also given submissions. I believe that the effort that you're making to be fair is duly noted and appreciated. I stand ready to answer any questions you may have.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Dach. Let me start out by suggesting to you that if we were to add one more electoral division in Edmonton, you would lose some of Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** That's probable, but I'm not . . .

**The Chair:** And you just started out by saying that you're glad that we kind of restored those communities and you've got a significant population there, but you didn't complain about the numbers in your riding. You realize that you'd lose some?

**Mr. Dach:** I would think there is a potential risk of sacrifice by different ridings depending upon where that riding got added, but certainly I'm not unaware of that.

**The Chair:** Okay. So, "Be careful what you wish for," they say.

**Mr. Dach:** Pardon me?

**The Chair:** "Be careful what you wish for," they say.

**Mr. Dach:** Oh, of course. Absolutely.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark, any questions?

**Mr. Clark:** No. No specific questions beyond just saying: thank you very much for the details on those communities. We do try to

respect the community league boundaries as best we can. It's not always possible, but it's just good to know that the ones that we have aligned together seem to make logical sense, so thanks very much.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah.

I'd like to echo that and thank you for pointing out that bringing Rio Terrace and the like back in just seemed right. So, too, using the Henday on the southern end of your riding just makes perfect sense. I wanted to ask you, though, about what you might call the Misericordia campus precinct, that whole chunk up here on the north end. Are you okay with that? It has to go somewhere, but does it make sense to you from a communities of interest point of view?

**Mr. Dach:** To have the west Meadowlark and the north of the Whitemud portion?

**Dr. Martin:** No, not this bit, just the top hat bit.

**Mr. Dach:** Yeah. I represent that already. What I'm losing to the north is West Edmonton Mall and Summerlea. I'm not exactly certain what the rationale was on the minds of the panelists when they eliminated that. It may have been, like, a domino effect, needing to balance population and so forth. I mean, I think that panelists have to be given the respect they deserve in terms of acknowledging that judgments have to be made to make sure the population is right. As much as I'd love to continue representing Summerlea and West Edmonton Mall, you know, I'm not going to squawk about that knowing the limitations that you work under.

2:00

Now, one thing I will mention about that, though, is that if you look at the LRT construction that's going in along there, there are two consecutive stops at the Misericordia and at West Edmonton Mall. Both of those establishments are also joined by a pedestrian walkway across 170th Street, so there's a natural community of interest there, the major populations of commuters are going to both locations, which would make sense from that standpoint to have one MLA represent because they are a big population centre of people coming to and fro with the hospital and the mall. Summerlea itself is a relatively small population. They don't really have anything except houses there to the north of West Edmonton Mall, although there is a school surplus site that is in Summerlea that might be developed into more housing.

I'm thinking now of people who live in Summerlea. This is going to be, I think, the third distribution in a row where they get to change ridings. That is probably something that the panel tries to avoid so that a community doesn't feel like it's being bounced around. But that notwithstanding, I still appreciate the limitations that you work under, and if indeed it needs to be, well, it needs to be.

I think I've pointed out some of the things that I appreciated and had concerns with and the fact that I think all in all there should be another seat in Edmonton even though it may be injurious to my riding, but that's part of the growing process.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** No questions. Thank you for your presentation. I appreciate it.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you.

**Mr. Evans:** I have no questions. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Dach, how long does it take you to get to the Legislative Assembly?

**Mr. Dach:** Pardon me?

**The Chair:** How long does it take you to get from your house to the Legislative Assembly?

**Mr. Dach:** It will be, depending on traffic, 20 to 30 minutes.

**The Chair:** Okay. You appreciate that there are many MLAs that take four, five, six hours?

**Mr. Dach:** Oh, absolutely.

**The Chair:** I didn't want you to misinterpret my earlier comments, "Be careful what you wish for."

**Mr. Dach:** Oh, yeah.

**The Chair:** The limitations on us to add another Edmonton seat, I think to be realistic, from where I sit are pretty difficult.

**Mr. Dach:** Yeah. No offence taken.

**The Chair:** Okay. Yeah. Thank you so much for your presentation.

**Mr. Dach:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Samuel Goertz.

**Mr. Goertz:** It's rare that people get that last name right.

**The Chair:** Welcome. Tell us what electoral division you are in and which ones you want to comment on.

**Mr. Goertz:** I live in Edmonton-Strathcona, but I want to speak today more generally. I want to start off the top, at the risk of being maybe overly saccharine, to express my sincere appreciation for the work of the commission and also a great opportunity to speak in front of my fellow citizens both in this room and online.

I don't think it's overly dramatic to say that lots of the world is facing threats to democracy. I can certainly appreciate that, and I think it's processes like this that fulfill the promises of a healthy democracy. I think it's quite essential, important that we have an independent commission like yourselves who are making these decisions. I know we haven't always had that, but I think it makes our democracy much better. I appreciate that there's a tremendous amount of pressure and considerations you all have.

I just want to express my appreciation also for this process because everybody in here is contributing to our democracy in some way. I just want to make sure that that gravity is expressed, and I want to express my gratitude to you all.

**The Chair:** Mr. Goertz, we're all proud Canadians at this table.

**Mr. Goertz:** Yes.

**The Chair:** And I think this process has made us even prouder.

**Mr. Goertz:** I imagine. I appreciate that.

I'm not going to bore you with my biography, but a little bit that might be important for my comments: I'm currently fortunate to be doing my PhD in political science at the University of Alberta. My supervisor, Dr. Jared Wesley, was the chair of the Edmonton Ward Boundary Commission. I do not represent him by any means, but I



tried to pick his brain as much as possible on the sort of principles behind this process, however different they may be for that. I've also lived in Edmonton most of my life besides a couple of brief stints elsewhere, lived all over the city. I also spent the summer for my research travelling Alberta to many wonderful, wonderful communities large and small. While those communities are wonderful, there's just something about Edmonton that I dearly adore, and I don't think there's any place quite like it.

In my comments today I don't have particular recommendations for certain parts of city, particular electoral districts. Like the previous speakers, I think that generally the commission got it right, and I respect that you have limitations on potentially adding another seat to Edmonton. I think given the growth projections that were particularly well articulated by the mayor's office and then that I reiterated in an op-ed I had published in the *Edmonton Journal* alongside a dear friend Rajah Maggay in mid December, that you could make the case for adding a seat to Edmonton, particularly because core growth seems to be sort of reversing and now the core of Edmonton has seen a number of housing starts intensifying. I appreciate your limitations on that front. I think that at the very least the additional seat in Edmonton should be preserved as well as the two seats in Calgary, although I have less of a perspective on the Calgary seats.

Then I wanted to speak to Edmonton as a community of interest in its own right. I know you can define communities of interest in various ways. You can find them at the community league level, which I appreciate, but also at the city level. This is particularly in response to some conversations that I've seen around sort of splicing not just the city of Edmonton but other cities up into hybrid urban-rural ridings, which I think can do a sort of disservice to both urban and rural citizens with their own different interests and perspectives.

I greatly appreciate the commission's decision on Lethbridge. There's sort of a bizarre proposal to slice that up in a funny way, and that obviously isn't in this interim plan. I just wanted to reiterate my support for the plan as presented. I understand that it is a draft, but I think it gets that community of interest right. Then the sort of hybrid riding on the west end with Enoch I think generally also makes good sense. I just wanted to reiterate that, Edmonton as a community of interest.

Then I know that you are sort of bound by legislation and case law so that the vote parity principle is not the only one that you look at. I certainly respect that you're bound by slightly different rules, but I, too, am bound by rules, and that is my sort of conscience and principles I hold dear, so I wanted to reiterate my support for that as much as possible. I understand you're working within bounds of about 41,000 to 68,000, but I think as much as possible if I can just urge my support for keeping vote parity. I understand the north is very tricky, but those ridings: my goodness, they're large, very geographically large. Underrepresenting certain parts of our province – citizens in Edmonton, Calgary, other cities – to slightly shrink what will continue to be a very large geographic riding doesn't quite make sense to me. I don't think that they should be underrepresented. I also don't think that they should be overrepresented, the same as I don't think that for citizens in Edmonton or Calgary or anywhere else. I'm going to speak as just a city dweller. I just want to speak from that principle of vote parity.

Those two points beside, I think I'll leave my comments there, and I'm happy to take questions from here. Thank you again.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** I have no questions. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** No, but that was an excellent presentation. If I can just say one comment, we're working on population, not vote. Everybody is represented, not just the voters. You use the terminology "vote parity."

**Mr. Goertz:** I appreciate that correction. I mean population parity. Yes. Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** I only do that for the general listener.

**Mr. Goertz:** I appreciate that because it shouldn't matter whether they vote or not. Population parity: thank you for that. I appreciate that.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Yes. I'd just like to follow that up really because, you know, population is lumpy. The density is different in different neighbourhoods. Gosh, there are parts of Edmonton that look like suburbs. Mentally they're inside the city limits, but they're still suburbs relative to other parts that have much higher density and sort of a classic multistorey environment. Now, we haven't actually modelled anything we had about voter parity, but I bet you it's lumpy, too. So you have to be careful about those terms. We have to constantly remind ourselves, let alone our speakers, not to mix the two concepts.

2:10

**Mr. Goertz:** Yes. I take that correction. May I retroactively say "population parity," and scratch out "voter parity?"

**The Chair:** The literature says "voter parity." You're right on that, but we base it on population, so nobody's wrong. You know, we're just taking a different slice of it.

Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you.

I'm really interested in your perspective as a student of political science, far more advanced than I ever got in political science. I'm curious how you would make those tradeoffs. You know, if we're really challenged in finding another spot, another seat for the north, and you feel like the city of Edmonton or the city of Calgary shouldn't bear the cost of that, do you feel like – there are similarities and there are differences when you're representing an area. I mean, there are some amazing statistics of geography in the north. I think Mackenzie county is something like two and a half times the country of Belgium in size and has like 15,000 or 20,000 people in it, just sort of these almost mind-blowing statistics. Then you would have different areas that are rural but maybe have a few towns or villages or even small cities, somewhere along highway 2, for example, in central Alberta. Do you make a distinction? Would you say that maybe there's a different way of looking at that voter or population parity – we won't make you choose one or the other of those options – and also blending the concept of effective representation in particular for those more remote communities?

**Mr. Goertz:** Yeah. The first thing I want to say is that you have much more experience in political science in the practical sense. I have the maybe much less useful theoretical knowledge, but even then only arguably.

In terms of the trade-off, I was struck by something I experienced this summer. Again, I travelled across Alberta to many different

communities, including Fort McMurray. Fort McMurray obviously is a city, but I was struck by the way that many residents of Fort McMurray describe themselves. They describe themselves as remote, and I never quite clocked that before. Maybe other people had and it was just my ignorance. It stopped me sort of in my tracks. I thought: okay; I've never been this far north before, and it is different. It's obviously not rural, but it's not urban in the same way, so it matters that they feel represented effectively as a sort of remote community. Fort McMurray has its own oddities and challenges that I can't speak to. It's just to say that I have an appreciation for remote versus rural versus suburban versus urban. Remote communities are different.

As far as the trade-off, I don't know that I can say anything concrete about that. I think that's a tremendous challenge. I do know that the large geography, which is a problem all over Canada, will probably remain a challenge for the commission even if you, say, have seats in the north that were even less than 41,000 people per riding. It would still be rather large, so I just don't see the sort of watering-down thing as really aiding effective representation. I guess that's what I would say. I think they're going to be large either way, and that's a heck of a challenge for those people and those representatives. I don't know if underrepresenting certain communities really helps with that.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you.

**Mr. Goertz:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** By the way, Mr. Goertz, what's your research focus?

**Mr. Goertz:** I'm working on research concerning Alberta's independence, separatism movement, as part of a research team as well as American influence on Canadian political priorities. So not controversial at all.

**The Chair:** Well, you know, you made a case, as have other presenters, for another seat in Edmonton. It's not difficult to make that case, but it's difficult for us to accede to it. I'm not speaking for the rest of the commissioners, but having travelled the province, I have to say that the times we were in Edmonton, I have found the Edmonton presenters to be the most polite, congenial, and courteous presenters in the province. You've been very, very good to us both in the first round and second round.

I didn't do the little introduction that I probably should have at the beginning because Mr. Kolkman was here and so ready to go, so we just jumped into it.

Our goal is effective representation. As you know, it's not one person, one vote, it's not rep by pop, and effective representation is an elastic concept. I always encourage presenters to stay to hear other presenters, and I wish you could hear all of the presentations we heard. Somebody from northern Alberta said to us last week, you know: by straining to get as close to the average population in a northern riding, you expand the boundaries and you've got more territory. That's the paradox. We make effective representation more difficult for the northerners by doing that. So it's a paradox and it's a challenge.

Yeah. Thank you so much for your presentation and for your good comments.

**Mr. Goertz:** Thank you very much for the opportunity.

**The Chair:** Again, please remain if you can to hear other presenters. Sarah Hoffman is not here. Okay.  
Joanne Sasges.

**Ms Sasges:** It doesn't look like it sounds. Like Sam said, if you get it right, you're probably related to me.

**The Chair:** Okay. Tell us where you are from and what electoral divisions you wish to comment on.

**Ms Sasges:** I, too, want to speak about things generally, particularly around Edmonton. I live currently in Edmonton-Glenora.

I want to start by talking about when I reviewed last summer's submissions. I noticed you were asked to use population data from the Office of Statistics and Information, the OSI. Well, before I retired from government in 2015, I'm the one who built the OSI, and my job was – I was mandated actually by the Premier – to develop a suite of official statistics and, particularly, an official statistic for population for exactly this kind of work.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you for your work.

**Ms Sasges:** Thank you. Since population changes are integral to informing the decision-making process you're going to use, I'd like to talk primarily about population with you because I think the big story in Edmonton is population. I have some slides.

**Mrs. Samson:** Aaron is coming.

**Ms Sasges:** Okay. Thanks.

Are you Aaron? Hi, Aaron. Okay. If you can go to the third slide, I guess, we can jump right into it.

I've already heard from what you said to Sam that accurate population statistics alongside consideration of emerging factors and historical factors are part of the process that you're going to be using to make electoral decisions. But I want to share three examples in the hopes of commission members seeing Edmonton as it is and not in an outdated way. What I noticed last year were comments about how nice it was to get to know Edmonton, so I would like to share just a couple of facts that are relevant.

First, official population data for Edmonton, you can see on the slide, is much greater in terms of its growth than other census metropolitan areas in Alberta. So we're growing faster than other census metropolitan areas.

Secondly, I'm Métis, and my family roots go back to Fort Edmonton in the early 1800s, and for 200-plus years, I know from this history, Fort Edmonton was a regional economic hub, and long before that, it was an Indigenous gathering place. Today it continues to be an economic and infrastructure hub for the oil and gas industry in the north and an important health and postsecondary hub for surrounding communities. Surrounding smaller communities has long been regular users of Edmonton's infrastructure and services, but it's Edmonton who builds and maintains them, and it's not the surrounding communities who necessarily have priorities around what happens in Edmonton. They have their own priorities.

Thirdly, Edmonton has a reputation now for affordable housing, and we're attracting all kinds of interprovincial migration. So I think these factors are the things that make Edmonton a community of interest for the commission's consideration.

2:20

Now I'd like to speak a little bit to Edmonton-Glenora. I live in Edmonton-Glenora in one of the neighbourhoods called North Glenora, and I'm advocating for it to be well represented even if it does not always vote conservative. It seems that an assumption behind combining Glenora and the Riverview constituencies is that they may be made up of stagnant, older communities.

I want to show you these two slides. These homes were just a block or two away from where I live. They've been in our neighbourhood

since 1953, and until 2025 they housed single families, and there were about 48 single families that would have lived in these homes. In the space of six to eight of those homes, this is what now exists. There are four-storey apartment buildings that exist – I’m assuming you can see that somewhere else. Can you? Sorry. So, yes, in the space of six to eight homes, we have now a four-storey, 48 two-bedroom suite, fully rented building. The full set of family homes is now represented by this one building, and there will be three more buildings. If you do the math, that’s 384-plus voters in the same space where there were 96, and that will all happen this year.

**Dr. Martin:** Population, not voters.

**Ms Sasges:** There will be more population. I’m assuming two adults in these places. There will be families as well, so for sure you can say population if you like. It’ll be more if you use population, I suspect.

I can’t speak to Edmonton-Riverview because I don’t live there, but I know the concerns they’ve had about the fast pace of infill growth. These are not constituencies that are stagnating. They are housing our growing population, and our roadways carry folks from surrounding rural communities in and out each workday.

My proposal is to leave the footprint of these growing communities in Edmonton-Glenora and Riverview as is and add a hybrid constituency where other population growth is occurring on the outskirts. I’ve seen the Alberta Is Calling campaign in every Canadian airport I’ve been in in the last couple of years. The province also financially incentivized people moving, and, not surprisingly, families have moved here. We did a good job, but the corollary requirement of this successful campaign is good planning. That includes considering fair representation for a population that is now calling our province and Edmonton home.

I want to go back to official population statistics one last time. Between 2022 and 2024 Edmonton grew by 100,000 people. That’s like adding a small city, and the forecast is for continued strong upward population growth in Edmonton. I’ll echo the Edmonton mayor saying that he recognizes the commission does not have an easy job. In my experience this is why you rely on official statistics, because it ensures objectivity in your decision-making. In good data analysis we look for patterns and data to explain them. I hope you’re convinced that significant population growth has occurred and is continuing to occur in Edmonton.

I want to say thank you, just like Sam did. It’s always wonderful that you give time to these kinds of things, anybody who does it. In closing, I want to ask you to future-proof Edmonton’s population representation based on its population growth, keeping in mind that we don’t know the voting preferences of these new constituents but that they’re moving here knowing what our government is and they’re moving here, probably, because they want to be here. I’d like to see a seat added to Edmonton. I know this is a big ask, but it’s not just reasonable; it’s essential to ensure that decisions concerning the future of Edmonton as a regional hub are data-informed ones.

Thanks for your time, and the best in your deliberations.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I’m sure we’re going to have some questions, so we’ll start with Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you. Yeah. I have a few questions.

First off, thank you for establishing the OSI. That’s incredibly valuable, and I think the point you made right at the end is why it’s valuable.

**Ms Sasges:** Yes.

**Mr. Clark:** You know, it’s interesting. We were talking earlier, just in the break, about: often in past commissions they’d spend about half of their time arguing about which census to use and back and forth, and that really hasn’t been a real subject of discussion here. So that liberates us in a lot of ways. I just want to thank you for putting us on that path.

**Ms Sasges:** I appreciate that.

**Mr. Clark:** It’s good stuff. I just want to ask a little bit about the idea of hybrid constituencies around the edges of Edmonton. We’ve had some pretty strong push-back on that and didn’t include much in the way of Edmonton, really just the Edmonton-West-Enoch constituency. The primary argument we’ve heard is, “We want to be with people who are part of our community of interest,” and there’s a concern either that that community of interest is diluted or that we would perhaps put an MLA in a difficult position of having to advocate for quite different perspectives. We’ve had a few different examples of what that may look like. You’ve argued that you think that’s probably a good idea around the edges of Edmonton. I’m just interested in your thoughts on that.

**Ms Sasges:** I’ve argued that it’s a good idea because I think you’re going to – well, I mean, assuming this kind of review happens every seven to 10 years, the Glenora-Riverview combination is going to have to be split. I think there’s no question that population growth will be so great in these inner areas. So I’m asking you not to make a short-term decision that actually isn’t in the interest of these communities in the long term.

I completely agree with the arguments that are being made about why it’s challenging to have a hybrid. I know the legislation now allows that and doesn’t require Edmonton and Calgary to stay within their limits. But, as I said, every community around Edmonton is chockablock full of cars in the morning and in the afternoon. They’re coming in, and they’re leaving. Those communities don’t support Edmonton in its priorities. They have their own priorities. I think that’s a big concern with the hybrid. If the hybrid is truly a community that fits the needs – I think the problem with Enoch is that it has, I would say, the same thing. I have concerns about the loss of the constituency in Lesser Slave Lake. Those are communities of interest. We have a government that’s going to be needing to do consultation around pipelines. You want to make sure those communities of interest feel like they’re going to be heard.

I don’t envy your role, and I agree with all the things that you’ve heard. It’s why I didn’t argue them again.

**Mr. Clark:** That’s exactly it. Those are all the things that we’re tasked with. Just as someone who’s a data person, we also struggle a bit with lagging versus leading statistics. You know, the lagging statistic would tell us pretty clearly that Glenora, Riverview, the sort of more inner-city Edmonton has grown in an absolute sense, but relative to other parts of Edmonton and Alberta really hasn’t. What we’ve heard a few times is: well, that’s about to change.

**Ms Sasges:** That’s why I showed you the pictures. It isn’t just, “I think it’s going to happen;” those patio homes are bulldozed or in the process of being bulldozed, and the developer’s intent is to build the same. The building that is in place – it’s about four blocks from me – is fully rented, and it’s actually rented by young kids who are friends of my children. You know, these are young people wanting to start in their own home community, which is wonderful. I’m sure

there are lots of other people, but I know that it's already chockablock full.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thanks.

Similar problem. We just want to enrol you in our dilemmas, I guess. The business of future-proofing is really off the limit. It's out of our scope, and as you, involved in statistics and census work, will know, it's always a lagging indicator. Census people: the minute they publish a census, they are immediately preparing revisions. It's just an endless task. So future-proofing sounds right, but we don't have the tools or the foreknowledge to do it, which is why, you know, anyone can say that things are growing, but I want to see the Tyvek on the buildings before I feel that it's so imminent that I can take it seriously. Now, some of the examples you gave are actually built, but again, as a commission, how are we to know how far into the future we can go into planning a riding? I mean, it gets very murky very fast.

2:30

**Ms Sasges:** Yeah. I think one of the great things that has happened with the declaration of an official statistic for population is also the declaration of who is the statistic owner, and in this case it's the demography area in Treasury Board and Finance. They're the ones that have given the data that I shared with you today. The data isn't as old as it is in a census, and the data that they're giving you – I think it's 4.77 million.

**Dr. Martin:** Four point eight eight eight.

**Ms Sasges:** Okay. That's growing. That's not census data anymore. So you do have numbers that are leading indicators in the sense of you know what direction they're headed in, and that's my point. I know from living in this city for a long time that our city did not change for a long time, and it is rapidly changing now in a good way. You know, as much as I don't like living beside the infill who's next door to me, I very much support the need for this to happen. We have schools and parks and all the infrastructure in place to welcome far more families, so we should be doing that and we are. That's what's happening. People are coming to our city because we have affordable housing, and we're building more and more housing.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation. That was really good. Did you say you were retired at the beginning?

**Ms Sasges:** I am retired, yes.

**Mrs. Samson:** You should not have.

**Ms Sasges:** Oh, thanks.

**Mrs. Samson:** But what I wanted to say – and it's more of a comment in that, you know, we couldn't give the room that the city of Edmonton needed to grow. And, yes, it's growing. Can you answer this. Do you feel it's still growing at that same fast rate that we talk about?

**Ms Sasges:** My husband had some surgery, and we had a nurse in our house this morning. She said, "I'm here from Montreal," so, yes, I think people are coming here, and they're coming here because they're attracted to what we can offer. I don't necessarily know what is bringing them here, obviously, but I think for sure for families – my kids are 20-something and they talk about, you know,

their friends making choices between food or paying the rent and stuff, so things around affordable housing are really, really important for them. We have rental spaces now. You don't have to get into the market as a buyer necessarily, which is very hard to do.

Did that answer . . .

**Mrs. Samson:** Yeah, it does. Thank you very much for that.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** No questions. Thank you for your submissions.

**The Chair:** You obviously read our report, particularly pages 15 to 17. Did we do okay in that regard?

**Ms Sasges:** I mean, the great thing about using the official statistics as the basis means that it's kind of hard to argue the facts. That's the point of having them. When I was given that responsibility – it was in 2007 – it was because of an event much like this where they had population statistics coming from all over. I think the census before that had – well, there was a 2006 census, but that data wasn't out, so they were using 2001 census. You had the municipal censuses trying to guide what was happening. You had Treasury Board and Finance sort of sticking with the census data and not so much doing forecasts. So the question was: first of all, who owns this data? That was a big part of my job, building collaboration and relationships. It's okay to let go, particularly for Municipal Affairs. That can be supplemental data, but it should not be the official data that we make decisions on the basis of.

**The Chair:** Would you say it's reasonable – we're in the last round of public submissions. We've got a legislative deadline, March 27, to table our report. Are we still on good grounds to rely on the 2021 federal census, which is updated by OSI up until July of '24?

**Ms Sasges:** Yes. They are the best at doing what they're doing. They are some of the same people that I used to work with who are still doing that work, so I can speak to that personally.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

**Ms Sasges:** Okay. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Our next presenter is Sarah Hoffman. Ms Hoffman, indicate the electoral division you are commenting on, and welcome again.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Justice Miller and to all of the commission members. I currently represent Edmonton-Glenora. I am probably going to comment mostly on the current and proposed Edmonton-Glenora-Riverview map.

I want to start by saying how grateful I am for the clearly tremendous amount of work that went into this and how I think it's to be commended that you found a way for all five of you to come up with something you could live with. I imagine that means nobody is particularly excited but that there is lots of compromise. I appreciate for the most part keeping municipal boundaries intact. I can think of some examples where that isn't the case, but for the vast majority it was. I think that that is sound democratic principle.

I wanted to bring information that shows what is happening today and what's proposed to be happening, particularly in the current riding of Edmonton-Glenora, and the parts that are proposed to maintain within Edmonton-Glenora-Riverview, in terms of development. The first document that I brought and brought copies for all of you is showing the priority growth areas for rezoning within the city of Edmonton. It's got the city on the top. It's about

a three- or four-page document. You'll see that they mentioned three priority areas for growth, and two of those are in Edmonton-Glenora and one is in Edmonton-Riverview today. The bottom one, the university-Garneau node, is proposed to go into Strathcona, but the other two are proposed to still be within Glenora, that being 124th Street as well as the Stony Plain and 156th corridors.

Then I brought with those some maps, and you can see that a lot of it is the city planning around transit-oriented development. I was trying to decide if I should explain my lateness by complaining about construction or traffic or my own tardiness, and the answer is all three. It was the trifecta today.

It is very evident that there is a lot of densification happening in the core of our city. I'm not here to argue in support or opposition to that. I am here to say that more and more people are moving into the core, particularly into the parts of Edmonton-Glenora that are proposed to still be in the new map with Edmonton-Glenora-Riverview. Already I believe it's proposed to be the third most populous riding in the province. Even without all of the initiatives that the municipality has launched in the last five years, over the last duration of the map we have kept up with provincial growth, and now the efforts to densify are so much greater. Those are the maps of the specific neighbourhoods where they're really focusing on the densification.

I spent about 90 minutes yesterday driving around just taking a few photos in those areas, and that's the last big stack that Aaron will pass out. You can see that there are many eight- and 16-unit properties being built where there used to be one single detached home. You can see that there are a number of – yeah; it's mostly eight and 16s that I really highlighted for photos as well as some areas where there are a number of skinny houses in the middle of blocks, and there are also areas where there are going to be six and eight units that are currently under construction in those areas as well.

2:40

As well, there is the Charles Camsell site in Inglewood, which is in Edmonton-Glenora and proposed Edmonton-Glenora-Riverview, which is the hospital that closed in the '90s and now has been converted into apartments, and it is about 60 per cent occupied now. On that same ground they've built seniors' housing that's only at about 20 per cent occupied right now. They're building townhouses on that same parcel of land. So there's a ton of densification happening within Inglewood, North Glenora. North Glenora, I believe, was the community where the garden suites were referred to, and that's where 16 and even more dense than that units are being built, and it looks like they're all being built right now as purpose-built rentals. It is really changing the number of people who are living in the community in an increased way.

Whether you think that that's a positive or negative, I'm not here to explain, but I want to make sure that no matter where you live in the province of Alberta, you feel like you have access to your representative and that your representative can do a good job meeting with the constituents and giving their feedback. So I think it would be unwise to have an area where there's so much intentional effort around densification be already one of the most populated ridings in the province before the map even comes into play. I know that it's hard to anticipate with certainty where we'll be in eight years, but I can say that these are all going to be on the market this spring, and it's going to be many more people even by the time the next provincial election comes around and many more after that given the city's intentional efforts around densification.

I'm not wanting to propose a specific neighbourhood be included or removed or any of that. I'm sure that this has been a very difficult effort for all of you to date. I again want to commend that I think

you've applied some really good principles, both that were in legislation that I think others were urging you to consider, and say that I think Edmonton, particularly the more mature areas: those ridings are larger than they should be for this proposal.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms Hoffman. Let me give a bit of a perverse scenario. If you're right – and let's assume that all of Alberta continues to grow. You've got a bit of a microcosm in the province that clearly is going to be exploding. But let's say the province continues to grow. You're saying: look, be careful; we're almost at the limit already. You're 61,000, 62,000 right now, right?

**Ms Hoffman:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** In our proposed riding. If the province continues to grow, the range is going to be higher, too, so we're not going to offend anything, right?

**Ms Hoffman:** I believe that the smallest proposed riding is at about 32,000, 33,000.

**The Chair:** Forty-one thousand before we get to 15(2).

**Ms Hoffman:** Sorry; 41,000 residents versus 62,000 residents?

**The Chair:** Yes, 41,000 to 68,000.

**Ms Hoffman:** Okay. I'm looking at the riding I currently represent, and I think that having – I believe that's Drumheller-Stettler, is it, that's 41,000?

**The Chair:** Probably, yes.

**Ms Hoffman:** We lived in that riding for a while when I was a child. We lived in Altario, a very small town not far from the Saskatchewan border. It was a one-block-square town, and even fewer people live there now than did then. When you look at the trends of what's happening with population in ridings that are proposed to be significantly under the variance, it's unlikely that those ridings will increase or at least that they will increase at the same rate that Edmonton, Calgary, and the other more urban centres are. I think the best determinant of future is the recent past, and that's what I'm trying to bring to the table.

**The Chair:** Okay. That was probably a little bit of an unfair scenario to put to you.

**Ms Hoffman:** I don't think it's unfair. Your job is to ask the questions.

**The Chair:** It goes straight to the paradox that we're faced with.

**Ms Hoffman:** Yeah. I think my riding is growing much faster than the communities I grew up in in rural Alberta, which are declining in enrolment.

**Mr. Evans:** What I'm hearing from you, Ms Hoffman, is that previously, I guess, your riding would be at 52,000, presumably, and it's proposed to be at 61,000. You're saying that you're expecting significant growth and we're going to overshoot our mark by quite a lot if we don't pare it down now.

**Ms Hoffman:** I think that 61,000 is based on the most recent data that we have, which is almost a year old at this point, is it?

**The Chair:** Yeah. You're right.

**Ms Hoffman:** I think it's already more than 61,000 quite a bit, especially given some of the seniors' apartments that have opened in the riding. I'm just showing you what's currently under construction in about the four neighbourhoods I had a chance to drive through in those 90 minutes. I think we're already significantly over 61,000, and we'll be far in excess of it by the provincial election and definitely by the following provincial election.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thank you.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** I hear exactly what you're saying, and we heard it in the submissions. I don't know if you know, but we got 1,100 submissions from the interim report.

I call this a hot spot that these two ridings join together. We will be looking at it. I can't promise anything, but we're going to look at it.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** This is really valuable stuff that you took the time to do.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** There are some ridings in Edmonton that are not close to yours. I mean, there's room for us to play without adding another electoral division.

**Dr. Martin:** I'm trying to absorb the maps that you provided, which I will, but I haven't done it yet. I want to take you to one just so you can walk me through what it's actually telling me about proposed densities.

**Ms Hoffman:** I'd love to.

**Dr. Martin:** Let's take this one since I've scribbled it up.

**Ms Hoffman:** Yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** So down the middle of this is an increased density plan for 124th Street. Then, of course, in classic form, for the most part it goes to medium and low density as you move away from 124th Street and the other side. Then the Stony Plain intersection is going to be even more dense. Am I reading this correctly so far?

**Ms Hoffman:** Yes. We're just east of Stony Plain Road and 124th Street and that sort of 105th Ave area. There have already been some low-rises that have been demolished and some high-rises built in that area in the last year, and it looks like there will be more to come.

**Dr. Martin:** Sure. That's just south of the Oliver . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** West. Yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. Okay. All right. Now, what is the status of this plan? Presumably, it's a city plan and it has been passed as an area redevelopment plan.

**Ms Hoffman:** Yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** What is your sense of the current building activity in this particular zone?

**Ms Hoffman:** I took a number of photos along 127th Street, so actually just west of it, where they look like it's not going to be densified for higher zoning. Within there is where there are a number of the eight- and 16-plexes being built. I actually didn't take a lot right along 124th Street, which is kind of funny because it's where the city has got a lot of focus. With what's happening right now within the residential areas there are a ton of four-, six-, and eightplexes. There's even a 10-plex being built on one where it looks like four upper townhouses with four basement suites and then two garage suites being built as well over the four garages on one corner lot. So quite a bit of densification that way.

Yeah. Further up 124th Street, as you reach 111th Avenue, which is near the top of this map, there are a number of brownfields I think it is referred to. I think people who've owned that land for 20-plus years have been prospecting for increased densification. There aren't for sale signs on them right now, so it feels to those of us in the neighbourhood like there's going to be more construction in that area imminently as well.

Then along 111th Avenue the city has been buying up a lot of the corner lots along that street. It also is anticipated that there will be more purpose-built, probably nonprofit or city-partnered housing along that way. So while 124th Street is a north-south running corridor, there are branches coming off it to the east and west, where there's densification happening right now as well.

Yeah. The largest area of densification is that sort of red centre around Stony Plain and 124th Street, where they're putting in a major transit centre. We've already got a few eight- and 16-storey buildings, and it seems like there will be significantly more in the future if council's proposals continue.

2:50

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you. That's helpful.

**Ms Hoffman:** Yeah. Thank you, Dr. Martin.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah.

Thank you very much for this. This is, I think, the reason we write an interim report and put out specific proposals, so people who are actually in those neighbourhoods can tell us specifically what's actually happening on the ground. As I think you may have heard from the last presenter, the data we have is lagging data, so in the past. Over the last seven or eight years Glenora, Riverview have grown, absolutely, but less relative to the rest of the province. Do you believe that the growth in the next seven or eight years is going to meet or exceed the average of the rest of the province?

**Ms Hoffman:** I think Glenora grew at about the provincial average, but I'm not sure about Riverview. I think you highlighted that, actually, at our last presentation. I appreciated it.

One of the reasons why I think Glenora, Riverview will grow much faster than the rest of the province is because even in this last year – and that data isn't factored into the census data you have – the city of Edmonton open data shows that within the Heday over 40 per cent of the new units were added to the city of Edmonton. So there's still slightly more than the majority happening outside of the Heday, but there's a ton of new units being built within in terms of a net increase. Because the LRT is coming through my riding and that Valley Line west is anticipated to have significant transit-oriented development and already some towers have been built around where the proposed stations will be, I expect that it will be even faster.

The other piece that I did want to highlight is these, you know, 16-plexes and eightplexes that are coming in in the middle of

neighbourhoods. Those aren't even in these transit-oriented routes, but they are within a five- to 10-minute walk of where transit will be and where there are bike lanes and other opportunities.

I remember feeling some guilt when I moved into a duplex in my riding. I was like: oh, I don't know how people are going to feel about a duplex. My neighbours were overwhelmingly positive in that it used to be a rundown house that had police and EMS at it on a regular basis. People were squatting in it, those types of things. Instead, now there are two homeowners who are active members of the community. There is more of that happening throughout the area as well as a number of seniors retiring and wanting to downsize.

One of the buildings that opened on the Charles Camsell site: that's sort of in the middle of this package.

**Mr. Clark:** While you look for that, if you don't mind, maybe I'll ask a follow-up question if that's all right with you.

**Ms Hoffman:** Sure. Yep.

**Mr. Clark:** In your presentation you said that you wouldn't suggest which parts may shift elsewhere, so I won't ask you that specific question. But are there neighbouring parts of Edmonton that might or might not border on your constituency . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** Which one of your children is your favourite? Is that your question, Mr. Clark?

**Mr. Clark:** I tell my two kids that they're within the top five kids I have.

**Ms Hoffman:** Yeah. Okay. That's good.

**Mr. Clark:** But in all sincerity, if there were somewhere – you know, we're looking at this, for example. I see your next-door neighbour colleague is sitting in the audience behind you. Again, there's some cascading that needs to happen as well. I guess I'm really just interested in: are there parts that are adjacent that would be slower growing that might make some sense if we were to try to balance out things here a little bit?

**Ms Hoffman:** One of the pieces that I brought last time, that I encourage you to consider again, is around high school catchment area. When you think about communities of like interest – kids who grew up together, who play sports together, who go to the same high school – as much as we can keep those families connected in the same representative area I think would be wise. That doesn't mean our boundaries need to match high school catchment areas, but I think that would be a good measure of influence for communities of like interest.

The two most easterly neighbourhoods that are proposed to come out of Edmonton-Glenora and go into Edmonton-City Centre in the last redraw were added. That was Prince Rupert and Blatchford. They have been the child that's been moved between families multiple times over the last probably three or four rewrites of the maps. They regularly move, and I imagine that one of your considerations is that Blatchford will have continued increased development over the next eight years. I didn't even include it in this because it isn't proposed to be in Edmonton-Riverview, but if downtown is having more densification and includes Blatchford, I think that's something that you'll want to consider moving forward.

The furthest west parts of the riding were proposed to come out of Edmonton-Glenora as well. Honestly, it is such a pressure point. I don't want to pick a specific neighbourhood, but I will say that the two furthest east that are already being proposed to come out were only added eight years ago. I don't know how people will feel about

that, but I think they're used to having some change. At one point they were Edmonton-Calder, at another point they were Edmonton-Centre, at one point they're Edmonton-Glenora, and there is a lot of change happening in those areas in terms of densification and completely new build-outs in Blatchford, so I understand why you maybe proposed moving those out.

If I were in your shoes for an hour, because I don't want to be in them for the duration of this, I would say that maybe we need to add one more seat somewhere between the Yellowhead and the Whitemud to do some reconfiguration of that part of the city because I think your acknowledgement that we are continuing to grow outside of the Henday is wise, and we will continue to grow outside of the Henday, but we are also growing within. To take one seat from within the Henday and put it outside of the Henday to account for that I don't think is fair to all the people who currently live in the core and are planning on moving there in the next year or beyond.

That's my general problem that I leave you to solve.

**Dr. Martin:** We want to hear solutions.

**Ms Hoffman:** Well, yeah. Good luck.

**Mr. Clark:** Appreciate the honesty. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you. By the way, you've got 55 minutes left in your hour to be in our shoes.

**Ms Hoffman:** I'll stay for at least 20.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. One more presenter before break. Yeah. I've got David Eggen.

**Dr. Martin:** Two. Earl Dreeshen.

**The Chair:** Oh, Earl is not on mine. Okay. I guess Earl is first.

Earl, come forth. Welcome. Introduce yourself and tell us what riding you're in and which ridings you want to comment on.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Well, thank you very much. My name is Earl Dreeshen. I'm a former MP for Red Deer and Red Deer-Mountain View, and I wish to speak to the proposed riding of now Sylvan Lake-Innisfail. I wanted to kind of give a bit of an overview of my experience as far as being a political representative. My wife and I: we've been farming the Pine Lake area for over 50 years, continuing the tradition of forefathers that had come here prior to Alberta becoming a province.

Really, I suppose, in one way I'm one of those people that you can say went to a one-room schoolhouse and all of the stories associated with it, but I bring this up not just for nostalgic reasons. When consolidation had taken place in 1961, there were 13 students in our school. We ended up being split into four different directions, so we ended up having students go to Delburne, to Elnora, to Huxley, and in our case to Innisfail. This is sort of some of the things that can happen when governments go through the things that they must do in order to maintain what is required.

I also became a teacher, and I started teaching in Elnora, grades 1 through 9. Then for the next 34 years I taught at the Innisfail high school as a senior high math and science specialist. I also served as a political liaison between the Alberta Teachers' Association and the government of Alberta.

My political career started municipally when I was elected as a hospital board director for Elnora, and I served on this board for many years, eventually as the chairman. I also chaired the Eltrohills advisory committee, implementing innovative health care delivery

systems in the communities of Elnora, Trochu, and Three Hills. During that era I had the good fortune to be able to work with many provincial cabinet ministers and other members of the Alberta Legislature on an ongoing basis.

During the boundary review that was taking place at that time, we were able to stress the importance of rural representation, and I spoke of the necessity of representation by responsibility. Rural MLAs at that time dealt with multiple hospital boards, school boards, municipal councils while their Edmonton and Calgary counterparts had but one municipal council to deal with, two health boards, two school boards, and significantly they shared that responsibility with many other urban MLA colleagues. Also, the extensive travel time in rural areas and extensive points of contact with constituents were considerations that were often overlooked. When the commissioners understood the reality of that rural representation, changes that reflected rural community needs were gratefully implemented.

3:00

Now, after retiring from teaching, my life took an unexpected turn and I was once again involved in politics. I've served as a Member of Parliament over 16 years. Initially I represented the Red Deer federal riding, which encompassed both the city of Red Deer and the county of Red Deer and all of the towns and villages within the county, including the two largest of Innisfail and Sylvan Lake, so I quickly got first-hand experience in dealing with the responsibility of representing a diverse group of citizens. My experience was much different than that of my urban MP colleagues, who shared a far lesser variety of issues.

In 2015 the Red Deer riding was split into two electoral districts. The northern part of Red Deer, Sylvan Lake, and the northern Red Deer county became part of the new Red Deer-Lacombe riding. Red Deer-South, Innisfail, and the southern part of Red Deer county joined Mountain View county in the new Red Deer-Mountain View riding, which I had the honour of representing until my retirement in 2025.

Rural provincial ridings in Alberta should not be decreased. Representation by responsibility is as important today as it ever was. Rural MLAs have huge geographic areas to cover, many municipal councils to deal with, many varied issues to address, and are the main point of contact for government services for their constituents.

I'd recommend that the growing town of Sylvan Lake, soon to be a city, be added to the Lacombe provincial riding, mirroring the present federal central Alberta riding configuration, and I believe that Innisfail and the other towns, villages, and hamlets along the highway 2 corridor such as Bowden, Penhold, Springbrook, Gasoline Alley, and Blackfalds along with the towns, villages, and hamlets along the highway 21 corridor of Joffre, Delburne, Lousana, Elnora, Huxley, and Trochu should be included in a new riding. My recommendation is based on the unique aspects and ties of these vibrant rural communities. They represent strong north-south economic corridors, with major railways and highways that support farms, ranches, grain company elevators, machinery dealerships, and other agriculture businesses along with oil and gas industry and resource development in central Alberta.

I thank you for your consideration, and I'd be happy to take your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Dreeshen. Just give us a moment so everybody has that map. By the way, have you submitted a written presentation?

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Yes.

**The Chair:** So your proposed descriptions are in . . .

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Yes, they are.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** No, but thank you for your submissions.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Hi. Long time no see.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Hi, Susan.

**Mrs. Samson:** Welcome. It's good to see you. Sorry you're bringing me bad news.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** I've already gone through that once when I had to say goodbye to Sylvan Lake when the change took place in 2015.

**Mrs. Samson:** Absolutely. You know we have strong ties. I want to get your opinion on: when I think about the history – I'm speaking specifically of Sylvan Lake – of our ties into that riding since 1993 with no change, when I think about the county of Red Deer being, in its entirety, the only level of government to help out those municipalities that are inside it and the convenience of that, and lastly when I think about the strides we've made on partnerships with our area partners when it comes to health care and urgent care and forming a solid voice to advocate with the government, I find it interesting that you think the town of Sylvan Lake would be better elsewhere. Can you speak to that specifically?

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Certainly. One of the portions of the proposal was of course to reduce rural representation in central Alberta, and it's from that position that I'm coming from. I believe that there was a basis at the federal level for Sylvan Lake and Lacombe to be together in that the lake is surrounded by the two counties. When it was done federally, that was the trade-off that I felt: at least that's a positive that we can talk about. I believe, continuing with that, it also makes the fact that Sylvan Lake – even just the name that we've given, Sylvan Lake-Innisfail, shows the prominence of that community. I think that's part of what we're looking at there. Where a boundary might go between Sylvan Lake and Red Deer: I guess that's something that one can, you know, take a look at. I really think that it's important that we look at the key component, which is ensuring that rural representation remains as it is at this particular point in view. That's my reason for going that particular route.

I know many people that are in the Sylvan Lake and Lacombe area and the things that are going on along highway 20. You know, there's great growth potential that is there. We certainly see what is happening. My daughter had taught in Sylvan Lake, so I know all of those things that are taking place in there. That's really where I'm at when I put that into the proposal.

The key aspect of it as well, though, is the rest of the riding where we're talking about the highway 2 corridor. We have CN and we have CP, the two rail lines that come down. They are part of an economic corridor that is really critical. I think that's really important. We have massive grain terminals that are on both of those lines. We have in Springbrook probably the largest flour mill in Canada that is being built and this year probably is going to start in production. We see that more on the agricultural side of things. I think agriculture is the key component. We have equipment dealerships in Penhold and a couple in the county of Red Deer and



a couple in Trochu. I mean, these are the areas that are really key into the agricultural – and there's a lot.

You know, we live at Pine Lake. I mean, we're on a farm. There are tens of thousands of people that show up there in the summertime. We have a lot of people that are coming in; there are new subdivisions that are showing up but also smaller areas as well. These are what I'm looking at in the future.

Really, I did look at the health care side of it because I was part of it when the health care boards were removed. I know that the complete story was: oh, there must be something wrong that Alberta did. Of course, as a federal politician I recognize the major cut there was from the federal government to the provinces, so they had to do something in order to maintain balance. I understand those types of things. I understand how politics sometimes works but also what it does to communities. That's why my major focus is to make sure that we have that type of rural representation.

The other aspect of it is that – you know, love my colleagues, the ones that are in the cities and so on – if we have a Canada Day event or if we have a Remembrance Day ceremony, there are 15 or 20 of them that can kind of decide where they want to go. With us, we have seven or eight places that we are supposed to go at one time. It's very difficult to do. It's a labour of love and you do it, but it's hard that way.

I'm not sure how my time is.

**The Chair:** You're well over it, but keep going.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** The last thing I would like to say is that when the city of Red Deer was split in half for that time being, the one promise that I made is that I would never represent half of the city. I believe that those MLAs that share the city and the rural area around it are richer for that experience. I believe in the hub-and-spoke concept of it. I know that we are here in Edmonton and, you know, the city centre has to be associated with the pockets that are there and the ridings that are there, but when you get into the outer edges, there's an opportunity then to get a bit more of that rural flavour that makes the riding so important.

Thank you very much.

3:10

**The Chair:** Okay.  
Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much, sir. I wanted to take you to the eastern part of the riding and to highway 21, which is, as you very well know, adjacent to the railway. I want to ask you about Trochu, which currently isn't in this map, but we've heard a very great deal about this as a grain corridor. I wanted to press you on the economic logic, if you will, of including Trochu in this riding.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Trochu has some unique aspects to it. It has two equipment dealerships that are there. It also is in the centre of three different high capacity grain terminals. There's one closer to Three Hills, there's one right by Trochu, and there's one in Huxley, which is a few miles away. These are 100-car, 120-car spots that they – two of them are. And the traffic that goes along there – we were hauling grain last week, and it would take you two or three minutes to get onto the highway from 590, where we're at, because of the traffic that is there. There's a massive amount of activity that takes place, and Trochu is certainly one of the key components of that.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you. It's tough when you have to go last because Julian often takes my questions. Lots of discussion last week about Trochu.

I guess, you know, one of the mandates of the boundaries commission, I'm sure you know, is clear and understandable boundaries, and in the case of the current Innisfail-Sylvan Lake we haven't done a whole lot to the constituency, right? As it stands now, it's not massively different. I think we bumped it out a little bit west. I guess that's part of what I wanted to ask you about. Is it currently functioning okay? I know you may have some insight into the current MLA, but notwithstanding that I guess I'm just curious. Do you feel like it's working okay as it is now? I know you've made a case here that we need to shuffle things up a little bit.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Well, I think that where I look at it from is that when the proposal was that there would be less representation in central Alberta, then you take that as your first premise and then say: okay; now that means we need to do this, and then we need to do that. I'm suggesting that that is not the right way to go and that we should be looking at maintaining the same number of regions in central Alberta. When you look at potentially three ridings – one in central Alberta, one in southern Alberta, one in northern Alberta – being pulled out from the rural – we do have the extra two that are coming into the cities. But then to change that: that's where I believe that we need to really reconsider just where we're at there.

That's why when you start to say, "Okay; well, how then would you make that work?" I'm simply saying that this would be a way to do that, to pull in this again. You know what? I still spend a lot of time in Sylvan even though it wasn't part of my riding. Nevertheless, sometimes you simply have to look at it and say: okay; well, this is a chance. It's also a chance for, hopefully, the new city of Sylvan to have its own future and design, you know, as we move forward.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Dreeshen.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Okay. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** I'll excuse you from the table, but please remain. By the way, this has got to be the best day of people staying after they presented. I always gently encourage people, and most people just leave, but it's helpful for everybody to hear the other persons' presentations, especially if it's somewhat contrasting. So thank you very much.

Mr. Eggen, please come forward. I was all set to make some smart comment when I was going to call you up earlier saying that we were on time, just before the break. But no, we're not on time. As you can see, time limits are not strictly enforced in these proceedings. So please proceed and tell us what we need to know.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you. I appreciate being in front of you here again. Just by way of opening remarks I, of course, am the MLA for Edmonton-North West, so that's what I am advocating for here today as well as the city of Edmonton.

I must say before I begin that I'm very impressed with this interim report, and I can see a lot of thoughtful collaboration that took place. I think that's evidenced by the fact that you all voted for this interim report as well. I'm sure you know that is not often the case. I think that demonstrates a lot of work in the background that produced something that was both thoughtful and collaborative.

**The Chair:** Did you read appendix D?

**Mr. Eggen:** I probably did.

**The Chair:** Which is the history of Alberta's EBC going back to . . .

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes. I was using my own anecdotal history, you know, since I started doing this. It was fractious at best. Congratulations for breaking that mould.

I was struck by a number of the other presentations that I heard earlier, and it's something similar that we can see in Edmonton-North West as well. This is the phenomenon of density and building growth through infills. We see a lot of this here in Edmonton-North West as well. I find it interesting when I look at your interim report that the proposed four most populated constituencies are all in Edmonton north of the river, and Edmonton-North West is fourth in that regard.

You know, we can see some density. We can see some congestion there as well. As described by my colleague from Edmonton-Glenora, they're literally building these places in Edmonton-North West right now. As we speak, they are going up, these 200, 300, or even 400-person apartments, eight or 10 stories high, in places like Griesbach and in Albany. The density is quite breathtaking, really. It's growing. I think there are a whole bunch of reasons why we see this growth, but people are building on spec around new LRT and transit lines, and they're building for affordability, right? Quite frankly, young families will move into a place where they can get a single detached home or a town home or a duplex where they can afford the mortgage, and that's what's happening in the north part of Edmonton-North West.

As I said when I previously presented, I have neighbourhoods in my constituency that are more than 100 years old and I have neighbourhoods that are a few weeks old, probably, at best. It's a dynamic place. I love representing Edmonton-North West. I just want to advocate for a sense of purpose.

You did listen to the people that did present before, myself included, who were saying that we would like to keep the configuration of Edmonton-North West as much as possible. Certainly you did achieve that in this interim report, but you did add one neighbourhood that I did represent before, but it's another 5,000 people or so.

I know, as Dr. Martin said, that you're not here necessarily to project the future, but we have to use an informed analysis of the immediate past to see what direction we're going to. For Edmonton-North West to be at 61,000 and change with this proposal, I think it's a pretty conservative projection that it will exceed 70,000 in the next five or six years, so we need to think about that as well.

I'm here representing people that have a very strong connection to community, and we have some of the best community leagues I think in Edmonton. Edmonton has very good community leagues in Canada, in fact. They divide themselves up into areas, so a lot of the neighbourhoods that I represent belong to the Area 1 community leagues. Keeping those together: I really appreciated that, and they appreciate that, too. I'm literally going to a dinner in a couple of weeks where they meet every six months or so. Those are all of those neighbourhoods in Edmonton-North West. You know, that sort of informal governance and community building is not always so tangible, but it's indispensable for people looking after each other and so forth. So I appreciate that somehow you did manage to keep those things together.

3:20

Again, I can see that Edmonton is growing very quickly. I appreciate that your proposal does add a seat to the city of Edmonton. But considering, as I said, with Edmonton-North West, Edmonton-Glenora, Edmonton-West Henday, and Edmonton-

McClung being the top four sized constituencies in your proposal, it's an indicator – it doesn't necessarily have to be this immediate geographic area – that Edmonton needs another seat.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you. You caught me . . .

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, you know, I'm 30 seconds short, so there you go. Yeah.

**The Chair:** Just having heard the last two presenters, we have one lawyer on the panel here and maybe there are more lawyers in the crowd, but in law school you have to moot cases and sometimes you have to switch sides. I was just thinking: you know what would be a really good idea? To make the rural MLAs advocate for the city's expansion and the city MLAs advocate for the rural.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yeah. I mean, certainly my proposal around . . .

**Mr. Evans:** Next we're going to have Mr. Eggen up here, and we're going to give him some submissions.

**Mr. Eggen:** Someday I may be on the electoral commission, but not today.

I mean, my advocacy for another seat in Edmonton: I'm not doing it at the expense of the rural areas. I think it's very important for us to recognize the differential between – you know, you can't have a 62,000 person rural riding, of course. Right? But at the same time we can see the trends, and people do pay attention to the value of a vote. If someone is coming from an area like the proposed Mackenzie area, for example, it was 30-some thousand, I think. Yeah. Then, of course, that would be half as much as the one in Edmonton-North West. God bless the proposed Mackenzie. I think that's a fantastic idea. I really do. I'm just here to advocate for Edmonton-North West.

**The Chair:** You know, I don't recall any Edmonton MLA complaining at all about their high numbers the first time around. I mean, in fact, they were fighting not to lose areas because everybody loves their area. But I get the pressure points from Ms Hoffman and your presentation and the uniqueness of those four ridings. They're probably not only the highest but they're going to be the most pressure laden.

Okay. Questions.

**Mr. Clark:** Again, if you've heard some of my questions, they'll be similar. I guess I'm interested in the Edmonton-North West context. How foreseeable is some of that development that you suggest is likely coming? As you can tell, part of the challenge we're dealing with here is always a bit of a cascading effect. Trying to keep community leagues together: that was part of the reason we put all of Calder into Edmonton-North West. It's a bit of a six of one, half dozen of the other kind of thing. Are there, you know, like with MLA Hoffman, very specific, targeted developments that are planned for North West, and if so . . .

**Mr. Eggen:** For sure. You know, we have the good fortune of having the many of the developers who are developing in Edmonton-North West also live there, so I know. I meet with them on a regular basis, and I'm friends with some of them. They're building significant units and development in Griesbach in anticipation of the transit that will be there on the corner of 113A and 137 Ave. Right? Then, again, they're literally building the multiunit apartments and townhomes in Albany as we speak. Then even on the other side of the Henday jumping across immediately

west of the remand centre there's a significant development that's being sited and graded right now.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you.

**Dr. Martin:** Where is that?

**Mr. Eggen:** I can't remember the name of it now because there's no one there right now, but it's just on the other side of the Henday with the 127 Street overpass and then west. Oh, yeah. Okay. Thanks.

**Ms Hoffman:** So originally you were talking about over here – right? – when you were talking about Griesbach?

**Mr. Eggen:** Yeah. So 127 street when it hits the Henday, and then it's just immediately west of there. That's projected. Yeah. Higher. Yeah. You can't reach that?

**Mr. Evans:** Forest Lawn I think is where it is.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yeah. So that's another one, but the real density is Griesbach and Albany.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Samson, any questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** No.

I'm just looking at the map in front of me, and I can see where the four ridings are holding that heavy density, and we certainly will have a look at it. I don't know where the extra electoral district – there are no extras. So what I see happening is that we're going to start pushing things around.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yeah. I mean, again, I'm not here to ask for this neighbourhood and put this neighbourhood over wherever. I'm looking at the city globally, and just, you know, these four constituencies are a case in point for significant growth and density, and they happen to be the top four in the province. It's a good problem to have in a way. I mean, we see the vibrancy. I see shops and so forth that I would never dream of having in Edmonton-North West 10 years ago, so it's definitely growing and the economy is growing, too, which is a good problem to have.

**Mrs. Samson:** Yeah. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Did I get you?

**Dr. Martin:** You didn't, but I'm just kind of dumbfounded, so I don't really have a question. You know, Livingstone-Macleod has over 60,000 people in their configuration.

**Mr. Eggen:** Okay. Good for them.

**Dr. Martin:** These Edmonton ridings plus the farthest away riding in the south: I don't know how we make you smaller, actually, Mr. Eggen.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yeah. I mean, again, I'm arguing this based on the premise that there's growth in Edmonton. You know, I'm trying to look at it on a more global sort of basis. So Edmonton-North West is a case in point. That's the approach I'm taking.

**Dr. Martin:** And just to conclude, again, enrolling you in our dilemma: you know, past performance is no indicator of future events, and this is something that we're always told about the markets and investing, but it is also true about area restructure

plans. We have to be very, very careful. MLA Hoffman provided actual pictures of stuff that has Tyvek on it, which I love to see because that seems much more real than a developer's brochure or a city planning department's expectation. For us, we need to feel confident that we're actually seeing, as it were, real growth rather than potential, because everybody has potential.

**Mr. Eggen:** For sure. Yeah. I restricted my comments to the Griesbach area, you know, where these buildings are. They're there, right? I mean, people are moving into them, and they're not reflected in the population census that this interim report was based on.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Eggen, for presenting. I'm going to excuse you from the table.

We're about 10 minutes past our scheduled break time. I'm going to use the Chairman's prerogative, and we're not going to have a break. If any of the panel members have to take a break, then go do it now. We will go to our next presenter, David Shepherd.

Good afternoon.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Good afternoon. Do we want to wait for Mr. Clark to return or . . .

**The Chair:** Just talk really slow.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Okay. Sure. I'm sorry. What is the time that I have again?

**Dr. Martin:** Six minutes.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Six minutes. Thank you. I will just set a timer to make sure that I keep track of that.

**The Chair:** No one's met that deadline except for Mr. Eggen.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Okay. I try to be thorough. You know, practice in the Legislature and all.

Good afternoon. Thank you. It's wonderful to see you all again, and I appreciate the opportunity to present again. I am David Shepherd. For the last 10 years I've had the honour of serving as the MLA here in Edmonton-City Centre. I've been a resident of the constituency since about 2008, so I appreciate the chance to share a few thoughts on the draft constituency map that you put for the commission.

3:30

First, I want to say thank you for all the work you have put in in creating this map. I know it's not an easy job. It's a pretty challenging task, in fact, weighing a lot of different intersecting considerations, competing interests. I love puzzles. I love word games, jigsaw puzzles, logic puzzles. Working on a 2,000-piece one I started just over the Christmas holidays. But I think the work that you've had is a bigger puzzle than I've ever attempted. I'm not sure I'd want to, but I really appreciate your efforts.

Clearly there's a lot of thought and consideration that went into creating these new proposed boundaries. In particular, I want to say thank you for recognizing the rapid growth of our population in Edmonton by granting us an additional seat. I think, as you're aware, '22 to '24 our city saw its highest two-year rate of growth since 2003. That's about 100,000 new residents. That's a 10 per cent increase. The chief economist does forecast that growth is going to continue, hitting about 1.25 million by 2027, and that's about five years earlier than had been projected in the city plan that

was put forward in 2019. So the additional seat, I think, is well essential and important. Indeed, as my colleagues have noted, there could even be room for consideration, I think, of an additional seat.

I note in the report that you did talk about the six electoral divisions in the urban centre of Edmonton being consolidated into five. That is, in fact, what you chose to do to reflect that the rate of population growth in these areas has been below that of the city. I think my colleague Sarah from Edmonton-Glenora spoke well to the growth that she's seeing in her community. I'll speak a bit to what I'm seeing in Edmonton-City Centre.

Now, I don't have specific photos of projects, but what I can tell you is that as I'm out door-knocking in the communities around Edmonton-City Centre, whether that be Spruce Avenue, Queen Mary Park, some of these neighbourhoods, Westwood, you cannot go down a block without seeing infill. It is consistent, it is rapid, and it is continuing. You know, Edmontonians chose to re-elect a mayor and council who are dedicated to incentivizing that work. So we are certainly seeing that growth here.

We have new condo towers that are being built across the downtown, I would point to, and I would note the parks just over here by O-day'min park. As we see that development investment from the city, we are seeing new condo towers in the downtown and in Wihkwentowin. We are also seeing current apartment buildings, some of these three-storey walk-ups, that are being redeveloped, so torn down, redeveloped, adding additional units. We are seeing some significant growth here.

I would note also then that the province stepping forward with their investment for the Ice District alongside the city of Edmonton includes plans for 4,500 new homes in the village at Ice District.

I think, ultimately, as Sarah noted, taking a seat from between the Yellowhead and the Whitemud could be a decision for now, but it could be a decision that could rapidly have to be reversed as we continue to see this growth and development within the inner core.

Just to reiterate, I think, what I said previously when I presented here, I think the most effective and fair electoral map is one that groups communities of like interests and needs together. I would say in terms of Edmonton-City Centre that the adjustments you're proposing do meet with that. But I would continue to iterate, I think, that it's worth considering as we are looking at some of the communities around the fringes of our city as well.

I'll just take a look here. What else do I want to make sure I get in?

Yeah. In general I'd say that the communities in my constituency have common interests and needs, and then those outside our core, those in the suburbs, those communities in turn have their own more common interests and needs than those outside of our city boundaries.

Lastly, I would just say, I guess, hearing some of the comments like looking at rural versus urban – and I appreciate, I think it was my colleague David Eggen that kind of noted, that we do need to consider, you know, local representation, yes, in terms of the ability of MLAs to appear at community events, to be able to get out to local councils and those sorts of things, but we also do really have to weigh the democratic representation in terms of keeping those numbers similar so that we don't have too much discrepancy between the population sizes in some of the rural seats versus the urban seats, to have that equity of representation in the Legislature where these considerable and major decisions are made.

Ultimately, what I'll say is, you know, this is a process about creating electoral boundaries that provide Albertans across the province with fair representation, and that is absolutely core to our democratic process. I think at a time when we only need to look south of the border and see the significant degradation of democratic norms, including an increasingly illiberal President

openly calling for partisan interference in electoral boundaries, it's a reminder of how important a fair and balanced process driven by data truly is.

I truly appreciate the work that you're doing, the questions that I hear you asking, and the opportunities we each have to present to ensure that we get the best outcome we can for folks here.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Shepherd.

Mr. Evans, questions?

**Mr. Evans:** No. I don't have any questions for you, but thank you for presenting.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for coming. Would it be safe to say that you like Edmonton-City Centre in the interim report?

**Mr. Shepherd:** Yeah. The boundaries have remained more or less similar. You know, you have chosen to make the adjustment of removing Westwood and adding in Prince Rupert and Blatchford. In terms of numbers: relatively equal. In terms of communities of interest: I think still very well connected.

**Mrs. Samson:** Great. Thank you.

**Dr. Martin:** That was basically my question. I take it, Mr. Shepherd, that you have been here to hear your colleagues speak to Edmonton on issues as well, so I won't press you on the same points. That would be tiresome. But really, the points that we have heard through much of this afternoon about Edmonton, I think, would apply to the Edmonton-City Centre situation as well. Yes, you probably need another seat. Do we have one? Probably no.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Fair.

**The Chair:** I was going to tell Mr. Eggen that if he was a betting man, I wouldn't bet on . . .

**Mr. Shepherd:** Okay. Yeah. You don't have a spare in the back pocket at the moment. I understand.

**The Chair:** No. But strangely – well, no. I won't.  
Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, and apologies for stepping out there for a second. If I missed this already, I apologize. The Spruce Avenue neighbourhood: there was a suggestion earlier today that perhaps that would fit a little better in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood from one of the first presenters of the day. How do you feel about that suggestion?

**Mr. Shepherd:** You know, I will echo my colleague from Edmonton-Glenora in not wanting to have to pick amongst my children. I would say I was at the Spruce Avenue junior high today and had a great conversation with the kids there. I really appreciate that community. They are active. While they are not quite the same as some of the more urban, they are very closely connected with areas like Queen Mary Park – right? – certainly Prince Rupert, others. So I think they have quite a bit in common with the communities that I have here. Yeah.

**Mr. Clark:** Do you feel you have the similar growth pressures as your colleague to the west and in Edmonton-Glenora?

**Mr. Shepherd:** Oh, absolutely. As I was saying, you know, I can't walk through Spruce Avenue or Queen Mary Park without coming across infill. Certainly, that's very actively growing there. I mentioned new condominium buildings, apartment buildings that

are going, redevelopment of previous apartment buildings. There was some slowing through COVID-19, but we are seeing that rapidly start to restart now. Certainly, I anticipate quite a bit of growth.

**Mr. Clark:** Just one last quick question. Is there a fair bit of kind of mid-rise density in those areas that you've talked about as compared to a little bit to the west?

**Mr. Shepherd:** I believe Wihkwentowin is the densest community in Edmonton. Certainly, we have quite a bit of those three- or four-storey walk-ups and, like I said, a number of those being redeveloped into larger properties. Yeah. There's a fair amount of that there. Westwood, which you are proposing to remove, also has a number of those sort of mid-size apartment buildings, as does Central McDougall.

**Mr. Clark:** That's very helpful. Thank you.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Shepherd, maybe I could use this as an opportunity. This isn't meant to be a cheeky question, but how far does it take you to get to your legislative office?

**Mr. Shepherd:** To my legislative office? You know, it's about 10 to 15 minutes depending on the weather and the traffic, but yes, it's a short drive.

**The Chair:** Just to illustrate the stresses that we are under. Last week someone from northern Alberta presented and said – this morning I had a presentation on effective representation, which is ultimately the goal of this commission. It's not numbers. It's not one person, one vote. It's not rep by pop like the Americans. We have a different approach, effective representation. One of the northern presenters said: there's a paradox in that because when you work to make a northern riding closer to the average, you increase its size, and that makes it less effective representation. So I hope you appreciate – I know you do because you have colleagues that drive in five hours to the Leg after every weekend, and you didn't advocate numbers that much. But that's the problem for us. It'll be very difficult to give an extra riding now to Edmonton.

3:40

**Mr. Shepherd:** I certainly recognize the challenges that are involved in that. When we're looking at geography and population distribution, the challenges that creates – I have colleagues like Sarah Elmeligi in Banff-Kananaskis. Talking with her about, you know – I mean, that's not as large as some of the northern, but certainly hearing the kilometres she puts in in her due diligence to visit all the communities she represents. Certainly, it's a piece to balance.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Part of the weaknesses or the limitations we have is that we only have two more ridings to deal with. You know, 87 to 89. Probably could have used six or seven more.

Anyways, thank you so much, Mr. Shepherd. Appreciate it.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Now we've got, I believe, a group of presenters, is it?

**Mrs. Doblanko:** It's just me.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mrs. Doblanko:** I think. Leduc county? Yeah.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Are you Michael Scheidl?

**Mrs. Doblanko:** I am not Michael. I'm Tanni Doblanko. I'm the mayor of Leduc county. Michael probably organized all that, so that's probably why his name is there.

**The Chair:** Okay. Sorry. Can you give us your name again?

**Mrs. Doblanko:** Absolutely. First name is Tanni, last name Doblanko. I am the mayor in Leduc county.

**The Chair:** Okay. Good. Thank you.

**Mrs. Doblanko:** Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak this afternoon. We're not here from Leduc county asking to add. We're asking for some tweaks on the boundaries.

**The Chair:** We're good at tweaks.

**Mrs. Doblanko:** I know. In fact, we've made the right work easy by giving you some options to look at because that's just how we think. Really, it's about: we currently have five ridings that touch or affect us in Leduc county, and we're just talking about how we can make some of those more effective for our residents. I really appreciate listening to some of the other presenters talk about community. Our changes aren't based on population; they're based on either social or economic community as we call it. With that, I'll get to taking a look at it.

The first change that we're going to look at is the one that's from the Strathcona-Sherwood Park riding. If you take a look in the bottom corner, you can see that, well, first off, this riding is very large, very rural, and it is looking to take a little piece, half of Beaumont, and a very small piece of Leduc county. That part of Leduc county actually is very densely populated, which is probably why it's been included, for numbers, but it actually breaks up a significant social and economic sort of area for us, which is our country residential area in the east end of our county. The farmland isn't quite as good there, so we've actually allowed that to be where a lot of our country residential growth happens. We think that that isn't going to work well for the residents in that area when you look at an MLA being spread out as far as he or she would be in that area.

The second one is then a change to the Camrose riding, which is the next page in your handout. This riding actually sits, if you can look really carefully . . .

**The Chair:** Sorry. Did you say handout?

**Mrs. Doblanko:** Oh, I'm sorry. Did you not get our handout?

**The Chair:** Okay. As soon as Aaron comes in, he'll get it up to us.

**Mrs. Doblanko:** Aaron. On a break. No worries.

If you can look really, really hard up at above the red line where it says Leduc county, right above that is that little piece that was going to go to Strathcona-Sherwood Park riding. Now this bigger piece is going to be attached to the Camrose riding.

Again, we're looking at a very large, mainly rural agricultural riding which will include New Sarepta, which is a growth hamlet for us. We are looking at that as sort of our small growth hamlet. But also, again, it is a community of country residential areas out there that really stay together. Most of the people there work, for the most part, in Leduc, Nisku, Leduc Business Park, or the airport. So the transportation corridors, all of those sorts of things are fitting

into that smaller Leduc subregion, and this really breaks up that social community.

I heard one of the earlier presenters talk about things like community halls. I think you all know how important a community hall or a community is. This is dividing it up by lines, and I think it would be less advantageous unless we looked at a couple of other options, which we actually have for you.

Moving on, what we would propose – again, we like to make the right work easy, so we’ve given you some options here. We’d like to see that we keep the Leduc-Beaumont riding the same. We believe that has been one of the most successful ridings and we work with the MLA there. We are looking at both the airport, Nisku Business Park, and all of those sorts of things which are really an industrial driver for the province, and having that economic generator with one MLA is absolutely, we believe, critical to the continued growth. Currently Leduc county is looking for some additional industrial growth on the west side of the airport that will tie in well with this sort of development that we’re looking at. That’s one of the options that we have for you.

Thank you, Aaron, for handing those out.

This next one involves actually two ridings: Wetaskiwin-Maskwacis-Ponoka and Stony Plain-Drayton Valley-Devon. I currently live in the Drayton Valley-Devon riding, farming out there with my husband until we run out of money, like every other farmer does, but happily doing it. A couple of changes on here. This one actually extends the Stony Plain riding a bit, but we also think it makes more sense. It keeps the types of activities, the types of economic development the same, and it keeps that rural focus. Adding in Stony Plain would help with the population as well. That’s that option.

**Mr. Clark:** Sorry. Can you just explain the different colours?

**Mrs. Doblanko:** Our option?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah.

**Mrs. Doblanko:** Our option on the handout, and it’s kind of hard to read, expands the Stony Plain riding all the way out to highway 814. Again, that provides a little bit more population while maintaining that notion of like-minded community, like-minded people, like-minded activities. It also kind of reflects how people move in that area and how they interact with each other. Again, our best idea.

Yep?

**Dr. Martin:** Sorry to interrupt. You’re speaking north of the big river, and that will be the Genesee Bridge?

**Mrs. Doblanko:** Right now I’m speaking 814, which goes east.

Michael? Correct? Correct. Right.

It already goes across the river into Parkland county. That’s not an issue. That’s been there for a while. I think it mimics the federal one, which goes across the river as well. This is about expanding it a little bit farther east than what it was. Or, you know, you could shift a little bit around Calmar. Again, that’s in one of our pictures.

The final piece is around the Wetaskiwin-Maskwacis-Ponoka. It deals with Pigeon Lake. Pigeon Lake is a very, very unique community and, we believe, would be better served with one MLA. The number of summer villages, the number of property owners that are both in Wetaskiwin county and Leduc county: I think there’s a likeness there that’s better captured with one MLA as opposed to the proposal, which was to divide the lake up a bit.

That was really four and a half minutes because I’m trying to keep under six.

Again, we realize that the commission was going to want to know: what do we want to do about it, right? Here are some issues and so these are some options we have for you. Really, you know, first and foremost, keeping our Leduc-Beaumont riding the same and not dividing up the area around Beaumont is critical, absolutely critical. Again, I understand the need for population, but I heard you say so eloquently before that it’s not just about population. Beaumont’s not a big enough city to be divided up with two MLAs. It’s a small, growing city, but it’s more like Leduc and that area than it is that larger Strathcona or Camrose area.

With that, I’m all out of – I should have taken a water during the nonbreak, but I’m done.

3:50

**The Chair:** Okay. Now you’re going to get grilled.

**Mrs. Doblanko:** I will just defer to Michael.

**Mr. Evans:** I really appreciate the options. That’s very helpful. I can’t find Pigeon Lake. I’ve driven through it.

**Dr. Martin:** No, you haven’t.

**Mr. Evans:** Well, not the lake.

**Mrs. Doblanko:** It’s right at the bottom.

**Mr. Evans:** It’s the one that’s Sundance Beach.

**Mrs. Doblanko:** Yes. That is Pigeon Lake.

**Mrs. Samson:** Yeah. It’s just half of it. That’s why it looks weird.

**Mrs. Doblanko:** Yeah. We only get half of the lake.

Again, the options just provide some food for thought for the commission. I know it’s hard to think about how to redraw a line if you don’t live it.

**The Chair:** For not being a large metropolitan area, you have a busy area.

**Mrs. Doblanko:** We are extremely busy in Leduc county, and that doesn’t, you know, take in Genesee and all of those sorts of areas and things that are happening out there. We are proud of what we do.

**Mrs. Samson:** Just to be clear, because the maps are numerous, the priority is that the city of Leduc and the city of Beaumont reside together entirely inside your county.

**Mrs. Doblanko:** Inside the current Leduc-Beaumont riding. That’s currently the riding, and we believe that will not only allow us to grow commercially and industrially, but it really holds the social fabric together for that subregion.

**Mrs. Samson:** Good. Then, you know, the other tweaks: I will tell you that we will look at them in detail and do what’s appropriate. But that Beaumont thing: we got a lot of push-back. It’s a hot spot.

**Mrs. Doblanko:** Again, sometimes we’re using a solution for one problem instead of looking at the whole problem. Hopefully that gives you some food for thought. We did run the numbers from the last statistics, and they seem to be plus or minus 25. We’ve done that work, too. Okay; I didn’t do that work.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you so much. I appreciate it. Take the credit.

**The Chair:** Okay. Julian?

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

I want to tell you that our numbers' modelling suggests that if we bring the entirety of Beaumont back into the fold plus give you back Rolly View and the Looma piece, you're at 75,000.

**Mrs. Doblanko:** Huh.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. So there's our problem.

**Mr. Evans:** Are you okay at 68,000 or 65,000?

**Mrs. Doblanko:** Which people are we throwing out?

**Dr. Martin:** Well, there you go. Welcome to our world.

**Mrs. Doblanko:** Thank you for that. I wasn't aware of that. That's very interesting because that area is the absolute – you know, I hear growth pressures from urban: both Leduc and Beaumont are facing 20 per cent or 30 per cent. Whatever they're facing for growth is ridiculous, plus Leduc county itself has a small urban growth area that is exploding as well.

Thank you for that, Dr. Martin. I guess that's the good and the bad of growth.

**Mr. Evans:** Where's the exploding growth portion of Leduc county?

**Mrs. Doblanko:** Do you know where the Nisku Business Park is? Okay. If you take a look at Beaumont on one of the maps and you come a little bit west, there's a small area between Beaumont and Nisku Business Park that is being developed at an urban standard by Leduc county. It's called the vistas. I don't know what we're going to call it when it actually finishes. Yes. We do have an urban growth node there, and it is growing very rapidly.

**Dr. Martin:** I happen to have been there three weeks ago.

**Mrs. Doblanko:** Oh, really?

**Dr. Martin:** I was lost. I turned into it and said: wow, look at the houses. So I can attest to this.

Again you compound the dilemma, don't you?

**Mrs. Doblanko:** It's about growth, right? Growth is good and bad. I think that we all agree with that. But knowing those numbers is a little bit more sobering for me. Let me, you know, echo what I heard some of the other speakers saying: I'm glad I'm not on that side of the bench.

**The Chair:** You know why we carved Beaumont out.

**Mrs. Doblanko:** Yeah. It makes sense now.

**The Chair:** Was it 50th Street . . .

**Mrs. Doblanko:** Yeah; 50th Street goes right down the middle. But, again, Beaumont is such a small city to divide.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Okay.

**Mr. Clark:** That's actually really what I wanted to dive into. Your current boundaries do not include the areas immediately east of Beaumont: Rolly View, et cetera.

**Mrs. Doblanko:** Those are in Maskwacis. Yeah.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah; exactly, right? So if you're saying, "What we'd really like is just to keep it the way it is now," which is Leduc and

Beaumont together, now, that still leaves us other problems that we sort of have to sort out.

**Mrs. Doblanko:** Yes.

**Mr. Clark:** So right now, according to our Office of Statistics and Information, Leduc-Beaumont is about 65,460 on the average of 54,929, which puts you about 19 per cent over but still within the range.

**The Chair:** That's with all of Beaumont.

**Mr. Clark:** It's with all of Beaumont.

**Mrs. Doblanko:** All of Beaumont. Right.

**Mr. Clark:** Today's 2017 boundaries, which is all of Beaumont and Leduc together, essentially it's just the two urban areas of Leduc and Beaumont and not much else and everything in between.

**Mrs. Doblanko:** Yes. Which is pretty small.

**Mr. Clark:** I guess, really, the question – because often folks are coming to us saying: "Please, please, please. We have too many people in this constituency. You need to make it smaller." But what you're saying is: actually, we're willing to take that in exchange for having Leduc and Beaumont together.

**Mrs. Doblanko:** Right.

**Mr. Clark:** Then some of the other – okay.

**Mrs. Doblanko:** Right. Again, you know, well said. Right now those country residential areas, the New Sareptas, those are currently in with Maskwacis, and that works really well. Minister Wilson understands that area, works really well out there. Again, it keeps a community that's alike together. That country residential has very, very distinct needs from the rest of our county. There's no doubt about it.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. Then the other portion that you mentioned, to move Pigeon Lake into Maskwacis.

**Mrs. Doblanko:** Yeah.

**Mr. Clark:** You've got a line here that runs east-west on your map. I guess what I wonder is – sort of south of Cavanagh, south of Thorsby, which would take it out of Stony Plain-Drayton Valley-Devon and put it into Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin, what line have you chosen?

**Mrs. Doblanko:** Well, I think a couple of things. When you look at that area, Cavanagh down to, like, the Leduc border, that's generally very sparsely populated farmland. I guess my comment is that whether it goes with Stony Plain-Drayton Valley-Devon or it goes with Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin doesn't really matter because those are very alike, right?

**Mr. Clark:** Got it.

**Mrs. Doblanko:** The small population in there isn't going to make a difference for population, but it might help you guys with how you draw your lines.

**Mr. Clark:** This is a fabulous map. It would be really great if we could have maps just of your suggestion, without the others. Is that possible?

**Mrs. Doblanko:** My guy says yes.

**Mr. Clark:** I think that would really help. And that's probably just my shortcoming; I'm having a difficult time visualizing what's what.

**Mrs. Doblanko:** Yeah. They are hard to read. I agree.

**Mr. Clark:** No. The work you put into this – and lots of folks come to us with problems and not many solutions, so we really appreciate proposed solutions, especially from folks who are elected representatives in their communities. It helps a lot. Thank you.

**Mrs. Doblanko:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Could we have a Case IH tractor instead on the front, too?

**Mrs. Doblanko:** No. I would have been fired if it hadn't been a John Deere.

**The Chair:** Oh, okay.

**Mrs. Doblanko:** Not that I'm a John Deere girl, but it is the tractor of Leduc county.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** The next presenter, Jason Deol.

Okay. Introduce yourself, please, and tell us what riding you live in and what electoral district you want to talk about.

4:00

**Mr. Jason Deol:** Sure. Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. My name is Jason Deol. I've been a lifelong resident of the Mill Woods area, but specifically I want to talk a little bit today about the south of Edmonton and a little bit about Edmonton in general. Yeah. Thanks to the commission, you know, for all the work that's already gone into this, into the report, all these public hearings. I'm sure there are a lot of different types of opinions about challenges, balancing, all of that.

I just wanted to speak to, I guess, some of the kind of concerns specifically in my community. I live in Crawford Plains. It will now be under the proposed boundaries in the new Edmonton-South East riding.

**The Chair:** Sorry. Could you describe your district again?

**Mr. Jason Deol:** Yeah. I live specifically in the Crawford Plains community.

**The Chair:** Crawford Plains. Okay.

**Mr. Jason Deol:** Yeah. Just north of Anthony Henday and east of 50th Street, just that kind of northern little cut-out in the new Edmonton-South East.

Under the current boundaries I live in the Edmonton-Ellerslie riding. When I'm kind of thinking, I guess, of effective representation and about community, I don't actually feel like either of these boundaries, you know, were effective representation or represented where I live in my communities. I was happy to see a new riding get added in the south. I think that was absolutely necessary. Like, with

the population, the continued development moving south, it was absolutely necessary.

My own community and specifically the communities north of Anthony Henday between 50th Street and 34th Street – Crawford Plains, Pollard Meadows, Daly Grove – are, you know, much more mature and older neighbourhoods that really feel like a part of Mill Woods as compared to everything that is south of Anthony Henday. Even within the current boundaries, being in Edmonton-Ellerslie, I think it feels like quite a disconnect from all of the communities kind of north of that. If you asked anybody around that area where they live, like, nobody would identify with Ellerslie, I think, in terms of the naming identity and then even in terms of how you commute, where you work, where you shop, and, more specifically, maybe where you're going to school or where your kids go to school.

I think there's a bit of a divide between maybe some of the concerns and challenges that people will care about in these communities, specifically just when it comes to kind of the identity, right? Like, everything north is, you know, built in the '70s. It's kind of part of that old Mill Woods, versus everything south of that is where we're seeing most of the development. I know there are a lot of challenges, especially when it comes to population, in terms of how you kind of make that work, but under both of these boundaries it feels like my community has just been a little kind of add-on to balance out the population.

Like, as I mentioned, in the current boundaries when it comes to Edmonton-Ellerslie, it just does not feel like it actually represents those areas of Crawford, Daly Grove, and Pollard Meadows. You know, when it comes to challenges that people are facing in these newer areas, something we typically see is infrastructure, like access to schools. That's always been a concern for people when we're seeing newer areas get developed. It feels like a lot of that infrastructure is lagging behind versus – in areas north of the Henday, this is not really a concern, right? They've been built out for many years, and these are not the issues that people are concerned about there. I feel like this ends up alienating people a little bit from their riding, from their representatives, potentially hurting things like voter turnout and engagement because people are not going to feel as connected or represented by their riding.

When you're looking a little west, in terms of that cut-off, like I mentioned, north and south of Henday between Edmonton-Ellerslie and Edmonton-South, Gateway Boulevard and Calgary Trail are kind of used as the boundary, which I think visually makes sense, even the physical distance between those communities makes sense, but I think the communities east and west of Gateway are actually much closer in identity in terms of the age of these communities, in terms of what they look like compared to those that are north and south. Again, I know that the main challenge here is balancing population ...

**The Chair:** Just let me stop – I want to finish this conversation here. As long as you're both on the same page.

**Mrs. Samson:** Mm-hmm.

**The Chair:** Okay. Sorry. Continue.

**Mr. Jason Deol:** Yep. No worries.

Yeah. When it comes to the communities that are east and west of Gateway Boulevard, I think those are actually much closer in identity – you know, we're thinking about the idea of representation in a community – as compared to those that are north and south. Even the Edmonton-Ellerslie boundaries also include some of those neighbourhoods just north of Anthony Henday as well.



I think some of these challenges are also quite difficult because of the northern boundaries of these ridings. Like, Edmonton-Mill Woods being cut off at Whitemud makes a lot of sense. I think that's exactly where it should be. And then when it comes to Edmonton-Meadows, it's kind of stuck in that northeast corner and you can't really do much besides cut it out where the population kind of works. So I understand some of the challenges that come with how we're dividing up the southeast, but I just don't feel like these areas that are kind of getting tacked on feel like they're being represented or are of the same identity as everything that is south of that. It feels quite distinct and different. Crossing south of Anthony Henday is, like, very distinctly moving into what you would consider Ellerslie and into those newer communities.

When it comes to the naming of some of these ridings as well, I think it's kind of the same issue with some of that identity. Like, at the moment now we have Edmonton-South West, Edmonton-South, Edmonton-South East. We're kind of hitting all the directions of the compass but, you know, not really representing some of those communities. When it comes to areas like Edmonton-South West, I think there could be names that make sense, like Edmonton-Windermere, for example. I think that area of the city is identified as Windermere by people throughout the city. Edmonton-South: maybe something like Edmonton-Heritage Valley.

But when I look at the southeast, it kind of comes back to the same issue. I don't even know what I would call it. The areas that are north of Henday: if you kind of use those names, I don't feel like that would represent all the development in your areas that are moving further and further south and even a little to the east, including that little cut-out of Laurel that's included in there as well. Who knows what that could become in the future. That could become kind of its own Windermere. In terms of where it's located geographically, it's very similar to when Windermere started to develop. You know, today I think that's what that area of the city is known as, versus right now we don't really know what the southeast is going to be.

When it comes to kind of concerns with growth and development, I think that also applies to the rest of the city as well. You know, development is going to keep continuing further and further south. We're seeing the roadways get developed more and more. That 41st Ave is going to be completely built out; 17th Street is going to get built out further south. And I think we can expect development to continue and population to continue to grow in those areas as well.

I also have a bit of concern where the way the boundaries are drawn up now – oh, sorry.

**The Chair:** No. Just wrap it up.

**Mr. Jason Deol:** Okay. Yeah. Just wrap it up.

Just the concern that by the time this comes into effect, maybe it's already going to feel like it's lagging behind. These areas have continued to grow, especially when it is south of Edmonton, and even the mature areas. Like I'm sure many people have mentioned, the city is really pushing a lot of infill and redevelopment, so it seems like this population growth is only going to continue, and by the time this is implemented, it's already going to feel like we need to update it again at that point.

**The Chair:** Okay. You've made several points. Do you have a proposed map that articulates what you are suggesting?

**Mr. Jason Deol:** Unfortunately, I don't have a direct suggestion in terms of what the change would be. As I mentioned, the difficulty really is that because of the kind of northern and eastern boundaries that are very defined, I know it becomes a challenge of what the

populations look like. If you took the few neighbourhoods that are in Edmonton-Ellerslie and in the new Edmonton-South East that are just north of Henday, I don't think the population is enough there to make it its own riding. I guess my concern is that it really does feel like a very distinct difference, you know, things that are north and south of Anthony Henday. When it comes to the idea of effective representation and kind of thinking of that, I feel like that's missing for those communities.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Any questions, starting with Mr. Clark?

**Mr. Clark:** Hoo boy. Yeah.

It's a big challenge. This is very, very helpful, though. Where possible we've tried to respect community league boundaries, but I'm realizing here that we cut Laurel in half, and I do hear you on the Henday. I'll look again. In the last round we had many different iterations. I just recall that the southeast corner of Edmonton is about 220,000 population, divides neatly into four. What I'm hearing is that we may not have drawn the boundaries quite right. So 220,000 divided by four is 55,000. That's pretty much right what we're looking for, but what I'm hearing is: try to maybe restructure things a little bit and, to the degree possible, north and south of Henday is an important barrier.

4:10

**Mr. Jason Deol:** Yeah. I think it's a very distinct barrier and one that – like, I've grown up in this area my entire life. I feel like if you ask anybody through any of these ridings, that really is the distinct kind of line. To the west, like, 91 and the north Whitemud and the east Henday are very defined. I think that kind of box is how people identify this area of the city.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. Thank you.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you. Your primary critique, as it were, is that we have not respected communities of interest as much as you would wish for, which is a fair comment. I draw your attention to my estimate of the population in this current interim map for Edmonton-South West. My estimate of the population north of the Henday is 20,000.

**Mr. Jason Deol:** You mean just in the southeast?

**Dr. Martin:** North of the Henday.

The rest of it is along 50th Street south of the Henday. There are two large blocks of residential populations. Ellerslie is starting to develop from east to west as a main street. It's not entirely there yet. Of course, we've got the big freeway blocking it to some extent. Nonetheless, there's a huge amount of growth south of the Henday. Admittedly, it may not feel like the same communities that are much more long established north of the Henday, but the population growth in the Mill Woods region has been very, very large.

We've heard from the constituency manager of Edmonton-Meadows this morning about the difficulties of what – we played the thought experiment. You're at 53,000. If you wanted to have more, which would it be? Would you want the northern bit to put those communities back together, or do you want the southern bit to put those communities back together? He wasn't sure which way to go, nor are we. You know, this whole area is very difficult to connect together coherently.

**The Chair:** Because it's so new.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation. Lots of information there. I have no questions. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah.

You know, I was really interested in looking at Edmonton-Ellerslie, which has a population, at least in our numbers, of 82,000 and change, and comparing it to the proposed Edmonton-South East, which brings it down to 52,000, 53,000. I was specifically drawn to Crawford Plains in that we've actually added all of Crawford Plains into the proposed. The fact that you live in Crawford Plains and now we've included all Crawford Plains into this: I would have thought you'd have been ecstatic. Then we took out half of Laurel, and nobody likes Laurel anyways, right? We took out half of Laurel. That I could understand if you said: hey, my best friend is in Laurel; now you've taken him or her out. But you didn't mention that. All we've done is take out Ellerslie, Summerside, and The Orchards to move some of that population out. The rest is exactly the same. If it was connected before, would it be connected now?

**Mr. Jason Deol:** Well, as I mentioned, even with the current boundaries I think it just went along Mill Woods Road. It kind of cut that little north section almost in half, the previous boundaries. I also feel like that was not the best representation. Like, it was kind of the same issue of that north-south divide of the identity of Ellerslie versus the identity of these more Mill Woods areas. I actually had kind of the same concern or same issue with that.

Now when we're seeing a new proposal of boundaries, this kind of southeast area – as you mentioned, we're seeing development across Ellerslie Road. As 17th Street gets built a little more as well, I think we're going to see continued development, you know, on that southeast side as well, like, just below where Edmonton-Meadows is. Those areas all feel very different in identity, in the challenges they're going to have, and specifically just the age of those communities compared to everything in the north. I think I would have had the same concerns with the previous boundaries as well, but I couldn't do too much about that.

**Mr. Evans:** That makes sense now.

**Mr. Jason Deol:** Yeah.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. I understand.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Jason Deol:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Just for everyone's benefit, we are technically supposed to be concluding our afternoon session now at 4:20, and we have to come back in an hour and 10 minutes for the evening session, and we have four more presenters. So I'm going to restrict the questions. The questions are getting way too prolonged, so it's not the presenter's fault. We like to hear the sound of our own voice.

Nicholas Rheubottom.

It's going to be one question per side. Flip a coin.

Sorry. Please identify yourself and tell us what electoral district you are from and which one you want to comment on.

**Mr. Rheubottom:** For sure. My name is Nicholas Rheubottom. I'm an affordable housing consultant and the former executive director of Infill Development in Edmonton Association, so I have a housing background. I live in Edmonton-Strathcona riding. My main commentary today is going to be talking about the central ridings

in the city, the six that are being proposed to be consolidated into five, as well as just the idea of hybridized ridings, the urban versus rural and the sort of effects that can have on the representation that we see in our ridings.

Thank you so much to the commission for the opportunity to speak today. I speak today as a consultant actively working in the space of housing and the former executive director of IDEA, Infill Development in Edmonton Association. My work has involved supporting affordable housing, redevelopment, and neighbourhood-scale initiatives across a wide range of communities.

My intention today is to not oppose fair redistribution. I know you have a very difficult job ahead of you. It's just to demonstrate that assessing population growth without considering growth modality can lead to premature consolidation in Edmonton's urban centre and increase reliance on hybrid ridings, both of which weaken effective representation over time. That's a piece that I would like to talk about.

Population growth in Edmonton's mature neighbourhoods is increasing, not decreasing. While that growth occurs at a slower rate, it is sustained, infill-driven, and produces stable communities with shared functional needs. Reading slower growth as stagnation or as evidence that these areas are being hollowed out may misinterpret what is actually happening. Growth in mature neighbourhoods occurs through redevelopment, gentle density, and reinvestment. It accumulates over time rather than appearing all at once. That distinction between how fast growth occurs and how growth occurs is central to understanding where representation pressure will emerge over the next boundary cycle of eight years.

To ground this I'll offer a brief example from my professional work. I was recently requested to provide an early-stage consult on a feasibility-level housing project located in one of Edmonton's urban centre ridings. It is a medium-scale redevelopment project that sits entirely within an existing mature neighbourhood, the Strathcona area of the city. What stands out is not the scale of the project – it wouldn't move the dial very much population-wise in and of itself – but the nature of the work required. Even at this early stage, it involves zoning considerations, alignment with city plan objectives, engagement with the surrounding community, and anticipating future public funding pathways. Basically, the community needs to support those projects.

This is how population growth occurs in mature neighbourhoods. It is incremental, policy driven, and front loaded in terms of predictability, coordination, and effort. From a year-to-year population perspective a single project like this doesn't move the dial much, but taken together these projects reflect a broader pattern, the normalization of sustained growth that introduces residents who are likely to remain in these neighbourhoods for years to come. That sustained growth gradually expands the local property tax base and supports collective neighbourhood needs such as infrastructure renewal, transit, and local services.

That relationship is most effective when the neighbourhoods within a riding share similar functional needs and are at compatible stages in their life cycle. When that alignment exists, an elected representative can advocate consistently for reinvestment priorities that benefit the riding as a whole. When it doesn't, those same gains become harder to translate into outcomes that feel equitable or responsible across the riding. This is why the composition of a riding matters as much as the population. I would call it a kind of modality in addition to growth as a consideration. When representation in the urban centre is consolidated too early, population pressure does not disappear; it's just displaced.

4:20

The result is twofold. First, core ridings composed of mature neighbourhoods will reflect meaningful population increases long before the next redistribution cycle, leaving urban residents structurally underrepresented. At the same time those areas are absorbing more people and more policy complexity. Second, hybrid boundary solutions become a release valve of sorts, whether between rural and urban communities or within cities where the neighbourhoods might have competing interests. Competing functional needs are being combined, so more of an implicit representation of hybridization. These configurations make it harder for a representative to advocate coherently and consistently over time.

Hybrid ridings may appear efficient on paper, but in practice they combine communities that require different policy priorities, different investment sequencing, and different forms of representation. This matters because growth in Edmonton's mature neighbourhoods is not accidental. City policy explicitly supports infill and reinvestment as a core growth strategy. That direction is being operationalized through zoning reform, redevelopment, and sustained public and private investment in the urban centre. Provincial tools, such as the community revitalization levy, reflect long-term confidence from the province in that approach. Representation should be aligned with where it is occurring and how it is occurring, not solely with where it has already appeared in headline population counts.

I know this is something that you know, and that's why this is not so much a criticism or a specific thing that I think you should do in a specific place. I just felt it was very important that I come and say: please make sure that you're considering representation as part of population growth. I'm really inspired and happy to hear that this seems to be something that's front of mind for you.

In closing, population growth in Edmonton's mature neighbourhoods is increasing, not decreasing. That growth is sustained, infill-driven, and produces stable communities with shared functional needs. Interpreting this pattern as decline has led to proposed consolidation in the urban centre that does not necessarily align with how growth is actually occurring.

My first recommendation, to give some recommendations, would be that representation in Edmonton's urban centre should be maintained in a manner that reflects both the direction and the modality of growth specifically by retaining the existing six urban centre ridings rather than consolidating them into five.

My second observation is more of an observation. It concerns the broader system effect. When hybrid boundary solutions are used to manage population pressures, unintended consequences could occur, whether through the creation of explicit rural-urban hybrid ridings or implicit hybrid ridings where mature neighbourhoods are combined with maybe more suburban-prioritized areas as well competing functionally with – sorry. Let me start that again. Implicit hybrids where mature neighbourhoods and suburban areas have competing functionality within a single riding, making effective representation more difficult to sustain over time.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this perspective, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Rheubottom.

This side, any questions? One question.

**Mr. Clark:** I'll just ask this: how new is the infill? You know, these policies, I guess: have they started to bear fruit already, or is this sort of a point forward?

**Mr. Rheubottom:** I think so. Like, the idea as an organization when they started doing info advocacy: that was about 14 years ago, and they already were as a grassroots group before that. The new zoning bylaw has now been around for coming up on two years. The impact that the new zoning bylaw has had is major redevelopment. I'm sure a lot of you have followed the news from last year in the summer. There was a lot of discussion over row housing and increase in density, some people being very supportive of it, some people being less supportive of it. But the point of the matter is the densification is happening. We're seeing it happening in row housing. We're seeing it happen at mid-level density. We're seeing it happen in our downtown core.

I live in Strathcona. I see density everywhere. I see infill everywhere. We constantly have projects that are popping up. The downtown area: I used to live there before. Mr. Shepherd mentioned Wihkwentwin. You're definitely seeing a lot there. Glenora: it's the same thing. West end Edmonton development is majorly shifting.

Proof that the policy is still behind would be in our development of the district plans as a regulatory mechanism to manage development in Edmonton. By the time they got the zoning dealt with and got to the district plan level, they realized that their population modelling was way off base. It was way under.

I can't speak to riding populations. My area of expertise when I used to work for IDEA was very much focused on looking at it from that municipal perspective, but we were so far behind where we thought we would be that by the time we actually were debating the policy, the policy was already redundant. So what I guess I'm saying to you is that I'm not trying to challenge your prescription of any specific riding. I know it's a really hard balance between population growth versus population modality.

The biggest concern, the thing that really flagged me and kind of prompted me to speak was actually the consolidation of the six ridings to the five. The big piece behind that is that I wanted to make sure that the core ridings really represented the shift, the municipal shift, in growth priorities for our city. I feel there's so much emphasis on the downtown core that there needs to be that electoral representation happening, and the partnerships that we need to foster between the province to actually get these changes happening needs that representation to be in the downtown centre. So that was a big piece for me.

**The Chair:** Okay. Any questions from this side?

**Mrs. Samson:** I'm good.

**Mr. Evans:** No. Thank you for your presentation.

**The Chair:** If we get it wrong, you will be one of the most empathetic individuals out there for us, right?

**Mr. Rheubottom:** Well, I ran for municipal office last election cycle, and definitely from just the door-knocking and the experience of engaging with residents, I know how difficult it is to please everyone. It's not possible. All I hope, and it seems like it's being demonstrated just in the way that you're engaging with the speakers today, is that there's a lot of mindful consideration and that it's not just about the numbers. That seems to be the case, so I really appreciate the work that you're doing there.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much.

Our next presenter on the list is Rahin Deol. No? Okay.  
Tania Kajner.

**Dr. Kajner:** Thank you. Good afternoon.

**The Chair:** Good afternoon. Just tell us what electoral division you are in and which ones you want to comment on.

**Dr. Kajner:** Sure. My name is Tania Kajner. I live in the Ritchie community, currently Edmonton-Strathcona riding, and I want to speak about the proposal to consolidate six ridings in the Edmonton urban core as well as the boundaries of Edmonton-Strathcona.

I'm speaking today as a citizen because I want to ensure that Alberta's new electoral boundaries provide fair and effective representation for my city and my community. Like many others I want to start with some thanks because I can only appreciate how complex it has been for you to date and will continue to be. So thank you for taking up this complicated task of recommending changes to Alberta's electoral boundaries.

Given the growth in Edmonton and city residents' distinct needs, challenges, and demographics that differ from those of neighbouring municipalities, I really appreciate your recommendation to add a new electoral division in Edmonton. I am, however, concerned about the proposal to consolidate six electoral divisions in the urban centre into five.

4:30

The commission's interim report states the population growth in these areas has been lower than the rest of the city, and that population numbers in these areas are below the provincial average. You know, this feels contradictory to what I see happening in my community and other communities in Edmonton's urban core, and it doesn't appear to incorporate the impacts that Edmonton's focus on urban densification and their growth plan aims will have.

I've witnessed incredible growth and densification in my community. Single-family homes are replaced with duplexes, skinny homes, both of which have legal basement suites to help with mortgage. Sometimes single-family homes are being replaced with a four-, six-, or even an eight-plex in my community. I see the growth of garden suites and garage suites, which is a trend that I think will probably continue. As a result, the same lot that used to host and house an older couple is now housing upwards of eight to 16 people. Many of the 1950s homes, you know, on my street for example, have legal basement suites, and I see population density increasing in these rentals as well. In the past, many of these spaces were rented by one or two university students. Today, I see families of four occupying the same space, many looking for safe and low-cost housing that is centrally located because of its proximity to transportation and other services.

As I think you heard from the last speaker, much of this growth is linked to zoning bylaw changes that are meant to encourage densification in Edmonton. In 2024 Edmonton made bylaw changes that support higher density in mature neighbourhoods. The city plans to accommodate a full 50 per cent of new residential growth through infill with existing areas, and it's off to a strong start in meeting this target.

The implications of these fairly recent zoning bylaw changes, I think, are just beginning to be felt and visible in my neighbourhood, and I do believe they will be amplified as the developments approved in 2024-2025 become finished and available for rent and purchase. I think the impact will be significant population growth in the urban core neighbourhoods. I really feel like this growth needs to be recognized partly because density in urban core ridings creates unique challenges, and it's really critical that residents in Ritchie and in other communities in Edmonton's core have fair representation to address these challenges.

Density brings a kind of, I think the last speaker called it, policy complexity, and certainly there are a lot of issues that arise with density that folks need representation to address. I think collapsing

six ridings in the core into five works against, you know, the principle of fair representation because of these complex issues and because the resulting impacts would in part lead to ridings such as Edmonton-Glenora-Riverview, which is 12.3 per cent over the provincial average.

In addition to concern about collapsing six of those urban core ridings into five, I wanted to speak more specifically about the Edmonton-Strathcona riding's proposed boundaries. I feel like these boundaries don't align with the geographical boundaries and that they divide up the community of Ritchie.

As a resident in Ritchie living west of Mill Creek ravine, I rarely travel east for work, recreation, health services, or entertainment. Like many of my neighbours I'm more closely connected to the university, medical centres, restaurants, and services that are west of the ravine. The Ritchie community hall sits in this little patch that has been carved off and separated from other Ritchie residents who are on the west side of 99th Street. This is a gathering place where Ritchie residents come together to talk about issues, and to have us then joining as constituents who will have different representatives is problematic. My suggestion for this is to consider the community of interest for Ritchie residents and align with the natural geographical boundary, in particular, to follow Mill Creek ravine from 82nd Ave to 63rd Ave. There's a little patch there that has been, kind of, carved off that I believe divides Ritchie in two, using 99th Street as the current boundary.

To conclude, I think the consolidation of six urban core electoral divisions into five might raise some equity concerns and certainly might not provide an opportunity for residents there to have fair representation given the complexity of the issues that they face. I also believe that the commission could tweak the Edmonton-Strathcona proposed boundary in order to ensure that the community of Ritchie is not divided.

**The Chair:** Just so I'm clear: take away 99th Street as the eastern boundary and move it over to Mill Creek?

**Dr. Kajner:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much. I note in passing, and you can see it on the map as well, that the population figures for City Centre, Highlands, Gold Bar, and Strathcona are all below the provincial mean. That will accommodate some growth, to be sure. Even at 15 per cent growth, Edmonton-Strathcona would be 63,000-ish, let's say, but I just note this in passing.

I wanted to focus on the Ritchie, Hazeldean, Argyll piece. If we use Mill Creek as a boundary, which is plausible enough, that's 9,000 persons. Where are we going to put it? We're going to put it into Strathcona, ostensibly, which makes Edmonton-Strathcona 61,000, and Edmonton-Gold Bar becomes the smallest population in the city. We struggle. It's a rough and ready balance, I think. It left us with a very difficult decision about what to do with those three communities: Ritchie, Hazeldean, and Argyll. That's why we ended up as we did. Are you proposing that we just take Ritchie and leave Hazeldean and Argyll? They have less connectivity by roadway across Mill Creek than Ritchie does.

**Dr. Kajner:** Well, you know, my real concern is about Ritchie being divided. My proposal to follow the geographical natural boundary of Mill Creek ravine was really because when I get together with fellow residents, many of them are coming from west of 99th Street, that part of Ritchie. We gather east of 99th Street, in that part of Ritchie. I'm imagining to myself the kinds of difficulties when we're then as a community trying to propose that some of our

issues and concerns be brought forward to our elected officials, and we've got two rather than one. I haven't seen the numbers. I haven't seen the data, the methodologies. I unfortunately think that's your difficult task, but I really would appreciate you considering that folks in Ritchie really are a shared community of interest as well.

**Dr. Martin:** I will say that according to the planning folk at the city west Ritchie belongs to Strathcona, not to Ritchie. I used to live in Ritchie and it was annoying that they said that, but 99th Street from the city's point of view is a boundary.

**Dr. Kajner:** Well, they should tell it to the community hall because we're about to order a new sign.

**Dr. Martin:** I know. I understand. The rest of Ritchie is deemed to be part of the Strathcona community league's turf.

**Mr. Evans:** You're in ward 8. Is that right?

**Dr. Kajner:** Yeah. I live in that little patch of Ritchie that's just south of 82nd Ave and east of – are you asking about my city ward?

**Mr. Evans:** Yes.

**Dr. Kajner:** Yeah. Michael Janz is my councillor.

**Mr. Evans:** You're suggesting that the boundaries that we should be changing to are basically to fit within your city ward 8 boundary?

**Dr. Kajner:** Yeah. I was suggesting really following that ravine in part because of the way people in my community live and where we work and where we go for services and the things that we discuss and are concerned about. I mean, we're quite connected to that kind of university, Whyte Ave sort of area, and many of us don't go east of the ravine for health services or for other services, so I'm proposing following that ravine as a kind of natural divider.

4:40

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, ma'am, for your stick-to-itiveness in staying here all afternoon.

Our next presenter, I believe our last for the day, is Maureen Towns – not for the day, for the afternoon.

Good afternoon. Please identify the electoral district you're from and which you want to comment on.

**Ms Towns:** I guess I just want to start my timer, so I – you've got one, I'm sure. Good afternoon. My name is Maureen Towns, and I live in the Strathcona-Sherwood Park riding. I would like to thank the members of the commission for undertaking this difficult work and appreciate that Strathcona county, including Sherwood Park, has been ...

**The Chair:** Sorry. Could you identify your riding again?

**Ms Towns:** Strathcona-Sherwood Park. I have a feeling I left out the Sherwood Park before.

**The Chair:** No, you didn't. It's my misunderstanding.

**Ms Towns:** Okay.

**The Chair:** There are too many Strathconas in Edmonton.

**Ms Towns:** There are. Well, and we're not in Edmonton.

**The Chair:** Edmonton expropriated your name, I know.

**Ms Towns:** Well, way too many Scots here anyway.

I appreciate for the most part that Sherwood Park and Strathcona county have been recognized as a cohesive municipal entity and have not been included in Edmonton ridings, which certainly has happened in – I don't know in the past provincially, but federally it has been.

I'm a retired lawyer, and I was a school trustee and the board chair of Elk Island public schools from 2001 to 2004. I've lived in Sherwood Park for over 40 years. Since 1989 I've lived in the Heritage Hills area, which is east of Clover Bar Road and west of highway 21, south of Baseline Road and north of Wye Road. In 1989 we were considered to be the far northeast of Sherwood Park, and now we're kind of not quite in the middle, but we're no longer the far northeast.

There are three significant changes proposed for the Strathcona-Sherwood Park riding, and they are that the Heritage Hills neighbourhood, in which I live, would be removed from the riding and added to Sherwood Park; an area south of Wye Road and west of range road 231, or Clover Bar Road when it's in Sherwood Park, would be removed from the riding and added to Sherwood Park; and part of the city of Beaumont and part of Leduc county would be added to the riding.

I'll specifically address population, community of interest, and clear and understandable boundaries. By removing Heritage Hills, the difficulty here is obviously the push-pull of population. It's like a spider web. You pull one end, and the whole thing jiggles. In my view the problem starts by removing Heritage Hills from the riding and putting it into Sherwood Park. The interim proposal, in an attempt to balance the population, would then extend Strathcona-Sherwood Park considerably southward to include Beaumont.

While drawing electoral boundaries is largely not completely a numbers game, there are, of course, other considerations. The proposal that has been put forward seems to ignore the growth in population that's already occurring in areas of Strathcona-Sherwood Park, notably south of Wye Road and in the community of Ardrossan, which at one point was, like, so far away you couldn't believe that people actually went there. Now it's a common occurrence for us to be in Ardrossan. It also ignores the significant growth happening in the Sherwood Park riding, notably north of highway 16 and west of highway 21 in the Cambrian neighbourhood, and I'm sure you've heard about it.

It's inefficient, in my view, to balance the population by removing Heritage Hills and including half of the city of Beaumont. It will make it very difficult for an MLA to represent the riding and to develop effective relationships with municipal and school board representatives. What would happen is two new municipalities would be added, not completely but they would be there, as well as two additional school divisions being Black Gold school division and St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic separate school division.

With respect to communities of interest, in my view, this is the most important aspect as we try to juggle the population. I'm concerned that the configuration would result in a significant loss in the ability of the MLA to address the issues unique to these communities.

When you look at Strathcona-Sherwood Park, Strathcona county generally, and Beaumont, their histories are completely different. Sherwood Park started as a bedroom community in the '50s. Beaumont started as its own community in the late 1800s. I'm not exactly sure of what the dates look like. There is also the issue of the francophone community in Beaumont, which is not similar at all in Sherwood Park, Strathcona county. Frankly, I think it would be a huge disservice to Beaumont to cut them up and include them in Strathcona-Sherwood Park although that is their brief to make,

but that is my observation. It's not that we have anything against Beaumont. We think it's lovely. I'm just thinking that.

The other thing is that understandable and clear boundaries are set out in 14(e). The boundaries contained in the proposal are understandable only so far as they relate to population and trying to equalize population. Removing Heritage Hills from Strathcona county – as you can see on the map, you see highway 21 and a bit to the west or left of that there's Clover Bar Road, which is all squiggly, and then it goes over to highway 21. That doesn't make sense when you look at the map. To me, that is not a clear and understandable boundary.

The other boundary that's odd, in my view – and part of it already exists now – is in the area south of Wye Road. The proposal includes adding to that area, but my recommendation is that Wye Road be the southern boundary. There is significant growth in that neighbourhood, in the Salisbury Village neighbourhood, and it would make the boundary clearer, more understandable, and address the population issue.

In summary, to me, the biggest issue is Beaumont, and if we kept Heritage Hills in Strathcona-Sherwood Park, added the area south of Wye Road, and, you know, paid attention to the increase in population, in my view, that would address the population issues. The Strathcona-Sherwood Park riding has worked well since 2017, when the boundaries were last redrawn, as I understand it, and the biggest change has been in population and growth, which I believe can be addressed in the ways I've suggested.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much.

I think Dr. Martin is chomping at the bit to have a question.

**Dr. Martin:** The southern boundary of Sherwood Park is the urban service area boundary. We didn't invent that jiggly line although we did add Hillshire. But other than that, we didn't touch it. I take your point about Heritage Hills, which has been pressed on us by perhaps 75 submissions. The area north of the Yellowhead: of course, we're starting to see some Cambrian development there.

4:50

**Ms Towns:** Yes.

**Dr. Martin:** Bremner is in the other riding.

**Ms Towns:** In Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Dr. Martin:** Yes, it is. It's projected to be 70,000 or 80,000 in 50 years' time, so who knows how rapidly it will be developed. They've cut the ground open but haven't done much more so far.

I really wanted to ask you about the county – I mean, about Strathcona-Sherwood Park per se. Without the Beaumont piece, which you say was very ill advised, then the county is significantly lower in population, which, on the one hand, people could say: well,

that's okay; why not do it? But if you wanted to add more bits, would you take a chunk north of the Yellowhead and add it to this particular riding?

**Ms Towns:** Oh, yes. For sure.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. The Bremner bit, so to speak.

**Ms Towns:** Like, Bremner makes a lot of sense. My only concern with that is that you're tugging a line, which is going to have an effect elsewhere. But that, to me, if you were looking at really significantly adding population, which – okay; 70,000 in 50 years. But we really kind of only need to worry, so to speak, about the next eight to 10 – right? – so I think that's an opportunity that is there.

With respect to Heritage Hills, I'm actually not personally that busted about it except as it relates to then messing up the population numbers. To me, that's kind of the first domino: "Oh, we've taken all this population out. Now what do we do? Oh, let's add Beaumont." I'm sorry. I'm sounding flippant about the process, and I don't mean to.

**The Chair:** You should hear us talk about it.

**Mr. Evans:** You may not be as far off as you think.

**Ms Towns:** Just invite me.

That's kind of my view on Heritage Hills.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**Ms Towns:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. On this side?

**Mrs. Samson:** No questions, but thank you for coming out. I appreciate it.

**Ms Towns:** Oh, my pleasure.

**The Chair:** Thank you for sticking with us.

**Mr. Evans:** I would just echo Justice Miller's comments before. Be careful what you wish for. We might invite you into this.

**Ms Towns:** Oh, I don't know. I'm retired. I've got time.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much.

**Ms Towns:** All right. Thank you.

**The Chair:** We will close these hearings till 5:30 p.m.

[The hearing adjourned at 4:53 p.m.]









Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Public Hearings

Edmonton

Monday, January 19, 2026  
5:38 p.m.

Transcript No. 42

## **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 - Edmonton**

Vincent Byfield  
Kimberley Gutsche  
Abigail Johnson  
Philippe Johnson  
Dean Kakoschke  
Sean McQuillan  
John Nibourg  
Jordon Northcott, Reeve, County of Clearwater  
Lesley Thompson  
Helen Wowk



5:38 p.m.

Monday, January 19, 2026

[Justice Miller in the chair]

**The Chair:** We've got several presenters lined up for this evening. We're going to start with Abigail Johnson. Please come forward, have a seat at the table, identify yourself, and tell us what electoral division you live in and which electoral divisions you wish to comment on.

**Miss Johnson:** All right. Well, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak. My name is Abigail Johnson, and I currently live in Edmonton-City Centre. I kind of want to comment more on Edmonton as a whole, and I think we should not be restricted to just Edmonton city boundaries when considering this. I think we should extend a bit more into the surrounding communities.

Some of the reasons for this are that, first of all, there's no legislative requirements to be following the city boundaries. It used to be communities like Sherwood Park, St. Albert, Devon, Beaumont were separate towns with separate identities, which made sense, that they were separate from an Edmonton constituency. But as the city has grown physically, they've gotten closer to these communities, and a lot of people from Edmonton have moved to these surrounding communities but are still heavily invested in Edmonton as a community, and there are a lot of ties there still.

The result of this has been that communities around Edmonton share the same interests; therefore, a community will be better represented if it is included with part of Edmonton rather than the more rural areas. You can see evidence of this change in the traffic patterns, in the shopping, in the schools, in the community sports. These communities are a part of the greater capital region, and boundaries should not be governed by an Edmonton city boundary. So that's what I'd like to present.

I also have a letter here from a resident of Beaumont who has a request of what they think the boundary should be, including them to be in one of the Edmonton constituencies. I'm not sure . . .

**The Chair:** Oh, okay. Leave it with Mr. Roth, and he'll get it to all of us.

**Miss Johnson:** Perfect. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, thank you.

Miss Johnson, you are advocating for hybrid ridings?

**Miss Johnson:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. You've seen our map, and we've tried to do a little bit of that in Edmonton. Any comments on those specific proposals?

**Miss Johnson:** Yes. I've looked at it a bit. I think I'd like to see a bit more going into Edmonton-Ellerslie, connecting that with Beaumont a bit more. That's what I'd like to see. Beyond that, I don't have any big ones.

**The Chair:** Okay. We'll open it up to questions from the panel. This side?

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much for coming this evening. I'm curious how far you'd extend that. Would you take Sherwood Park, like half of Sherwood Park and part of Edmonton?

**Miss Johnson:** I think you could. I don't have specific guidelines for all of where we should go. I think you can go into Sherwood Park and take some from there, depending on the makeup of that

community. But I think Sherwood Park is a community that we can include in this. I think the main communities would be Devon, Beaumont, and, I want to say, Spruce Grove are the three main communities that I'm thinking of.

**Mr. Clark:** How about Fort Saskatchewan? Would you blend Fort Saskatchewan and northeast Edmonton?

**Miss Johnson:** I think we could leave it as it is. I'm okay with the way that the boundary currently sits for that.

**Mr. Clark:** I guess I'm just trying to identify sort of: at what point does it get to be too much? Do you know what I mean? I guess I'm just trying to identify sort of a common principle of how we define, like, what goes with what, if that makes sense.

**Miss Johnson:** Yeah, for sure. I do have kind of a proposed map as well. I could hand that out. I'm sorry I don't have more, like, specific . . .

**Mr. Clark:** No, no. I think that's great that you brought the map.

**Miss Johnson:** Yeah. Just kind of reaching out to the community surrounding a bit more. It's more so just making sure that we're not sticking just to the city limits because I think that's restricting a lot of the communities. Not all of the surrounding communities need to be part of an Edmonton constituency. I think we just need to give consideration to the fact that we can extend beyond those city boundaries.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** On this side, any questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** Thanks for coming out tonight. I agree with you that hybrids do have a place. It's just a matter of: where does it work? And to do it for a hybrid's sake is not a good enough reason. Has to be a lot more. The legislation has just changed, and we're testing the waters here.

**The Chair:** Tell me, Miss Johnson. Are you a student?

**Miss Johnson:** I'm not. I currently work.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you for your presentation.

**Miss Johnson:** Yeah. Thank you.

**The Chair:** You're excused.

Our next presenter is Leslie Thompson.

Sorry, Ms Thompson. We're just comparing lists here.

5:45

**Ms Thompson:** Oh, it's okay. I got here early, and I wasn't expecting to be up so soon, but, hey, we're good.

**The Chair:** Yeah. We are bringing you up early.

Please identify yourself and tell us what electoral division you live in and which ones you're going to comment on.

**Ms Thompson:** Okay. My name is Lesley Thompson. I'm a community leader. I live in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, and I'm speaking about Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**The Chair:** I think you're the first person to present on Beverly today.

**Ms Thompson:** I'm a keener, so there you go.

**The Chair:** Okay. Please proceed.

**Ms Thompson:** Well, good evening, everyone, and thank you so much for having me present tonight. I really want to thank you for the opportunity to speak here and for the care, thoughtfulness, and hard work reflected in your interim reports. As you heard, my name is Leslie Thompson. I've lived in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview for more than 18 years. Right now this is the heart of our riding, the Clareview area. I want to share with you tonight not just an abstract policy perspective but how these boundaries reflect the real lived experience of the people who call this community home.

My daily life is shaped by how interconnected this riding truly is. I live within walking and biking distance of the Clareview LRT station, the Clareview rec centre, the Clareview library, and a million other amenities including a Costco and stuff like that. Anyhoo, I regularly use these spaces. They function as neighbourhood-specific amenities, but they're also shared community hubs used by residents from across our riding, whether you're in the Beverly-Beacon Heights area or you're in the Clareview-specific area.

You know, we also have some great parks, Rundle park, Hermitage park, with walking, cycling, a bunch of nature things. These trails physically and socially connect our neighbourhoods. Even our major roadways like the Yellowhead do not divide how people actually live, move, and connect. From lived experience, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview already functions as a cohesive community.

Now, I want to begin by sincerely thanking the commission for keeping Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview fully within the city of Edmonton with the limited, sensible exception of the landfill and the gravel pits. I know when I presented last time we talked about those lovely gravel pits that we have on the edge of our riding and the garbage dump and all of those extra amenities, but they're also big job employers in our riding.

Residents in this riding rely on the same municipal services, transit networks, infrastructure, and social supports. Keeping the riding within a single municipal framework allows our MLAs to advocate clearly and consistently for their constituents whose needs are shaped by the same city systems. This is not just administratively logical; it's democratically sound.

I want to express my strong support for how the interim report aligns. I really like what you folks have done with our shared history, our daily interactions, and clear geography. One of the changes that you brought in is that you brought the Fraser and Kirkness communities into Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, and I think that's just amazing. The Kirkness community is connected to the Hairsine Community League, and the Hairsine Community League is already in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. Fraser is directly connected to the Bannerman Community League, and Bannerman is already in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Fraser and Bannerman both have two little elementary schools. Some of the residents that live in Bannerman: their kids go to the Fraser school. Some of the people that live in Fraser: their kids go to the Bannerman school. Depending on the different needs they require, whether it's English language supports or extra educational assistant supports for their students, they go back and forth, as well as some of the community needs from after-school programs. Bannerman provides a lot of after-school programs through the Abbottsfield youth group.

That's how Abbottsfield, Beverly, and Beacon connect to the Clareview area. We have many different social services providers, whether it's C5, Candora Society, or the Abbottsfield youth group. Just because they might be located in one area, they serve that whole community. C5 is located in Clareview, and Candora and the Abbottsfield youth project are more in the Beverly area, but they

run so many different programs that serve the whole community, whether it's at the Abbottsfield rec centre or through the community areas in the Clareview rec centre or in the community leagues for after-school programs.

As well, we removed Belvedere from the Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview riding, and you've put that into Edmonton-Decore. That is actually a smart, great choice because Belvedere is strongly connected to Balwin for the same reasons as Bannerman and Fraser being connected. So we think that's a good idea, because there's so much that happens between the Belvedere and the Balwin community leagues. And because Balwin currently sits in Decore and Belvedere sits in Beverly-Clareview, there's this crossover between the two ridings and the communities where they work as one hub. Having Belvedere and Balwin together is a great decision.

Our riding is also unified through shared community life. We have a big farmers' market in the summer, and then in the winter it moves into Riverview, formerly known as Abbottsfield Mall, and that's the Beverly farmers' market. This market serves a good chunk of northeast Edmonton, and people come and, you know, buy their produce, but also it's a coffee connection to see their neighbours no matter what area of the riding. It's a great way every week to be like: hey, how's it going?

So quickly here I'd like to just finally say that the interim report appropriately accounts for the ongoing and anticipated growth within Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. I've seen this growth firsthand, particularly with higher density housing near our transit corridors. We have a lot of apartment condos: owned apartment condos and then rented apartments that have gone up, and more are going up every day, so this helps us there. These trends support your commission's conclusions.

We also have a lot of infill going into Beverly. So we have older, big lots that, you know – I like those big lots, but we have a bunch of skinny homes going up as well, and it's helping regrow those communities. Some of the areas in Clareview are now having the infill as well, and a lot of younger families are coming in because there's affordable housing for them. You have that growth because a lot that used to serve one family, one household, is now serving two or three. So everything is growing, and we like how you've adjusted for that and the future growth down the road.

Thank you so much for your time tonight.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms Thompson. You presented last time, too, didn't you?

**Ms Thompson:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Any questions on this side?

**Mrs. Samson:** No. Thank you, though.

**Ms Thompson:** Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** We like praise.

**Ms Thompson:** Okay. Good. Thank you, everyone. I appreciate it.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Sean McQuillan.

**Mr. McQuillan:** Hi there.

**The Chair:** Hi. Tell us what electoral division you're in and which ones you wish to comment on.

**Mr. McQuillan:** I'm currently in St. Albert, but I'm commenting on Edmonton-Riverview.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. McQuillan:** Great. Good evening. My name is Sean McQuillan. Thanks for the opportunity to speak. As I mentioned, even though I'm currently living in St. Albert, I'm speaking on Riverview because I spent most of my life going to St. Paul's United church in Belgravia there, so I've lived in and worked in that area for a good chunk of my life. I have family there, lots of friends who live there. I have a really close connection to that community, so when I heard that it was being dissolved, I felt compelled to come up here and say some things.

I do want to begin by acknowledging the complexity of your work. You know, the interim report clearly reflects the challenge of balancing population equality, communities of common interest, geography, and long-term demographic change, and I appreciate all the care that has gone into this process. I want to begin just by thanking you for all of your work so far.

I am here, however, to express deep concern over one recommendation, and that is the proposed dissolution of Edmonton-Riverview. I believe this recommendation both conflicts with the commission's own data and with the lived realities of the people in the communities affected.

The dissolution of a central riding is typically justified when population is declining or hollowing out, but Edmonton-Riverview does not fit that pattern. The neighbourhoods that make up Riverview – Belgravia, Windsor Park, Parkallen Garneau, Old Strathcona, Crestwood, Laurier Heights, Grovenor, McQueen, Britannia, Parkview, and others – are seeing ongoing infill and redevelopment and rising density. The interim report itself recognizes that Edmonton continues to experience strong growth and that mature neighbourhoods increasingly absorb that growth through densification rather than sprawl. University-adjacent communities in particular are stable population anchors. Student populations, research expansion, and higher density housing are not short-term trends; they are structural and continuous. So I'm going to say that central Edmonton is not shrinking; it is intensifying and it is strengthening.

5:55

Under the proposed boundaries Edmonton-Riverview is merged into a revised Edmonton-Glenora-Riverview riding, primarily. It's also with Edmonton-Strathcona, but it begins well above the provincial population average, roughly 10 to 14 per cent, according to your own figures that you had in the interim report there.

The commission is clear that population equality must be considered over the full 10-year redistribution cycle and not just on day one. The interim report also acknowledges that urban ridings which begin above average, especially in areas experiencing redevelopment, tend to exceed acceptable variance well before the next boundary review. This means that this proposal risks creating vote dilution, not in theory but in practice within a single cycle. Maintaining Edmonton-Riverview as a distinct riding would instead ensure that both ridings and, of course, Strathcona as well have a balanced sustainable population growth aligned with current data and future growth.

Now, population numbers alone do not define effective representation. The interim report explicitly recognizes communities of common interest and geographic coherence. They are both essential considerations as well. Edmonton-Riverview communities share proximity to the river valley; transit, density, and redevelopment pressures; deeply connected community leagues; and, well, for part of it, the university-centred community life.

When Riverview is dissolved, these communities are split and merged into areas that do not share the same realities. Belgravia is

not Bonnie Doon. Laurier Heights is not Woodcroft. They're very distinct communities. River-adjacent communities do not experience the city in the same way that further north or east central neighbourhoods do, and that matters for representation.

These are not abstract distinctions. They shape daily life, local priorities, and how effectively an MLA can advocate for the constituents. Electoral boundaries are not just lines on a map. They determine whether communities are meaningfully represented, consistently overshadowed, or diluted by being combined for convenience.

West central river communities face unique pressures: environmental stewardship, redevelopment intensity, student housing, and transit infrastructure, and these concerns require focused representation, not fragmentation. The interim report emphasizes that departures from population parity must be justified. So I would suggest that the opposite is also true: that changes that weaken community coherence require strong justification. And I'm not sure if there is a strong enough justification right now being demonstrated.

So for reasons of population fairness, long-term demographic sustainability, communities of common interest, and geographic logic, I respectfully ask the commission to preserve that Edmonton-Riverview has a distinct riding in the final report. This is not opposition to change; it is a request that change reflect both evidence and lived reality. I just want to thank you for your time. So thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Dr. Martin, any questions?

**Dr. Martin:** No.

**The Chair:** Okay. On this side?

**Mrs. Samson:** We had an excellent presentation before you today from MLA Sarah Hoffman, and she had a lot of facts to back up about the growth in that area. So you are heard.

**Mr. McQuillan:** Oh, good.

**Mrs. Samson:** Believe me, you are heard.

**The Chair:** You are heard on the population. The reorganizing is maybe a bit more of a challenge. So if you had to draw the lines, do you want to go to the map and just tell us what you would want?

**Mr. McQuillan:** Well, I mean, to keep Edmonton-Riverview. It would make sense to keep things along the river, taking out maybe even a chunk of McClung or dipping into Edmonton-Strathcona . . .

**The Chair:** So chop off the top 40 per cent. Is that what you're saying?

**Mr. McQuillan:** Well, it's basically – we're sitting to the edge of the Yellowhead. And when you extend to the Yellowhead, like, the differences in how people experience life are drastic. So the needs for people who live close to the river are just going to be different than people out by the Yellowhead. That's just a fact. So I think, beyond just the population shifts, that the type of representation people in those communities want varies vastly.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, sir. I appreciate it.

**Mr. McQuillan:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** John Nibourg. Nibourg?

**Mr. Nibourg:** Nibourg. That's all right.

**The Chair:** The emphasis was on the wrong syllable.

**Mr. Nibourg:** Yeah. You're sort of used to it, but nobody throws things.

**The Chair:** You're from Stettler.

**Mr. Nibourg:** My family is from Stettler.

**The Chair:** Oh. Okay.

**Mr. Nibourg:** I'm one of those unique Albertans that was born and raised in Alberta, and even though I live in Edmonton, I was born in Calgary, so don't hold it against me.

**The Chair:** Oh, okay. Tell me what electoral division you live in and which ones you're commenting on.

**Mr. Nibourg:** Currently I'm living in the great constituency of Edmonton-McClung, so we're going in there, and I'm looking to comment not on specific ridings but the process going on. The biggest concern, as I say, is using populations as opposed to voters, citizens, to determine ridings.

The purpose of the Alberta Boundaries Commission is to set the boundaries of the electoral divisions that will be used by the citizens, the voters, to determine their representative to the Alberta Legislature as per the Alberta Election Act, the Alberta Electoral Divisions Act, and the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, as well as following the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

This is important. Even the commission's interim report notes:

Section 3 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms states:

Every citizen of Canada has the right to vote in an election of members of the House of Commons or of a legislative assembly and to be qualified for membership therein.

Canadian citizenship is a right and a responsibility. Only citizens qualified and eligible under the various acts can vote if they choose. In order to vote in the provincial election in Alberta, a voter must be a Canadian citizen, a resident of Alberta, and at least 18 years of age. In a functional democracy it is the right and responsibility of a citizen to participate in the selection of the individual who will represent their values and concerns in the Legislative Assembly.

The section 3 Charter right to vote includes the responsibility as a citizen to participate in the democratic process, which is a core principle of section 3 of the Charter. It is a citizen that bears this burden and responsibility and is owed the right of effective representation. A number of court rulings state that section 3 of the Charter includes the right to cast a ballot and the right not to have the political force of one's vote unduly diluted and the right to effective representation.

Only one of the criteria in section 14 of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act mentions population, yet it highlights the requirement for effective representation as guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. According to the act population is the primary criteria for determining the boundaries, yet 14(f) indicates that voter numbers can be considered as well.

The commission must remain focused on the constitutional right of Canadian citizens in Alberta to vote, and how that right has been interpreted by the Supreme Court of Canada and the Alberta Court of Appeal. Absolute parity may not be achievable, but there is a need to balance citizen voter rights in an attempt to close the gap between population numbers and the number of eligible voters in order to try to achieve effective representation. Not considering the number of voters, the citizen, skews the narrative and adversely affects the citizen's section 3 Charter rights regarding voter parity that ensures relatively equal weight of each vote to allow for effective representation in the Legislature.

Historically in Alberta the relative number of eligible voters as opposed to the actual population has not fluctuated much, but between 2017 and 2024 Alberta's population grew by 20 per cent, but the number of registered voters only grew by 11.7 per cent. The current phenomenal population growth, especially in large urban areas, has created major disparities in effective representation. In many high-growth areas the population increase can be attributed to an influx of permanent residents and nonpermanent individuals.

Using eligible voters as our criteria for determining electoral divisions has led to criticism that this may disenfranchise noneligible residents, but the road to citizenship by these aforementioned groups is available by following standard documented procedures and processes. Some groups may not choose to obtain citizenship or participate in the electoral process for various reasons, but many permanent residents do not wish to obtain Canadian citizenship as they fear losing their passports and citizen privileges from their former countries. This should not be allowed to adversely affect the opportunity for effective representation by others and dilute the voting rights of citizens. This may even provide an incentive to actively pursue citizenship by some individuals and communities.

#### 6:05

The electoral process is based on giving citizens the opportunity to choose who they feel would best represent them in the Legislature. By reviewing the various legislation and various court cases, by far the narrative revolves around citizens and voters. The Alberta Election Act refers to elections, electors, electoral divisions, and voting areas. The act shows that voters, or electors, are the basis of voting in determining electoral divisions, constituencies, without mentioning population. Section 13(1) charges the Chief Electoral Officer to maintain a register of electors from which lists of electors for voting areas for each electoral division is created. There are numerous sections and references to the number of electors in compiling and maintaining and using the list of electors. During elections the results are tabulated and reported as total number of votes cast with the percentage turnout of eligible voters also documented. There's no official mention of the number of votes cast versus the population.

If the premise is using the number of eligible voters as a criteria for determining adjustments to the electoral divisions, constituencies, as per the Alberta Election Act and then using the 2024 data, the following information is indicated. The average number of registered voters for the current 87 constituencies is 34,094 voters. The largest number of registered voters per constituency is in Airdrie-Cochrane, which is 4,417 voters, which is 61 per cent of the population; Edmonton-South West, 42,412 voters, which is 55 per cent of the population; in Spruce Grove-Stony Plain, 4,840 voters, which is 66 per cent of the population. The fewest are in Peace River, which is 23,236 voters, which is 53 per cent of the population, mind you. Central Peace-Notley is 19,393 voters, which is 67 per cent of the population. And Lesser Slave Lake is 15,736 voters, which is 57 per cent of the population. Some of the other ones if you get in there: Calgary-North East has got 33,637 voters with a populace of 85,188. Edmonton-Ellerslie, 33,586 voters with a populace of 82,000, for only 40 per cent. The worst one is Calgary-Bhullar-McCall, 24,020 voters with a population of 70,633.

The disparity is, like, off the charts. The worst part of it is that the disparity and the changes are in the urban areas and not the rural areas. You're getting effective representation, which is covered through the various acts. The top electoral divisions where the average population deviation exceeds the voter deviation, which is ranging 58 to 80 per cent, are all in urban areas, where the average



voter deviation surpasses the population deviation is between 19 and 30 per cent, and they're all in rural areas. These numbers – there are lots of others I could give you; way too many numbers to show you – clearly show that in the current system of only using population as a base of determining electoral boundaries the concept of effective representation of voter parity and fairness is not evident. This is in a direct contradiction of section 3 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It's not consistent with the various sections of the Alberta Election Act.

Again, the percentage of growth of Alberta's population was 20 per cent, and the percentage of registered voters was 11 per cent. Going through the rest of them, if you're using the criteria as per section 15(1) of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act and applying it to the 2024 registered voters numbers regarding the 25 per cent, plus or minus, for adjusting electoral divisions, only Airdrie-Cochrane with 46,417 registered voters, for 36.14 per cent deviation from the provincial average, would have to be adjusted for exceeding the target. Seven other divisions would be below the target, which is Lesser Slave Lake, minus 53 per cent deviation; Central Peace-Notley, minus 43 per cent; Peace River, minus 31; Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, minus 31; Calgary-Bhullar-McCall, minus 29; Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche, 29; and Cardston-Siksika. Using the criteria for 15(2) for the 50 per cent exemption, the existing Calgary-Bhullar-McCall boundaries would need to be expanded. Cardston-Siksika would require some minor adjustments, and the others would need to be reviewed in order to meet their criteria.

The current proposed boundary revisions are not consistent with the use of voter citizenship numbers as a prime criteria and is not following the concept of the requirement for effective representation as guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I strongly urge this commission and all legislators to take this to heart and rectify this error both as part of the commission's recommendations and section 14 of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act.

**The Chair:** Thank you, and please – the numbers are hard to record – if you want, leave a copy of your presentation with Mr. Aaron Roth at the back, and he can get it to us.

Any questions on this side?

**Mr. Evans:** No questions.

**The Chair:** Any questions?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. If you don't mind, maybe just a point of clarification. I mean, part of the reason population is used is that the elected official represents all of those people. Some of the examples used, some of the more extreme examples – there are a lot of permanent residents who are on a path that are not yet voters, but they use health care, education, infrastructure, you know, provincial services of all different kinds, so in many ways using population – and that's not even to mention kids who are under 18: can't vote but count as population. That's historically been the rationale for using population, and I think that's what every Alberta commission to date has ever used, population. I think that's the reason that we use population, and from my perspective I think that's as it should be. I think your Member of the Legislative Assembly represents everyone, whether they're a citizen or a permanent resident or of voting age or not and, frankly, whether they voted for that MLA or not. You're their representative. Yeah. That's the reason that we use population.

**Mr. Nibourg:** That's a challenge, but it's the phenomenal growth. Historically, going through the data, it would work. They're

basically lockstep going through there between voter numbers and population numbers and growth, but this unprecedented growth is creating a lot of issues. Again, the same thing, too, as some of the – it causes a lot of grief, especially in the northern ridings, in rural ridings, where the growth hasn't taken place. Again, it's all the legislation. You go through all the legislation I've read; the only place it's mentioned, population for determining boundaries, is one note in the act, so either the acts have to change or . . .

**The Chair:** You provide us with some interesting information, but so what? You know, we have very limited control over that. Historically electors were the measure, up until the early '90s, in Alberta. It switched to population, and I'm not sure why. I would venture to say that almost every other jurisdiction uses population although I heard that maybe there is a Maritime province that uses electors. Seemingly, for reasons that are not clear, the last two or three generations we've made that change from voters to population, and our act is clear. It is population. Your point is well made that maybe we should make a recommendation – and, you know, we have the right to make recommendations – but your presentation is best made before a legislative committee than us.

6:15

**Mr. Nibourg:** As I said, it's one of these things I felt strongly and talked to a lot of people. It should be brought up because a lot of people are like: what is going on? And you're like: it's the changes, and they're trying to justify. Even going through some of the numbers I've got, a lot of the changes recommended for the various ridings you've got right now: well, they fall lockstep. They're perfectly aligned. It's these outliers, these anomalies, that when you're going through to figure, "Okay; how best are you going to deal with some of these various complaints?" I'm just suggesting things that: oh, take that into consideration. Is that going to help if you looked at that? You know, you can say: yes, we've looked at it, and it's not going to work.

**The Chair:** We have spent a bit of time trying to convince those people who advocate for one person, one vote that that's an American concept. That's not our system. However, our neighbours to the south do use population. They do not use voters.

**Mr. Nibourg:** Again, causing problems..

**The Chair:** Well, I mean, yeah. You know, it's an interesting historic question as to how we evolved to that.

**Dr. Martin:** One comment, sir. I've run these thought experiments, and I hope you find a legislative committee and make your case because there is a case. But one of the things that we would have to know is: what kind of a tool is this data set? You know, are you going to use it just at the margins of the most egregious cases, or are you going to use it as a back measure throughout all the ridings that you're adjusting?

Third point: the elections officer does keep records annually on voters, but he doesn't adjust them in accordance with us changing map boundaries and the like, so there's a data gap. So you can argue a case in principle – and I think you can go quite a long distance with that – saying it's out of whack with the population estimate approach, but you have to reduce it to a practicable tool. That's the challenge, I think.

**Mr. Nibourg:** And that's the thing. For the electoral lists, it's when they're updated for the elections and they go through there. You know this is year 1 as it's going through. It's one of the simplest, easiest ways to determine how many people are

eligible to vote in a riding because when they call the election, boom, this is the number.

**Dr. Martin:** The Calgary-North East riding that you alluded to: we have proposed to basically cut it in half, but we have no idea how the actual voters distribute themselves when we do that.

**Mr. Nibourg:** That's why I was looking through it. How is it determined to figure, like – because you can't do that. It's sort of a guess and a hope and a prayer. But when you start looking at it, I think, if you extrapolate it, less than 30 per cent of the population are registered voters.

**Dr. Martin:** Well, then you just don't know, do you? When you divide a riding like that to get the population more or less, you have no idea how many voters you're taking with you.

**Mr. Nibourg:** Yes. Right now my figures show there are about 20,000 registered voters in Calgary-Bhullar-McCall, and if you cut it in half, there are 10,000 voters for this.

**Dr. Martin:** We don't know that.

**Mr. Nibourg:** I know, so that's . . .

**The Chair:** Well, you made your point, sir. Leave a copy with Mr. Roth at the back.

**Mr. Nibourg:** Again, you guys have a tough job.

**The Chair:** Well, you just made it more difficult.

**Mr. Nibourg:** Thank you.

**Dr. Martin:** Everybody tells us this.

**The Chair:** Okay. Our next presenter is Philippe Johnson. No? Vincent Byfield?

**Mr. Byfield:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** Please make yourself comfortable. Tell us your name for the record and what electoral division you are in and which ones you want to comment on.

**Mr. Byfield:** My name is Vincent Byfield, and I'm speaking about the Edmonton-South West electoral division. I have some handouts.

**The Chair:** Sure. Just give them to Mr. Roth, and he'll hand them out to us?

**Mr. Byfield:** Perfect. Thank you very much. Just proceed with my presentation?

Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the commission. My name is Vince Byfield. I appreciate the opportunity to speak this evening.

The first question before the commission is not where Devon should be placed within Edmonton but whether Devon should be incorporated into an Edmonton constituency at all. On that point the evidence is very clear. As the commission has repeatedly stated in past reports, communities of interest are defined by how people actually live, work, and travel. That approach is affirmed in section 14 of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, which directs the commission to consider effective representation, common community interests, and transportation and communication patterns.

Devon functions as part of the Edmonton metropolitan system. It is immediately adjacent to the city, located south of the North Saskatchewan river, and connected by multiple direct highway corridors. In daily life Devon is not oriented toward distant rural

centres. It is oriented toward Edmonton. That integration is already formally recognized at the regional planning level as reflected in Devon's participation in the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board. This lived reality is also reflected in the town of Devon's own December 15, 2022, business profile, which states that roughly two-thirds of Devon's population has a short commute within the Edmonton metropolitan region.

Devon is capable of functioning as a self-contained community. However, the reality is that the breadth of the employment opportunities and services available in Edmonton has drawn the majority of Devon residents into the city for work and daily activity. That reliance extends beyond employment to major institutional services, including health care, postsecondary education, and other Edmonton-based regional services.

Rather than speak only in abstract terms, I think it's important to hear directly from someone who can describe the lived reality of daily life connected to Edmonton. The following testimony has been provided by Ingrid Rust, a resident of the town of Devon, and this is being read with her permission. She was supposed to be here to join me tonight, but her father passed away and she's been called away on that. These are her words.

In Devon it's generally understood that most people work in Edmonton. If you talk to your neighbours, you'll find that a large portion of households have at least one person commuting into the city every day. That's true on my street, and it's true throughout the community. Devon is a great place to live, but it's not where most jobs are. People commute into Edmonton for work or to areas immediately adjacent to Edmonton, like Acheson to the north or Nisku to the east. That's just the normal pattern of life.

The same applies when it comes to shopping and entertainment. For major shopping people don't stay in Devon. If you're doing a Costco run, for example, you're either going to the Costco in Winterburn, in west Edmonton, or the Costco near Nisku. Both are essentially the same distance, at roughly 20 minutes away. For groceries, hardware, clothing, or services, many people go to the Windermere area. For dining, movies, or entertainment, Edmonton is where people naturally go. Devon has local amenities, but Edmonton is where people spend much of their time outside of the town. That's simply the reality of how Devon fits into the region. People live in Devon, but they work, shop, and are entertained in Edmonton.

6:25

The rest is my closing here. Thank you. What you've just heard from me confirms what the data already shows. Devon functions as a part of Edmonton. The remaining question is which Edmonton constituency best reflects that reality. Geography provides the first answer. Devon lies south of the North Saskatchewan River, as does Edmonton-South West. Edmonton-West Enoch lies entirely north of the river. The commission has consistently treated major natural features, particularly rivers, as meaningful and logical boundaries. Real-world travel patterns reinforce this distinction. We examined travel times from the centre of Devon to downtown Edmonton. Whether a resident travels north-south using highway 60 or east-west using highway 19 and connects through Calgary Trail or gateway corridor, the travel time is essentially identical, about 41 minutes in either case. That tells us something important. Devon's connection to Edmonton is broad and systemic, not tied to a single corridor to the north of the river: daily flow of people into Edmonton-South and South West.

Population balance provides a second important, objective reason. In your electoral boundaries commission report published in October of 2025 the proposed new boundaries show Edmonton-South West at approximately 54,000 residents and Edmonton-West

Enoch at 57,000. Devon has approximately 6,500 residents. Adding Devon to Edmonton-South West brings that riding into balance. Adding Devon to Edmonton-West Enoch would make it the most heavily populated riding in the city. Placing Devon within a large, predominantly rural, urban district also risks diluting the effective representation of a commuter-based community whose priorities are distinctly metropolitan.

When geography travel patterns, population balance, growth trends, and lived community reality are considered together, the conclusion is straightforward. Devon belongs with Edmonton, and Edmonton-South West is the logical place for it. Thank you for your time and consideration.

The other parts are just to supplement what I've been saying here, but they're pretty self-explanatory. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. So Devon is 6,500 people?

**Mr. Byfield:** Correct.

**The Chair:** So adding it would bring it up to 60,000.

**Mr. Byfield:** Sixty thousand. Yeah, pretty much.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Questions on this side?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah.

Thank you very much for being here. I saw your written submission ahead of time as well. Thank you very much for sending that in. You know, one of the things we struggle with, of course, is the rapid population growth, and southwest Edmonton is one of those areas. Even though we've set Edmonton-South West at 54,000 or so, we're a little worried that's going to grow too quickly and overpopulate. As I think one of the previous presenters suggested, it's one of the challenges with urban constituencies. You're not really skating to where the puck is going to be. In some ways you're skating where the puck has been, and you're a little bit behind just because population tends to be attracted.

We did think about whether Devon would fit with Edmonton. Part of the struggle I think is: does it solve a problem we have, or does it actually make a problem we have worse than that? If that's now 60,000, it'll be very quickly way out of whack, right? Then we're pulling from some of the rural areas. I also think it's worth noting that we haven't heard from the town of Devon as a formal submission, which always makes it a bit tricky to know what they're thinking. The regional model is breaking down a bit too as an EMRB has been dissolved.

**Mr. Byfield:** Oh. Interesting.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. I used to chair the CMRB, so I know that firsthand, although I know municipalities work quite closely in the region notwithstanding that. You know, more just data points I think is what we're thinking. Isn't to say we're dismissing it out of hand. We'll take this under consideration like I think we do every other submission. Yeah, With that information if you have anything else you want to add.

**Mr. Byfield:** Well, I would actually in the sense of just... [An electronic device sounded] Sorry, I have to shut this off. I apologize.

I've grown up in west Edmonton, and the one thing I've been noticing because we have season tickets to Rabbit Hill is that on the south side that area seems to have somehow stopped. I'm not sure why, but I don't see as many developments happening there, but on the west end I am seeing quite a lot of developments, especially south of Edgemont going west towards, basically, the Devon

highway. There is a fair amount of expansion happening there, so I agree with you. There's still a lot of farmland in Edmonton-South West, but I haven't seen any significant developments happening there. I'm seeing a lot of developments, for some reason, in the west end.

**The Chair:** Do you live in Devon?

**Mr. Byfield:** I do not live in Devon. That's why I wanted Ingrid Rust to be here. She does live in Devon.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Any other questions?

**Mr. Clark:** No.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, thank you for your presentation and thank you for, you know, giving us the written one so concisely. We make no promises, but it is a very live issue.

**Dr. Martin:** I did have a question.

**Mr. Byfield:** Oh, yeah. Sure.

**Dr. Martin:** Mr. Byfield, you make a case for the work patterns in particular, taking people to Acheson to the north on 60.

**Mr. Byfield:** Or Nisku, yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** Using 19 to come up into Edmonton proper. Do you feel that people in Devon still work in Nisku, going along 19 and just heading to Nisku?

**Mr. Byfield:** So I interviewed Ingrid quite a bit on this. She's lived there for some time, and she said that if she were to hazard a guess, half or more live in Devon but work in Edmonton. There is a relatively small portion that work in Acheson and Nisku, but her gut is that it's about equal. Right? The Nisku one is slightly larger; therefore, it draws quite a bit as well, but I don't have solid data on that.

**Participant:** I could help out. I live in Devon.

**Mr. Byfield:** Yeah?

**Participant:** About 23 per cent of our population works in Nisku.

**Mr. Byfield:** Twenty-three per cent of the population works in Nisku?

**Participant:** Either works in Nisku or within that area between Nisku and Leduc.

**Mr. Byfield:** That's fascinating. Can I ask the source for that?

**Participant:** Well, the mayor right now is Mr. Craddock, and I've lived in Devon since 1974. I watched the inception of the end of Imperial Oil and the gas plant in Devon itself, but if I was really to make it a very conservative educated guess, about 20 per cent of the population.

**Mr. Byfield:** Interesting.

**Participant:** And not just the oil field industry. I'm talking about that whole corridor of Sparrow Drive all the way to Leduc, so including the people that are commuting to Leduc to work as well.

**Mr. Byfield:** In that 2022 Devon study they said that in terms of occupations, which would be one indicator for this, the number one

occupation of people who live in Devon is construction, and the second one is public administration. I don't think they need that many public administrators for the town of Devon, so that would argue that they're probably working in the Edmonton area.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much.

Our next presenter is Jordon Northcott. Please make yourself comfortable and tell us what electoral division you're in and which one you want to talk about.

**Mr. Northcott:** Okay. Good evening, commission members. My name is Jordon Northcott. I'm the reeve of Clearwater county, and we appreciate the opportunity to provide input on the Electoral Boundaries Commission's interim report and to comment on the proposed redistribution affecting the current Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre electoral division. The interim report proposes dividing Clearwater county among multiple provincial electoral divisions, fundamentally altering the county's longstanding representation within one single riding.

6:35

While the commission's mandate to reflect population changes is understood, Clearwater county has significant concerns that the proposed boundaries will negatively impact effective rural representation and local governance. First, the proposed redistribution would result in Clearwater county no longer being contained within one provincial electoral division. This loss of unified representation would weaken the county's ability to advance a cohesive and consistent voice on matters of regional importance, particularly on issues such as infrastructure, investment, agricultural policy, emergency management, and rural service delivery.

Second, the proposal would fragment the county across multiple ridings, including the proposed Banff-Jasper, Mountain View-Kneehill, and Lacombe-Rocky Mountain House electoral divisions. Splitting the county among several constituencies risks diluting rural interests and dispersing Clearwater county's population across ridings with differing priorities and urban-rural dynamics.

Third, the proposed ridings are anticipated to encompass significantly larger geographical areas, a trend that continues to disproportionately affect rural Alberta. Expanding the geographical size of rural electoral divisions places additional strain on Members of the Legislative Assembly to effectively serve constituents, attend local meetings, and maintain a meaningful presence across the vast and diverse regions.

Finally, Clearwater county among multiple MLAs would create practical challenges for residents, council, and administration. These include confusion regarding representation, increased administrative complexity, difficulties co-ordinating provincial advocacy, and added complications when seeking grants or engaging with provincial ministries. Collectively, these risks diminish Clearwater county's effectiveness and visibility within provincial decision-making processes.

Clearwater county respectfully urges the commission to reconsider boundary options to maintain Clearwater county within a single provincial electoral division wherever possible. The county requests that the commission give due consideration to the importance of cohesive rural representation, the realities of geographical size and service delivery in rural municipalities, and the cumulative impacts of repeated boundary adjustments on rural communities. Clearwater county submits that electoral redistribution should balance population quality with effective representation, ensuring rural residents continue to have accessible, meaningful, and equitable representation at the provincial level.

In conclusion, Clearwater county appreciates the commission's careful consideration of these comments and the opportunity to participate in the electoral boundary review process. The county remains available to provide further information for clarification should that be of assistance to the commission.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you. This area is an issue that we had some discussion on last week in several presentations.

I think maybe it's fair if every one of us had a shot at questions, starting with you, Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you. First, I really appreciate you being here today. You know, it is an area that we've heard from quite a bit. Some of the folks in school divisions and things, I mean, quite a few ordinary citizens and folks, lots of folks, have written in and also presented to us. I think it's especially helpful when elected representatives who represent the whole community are here to speak on behalf of your community. That's very helpful.

I'm curious. You had one MLA, and I think sort of your argument is that you develop a relationship, you can work with them, and they advocate on behalf of your county. But many other counties, I'd say most, have more than one MLA, and they find that quite helpful. It's interesting. We've had a number of different municipal districts, counties, cities, and towns that – I'd say it's almost half and half. Some of them would say: "I can't believe you're taking away our second MLA. We really love having two MLAs. That's really helpful." Then others are saying: "Well, wait a minute. I don't want to deal with more than one MLA. I kind of like dealing with the one." I guess I'm just wondering if you think there is any possible benefit to actually having more than one MLA that represents Clearwater county.

**Mr. Northcott:** With the regional success in the past many residents and even council members feel that it may dilute the efficiencies of having one representative representing us as the MLA.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. Fair enough. That's a clear answer. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Just for clarification for me, your county is quite large as compared to other counties, right?

**Mr. Northcott:** Yeah. It could be considered that way.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you. Thank you, Reeve. I wanted to ask you – I have it on a map somewhere. Just tell me: what is the eastern boundary of the county?

**Mr. Northcott:** We are just, oh, probably from Caroline roughly 15 miles to the east of Caroline. Then you would run into Red Deer county.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mrs. Samson?

**Mrs. Samson:** I don't have any questions, just the comment that this is turning into a real hot spot. It's a hot potato. It's not just for all the points you mentioned. We also have had pressure right across the province because of the loss of a rural voice, another seat. Yeah. We're going to talk about it more.

**Mr. Northcott:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Evans:** No questions. Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for coming out.

**Mr. Northcott:** Thank you very much for your time.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Kimberley Gutsche. How did I do?

**Mrs. Gutsche:** It's actually Gutsche, like the handbag but with no money in it. I figured after a long day, butchering my name is a good thing because then I can tell a joke.

**The Chair:** Okay. Tell us your home riding and which ones you want to comment on.

**Mrs. Gutsche:** Okay. Members of the commission, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Kimberley Gutsche, and I'm a constituent of the Strathcona-Sherwood Park riding. I sit before you today to engage in a vital conversation about the proposed electoral boundary changes impacting my community. As Alberta navigates the challenges and opportunities of growth representation, it's essential to reflect on our demographics and the socioeconomic ties that unite us. I firmly believe that the proposed boundary changes for Strathcona-Sherwood Park are not only unnecessary but could also jeopardize the effectiveness of our governance.

Let's begin with growth, a topic backed by clear numbers. Our population currently stands at around 51,000 give or take, comfortably within the legal 10 per cent variance permitted by provincial regulations. This means we have no immediate legal need for change. I'll just also say that I'm a change management professional, so I'm not averse to change. We are naturally progressing towards the provincial target of 55,000. Developments continue to be built in communities like Ardrossan and the Hillshire subdivision. The Hillshire subdivision alone is projected to add around 3,600 residents upon completion. Between these two communities, this means we'll reach the 55,000 target organically in just a few years. I also want to note that Ardrossan is projected to reach 6,000 residents in the short term. Why disrupt our thriving community with boundary adjustments for a problem that is already being resolved?

Now, think about Heritage Hills, a neighbourhood that has been an integral part of our riding for over a decade. Separating this community from communities north and south of it risks impacting valuable relationships at a government level and has profound impacts on families. Families who reside in Heritage Hills and have children who attend schools that are in other communities today such as Davidson Creek elementary will be left having an MLA represent their school's interests and a different MLA where they reside. We need representation that connects closely with our educational institutions, ensuring parents have a strong advocate to secure quality education for our children.

6:45

Next let's address the proposal of adding parts of Beaumont community to the Strathcona-Sherwood Park constituency. Residents of Beaumont often look toward Leduc or south Edmonton for work, shopping, and services, indicating a lack of natural community of interest with Sherwood Park and Strathcona county. This disconnect weakens representation for all involved.

Rather than forcing boundary changes that don't align with our shared interests, let's consider another option if changes must be made, adding Tofield. Tofield residents already integrate into our commuting patterns, using highway 14 to access jobs and services in our community. They contribute to our local economy and utilize

our health care services. Incorporating Tofield into our riding would enhance representation by uniting a coherent community that shares needs and community services.

Finally, we must evaluate the complexities of governance and economic ties. Strathcona-Sherwood Park operates in a specialized municipality, sharing one municipal government with the Sherwood Park constituency. Combining Strathcona-Sherwood Park with Beaumont, a distinct community, or potentially with other agricultural areas like Camrose would complicate representation, forcing one MLA to balance entirely different municipal frameworks and economic priorities. We need to ensure our governance aligns with our economic and communal interests for the benefit of all residents.

In conclusion, it is essential to re-evaluate the rationale behind these proposed changes. Our growth is a natural progression that needs no artificial boost, and Heritage Hills deserves to remain with the Strathcona-Sherwood Park constituency. If a change must be made to add a community, Tofield offers a more sensible route for cohesive representation, and we must respect the unique governance structures that support Strathcona county's success.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge the challenging task that the commission faces in proposing boundary changes. I do not want your job. This is no small undertaking, and I appreciate the diligence and thoughtfulness that goes into evaluating community demographics and needs. Redrawing boundaries requires balancing a multitude of factors, including population growth, community interests, and the practical implications of governance.

I understand that you are striving to create a framework that serves everyone effectively. However, it is vital to consider that solutions we pursue must genuinely reflect the unique character and cohesiveness of our communities rather than impose arbitrary changes that could disrupt it. Your efforts are commendable, and my hope is that we can find solutions that respect both the commission's challenges and the needs of residents.

Thank you for considering my remarks.

**The Chair:** Thank you for your very precise presentation.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** No, but thank you for your suggestions.

**The Chair:** Yeah. We like solutions.

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah. Appreciate that.

**Mrs. Gutsche:** We always say at work: come with a solution, not a problem.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for coming out tonight. I want you to know that we had a lot of written submissions and a lot in person on this very topic. Thank you for showing up in person.

**Mrs. Gutsche:** Excellent. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. Thank you very much for your presentation. I would like to say that we received many, many submissions in the past six weeks around these points. I wanted to press you particularly on something we did, not merely the Beaumont piece but the Looma piece that is down in that corner as well. What do you think about that little area? Is that, in some form of life, different than the county?

**Mrs. Gutsche:** I'm speaking as a resident. I would say that probably Looma would make more sense than Beaumont. I know people that live out that way. I ran into somebody at the

grocery store yesterday who lives out that way. They work in Sherwood Park.

**Dr. Martin:** Which grocery store? In Sherwood Park?

**Mrs. Gutsche:** Yeah. It was on Baseline, the Sobeys there. You know, I think that residents, especially if they're urban based, do come more to Sherwood Park than maybe they would go – without looking at a map exactly where Looma is. I've driven past it; I just can't remember where. But I also know people that live in Beaumont. They frequent Edmonton: Mill Woods, Ellerslie area, so forth. It makes more sense, if Beaumont needs to be carved up, that it would join up, do that hybrid approach with an urban-rural, with one of the Edmonton ridings.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you. You know, I guess I wanted to ask about the pace of growth. One of the things we're struggling with is not just absolute growth because many parts of Alberta, not all but many, are growing, just not all at the same time.

Part of the challenge, I think, in the Strathcona-Sherwood Park area and the Sherwood Park area generally is that the growth tends to be a bit lower density. Over the last seven years Strathcona-Sherwood Park grew 7 per cent, and the province's average is 20. Sherwood Park itself grew about 10 per cent against an average of 20. So they are growing, absolutely. By any other measure 10 per cent growth is pretty darn good. Relative to Alberta it's half, so that's part of the challenge. You know, part of your argument at the beginning was: well, if we just kind of stay status quo, we'll eventually catch up. There's a chance that at the very best you kind of get to about the average, because there certainly is a lot of development and growth happening. It's just a question of: would you exceed the growth of other parts of the province, in particular the big cities, Edmonton and Calgary?

Having said that, the idea of Tofield is not the first time we've heard that. That's interesting. And then some of that local knowledge on Looma is really interesting as well. So it certainly gives us something to work on as we kind of poke away at our online maps and things.

Anyway, I just want to thank you for that.

**Mrs. Gutsche:** Yeah. I appreciate that. You know, I don't know what the population growth is for Beaumont. I know that their population is 26,000. What you guys have carved out: I don't know what makes up that population. But in looking at Tofield's population of 2,130 – we've got Heritage Hills at 3,200 and then the projected short-term growth of 6,000 for Ardrossan – I think that we would make up that difference if it was 13,000 coming from Beaumont. Right?

I put some thought into this. I just think, too, that that municipality and the fact that residents that are – I think it's important that residents that live in the areas that utilize services are the ones that are considered, and that's why I feel strongly about the Beaumont piece.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much. That's really helpful.

**Mrs. Gutsche:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Okay. Philippe Johnson. Mr. Johnson, make yourself comfortable. Tell us what electoral division you are living in and which ones you want to comment on.

**Mr. Johnson:** Of course. I live in Edmonton-Strathcona in the community of Ritchie.

**The Chair:** I've heard of it.

**Mr. Johnson:** I have some general comments that I'd like to provide, not specific to a riding, but I hope they're valuable nonetheless.

**The Chair:** Okay. Please proceed.

**Mr. Johnson:** I know I have six minutes, so I will respect everyone's time.

Again, my name is Philippe. I am a lawyer. I was a candidate in the 2012 provincial election. I was also a political staffer for 10 years, and I'm an active volunteer in the community. You can call me the typical soccer dad.

I would like to applaud the commission overall. I think it did a very good job, but like most things in life, I think there's some room for improvement. I'd like to focus my submission today on two aspects of my written submission. First, I'd like to talk about my argument that Edmonton requires two additional ridings, not just one. In particular, I'd like the committee to ensure they take into account the anticipated population growth in the central Edmonton area.

Second of all, I would like to comment on my argument that there should not be a removal of a district in the central Edmonton ridings. I don't think it's justified, and I'd like to talk about how the proximity to the Legislature should not be used as a justification to unproportionately burden or dilute the votes of those in central Edmonton.

Now, with regard to my argument about the two ridings, I'd like to ask the committee to explain in their final report how they took into account the anticipated population growth in central Edmonton. The report focuses a lot on population growth rates in the suburbs. Through omission it discounts future population growth in the central core and does not provide any projections for the central core.

This discounting does not reflect my own personal experience in Ritchie, having lived there since 2008 and especially since 2019. From what I could find, between 2016 and 2021 Edmonton's growth rate was 1.6 per cent. Ritchie's was 1.4, not far behind. I think it is likely much higher now given the densification policies of various governments, including provincial and municipal. There have been, as I'm sure you've heard, changes to zoning, improved transportation, infrastructure, drainage, and education.

6:55

I'd like to just tell a quick story about education. In 2007 both the public and the Catholic school divisions had decided to demolish the elementary schools in Ritchie. There was public backlash. In 2010 new school boards were elected, and they decided to support mature neighbourhoods instead of contribute to their decline. In 2015 through 2019 the government committed to building new schools in Edmonton, and new elementary schools were built in Ritchie, one for the public and one for the Catholic. This government has also committed to building new schools.

Since then there has been an explosion of growth in my community, especially since 2018. More families are coming in, more infills, more restaurants, more breweries, more bookstores, condos, apartments. The growth has been exemplary. In 2008 I could walk down the street in Ritchie; you would barely see a child on the street. Now you can hardly throw a stone without hitting a family walking their dog. I would not recommend it. I will never do that.

I am also an example of this growth. In 2017 I purchased a duplex with my parents. Where there is the duplex, before was a single bungalow with an elderly woman living in it. Now there are my parents in one half of the duplex; me, my wife, and my two children in the other. Behind me there used to be two duplexes, also with two elderly people living in them. They are now gone, and there is slated to be a new apartment building that is seven to eight storeys high.

I just don't see this reality reflected in the current report. I fear that Edmonton central voters will have their votes unduly diluted if the current boundaries go ahead. I would like to ask that the commission – and maybe you've done this already – consider neighbourhood-level growth projections to ensure effective representation, provide growth projections in your reasons in the interest of helping the public understand your decisions, to shield from arbitrariness, and to promote the principles of accountability and responsive justification.

Now, with regard to my argument that a removal of a central Edmonton district is not justified. I would like to posit that proximity to the Legislature, to the urban core should not be used to justify the dilution of votes compared to other people living in suburban Edmonton or other like jurisdictions such as Calgary. Now, seemingly, again maybe through omission, the proximity to the Legislature seems to have been used to justify having four of the districts with a greater than 11 per cent variance in Edmonton. They're all in Edmonton, including Edmonton-Glenora-Riverview with 12.5. The variance is a couple of points higher than Calgary.

Distance from the Legislature must be considered by the commission. The further you are away from the Legislature, it means more time to travel from the Legislature to your constituency. But this only applies in very limited circumstances such as when the session begins and ends and on Thursdays, when MLAs go back to their constituencies for constituency breaks. Other than that, when MLAs are in Edmonton at the Legislature, they are focused on legislative business. When they're not in Edmonton, they're in their ridings dealing with their constituents.

You should also take into account the number of sitting days. Last year the number of sitting days was relatively small. We had 58 sitting days out of 365 in the year. You should also consider that night sittings are becoming more prominent. Night sittings represented 35 per cent of all sitting days, at 20, in 2025, and I think this is probably likely to grow.

When MLAs are in Edmonton, they're focused on the Legislature. There's no benefit to having the Legislature in your constituency during the legislative sessions. The reality is that there's next to no effective representational value. There are no special services, there are no special favours, and you get very little access to your MLA during legislative sessions whether or not they live in Edmonton or Medicine Hat.

Because of this, proximity should not be weighed heavily when considering if the core has effective representation or should be used to justify dilution of votes. If distance needs to be accounted for because of distance from the Legislature to your constituency, then that is a burden that should be shared by all Albertans who do not have a relatively unreasonable distance between them and the Legislature, not just the people who live within close proximity to the Legislature.

I believe that's my six minutes, so thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Your last two sentences I didn't follow.

**Mr. Johnson:** Sorry. As it seems right now, the proximity to the Legislature was used to justify a relatively higher dilution of votes in proximity to the Legislature. There wasn't a direct correlation,

but when you describe the justification for removing a central Edmonton district, part of the justification in the report now is the proximity to the Legislature. By baking that into the formula, you're essentially saying that because you live close to the Legislature, it's justified to have more vote dilution, but I think that's flipping the argument upside down. The distance from the Legislature is a reason for rural districts who are far away from the Legislature to be below the percentage; it's not a justification for people who live close to be high necessarily. It might be by necessity, but if someone's votes have to be diluted so that . . .

**The Chair:** Well, I don't think we're comfortable with those kind of terms. We talk about effective representation as opposed to one person, one vote. Effective representation includes the average and then a range of 25 minus or 25 plus, so I'm not sure that the word "dilution" is helpful because the range is the range.

**Mr. Johnson:** Oh. I believe it's a term used by the courts.

**Mr. Evans:** You're conflating voter parity.

**Mr. Johnson:** Yeah. Like, proximity to the Legislature shouldn't be used as a justification to increase the voter parity. There should be some sort of benefit for having your vote diluted. Maybe you don't like the word "diluted," but some sort of benefit. I mean, I didn't come up with a different word because I think that's the word that the courts use.

You know, there are 40,000 people in Edmonton who live in constituencies that are above the average. That is because we don't have a one person, one vote parity system. We rely on some areas having fewer residents, like you said, in order to compensate for things like living in a rural area. Perhaps it's more difficult to serve a rural area, and we're compensating for time it takes for rural people to travel around. There has to be compensation for that, and other ridings have to have more voters in them to compensate for other ridings having fewer voters in them. Part of that justification should not be proximity to the Legislature necessarily. It should be weighted very low given that when in the Legislature, your MLAs are occupied by legislative business, so there's really no benefit to living close to the Legislature when the Legislature is in session.

**The Chair:** You tell that to the MLAs who drive five hours to Edmonton.

**Mr. Johnson:** Yeah. There has to be some compensation for that, right? But that burden should be borne proportionally by all Albertans who don't have a five-hour drive. It shouldn't be borne disproportionately by people who live close to the Legislature.

**The Chair:** Okay. You're making a very, very fine argument that maybe I'm just not getting, sir, but I'll let the rest of the commission dialogue with you.

**Mr. Johnson:** Sure.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** I'm trying to decide if it will make Justice Miller unhappy if I continue asking about this, just to clarify it.

**The Chair:** Well, if you can clarify it, go ahead.

**Mr. Clark:** In our report on page 33, I think, you talk about Edmonton. There's a part of that paragraph that says proximity to the Legislature is part of our consideration. It isn't sort of, as far as I can tell, a specific argument around any particular constituency.

It's more just a general sense. And if I'm hearing what you're saying, you're saying: listen, being a Member of the Legislative Assembly involves many things, being a legislator but also being in what the courts have called an ombudsman role as well, advocating for your constituents. You're saying that task is sort of a universal task of Members of the Legislative Assembly that has absolutely no bearing on how close. If you can see the Legislature across the river, if it's a six-hour drive: those things don't matter if I'm advocating for somebody to get health care or build a school or a road or something like that, and that is a core part of the job of a representative of the people of that constituency. Is that what you're saying?

**Mr. Johnson:** Actually, the opposite. When you're in the Legislature, your job is legislative in nature, and that is a difficult job and your time is preoccupied with that. If I'm a resident in Edmonton-Strathcona, I'm not going to have access to my MLA when there is a session, when the Legislature is sitting. The same thing goes for every other MLA. Whether my MLA is from Medicine Hat or my MLA is from Ritchie, I'm not going to have access to them during the session. I've been there. I've seen what it's like. I've been a chief of staff to a minister, and I've tried to get a hold of my MLA. They're just not available during those times. You know, during the legislative session there's no benefit for being close to the Legislature.

7:05

**The Chair:** It shouldn't be a factor. That's what you're saying.

**Mr. Johnson:** Yeah, or it should be weighed. You know, you need to consider distance from the Legislature – it's part of your mandate – but it should be weighed relatively low, especially during session. Really, if you think about it, it only factors in when the MLA needs to drive back, right? The only difference between living in Ritchie or living in Mackenzie is the amount of time it takes to go home when the session is done, and they only go home on Thursdays or at the end of session, so really we're only talking about a few days out of the year where an MLA from Mackenzie has to drive farther than an MLA from Ritchie. It's very minimal. You don't describe to what extent you've put weight to that in the report, but I'm asking the commission not to give much weight, right?

When MLAs are in the riding – granted, if I live in Mackenzie and I have to drive from High Level to Fort Vermilion to see a school board, yes, that takes longer to get there and that should be compensated for, but you know, in Ritchie you also have a number of school boards, you also have a number of community associations that you have to go to. MLAs in every riding – and I ran in Lac La Biche and I've been a lobbyist for the municipality of Lac La Biche and for Grande Prairie county. I've made my rounds. There has to be compensation for that, but there are always way more demands on an MLA's – I don't care if you're from Medicine Hat or Mackenzie or Drumheller – time than you can possibly go to and get face-to-face time with your constituents. So really, we're just trying to compensate for the fact that if you're going to Fort Vermilion, it takes you a little bit longer to get there, right? That distance, that driving time was, you know, talked about quite a bit in your report.

There are other factors, too. This wasn't part of my submission today, but . . .

**The Chair:** Okay. I'm going to leave the rest for questions.

**Dr. Martin:** It's our time.

**Mr. Johnson:** Yeah. Sorry.

**Dr. Martin:** I want to ask you about Ritchie. As you can tell from our interim, we have put Ritchie, Hazeldean, and Argyll into Edmonton-Gold Bar. We've heard more than once that that's really not natural in any respect, that it should be perhaps the Mill Creek ravine. So my first query is: do you feel that that is the more appropriate way to go? Well, it leads immediately to our dilemma, because there are 9,000 people in Ritchie, Hazeldean, and Argyll. Do you want me to put them into Edmonton-Strathcona?

**Mr. Johnson:** I think Mill Creek ravine is a natural boundary on one side, and I think Whitemud is a natural boundary on the other. Argyll, I think, makes sense to go into my friend's riding.

**Dr. Martin:** Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Johnson:** Edmonton-Gold Bar. Thank you.

**Dr. Martin:** There's no easy road from Argyll to Gold Bar other than Argyll Road itself.

**Mr. Johnson:** Yeah. You'd have to go around. There's also, like, one road from Argyll into Hazeldean, too. It's kind of an isolated area. I'm pretty sure that in the past Argyll was part of Gold Bar as well, but I can't recall. Anyway, that's a way to sort of deal with it.

**Dr. Martin:** So the main point is: what are we going to do with those 9,000 people?

**Mr. Johnson:** I think the natural boundaries make sense, and there's a way to deal with the boundaries on the southern side or just put them in the riding. Like, I'm not opposed to bigger ridings, but it needs to be for the right reasons.

**Dr. Martin:** So you are suggesting – I mean, I can see the wheels going in your head and you're working it through logically, and I commend you for that. When you do it, the consequence is that Ritchie and Hazeldean go back into Edmonton-Strathcona, so to speak, but that's 9,000 people, and that makes Edmonton-Strathcona 62,000-ish.

**Mr. Johnson:** What percentage would that be? I haven't done the math.

**The Chair:** Well, 68,000 is the limit.

**Dr. Martin:** We project 68,000. It would be the biggest riding in the city. Then, of course, Edmonton-Gold Bar would be that much lower and it would become the lowest riding in the whole city, so you can see we're just trying to juggle it.

**Mr. Johnson:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** Short questions, short answers, okay?

**Mrs. Samson:** Thanks for your submission. It was really good. I like the information. I have no questions.

**Mr. Johnson:** Thank you.

**Mr. Evans:** We've heard a lot about this inner-city densification, and this all stems from bylaw 20001. That one was jumping off from bylaw 12800 in 2023. All of this development that everyone has been talking about was only approved – the bylaw changes were approved in 2023 and 2024, and we're now hearing that there are, you know, all these buildings that have been built. I just don't think that's possible. So we're talking about projected, what may take place, right?



**Mr. Johnson:** Yeah. I mean, I'm not an urban planner, but I've certainly seen the infills, you know, like many, many duplexes on my road, on 76th Ave, that have been going in well before 2023. I think the bylaws you're talking about, densification, allow for less parking, more units in a building, and that's certainly happening, but the densification has been happening before that.

My case is a point of example. There was a single bungalow. I don't know what it was, 600 square feet with a bunch of trees. They're all gone, and in place now is a massive duplex with a three bedroom in the back and a two bedroom in the front. It's me, my wife, my two kids, and my parents in the front. My grandson is having the time of his life.

Also, as I mentioned in my submission, it goes back to other things like education, like the school boards. In 2007 the school boards in Edmonton had decided that mature neighbourhoods were done. They were done servicing mature neighbourhoods: the population demographics had changed, the families weren't coming back, and they were going to bulldoze both the schools in Ritchie. There was a push-back, and the community said: no; we want you to support renewal in these neighbourhoods. That happened in 2010 when the board changed, and then by 2015 I think there was a decision to build two new schools. I think they were completed by 2019. Since then, you know, the explosion in the number of families in my community has been huge. I think the school board decision – and that's why I came here to tell you in person tonight – was pivotal in my community being rejuvenated as a mature community and seeing families come back into it. Dollars to doughnuts that's happening in other parts of the city as well.

**Mr. Evans:** What year did the school board make that decision?

**Mr. Johnson:** In 2007. I'm pretty sure by then the school board had made a decision to bulldoze both of the schools. The school board election of 2010 elected a new . . .

**Mr. Evans:** Which board is it?

**Mr. Johnson:** I'm talking about the Edmonton public school board, but I think Catholic school board elections happen at the same time. I know the people who got elected. I helped them get elected. There was a decision to stop the destruction, the demolishing of the two schools in Ritchie. Then it wasn't until the 2015 government, where the monies were put into place to build those schools, and the transformation since then has been something else.

I'd like to go back – sorry; short answers. When I moved into my house, there was a bit of an oddity. There was lead in the water, and there was lead in the water because the builder had forgot to change the pipe to the main line. That means that every single one of those little bungalows that are still around my house have lead in their water at a level that is above the standard health guidelines.

Those communities not only need to be building new schools; they need to be building new houses, too. That's happening and that's taking time, but the new houses that are building – like, they've got back-alley suites. There are a lot of duplexes now with the bylaw changes. There are going to be these apartment buildings going in and stuff like that. So things are changing, and it goes way back before 2023.

**The Chair:** Okay. Philippe, thank you so much.

**Mr. Johnson:** Merci beaucoup.

**The Chair:** I was pushing because I thought we were under the gun, but the next two presenters aren't here, I'm just advised. I'll just call out: Dean Kakoschke or Helen Wowk. No? Okay.

**Mrs. Samson:** That's it?

**The Chair:** Yes, but in fairness they're not scheduled till 8 o'clock, and we've been pushing people through here faster than I expected. Let's take a break for the two that we missed earlier today.

[The hearing adjourned from 7:15 p.m. to 7:40 p.m.]

**The Chair:** Okay. We've got Dean Kakoschke. First, just make yourself comfortable at the table, identify yourself, tell us what electoral division you're in and which ones you want to comment on.

**Mr. Kakoschke:** My name is Dean Kakoschke. I will be commenting on the constituency of Sherwood Park and also a little bit on the neighbouring constituency of Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

I looked at the recommended new boundaries for Sherwood Park, and if your goal is confusion, then you have succeeded.

**Mr. Evans:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Does anything more need to be said?

**Mrs. Samson:** There are no questions. Thank you.

**Mr. Evans:** Job is done.

**The Chair:** But you got here.

**Mr. Kakoschke:** The boundary currently separating Sherwood Park and Strathcona-Sherwood Park is Clover Bar Road, which runs through urban Sherwood Park. Already people living in that area driving to work down Clover Bar Road will see a candidate and a party on the side of the road. Then when they come home driving on the other side of the road, they will see another candidate but the same party. It's already confusing as it is. By adding the neighbourhood of Heritage Hills, as you can see, it's going to make it even worse.

As a citizen of Alberta I want people to come vote. I want to make it easy for people to vote. I don't want to make it frustrating for people to come vote. I've worked in numerous elections, and more than once I've had people come to the polling station and I tell them, "Sorry, you're at the wrong one. You need to go to this one." "Well, I was just there. They told me to come here." I take him to the map. "No, actually you need to go back to that one." And they get so frustrated that they go home, and they express that, say "I'm not voting because," right? Adding that neighbourhood will make it even worse.

I understand that you guys are worried about balancing the numbers. If you need to do that for Sherwood Park, my recommendation would be to go north of highway 16 and include that rural area up to the edge of the city of Fort Saskatchewan and then east up to and including Josephburg, and you could call it Sherwood Park-Josephburg constituency. That will take care of the numbers you require to match the 53,000, 54,000, whatever it is, and it will take away the confusion of adding that Heritage Hills subdivision.

**The Chair:** You mean Strathcona-Sherwood Park would go north of 16?

**Mr. Kakoschke:** No. Sherwood Park. Sorry. I'm only talking about Sherwood Park right now. I believe it should go north.

North of highway 16 is currently Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. That is my recommendation. Less confusion would be my goal as a citizen, and that solves a number problem of going north of highway

16 to include that rural up to the city of Fort Saskatchewan and then east up to and including Josephburg.

**The Chair:** Give back Heritage Hills to . . .

**Mr. Kakoschke:** Give it back to Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**The Chair:** Then go north if you need more population?

**Mr. Kakoschke:** Yes.

Another thing. People living north of highway 16: their addresses are Sherwood Park. Okay? When people in that area vote municipally, they vote for Strathcona county council and mayor, which includes Sherwood Park. If Canada Post says north of 16 is Sherwood Park and municipal elections include north of 16 as Sherwood Park municipality, Strathcona county, then why not have the provincial electoral boundaries go that way as well?

**The Chair:** Okay. What do you say to the name of Strathcona-Sherwood Park? Does that add to confusion?

**Mr. Kakoschke:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Should we get rid of Strathcona or should we get rid of Sherwood Park in the name?

**Mr. Kakoschke:** Right. I'll answer your first question. Yes, I find it confusing because Strathcona people automatically think Old Strathcona, Whyte Ave.

**The Chair:** So get rid of Strathcona.

**Mr. Kakoschke:** I would like to see that, but I don't know what to change it to.

**Mrs. Samson:** Beaverhill.

**Mr. Kakoschke:** Maybe.

**The Chair:** We'd have to go farther west to get Beaverhill.

**Mr. Kakoschke:** Right.

**Mrs. Samson:** Oh, true.

**Mr. Kakoschke:** Strathcona is the county, but yeah.

**The Chair:** You've generated food for thought.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** No. I'm all for the lack of confusion. I mean, I said that I was in favour of it before, but I was just kidding. No, I could see that that would be problematic if you're driving down the road. Entertaining at the same time, though.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Susan.

**Mrs. Samson:** No, I don't have any questions, but thank you for taking the time and making it out here. We were waiting for you.

**Mr. Kakoschke:** Yes. Thank you for waiting for us.

**The Chair:** And you weren't late, just so you know. We kind of finished our day early.

You probably have no questions, Dr. Martin, or comments?

**Mr. Clark:** Do you have any thoughts on Sherwood Park?

**Dr. Martin:** In the map, the interim map for Sherwood Park itself, we've included Hillshire, which as you may recall is a big old development just on the south flank of Wye Road.

**Mr. Kakoschke:** That's correct.

**Dr. Martin:** And there's quite a lot of development in there. I hear varying reports that there are 290 units. Actually, if you go further down when Clover Bar starts getting a number instead of a name, immediately beyond Hillshire there's a new development being scraped out and sewer pipes being put in. That must be another 50.

**Mrs. Samson:** High density?

**Dr. Martin:** I don't think so. I think it's big houses.

**Mr. Kakoschke:** That's correct. Yes, it is.

**Dr. Martin:** I think 50 in there, where they've just finished putting in a roundabout.

**Mr. Kakoschke:** Yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah, just back in there. So there's certainly some development going on in this area.

I want to put a question to you since you obviously know the area. You see where the so-called urban service area boundary is just south of Wye Road? It's a very lumpy, bumpy one, but if you go along the quarter section line, you know, everybody who lives in here: it's not all that many people, but they all shop on Wye Road.

**Mr. Kakoschke:** That's right.

**Dr. Martin:** So they're not sort of rural in any classic sense. So we're tinkering with the notion of just drawing a straight line over here. Would that be offensive to your point of view?

**Mr. Kakoschke:** Not at all. Those people consider themselves living in Sherwood Park, and again, even then to be in the other constituency would throw them for a loop.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** If you come up with something on the name to help streamline, you know, or eliminate the confusion as it relates to Strathcona, be sure to ask around your community and get it in to us because, yeah, for people who have been there a long time it's not confusing, but I can see why it is.

**Mr. Kakoschke:** Absolutely, it is.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah, no. We're just drawing. We've got a mapping tool here that can give us a quick population estimate. So what you're talking about: if we go north all the way to Fort Sask, up to highway 15, over to basically just south Bruderheim on the border of Elk Island park, and then south down to 16 and that whole swath there: that's about 3,500 people. So that's a big piece, but is that what you're thinking, something like that?

**Mr. Kakoschke:** Yes. That's the area I was referring to.

**Mr. Clark:** And then we would trade that off with Heritage Hills.

**Mr. Kakoschke:** Yeah.

**Mr. Clark:** We received some feedback on Heritage Hills, it's safe to say quite a lot of it.

**Mr. Kakoschke:** I bet you did.

**Mr. Clark:** It's good, though. It's very helpful.

**The Chair:** You have no opinion on Beaumont?

**Mr. Kakoschke:** That's not my constituency, but I do have an opinion if you want to hear about it.

7:50

**Mr. Clark:** As it relates to electoral boundaries.

**Mr. Kakoschke:** Splitting Beaumont right in half is ludicrous, in my opinion.

**Dr. Martin:** Did you write that letter?

**Mr. Kakoschke:** No, I did not.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Kakoschke:** Yes. I know that people in the Strathcona-Sherwood Park constituency are not pleased with that boundary as well.

**Mrs. Samson:** They told us.

**The Chair:** They're not overwhelmed in Beaumont by it either.

**Mr. Kakoschke:** I bet.

**The Chair:** I just said to my colleague: basically, it's an arranged marriage. We're not very good at that, I don't think. It's not going to last. Okay. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Kakoschke:** Right on. Thank you for your time. Thanks for waiting for us.

**The Chair:** Okay. No problem.  
Helen?

**Ms Wowk:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Wowk?

**Ms Wowk:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. Same drill: say your name for the record, what riding you live in, and what ridings you want to comment on.

**Ms Wowk:** Well, my name is Helen Wowk, and I live in that wonderful Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville riding. I am the said person that lives in that area that is frustrated with distance, for one, to, you know, attend meetings or anything like that regarding the constituency, and just everything. The distance for us to travel to Vegreville to do that is just not acceptable. Many of the people in our area are frustrated because, again, as Dean was saying, they don't understand how the municipality works, the provincial works, the federal, the confusion of all the different people that are running for various things. I certainly would love to see us get more people informed at an easier level so that they will come out and vote and understand who they're voting for.

I live just north of the highway on range road 225 and highway 21.

**The Chair:** Okay. And that's in the Fort Saskatchewan area?

**Ms Wowk:** Well, it's actually Sherwood Park. My address is Sherwood Park. I pay my taxes to Sherwood Park. Everything I do is in Sherwood Park.

**Mr. Clark:** Your constituency is Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Ms Wowk:** That's correct. I'm one mile north of highway 16 on range road 225.

**The Chair:** Okay. So you want to be where?

**Ms Wowk:** Part of Sherwood Park.

**The Chair:** Not Strathcona-Sherwood Park; Sherwood Park.

**Ms Wowk:** Strathcona – well, again, this confusion, right? Sherwood Park, okay? Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Can you maybe go to the map and just point for me because, you know, I'm not that familiar with the highways there. I used to be, when I was dating my wife 40, almost 50 years ago, but things have changed.

**Ms Wowk:** Right about here.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Ms Wowk:** So Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville is all, as you know . . .

**The Chair:** So you're recommending a westerly boundary that would . . .

**Ms Wowk:** Probably the border of Fort Saskatchewan, as Dean was mentioning, which is probably about up here and up to, like, this area in here. Correct?

**Mr. Clark:** Would you go as far north as Bruderheim?

**Ms Wowk:** Yes.

**Mr. Clark:** All the way up. So you'd basically just follow – is that highway 15 diagonally there?

**Ms Wowk:** Well, yes, because, again, look at this distance here. Whenever there's anything going on within the constituency, they're choosing it here in the town, saying that this is central. Well, it's really not. Okay? So, yeah.

**The Chair:** So you're suggesting a straight line north and south on the west side of Bruderheim?

**Ms Wowk:** Yes.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah, but not including Bruderheim; south of 15.

**Ms Wowk:** Yes.

**Dr. Martin:** Just south of the Fort Saskatchewan boundary is about – what road would that be, sort of 545?

**Ms Wowk:** It's 540 or 542.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. It doesn't really solve the problem that you were talking about with the very large distances and so on and so forth. But this allows Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville to not have this dogleg on the west side of Elk Island park.

**Ms Wowk:** Right. And, you know, definitely we're closer to Sherwood Park.

**Dr. Martin:** Well, there's part of our confusion. The county captures all of it, right?

**Ms Wowk:** Right.

**Dr. Martin:** We have the mighty hamlet taken out. Then we've got Fort Saskatchewan up here, too. It was kind of always out of it. So everything remains county in that northern bit, then part of it stays in Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, and part of it comes back into the county riding.

**Ms Wowk:** The county of Strathcona.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah.

**Ms Wowk:** That's right. Yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Well, I think we've got your position . . .

**Ms Wowk:** The gist.

**The Chair:** . . . whether we can deliver – and as you can appreciate, all these decisions have cascading effects.

**Ms Wowk:** Right. Yeah.

**The Chair:** Have you put anything in in writing?

**Ms Wowk:** I hadn't up to this point.

**The Chair:** Okay. It wouldn't hurt to send something in.

**Ms Wowk:** Okay. Yeah. For sure.

**The Chair:** Give us precise . . .

**Ms Wowk:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Like, you know, attach a map even if it's hand-drawn.

**Ms Wowk:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Do that.

**Ms Wowk:** For sure. Okay.

**The Chair:** Then we can manipulate it and determine exactly what kind of population you're talking about.

**Ms Wowk:** Right.

**The Chair:** That's a factor for us.

**Ms Wowk:** Absolutely. The ridings need to be within that 50,000?

**The Chair:** The average is 55,000, so 25 per cent up or down. That's a rough calculation. Yeah.

**Ms Wowk:** Okay. Very good.

**The Chair:** Any other questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** None for me. Thanks for coming out.

**Ms Wowk:** My pleasure.

**The Chair:** Greg, any questions?

**Mr. Clark:** No. We're just tinkering with the map.

**Dr. Martin:** Which is really rude of us.

**Mr. Clark:** You know what we're doing? Jumping ahead.

**Ms Wowk:** That's okay. That's okay.

**Mr. Clark:** We're jumping ahead to figure it out. I mean, we have both the paper map and the GIS system to give us a population estimate.

**Dr. Martin:** Can I ask you a question that's different? Honest. I want to know where you shop.

**Ms Wowk:** Sherwood Park.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. Thank you.

**Ms Wowk:** Like, we're literally not even five minutes to Sherwood Park, right?

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. Are you going to be . . .

**The Chair:** He runs a food truck, and he just wants to make sure where he can . . .

**Dr. Martin:** Bremner, when it finally grows, will be right on your doorstep.

**Ms Wowk:** That is me. That is right on my doorstep, yeah.

**The Chair:** Have they scraped the dirt yet?

**Ms Wowk:** Yes.

**Dr. Martin:** They have. I thought they were going to.

**Ms Wowk:** Yeah. That's going to be a big change there.

**Dr. Martin:** No Tyvek yet.

**Ms Wowk:** Not yet. But the taxes . . . Right?

**Dr. Martin:** Really?

**The Chair:** That's another indicia we should be using.

**Ms Wowk:** Yes.

**Mr. Clark:** That's what we need, more data.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much.

**Ms Wowk:** Okay. All right.

**The Chair:** We will put all of this into the hopper.

**Ms Wowk:** Pardon me?

**Dr. Martin:** We're getting a little punchy, but I do thank you.

**Ms Wowk:** Thank you. Thank you for listening.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you for your help. Appreciate you coming in.

[The hearing adjourned at 7:59 p.m.]





Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Public Hearings

Edmonton

Monday, January 19, 2026  
9:07 a.m.

Transcript No. 40

## **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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Parliamentary Services

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Manager of Corporate Communications

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Managing Editor of *Alberta Hansard*

## **Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Edmonton**

### **Public Participants**

Ben Acquaye

Yadvinder Bhardwaj, Constituency Manager, Edmonton-Meadows

Josh Bishop, District Director, Rural Municipalities of Alberta and Reeve, County of Wetaskiwin

Gale Davy

Roger Gunn

David Jackson

Kyle Kasawski, MLA, Sherwood Park

Art Lange

Irene McDermott

Laura Paquette

Priya Usman

Moiria Vane





9:07 a.m.

Monday, January 19, 2026

[Justice Miller in the chair]

**The Chair:** Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the first day of the second week of our round of public hearings for the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission. Of course, the commission is established by the Legislature. It's an independent commission, and if you note the members of the commission before you and if you need to know background information, you can go to the commission's website to find out about our backgrounds.

This commission was established back in late March, early April of last year, and we were given two challenges, effectively. The first one was to deal with boundaries for electoral divisions because of an increase of ridings from 87 to 89. The size of the Legislature is expanding. Of course, individuals, voters who reside in the electoral division are the ones who elect that particular MLA, and that person then represents them in the Legislative Assembly in Edmonton.

The second issue that we had to deal with is the issue of population increase. Alberta has been faced with a very significant population increase. So the first one was moving the number of seats from 87 to 89, and the second challenge was dealing with the significant increase in population. From the time of the last electoral boundaries report in 2017, Alberta's population has increased by over 800,000. Just to put it in perspective, in 2017 just over 4 million people resided in Alberta, and if you took the average population for each division, it was 46,697. That's not the target. The target zone is actually the plus/minus of 25 per cent. In order to maintain effective representation, as long as the electoral division had a population of between 35,000 to 58,000, that was sufficient.

Fast-forward to this time around, and the population of Alberta is now 4.8 million-plus. If we take that population and divide it by the number of electoral divisions of 89, that reveals an average population of just under 55,000. Again, the target range is 41,000 to 68,000.

The task of this commission is to hear from Albertans as to how best we can recommend boundaries to provide what has come to be known as effective representation for all Albertans.

The commission, since its appointment, has been busy. We first met in April to discuss and determine what population figures we were going to use. We're mandated by the legislation to rely on the last decennial census, which was 2021. That census figure is then updated regularly and consistently by the Office of Statistics and Information, a division of the Alberta Treasury Board. We agreed upon the population figures, and then we reviewed hundreds of submissions that came into this commission in the early days. In late May and all of June we travelled across the province to hear public presentations from interested citizens as to how the boundaries should be drawn and where they should be allocated. After our time dealing with the public, in late June, we then met with Elections Alberta staff, and they assisted us greatly in helping us draw boundaries throughout the province and allocating the boundaries such that we could then prepare our interim report.

The interim report was based on all the public submissions, the consultations, the population figures, and the assistance of Elections Alberta. That report was provided to the Speaker of the Legislature in late October, and he tabled it and gave a copy to each member of the Legislature immediately, and it was then posted on our website.

In completing our interim report, we followed and referenced the many factors that are mentioned in the legislation, things like: sparsity, density of population, communities of interest, geographic features, the availability and means of communication, transportation between various parts of Alberta, all leading up to the concept of

having electoral divisions that provide for effective representation. Then, finally, we want to be sure that all the boundaries that we do allocate are understandable and clear. That's what we tried to do in our interim report.

After release of the interim report, we opened a portal on our website for public submissions from November 3 to December 19, and in that time period we received over 1,100 submissions. Now, in January, we are, in a sense, travelling across Alberta again. We spent two and a half days in Calgary. We're spending three days here in Edmonton, and we spent two days receiving virtual submissions from places outside the two major centres. We've been doing that and will do that up until Wednesday of this week.

That's where we are. Now we're at the stage of the commission that in hearing these reports we will be preparing, after this week, to work on our final report.

We're pleased to be in Edmonton hearing in-person meetings. Our first presenter is Mr. Josh Bishop. Please identify yourself, tell us what organization you may be representing, and what constituencies you wish to comment on.

9:15

**Mr. Bishop:** Well, good morning. Thanks for having me here. My name is Josh Bishop. I'm a district director for the Rural Municipalities of Alberta. I'm also a reeve for the county of Wetaskiwin. We're here today to talk just more broadly across all the divisions and just get a sense of the greater need for rural representation through the districts.

For myself, I have lived up and down this great province, including Edmonton – large, dense, urban, as we're all aware – rural communities in the central regions, and I've also experienced living in the remoteness of the north. These lived experiences have helped me form some of the opinions that I'll be sharing with you today. I also have with me our general manager of policy and advocacy, Mr. Wyatt Skovron. He's been a valuable asset in creating a lot of the data and documentation that we've reviewed as an organization.

I'd also like to thank you for allowing me to come here today. You guys do have quite a task before you. I'm sure the pressures are immense and you want to get it right. I'm just here today to help guide that a little bit if I can.

A little bit about RMA. We represent Alberta's 69 rural municipalities, which include counties, municipal districts, specialized municipalities, and the Special Areas Board. This includes some urbanized areas such as city-sized hamlets as well as very small and remote hamlets. RMA members provide municipal services to 85 per cent of Alberta's land mass and roughly 15 per cent of the population.

Daily life for residents of our member municipalities is characterized by long distances in services and ties to the resource industries. Rural municipalities are also responsible for an outsized share of critical infrastructure, including 75 per cent of roads, 60 per cent of bridges and culverts, as well as 30 per cent of water systems. Despite the low population, rural Alberta produces 28 per cent of the province's GDP at over \$89 billion. These responsibilities and the value of our economic input need to be recognized in our rural representation.

These characteristics are central to how rural Albertans interact with and are represented by their MLAs. For context, we have massive municipalities geographically, with one of our northern municipalities, for example, being larger than the size of New Brunswick and P.E.I. combined. As you can imagine, trying to get over that scale of distance for an MLA would be quite challenging. Alberta is unique across Canadian provinces in the breadth of development and the communities spread out across the entirety of

the province north to south, east to west, making effective representation extremely difficult across such large distances.

As you can imagine, communities that are spread out will have differing priorities and challenges. In many cases rural ridings already have population centres and economic hubs that are hours apart from each other and as far as 13 hours away from Edmonton, where the MLA spends the majority of their time. These distances drastically reduce an MLA's ability to effectively represent and connect with their constituents and hear their concerns. This erodes public trust and confidence in effective representation.

The commission's report acknowledges that rural areas often present barriers to effective representation, and therefore the link between effective representation is often at odds with voter parity. The report emphasized that it is not only the commission's opinion that absolute or even relative parity is undesirable and impractical, but it is actually a core tenet of effective representation across the country, as confirmed by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1991. We wholeheartedly agree with that.

The report suggests that usage of larger variances is often required to account for rural challenges, yet the recommendations don't reflect that reality. In fact, we're seeing that reduced representation is actually being proposed. The takeaway here is that the commission's theoretical approach doesn't appear to match the recommendations we're seeing. Despite general references to a nuanced approach, voter parity is shown to be the preferred approach, despite the earlier comments that this is often inequitable in rural ridings.

Given the commission's focus on effective representation, RMA is a little bit surprised at the commission's minimal use of section 15(2) powers. Given that previously two of these divisions existed, and the commission is now recommending only one, our position is that there is justification to substantially increase the use of section 15(2). In reference to reducing the number of northern electoral divisions, the commission acknowledges that it is an imperfect solution to an impossible problem. However, you could also utilize section 15(2) to maintain the number of rural electoral divisions, if not increase, and accept some urban ridings that may trend slightly toward the upper end of the population variance threshold. This approach would lead to a more balanced distribution of access to representation.

Our view is that the commission's expanded use of hybrid ridings is similarly problematic. On page 27 of the interim report the commission argues that hybrid ridings are the only option available to them to maintain effective representation in rural areas. This seems to be linked, again, to the desire to keep those populations as close to the average as possible as opposed to prioritizing effective representation.

While it again may be an imperfect solution, the commission could choose to follow another path by tolerating slightly higher urban electoral division populations. While RMA agrees with the commission's comments that existing hybrid ridings are entrenched, expanding their use to Edmonton and Calgary could have major impacts on rural communities surrounding the cities as tensions around land use exist in these communities, and it's critical that we have our own voice at the table to defend those areas.

While hybrid ridings may support a cleaner electoral boundaries map, it risks weakening actual representation for both urban and rural residents of the riding. RMA would urge the commission to reconsider whether an expansion in hybrid ridings is inevitable, as they suggest, or whether there are other solutions to ensure urban and rural interests are adequately represented in the Legislature.

What I'd like to leave the commission with today is that many of the decisions and the approaches in the interim report that reduce

rural representation are framed as inevitable or an unfortunate reality of a changing province, but in reality the commission is making choices, and many of those choices will diminish, in our opinion, the rural representation. There are opportunities to revisit some of these most impactful changes to rural representation, including the loss of rural ridings and expansion of hybrid, and RMA and its members would be happy to work with the commission to gather any evidence that you would need to support this work.

Thanks again for allowing me to come and speak with you today.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Bishop. Thank you for your PowerPoint.

Questions from the commission. Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much. Yeah, I very much appreciate you being here.

You've flagged a couple of things, I think in particular the challenges with the way we've drawn the map for the far north. We've heard a lot of feedback on that last week in particular when we had the folks from the north speaking with us. We received well over a hundred written submissions on that point as well. So without making any promises at all, I think that's something we've heard very clearly, that there are differences – significant differences – and challenges in addressing and representing far north.

Some of the geographic examples you gave I think are compelling, very much so. I'm really interested. As someone who has lived all over the province, far north, rural and big cities, how would you characterize the difference between those areas? I guess what I'm really asking is that part of the submissions we've heard, some of the suggestions would say, "Let's blend different parts of the province together, you know, big cities and rural areas, because that's going to kind of connect us," as opposed to others who would say, "Well, wait a minute. Actually, that's quite different. The interests and the needs in a big city are quite different from rural communities and even some areas that are decidedly just outside the city but not the city." So I guess I'm just curious on your perspective on that question.

**Mr. Bishop:** The majority of my life I actually did live urban. It wasn't until later on that I moved into rural areas, and it's one of those things that the more you know, the more you realize how little you did know. Being on that other side of it, looking back with my perspective of being raised urban and living some of my adult life as urban, the differences are huge and I think largely misunderstood, so I did not know or understand a lot of things.

Ways that I would have voted, you know, for example, previously have changed because now I understand both sides, and actually some of the rural priorities and things that are important in the rural community I wouldn't have ever thought of, but it affects my day-to-day life in the city. So there are a lot of those types of things where I think getting that on-the-ground representation from MLAs is critical. When we're joining those ridings up with urban, you're going to dilute that voice, I think to the detriment of all Albertans.

9:25

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you. You know, again, as we wrestle with the challenge that with such a huge population influx that we saw between 2017 and 2025, the vast, vast majority of that ends up in cities. This isn't just an arithmetic exercise, as you've said. We have the opportunity. What we're looking for is effective representation. It's not one person, one vote. As Justice Miller said, it's effective representation. But in striving for that, the percentages of outside

Edmonton and Calgary representation in our interim report are actually greater as a percentage than we had in 2017 in the past boundaries.

That's a question. It's not that we haven't thought about it. Part of it is that you get handcuffed a bit just by the substantial influx of population, and then we only have certain tools to address it, one of them being some of the blending of urban and rural. There's been a lot of push-back on that. I guess maybe I'll just leave you with the question of: how would you square that particular challenge that we have?

**Mr. Bishop:** The representation in my case as reeve of the county of Wetaskiwin: I have a very close comparable to the city of Wetaskiwin population-wise. Our distance is way greater. Our responsibilities are way greater. When we do a public engagement, for example, to get that effective representation the city could hold one or two and capture everybody that wants to attend. We have to host eight. Just getting that representation out to everybody takes a lot more work, especially when you consider an MLA. The way that I would correct that is what I'm suggesting to the group, increasing those population thresholds as is allowed. These are tools that you have. Allowing that to get to that upper end I think would still allow for that effective representation.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much. I'm musing on your final point. A thought experiment: if you push to the upper range of the allowed variation, is it going to be consistent with effective representation? It's a puzzle that we have to deal with. We're juggling a half dozen factors according to the statute. Also when you consider factors that are mentioned here like communities of interest, that immediately breaks into 10 different ways you could parse that: school boards, where you shop, where you play, where you work, any number of things. It becomes an exercise in careful juggling.

To summarize what you have told us today, we ought to use the variation tool more robustly, not as a last resort? We should use 15(2) more often, which is a consequence of using the variation tool more robustly, and also hybrids. Hybrids have been top throughout our own personal discussions and those of all the submitters and letters of people have come before us. Really, I think to my mind it is – I can't speak for my colleagues here – a function of communities of interest as well. You can't just do it mathematically or just because you can. You need to justify it in the other terms.

Your points are taken. We're aware of them. It's always useful to be reminded that we could weight the factors differently from place to place and we can't have a cookie cutter approach to the weighting of them either because the act warns us against doing such a thing. Welcome to our dilemma.

I wanted to ask you something about Wetaskiwin. What are the economic corridors in the county? Is it a QE II orientated county, or is it east-west, that the major economic corridor is going east-west?

**Mr. Bishop:** It would be primarily north-south, but a lot of it is through traffic. They're not stopping necessarily in Wetaskiwin. We have very independent, I guess, economic diversification within our own county. Within our own county there'd be a little bit more east-west, but we cover everything from, you know, pasture land, farmland to mountain view, bush. Like, we're a smaller municipality as far as rurals go, but we're an hour and a half wide, so we encompass a lot of different things. Microeconomies across the county is basically what we have.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your time this morning. I appreciate your comments. I've been really struggling with the hybrids, and I think you touched on it well. They are challenging to work with. What we have been working with are two types of hybrids: the ones where we gather a little bit from the two core cities, Calgary and Edmonton, and then the ones where you have municipalities like Airdrie who are split through the city in half and half is urban and the other half is the rural. Did you want to comment further on those types of hybrids and how you see them fitting in and helping that urban-rural divide, or do you think they're not working that well?

**Mr. Bishop:** Like, without speaking to a specific one, just in general terms?

**Mrs. Samson:** Yeah. In general, please.

**Mr. Bishop:** I would feel that, you know, if you were the fractional part of the city – that is, say, you're 10,000 of the votes and 30,000 are in the rural – those 10,000 would ultimately feel disenfranchised, or the candidate comes from that urban and then the rest of the rural would feel disenfranchised. That's the way that we're looking at it, I think. Especially in those conflict zones with the growth management boards and the way that those have gone over the last couple of years, there's a very clear divide in some of those priorities, which would make it very difficult for an MLA that's split that way, when you have one on each side of it. I mean, they're still going to look at all the facts and make the best decision even if it's against what maybe your specific riding wants because we look at a broad scale. We do that no differently municipally. I think it's just allowing the access to hear that information and to feel that you're represented. It makes a big difference if it's split like that.

**Mrs. Samson:** In a case maybe closer to home for you, being the reeve of the county of Wetaskiwin, how close is your working relationship with – would I be fair to say that Wetaskiwin is the hub of the county?

**Mr. Bishop:** For a certain section of it. Like I said, we're an hour and a half wide. For the west end they're going to either Rocky or Drayton Valley. Central oftentimes will go to Leduc or wherever because they're right by highway 2. On the east end, yeah, they go to Wetaskiwin. So, you know, our ties are there, but we have so many competing interests. Within our own municipality residents in various hamlets across the municipality have different priorities, and we have to meet with each one of them individually. It takes an extra amount of time, I think, to get all of that representation effectively.

**Mrs. Samson:** Right. Thank you. That's most valuable. I appreciate your time today.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** Yes.

In carrying out your role as reeve and as any councillor, do I understand that Wetaskiwin the county would be broken up into effectively wards? So each councillor would be coming from a specific area?

**Mr. Bishop:** Yes.

**Mr. Evans:** So each councillor would, in effect, based on how you described to me – Wetaskiwin county and the microeconomies I think is the way you characterized it. Each of those would be distinct, identifiable communities of interest?

**Mr. Bishop:** Absolutely. Within my own division there are probably five distinct areas.

**Mr. Evans:** So a councillor representing each of those distinct areas would be conveying the voice of that area to the council. Correct?

**Mr. Bishop:** Yeah. Absolutely.

**Mr. Evans:** And through the process of politics you guys are able to come to a united voice in terms of representing the county as it relates to, you know, I guess the RMA, for example. Is that correct?

**Mr. Bishop:** Yeah.

**Mr. Evans:** So how is that carried out?

**Mr. Bishop:** Yeah. It's just by getting out into the community. Right? I couldn't imagine if my division was larger and I had to go to that many more subdivisions or some of them have multiple hamlets, so multiple urban areas within. This is at a smaller scale compared to an MLA but just based on that experience and the feedback we get. Like, you know, we host public hearings as well, where people are saying whether or not they're heard. The comments we hear at the door are whether or not they feel that they're being represented. We don't always have to vote the way that they want, but if we're at least available to hear them, I think the ability for us on that smaller scale to get out into all those areas is critical.

9:35

**Mr. Evans:** Isn't that just politics, though? I mean, regardless of what the constituency is and its makeup, whoever is the elected representative of that constituency has to do the work consistent with representing that constituency. It's no different in terms of your ward system.

My other question that I have for you is that I'm interested in your idea of taking the population and increasing the population density or threshold for urban versus rural. In the report we have the average population over 89 electoral districts for the province of Alberta. It would be 54,929. Then there's a population range that goes from 41,198 on the low end to the high end of 68,662. If I understand, what you're suggesting is that what we would do is we would maximize that population density as much as possible in the urban ridings to 68,000, let's say.

**The Chair:** Question.

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah.

Then, on the other hand, in rural ridings we would be using as close as possible to the 41,198, and we would balance things that way. Is that what you're suggesting?

**Mr. Bishop:** I would prefer to use some variation to it. I'm not saying that we have to go to the extreme in all cases. I know that's just never going to happen. It wouldn't fly. I think there'd be some major backlash. But if we go back to the core tenets and what we're supposed to be looking at, the effective representation, when you compare the ability to get out and do that effective representation outside of the Legislature – you're going to your community halls and to all these things – it's much, much easier to do that in an urban setting than a riding that's six, seven hours wide.

**Mr. Evans:** Have you guys worked through the numbers? Have you done the densification and the population – just one moment, Chair, please – in terms of the various populations?

**Mr. Bishop:** We haven't done your work, where we're going around to each one, but, you know, basically what we're looking at is, instead of reducing a rural seat, keeping at least the same amount or adding one. It would be very small percentages to achieve that.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mr. Bishop, can I encapsulate your presentation this way, that we talked a good talk in the early part of our report, but we didn't deliver?

**Mr. Bishop:** You've done a great job on an impossible thing. We would like some changes.

**The Chair:** Is that fair, though?

**Mr. Bishop:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. And one of the ways we could have done better is utilize 15(2). You're right. We probably made a mistake by reducing our 15(2)s from two down to one when we have the capacity to do four. You're saying: look, be bold; use the target range, and stop taking ridings from outside the large urban centres.

**Mr. Bishop:** Yes, please.

**The Chair:** Okay. I'm a little confused on your hybrid position. Do you like them or you don't like them?

**Mr. Bishop:** Our position is that we're not a fan of the hybrid as much.

**The Chair:** Okay. Another word for that is "compromise." I mean, we need a lot of compromise. I appreciate the challenges, especially in the large metropolitan areas having hybrids now, but you will note in the report that we've had hybrids for years in multiple areas of the province. It is an option. It is one of only three options we have. One of the options is taking more ridings out of the rural areas. I hope you realize that we do try to delicately craft the hybrid situation.

I'm curious of your offer, and it's a comment I've – it's always bothered me because we get a lot of presentations on this. Economics and manufacturing and industry is not a factor in the legislation, but you've offered to give us data, as I understand it, in terms of the types of economies and economics that are happening in the rural areas. Do we reach out to you for that if we need some information?

**Mr. Bishop:** Absolutely. You can reach out to our staff or myself.

Part of that extra data that I gave you is just for that effective representation. Those are employers. Those are employees. These are things that really need to be considered by the MLA. Obviously, in the past several governments they've been interested in those figures.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Bishop. We kept you a little longer than normal.

**Mr. Bishop:** Happy to be here.

**The Chair:** We'll excuse you from the table. Please remain and hear presentations from other attendees.

Our next presenter is Mr. Yadvinder Bhardwaj.

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Good morning, commissioners.

**The Chair:** Good morning, sir. Please tell us where you live and what electoral division you wish to comment on.

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** I live in the riding of Edmonton-Meadows. I also serve in the riding of Edmonton-Meadows as the constituency manager for the Edmonton-Meadows riding. I have gone through the report. I'm here to talk about the Edmonton region and also a little bit about my riding.

**The Chair:** Okay. This is an old-fashioned PowerPoint, is it?

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Yes. I'm a bit old fashioned, too.

Good morning, commissioners. My name is Yadvinder Bhardwaj. I serve as the constituency manager of Edmonton-Meadows, a role that I have held since 2019. In this position I work daily with the residents across the riding on issues such as housing stability, immigration and settlement, access to health care, and support to seniors and newcomers. My work brings me into constant contact with families, community organizations, schools, and service providers. Because of this, I see very clearly how electoral boundaries shape people's access to representation. I see when boundaries provide clarity and when they create confusion. I see how cohesive communities strengthen engagement and how arbitrary splits can unintentionally discourage it. I'm here today as a public servant and also a constituent of a riding with lived, on-ground experience offering a community-based perspective in support of the commission's mandate of effective representation.

I would like to begin by sincerely thanking the commission for the depth, care, and transparency reflected in the 2025 interim report. Redistribution in a province experiencing rapid and uneven population growth is extraordinarily complex. The interim report demonstrates the commission's careful effort to balance population parity, geography, communities of interest, and long-term durability, all within the framework of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act and relevant case law.

I also appreciate the commission's effort to respect municipal boundaries, avoid unnecessary disruptions, and ensure Alberta's electoral map remains functional until the next redistribution cycle. My comments today are offered in alignment with those principles. These are intended to build upon the strong foundation you have already established.

The interim report clearly establishes that Edmonton and Calgary together account for nearly three-quarters of Alberta's population growth. The government of Alberta's population data further shows that between 2017 and 2025 Edmonton's population grew at an annual average of approximately 3.8 per cent compared to 2.58 of Calgary's. This tells us something important. Edmonton's growth is not temporary or speculative; it is structural and ongoing.

The interim report also highlights how much the average size of the electoral division has increased since the last distribution. In 2017 with 87 ridings the average population per riding was approximately 46,803 based on a provincial population of 4,071,875 people in our province. Under the current proposal with 85 ridings the average rises to approximately 54,929 people in every riding based on the provincial population of 4.9 million. This is a roughly 17 per cent increase in average constituency size. This matters because redistribution must be judged not only on whether it meets today's legal thresholds but on whether it is durable, whether it will continue to serve Albertans effectively until the next redistribution cycle.

9:45

Appendix E of the interim report shows Edmonton ridings have seven ridings exceeding positive 6 per cent variance above the provincial average compared to three ridings in Calgary, three in

central and rural Alberta, and none in northern Alberta. This concentration of high-variance ridings signals that population pressure in Edmonton is already more intense and less evenly distributed than elsewhere in the province. While the commission is legally permitted to justify variance under the Charter, the interim report itself makes clear that population parity remains a central component of effective representation.

For that reason, adding one additional riding in Edmonton is critical. It is preventative. It will reduce clustered variance, improve parity, and help ensure that today's map does not require early correction in the face of continued growth. This has practical implications for schools, health care access, infrastructure planning, MLA workload, and constituent ability.

The interim report acknowledges the challenges faced by rural MLAs, particularly those related to the long distances and geographical scales. Urban ridings face a different but equally real challenge. In dense and diverse urban ridings like Edmonton-Meadows MLAs regularly confront multiple simultaneous community events, school functions, cultural gatherings, and stakeholder meetings, often occurring within the same evening or weekend. From the constituency operation perspective, this creates intense scheduling pressure and limits an MLA's ability to be physically present across all the parts of the riding. Effective representation requires recognizing both forms of strain, geographical distance in rural Alberta and population intensity and diversity in the urban centres. An additional seat would directly improve MLA accessibility and responsiveness in these high-demand environments.

I would now like to speak about Edmonton-Meadows and the importance of keeping Larkspur within the riding. The commission emphasizes the need to preserve communities of interest, including shared services, transportation networks, cultural ties, and daily patterns of life. Larkspur clearly meets these criteria in Edmonton-Meadows. The neighbourhood shares schools, recreation facilities, commercial corridors, transit routes within the rest of the riding. Residents access the same service hubs, community leagues, and local institutions. Demographically Larkspur reflects the same family-oriented, multicultural, newcomer-rich profile as surrounding Edmonton-Meadows neighbourhoods. From the constituency office perspective, Larkspur residents identify as part of Edmonton-Meadows.

In the closing remarks I would like to thank the commission for the thoughtful work they have done and its commitment of democratic fairness. Based on the commission's own findings regarding population growth, variance, and durability, adding one additional riding would strengthen effective and durable representation. Keeping Larkspur within Edmonton-Meadows would preserve a clear, cohesive community of interest. These recommendations are fully aligned with the principles outlined in the interim report and with the commission's mandate.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to Albertans.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Bhardwaj. Quick question: if we are unable to add a further electoral division in Edmonton, do you still want Larkspur?

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Yes, I think.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Other questions, starting with Mr. Evans. One question per commissioner, please.

**Mr. Evans:** You heard the comments of the reeve from Wetaskiwin? Were you here for that?

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** No.

**Mr. Evans:** What are your thoughts in terms of the population range that we have to work with of between 41,000 approximately and 68,000 and the concept of densification of urban ridings to that higher threshold of 68,000?

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** I believe, as to the pattern which we have seen, the loss of consultation is happening in the urban centres, urban ridings, as compared to the rural ridings. While the Alberta government already has been putting efforts to bring in new immigrants to the rural ridings with different immigration programs, it hasn't resulted in any steep, exponential growth in the rural ridings, which we can see from immigration statistics. I closely worked with the immigration files in my ridings, and lots of people are moving from rural Alberta ridings into the urban centres and ridings like Edmonton-Meadows, because immigration draws are not coming up.

There's no liability for immigration in rural Alberta, so I think that from the perspective of working with the population range, I still believe that the Edmonton zone specifically has high variance as compared to – while the commission has tried to sell in other regions, including Calgary and rural Alberta, with the variance which is no further than plus 6 per cent, there's still a concentration of ridings which have 11 per cent, the four ridings which were gathered into positive 12 per cent instead of the five ridings which we had earlier. I'm not saying that we should bring that riding back, but seeing the concentration of the population in Edmonton, adding one more seat makes sense for me.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** No questions, but thank you for the excellent presentation. I appreciate that information.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much for your presentation, and I appreciate your remark that density isn't uniform, even in a city like Edmonton or Calgary. I mean, it's lumpy. That adds to the challenges, and your challenges, too, because your colleagues who are constit managers elsewhere in the city will face quite different patterns of density and communities of interest.

I wanted to refer you to the map. There are two areas that are not in your current interim map at the north where you've been speaking, Larkspur, and also at the far south corner. What do you say about that far south chunk just north of the Henday?

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** From the new boundaries which I've seen, a half portion of the Laurel community has brought in while seven neighbourhoods have been actually proposed to be taken out of Meadows. It's a big shuffle, but population-wise and demographic-wise, cultural ties are all intact. In perspective of Larkspur specifically, these people are all part of Meadows. I have been in the Larkspur neighbourhood of our riding. Specifically, all these people are dominantly South Asian, as compared to when we moved towards 34th street, towards the west. The population gets less concentrated as compared to the South Asian population of our riding, and our riding also happens to be one of the highest populated ridings with minorities in our province.

**Dr. Martin:** So you want everything east of 50th?

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Yes. Let me have a look at it.

**Dr. Martin:** This bit. Larkspur.

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Yes. That's the current riding, but I was talking to the perspective of the new interim proposed riding changes.

**Dr. Martin:** This is the interim. So you want this to be included with you?

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Yes.

**Dr. Martin:** But you're indifferent about this bit?

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** I mean, Laurel is a very big sector, and as I see, you have included that in the southeast corner of the riding, which also caters to the consistency with what you guys are trying to do, and I agree with what you have done so far in the bottom end of our riding. Also taking, for example, a neighbourhood like Kiniski Gardens, which I currently live in. It was part of Edmonton-Meadows. I will be part, myself, of Edmonton-Mill Woods now as compared to Meadows, but I still think that Larkspur, which is also very intact with the Tamarack area: it kind of makes sense to have them intact in the Larkspur area.

9:55

**Dr. Martin:** That'd make you over 60,000 people. Are you okay with that?

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** I mean, our riding: I don't know if you guys have considered the fact that Maple area is still under construction. We are increasing more people, and I totally understand that you're trying to balance the population, too, but I think while we are seeing the population stress, lots of these people call themselves part of Meadows. They're literally five minutes away from my constit office as compared to having to travel 20 minutes to be represented by the Edmonton-Mill Woods office currently. In the future, if it shifts, that could be a different scenario. But if we are seeing from the perspective of accessibility to the MLAs, there are lots of these people – students, immigrants, temporary foreign workers – who don't have cars. They have to commute for a small question around even health care. If they're travelling 20, 30 minutes in a car as compared on a bus, that's going to take you one and a half hours, as compared to 10 minutes on a bus to my office. It kind of still makes sense.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you.

I think you definitely hit on one of the big challenges that we have, which is trying to keep neighbourhoods together without overpopulating a constituency while also keeping folks together. Then, as I think Mr. Evans referenced, you know, we're also trying to balance out effective representation in all areas of the province and that reflects different challenges.

I guess what I'm curious about because a lot of the discussion we've had for areas outside of the larger centres is the challenge of being an MLA in a really big geographic area with relatively sparse population: you put something in your presentation that I want to hear a little bit more about, which is high MLA workload within a compact geography. So the challenges you face are not driving three hours to a meeting; they're different challenges, but challenges all the same. Can you maybe just tell me a little bit more about what that looks like?

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Yes. While I say in my presentation that I have been through the report, there was a very good example of, I think, a previous MLA, Littlewood, while she explains how working in a

rural riding is different than urban ridings. From the urban riding's perspective, due to the concentration and number of community organizations, schools, the community events happening, and due to the multicultural perspective of our ridings like Edmonton-Meadows, we just don't have pancake dinners. We've got Diwali. We've got Holi. We've got Ramadan coming in. Sikhs: we've got Nagar Kirtan coming in. All these are happening in just between 12 months.

For an MLA and his staff, sometimes – not sometimes; on a daily basis – we have to pick and choose between the events we have to go to, and so many people in our ridings, you know, feel that they are being neglected because we have to pick and choose based on urgency, who came first to invite us. Sometimes we have to also push some events back because we have been visiting these communities two times in a year to efficiently represent every constituent of our riding or these community organizations.

There was a line which I was reading through the interim report that in the urban ridings the local MLAs can rely on their colleagues to represent them, which is not the case. Technically speaking, as a staffer, while as southeast ridings – for example Edmonton-Meadows, Ellerslie, and Mill Woods – we all work together, but there's so much overlap between constituents. For example, constituents of Meadows go to Edmonton-Mill Woods because of a merger of the congregations. For example, temples, mosques, and Sikh Temples are concentrated in Mill Woods, but these are all people who live in our riding. So they want MLA Deol from Meadows, they want MLA Christina Gray from Mill Woods, all being present at these events. For example, if colleagues are working together and saying, "This time you go; next time I will go," the communities don't understand that fact, and everybody as an Albertan wants their MLA to be present at their event.

So that being said, it's a high-stress environment in urban ridings. Of course, I acknowledge the fact that in rural ridings the distance, the geographical barriers: these things all play a vital role in, you know, hindering the performance of an MLA, but I think in urban centres it's very important to keep these facts in mind.

**Mr. Clark:** That's helpful. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you for your very comprehensive presentation, Mr. Bhardwaj. Most appreciated. I'm going to excuse you from the table, and we'll deal with our next presenter. And thanks for the PowerPoint.

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thanks for your time.

**The Chair:** Mr. Ben Acquaye.  
Good morning.

**Mr. Acquaye:** Good morning.

**The Chair:** Please identify yourself and tell us what riding you live in or what electoral division you live in and which one you wish to comment on.

**Mr. Acquaye:** Thank you most kindly. My name is Ben Acquaye, and I will be speaking today about Edmonton-South West and the proposed Edmonton-West-Enoch ridings. I'll just set my little clock here so I'm mindful of the time.

Good morning, commissioners. You sought, you received advice, suggestions, and feedback from Albertans, and you did produce an organized and detailed report. For that I am grateful. As I said earlier, my name is Ben Acquaye. I am a father who lives in the current riding of Edmonton-South West. I'll be speaking today

about Edmonton-South West and the proposed Edmonton-West-Enoch ridings.

First, Edmonton-South West. During the first round, many, many speakers, and you've acknowledged a lot of that in your report, spoke about the rapid rise of the populations that make up Edmonton-South West, probably one of the fastest increases in population, from 45,901 all the way up to 78,000-plus since the previous redistricting. It appears that this above-average growth largely contributed to the decision to carve out Edmonton-West-Enoch.

Now, the Cree name for Enoch is Maskekosihk, and that translates as the people of the land of medicine. Now, within this new proposed riding is the Maskekosihk Trail, which connects to the Anthony Henday highway. To a large extent I agree with this move because of the sheer issue of numbers and the need to make sure ridings are fairly sized.

I wish that members of Enoch Cree Nation would have been able to comment on this development, as in bringing them into this proposed Edmonton-West-Enoch. I also wish that the inclusion was not made up purely because it made sense with the numbers but because it reflected the fact that this First Nation is really very integrated into the Edmonton community. In the absence of their, you know, contributions, I would really suggest that an effort is made to reach out to them so it doesn't feel like an imposition but it feels like: hey, we really need to hear your views on this matter because in our current climate, that really helps.

As a parent, our kids have spent a fair amount of time at Enoch Cree Nation playing hockey at the famous Twin Rinks of River Cree. This First Nation is very integrated into the economy, into the culture, and into the infrastructure of West Edmonton. This new riding will also see a lot of growth because we have a large number of developers currently building family homes of various kinds and a lot of business units. I think this new riding would allow us to work on issues that are common to all the communities, specifically new schools, a new community centre, and health care being top of the agenda. The relation between, you know, Cree Nation and Edmonton is strong, and for that reason, this new riding should work well.

**10:05**

Ultimately, I believe that these changes would allow for fair and effective representation. The effect on the neighbouring electoral divisions – Edmonton-West Henday, Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, Edmonton-West – will, in my opinion, remain largely minimal. They will continue to retain their numbers and the cohesiveness that they have largely enjoyed over time. Fairness, it appears to me and to you, as judged by your report, is a very important aspect of this process. Overall, I think it's a very careful balancing act. I think the map is fair, and it accommodates a lot of the reasonable suggestions, and your output shows that.

In the end, I want to quote this Cree saying. "Realize that we as human beings have been put on this earth for only a short time and that we must use this time to gain wisdom, knowledge, respect and the understanding for all human beings since we are all relatives." I admire the professionalism and the patience and the understanding you have demonstrated over time, and my hope is that we will continue to work together as one group of people.

I appreciate your time this morning, and thank you for the audience.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, sir.

Mr. Clark, any questions?



**Mr. Clark:** Thank you.

I appreciate your thoughtful submission, and thank you very much for being here. I'm curious about southwest Edmonton. Just to be clear, Edmonton-South West: you're generally in favour of the way we've drawn the boundaries. You feel like that's fair and appropriate.

If you've been listening in, I may ask similar questions of most of the presenters, I think. How do you feel about the importance or perhaps opportunity of using the city boundary of Edmonton as a logical boundary with the exception of Enoch Cree, as you've suggested, whereas areas like perhaps Devon or somewhere like that, that potentially could be blended in with Edmonton: do you feel like that's a natural fit, or do you feel like those are different places that probably should be in their own constituencies?

**Mr. Acquaye:** I agree with the latter view. I think they have a lot of things in common there. Therefore, their challenges and issues will be slightly different, or perhaps in some areas, when it comes to density, schools, and so on, significantly different, from the Edmonton challenges that we face. It would be best that they are left to their own and Edmonton is also left to its own, so that we can hone in on the issues that really affect Edmontonians, especially in the southwest part.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Acquaye:** You're welcome, sir.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much.

Thank you for your remarks about the Edmonton-West-Enoch configuration. The former chief recently was making some remarks. Somebody was criticizing him for something outrageous, so he came back with a long story about the success of the Enoch Cree Nation, in particular the casino and entertainment centre, about which he said that there are approximately 200 people employed there that are members of the nation but over 800 who are members and live in Edmonton proper.

**Mr. Acquaye:** Yes.

**Dr. Martin:** It speaks directly to your remark about the integration there being a fairly easy and direct one. It's the biggest casino in western Canada. It's one of the best entertainment centres, sports centres, and so on. It's everything that you'd expect from an urban city to provide.

I'd also just like to remark on – I apologize for having not followed Whitemud Creek, but it's a population issue. Also, Edmonton-South is growing even more rapidly than Edmonton-South West, so the next commission will probably have to look at this bit rather carefully if growth patterns continue.

That's it for me. I'm very grateful for you coming to present today.

**Mr. Acquaye:** Thank you, Dr. Martin. I appreciate your comments.

**Mrs. Samson:** Mr. Acquaye, it's a pleasure to have you here today. I don't have a question per se but more like a comment. As we travelled around the province to do this work, we didn't have enough input from the Indigenous population, and I'm sorry for that because we certainly can't speak for them. But I can tell you this. We did have a written submission from someone who lived in the Enoch band who wanted to be part of Edmonton. Then, once the interim report came out, we had lots of positive feedback about that

particular inclusion, so I was pleased for that even though the input was minimal.

**Mr. Acquaye:** Thank you most kindly. I actually have family members who work at the casino, at the River Cree, and this sentiment is common, but there's a difference between a common sentiment and somebody stepping up and making an official presentation, which kind of really adds a lot of value and credibility to the sentiment. But it is noted, absolutely.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**Mr. Acquaye:** You're most welcome.

**The Chair:** Good point.

Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** No questions. Thank you for coming out, though. I appreciate your submissions.

**Mr. Acquaye:** You're very kind, and I appreciate your time and your efforts here.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Acquaye. I'm going to excuse you from the table, but please remain and listen to the other presentations if you're able.

**Mr. Acquaye:** Yeah. I just have to get some more money on the parking meter.

I appreciate your time. Merci beaucoup.

**The Chair:** Okay. Our next presenter is Roger Gunn. Please identify yourself and tell us which riding you live in and which riding or electoral division you wish to comment on.

**Mr. Gunn:** As you mentioned, my name is Roger Gunn, and I live in Edmonton-Rutherford. I have copies of my one-pager here if you wish to follow along as I speak. First of all, thank you very much, members of the commission, for allowing me to present my thoughts on the boundaries of the riding of Edmonton-Rutherford. I'm impressed with the work of the commission to date and am convinced that your final report will be fair and reasonable.

As I mentioned, my name is Roger Gunn. I've been a resident of Edmonton-Rutherford for over 35 years. I'm now a retiree. Over that period of 35 years I've noticed tremendous growth within Edmonton-Rutherford. There have been numerous developments happening over the years, and the riding has grown in population upwards as opposed to outwards. I've also witnessed growth and changes in diversity of the community of Edmonton-Rutherford, and Edmonton-Rutherford continues to have one of the highest levels of education of any riding within the province.

My proposal to you today is that the electoral boundaries of Edmonton-Rutherford, which were changed, I believe, in 2017 with the addition of Twin Brooks – my question is: do the boundaries need to be expanded again in 2026? I think not.

The current boundaries are Whitemud Drive in the north, Gateway Boulevard in the east, Anthony Henday to the south, and Whitemud Creek to the west. These are natural boundaries, which should not be touched. The interim report of the commission suggested southern boundaries be extended to Ellerslie Road. Part of the rationale, I understand, for suggesting this change was to bring the population of the riding closer to the average.

It's my proposal that the present boundaries do not need to be expanded because of recently proposed new development projects and current development projects within the existing boundaries of Edmonton-Rutherford. These housing units will take the population

of Edmonton-Rutherford, in my view, over the riding average population level. Therefore, the riding is being built up and not out. That's the city's policy. It has been for a number of years, minimizing urban sprawl by looking for opportunities where areas of the community can be further developed with infill, if you will.

**10:15**

Now, let me give you some examples of what I'm referring to. At 245 Saddleback Road, close to where I live, the city has announced an affordable housing project that will have 158 affordable units. There's another affordable housing project under way near the Keheewin school, and this project by Civida calls for 132 to 136 units, both apartments and town homes. Century Park, near my home, continues to be built up. Two new eight-storey condo buildings have recently been constructed, and they're estimated to house up to 150 new units. Lastly, in the Steinhauer area, a new housing development was announced about six weeks ago. This development, located at 106th Street and 31st Avenue, will amount to two 22-storey buildings, containing 750 units, and another half a dozen four- or six-storey buildings, which will contain roughly 300 units.

In conclusion, the total new units that I've referred to total approximately 1,500 units. That will translate, I believe, into some 3,000 new voters in Edmonton-Rutherford. Because of this new development, Edmonton-Rutherford will reach and perhaps surpass the average level of population within a riding. So with the new development building up, as I mentioned, there will be no need to have changes to the boundaries of the current Edmonton-Rutherford riding.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Gunn. That on-the-ground information gives us a picture of what may be happening in the years ahead.

I'll open it up for questions from the panel. Mr. Evans, any questions or comments of Mr. Gunn?

**Mr. Evans:** Do we have the copy? Just so that we know where the developments are that you're talking about. I think those are new. Thank you.

I don't have any questions. Thank you very much for this new information, and I'll certainly take it under consideration.

**Mr. Gunn:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Mr. Gunn, thank you for coming out today. That's very important, to hear from people who live right in the area. To our defence, if that would be the right word to use, how this came to be – in a perfect world we would have endeared ourselves to you by keeping it the same. But because the development in the south was so great and the numbers were so high – for example, Edmonton-South was sitting at almost 82,000; population doesn't disappear – we added the riding and moved it around. The cities, both the capital and Calgary, were extremely difficult to manage, I want you to know, but we will give every consideration to your words today, and I thank you for that.

**Mr. Gunn:** Thank you very much.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much, Mr. Gunn. One misnomer in your presentation: I agree that 1,500 housing units, roughly speaking, is 3,000 more people; they're not all voters.

**Mr. Gunn:** No.

**Dr. Martin:** Edmonton-Rutherford, although it has a large number of academic professors living in it, hence its high academic

qualification rate, also has a very large number of students. We have to distinguish between voters and population because a lot of those students are foreign students, of course.

My colleague's point is really key to our thinking on the matter and why you ended up with Ellerslie as a southern boundary. The population growth is much larger to the south of the Henday than it is to the north of it. Period. That was significant for us.

Your riding, Edmonton-Rutherford, is laced with very major transportation routes, and one of them actually continues down at least as far as Ellerslie Road whereas in this instance, strangely enough, the Henday is a much less permeable barrier. What I'm trying to say is that it's easy to drive underneath the Henday and access the shopping centres that are now clustered all along Ellerslie Road. We thought, both on the population grounds and also on access to services, that this was a reasonable thing to do.

Every part of Edmonton will grow. It's about which grows at what rate. As a previous presenter said, the density of population is lumpy, not uniform.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Clark. Or Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** I like that you keep calling me that. That's great. That's fantastic.

Yeah. I'd only add maybe a little bit of statistical context. I think, as you can see, one of our grand challenges with the significant growth in the south part of Edmonton – it's not that Edmonton-Rutherford isn't growing. It's just not growing relatively as quickly as other parts of Edmonton and other parts of Alberta. Edmonton-Rutherford grew 11 per cent from 2017 to our latest data that we're using in 2024. The average in Alberta is 20 per cent. Edmonton-Rutherford did grow; it just didn't grow as quickly. If we were to add 3,000 more population, that's roughly 5 per cent on the 58,000 that we've proposed. That's still probably in accordance with or maybe even less than what you'd see a little south of you.

I would respectfully disagree that voters are the ones that count. I think generally we are looking at population. Even folks who don't vote – kids or a foreign student, new Canadians and new immigrants – would also require representation by their MLA. We'd sort of use that as our relevant data point.

You know, I appreciate your submission very much, and the information is really helpful. I'm sure this isn't the only growth that we will see in Edmonton-Rutherford. It's a relative game as much or more as it is an absolute challenge that we have here. Yeah. I just maybe wanted to give you some statistical background on that as well.

Thank you.

**Mr. Gunn:** I appreciate that. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Gunn. I'll excuse you from the table, but please remain if you can if you don't need to plug your meter, like the previous person.

**Mr. Gunn:** Thanks again for the opportunity of being here.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Our next presenter is Sandra Houston. Sandra Houston? No. Okay. That's relatively short.

Gale Davy.

**Ms Davy:** Hon. Justice Miller, Dr. Martin, Mrs. Sampson, Mr. Evans, and Mr. Clark, thank you for the opportunity to be here. My name is Gale Davy. I live in the Edmonton-Gold Bar riding, but I'm not here, actually, to address a specific riding. I'm here to alert the

commission to a problem that I see with the 2021 census data that I believe must be taken into account in order for the commission to meet its objectives of creating electoral divisions that fall into the population parameters and ensure that every Albertan is fairly and proportionally represented in the Legislature.

Now, historically StatsCan censuses have had issues accurately counting postsecondary students in the riding in which they attend school and live. This issue has been recognized by past Alberta electoral boundaries commissions and other provincial commissions. Of course, the timing of the 2021 census, with a snapshot date of May 11, exacerbated this historic issue. It was conducted, of course, during COVID-19 shutdowns, including the on-campus closure of the University of Alberta. The result of this census timing is a significant undercounting of postsecondary students in the provincial ridings of Edmonton-Strathcona and Edmonton-Riverview, undercounting that exceeds the undercounts acknowledged by previous commissions.

**10:25**

Between the 2011 census and the 2021 census domestic enrolment at the University of Alberta increased by nearly 2,000 students. Domestic enrolment on May 11, 2021, was 29,506. Interestingly, today that figure is 37,902, so that is an even greater increase. Somewhere between 3,000 and 4,000 domestic students typically live on main campus, and that corresponds to census dissemination area 48111319. Now, while these residents are among the most likely to be missed by the census, regardless of COVID, the 2021 census population for this dissemination area dropped dramatically compared to the 2011 count, which was, in fact, down 54 per cent.

But the discrepancies between the expected census and what was recorded for the 2021 census go beyond missing on-campus residents. The neighbourhoods immediately adjacent to the main campus of the University of Alberta – these neighbourhoods include Windsor Park, Garneau, Queen Alexandra, McKernan, and Belgravia – are typically home to thousands of U of A students and their family members. According to the city of Edmonton these neighbourhoods saw significant increases in dwelling units from 2011 to 2021, including basement and garage suites, infills, and construction of multi-unit buildings, including several buildings of six storeys.

Now, census tract 23 includes the immediately adjacent neighbourhood of Garneau. According to the 2021 census this census tract had one of the largest declines in population in Alberta between the 2016 and 2021 census at negative 19.8 per cent, losing 1,200 residents. Yet according to the city of Edmonton Garneau is one of the mature neighbourhoods undergoing the most intense densification in the city. Between the 2016 and 2021 census Garneau added 630 net dwelling units. Given the decline in residential vacancy rates in Edmonton over the past several years with the single exception, of course, being that second quarter of 2021, when those COVID restrictions were in effect and the census was conducted, we would expect the population of census tract 23 to have increased versus the 2016 and 2011 numbers. Instead, as we see, that 2021 census recorded a decline of nearly 20 per cent.

We see the same thing in other neighbourhoods near the University of Alberta main campus as well. Looking at just the immediate neighbourhood surrounding the University of Alberta that is within one kilometre of campus and just including those neighbourhoods south of the North Saskatchewan River, not including on-campus housing, city of Edmonton data shows more than 1,000 dwelling units added between the 2011 and the 2021 censuses, yet the 2021 data shows fewer residents compared to 2011.

The impact of the COVID census timing on the undercount of postsecondary students can also be seen, albeit with smaller numbers, in the dissemination areas including the U of A's Campus Saint-Jean and The King's University, which are both within the Edmonton-Gold Bar electoral district. Those are dissemination areas 48111312 and 48112107.

Given the historic issue StatsCan and the electoral boundary commissions have already acknowledged previously with counting postsecondary students, given the increase in enrolment at the University of Alberta, given the intense densification increase in dwelling units seen in the neighbourhoods immediately surrounding the University of Alberta main campus over the past decade, the only rational explanation for the decrease in populations in these neighbourhoods is the timing of the census.

The discrepancy between the expected population based on enrolment numbers and densification versus the 2021 census numbers far exceeds any undercount of postsecondary students acknowledged by previous commissions. I estimate the actual population of the Edmonton-Riverview and Edmonton-Strathcona ridings under the current boundaries, not proposed boundaries, to be anywhere between 2,500 to 4,000 more than what was recorded in that snapshot, and for Edmonton-Gold Bar maybe somewhere around 500 more than what was recorded.

Now, I'm sure this commission employs excellent geographers and demographers, and I'm sure if they closely examine the dwelling unit data compiled by the city of Edmonton versus the census data, they will reach the same conclusion that I did. I did not look at neighbourhoods around other campuses in the province, but I would urge the professionals working with this commission to take this into account looking at those as well. We've heard a bit about how the census showed urban areas losing population, sort of the hollowing out or what they call the doughnut effect, but I believe that this is at least in part a mirage created by the unique timing of the 2021 census.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much. It's perfect timing. You're right under the wire. You bring to our attention a very novel point we've not had addressed to us yet, but you will know that we have not relied exclusively on 2021 StatsCan data. You didn't mention anything about the work of the Office of Statistics and Information that works to if not quarterly, monthly update Stats Canada's numbers. Would they have not caught the anomaly that you've just described to us?

**Ms Davy:** I don't know the answer to that. I know that when I first looked at this, there was nothing from StatsCan about this, which surprised me, but I don't know, if you look currently at the current numbers compared to the StatsCan numbers from 2021, whether this population discrepancy is that obvious.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Okay. Well, we'll be sure to follow up with OSI. Mr. Clark, any questions?

**Mr. Clark:** No, but thank you very much.

**Ms Davy:** You're welcome.

**Dr. Martin:** We're comfortable with our numbers. We don't rely on the 2021 census. We rely on, as the judge said, quarterly updates by the Office of Statistics and Information, and it's done at the dissemination area level. There are over 6,000 of those in the province. Those people stay busy. It's quite clear that any census is a lagging indicator. It's not bleeding-edge empirical data by any stretch. It never can be. Not only have the provincial figures been

updated very regularly, but they're constantly updating the estimates that originally surrounded not only the '21 census but their own estimates. So we're relying on better numbers than, you know, is ostensibly the case. The variation that you point to is probably true if we were relying entirely on the very difficult circumstances during the census collection year of 2021, but we're not.

**Ms Davy:** So my question would be: how are those updates – are they missing students as well? This is a fairly acknowledged issue.

**Dr. Martin:** No. Universities, as you well know, keep very good records on their students and where they live, and it's an easy task. It has long been the norm in university administrative management at the registrar level to track their students by postal code, so that gives you a very good idea right down to the block of where those people are.

**Ms Davy:** So those additional 8,000 students would be accounted for in the data that you're looking at right now, that you're using right now?

**Dr. Martin:** Yes.

**Ms Davy:** Okay.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. It's a marvellous and thankless task that census people engage in, and we recognize that, but we've chosen a data set and a timing of it that is high probabilistic rather than low and queasy probable, all right?

Thank you.

**Ms Davy:** Sure.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** No questions, but thanks for that alert to us. We'll follow it up.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** No questions, but thank you. You know what? I'm gladdened by the fact that you read the report and scrutinized it and you felt compelled to provide input on it. Thank you. I appreciate that.

**Ms Davy:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. You're excused, Ms Davy. Thank you.

We're just going to have a very brief five-, 10-minute break, and we'll be back here at 10:45.

[The hearing adjourned from 10:34 a.m. to 10:41 a.m.]

**The Chair:** Okay. Ladies and gentlemen, we have a fairly full second half of the morning, so we'll reconvene.

Our next presenter is Mr. Kyle Kasawski, MLA for – I should know it.

**Mr. Kasawski:** Sherwood Park.

**The Chair:** Sherwood Park. The mighty hamlet.

**Mr. Kasawski:** That's right. All roads lead there.

Sorry; I wasn't queued up. I'll be ready, though.

Justice Miller, I appreciate you wearing the Alberta tartan tie.

**The Chair:** Not everybody recognizes that. Being in the capital, I thought I should dress appropriately.

**Mr. Kasawski:** Well done.

Well, I think I'll just take this in an esoteric, theoretical way of going. I don't know if I have a lot of data. You guys have crunched a great deal of data, so I thank the panel for its continued work. I've reviewed the interim report. By my assessment you've taken your role and your mandate for the Electoral Boundaries Commission very seriously. I thank you for your service to Albertans through this independent electoral boundary review process.

I'd probably like to use my time to talk about the context that you operate within and bring it back to a discussion on the electoral boundaries connected to the community of Sherwood Park in the specialized municipality of Strathcona county. In my opinion, here is important context since the electoral boundaries were last updated in 2017; in fact, context since the start of the time period that this electoral boundaries commission held hearings, collected input, and created its interim report. I feel our democracy is under threat in Alberta. You're part of the operation that protects and facilitates our democracy. The independent offices of the Legislature that keep our democracy alive in Alberta have been weakened, pummelled, and watered down by the current government and its representatives.

Since 2017 the election office found fault with the way the UCP leadership contest was run; the elections officer was replaced. The Ethics Commissioner found a Premier had breached the ethics rules, and the Ethics Commissioner was replaced. The Legislature's rules for gifts were found to be inconvenient to the government; the rules of gifts were changed. Instead of having the Ethics Commissioner determine what is an acceptable gift for an MLA to receive, the government assigned that role to the Premier's chief of staff, a political appointee. The Auditor General has asked for an extension on his contract to complete his investigation into the health care procurement scandal. His request was denied by this government, and resources to the Auditor General office were slashed.

**The Chair:** Mr. Kasawski, we have enough challenges in this commission. I'm not sure the relevance of a lot of that.

**Mr. Kasawski:** It's very relevant in my opinion. The independent elections office of the government: you're an extension of that. I just want to urge you to continue the good work you have done.

**The Chair:** Yeah. We're an independent commission.

**Mr. Kasawski:** And you have done good work, and you've taken your role very seriously. My urging is for you to continue to take that role very seriously. You've been asked in the role to recommend the electoral boundaries for Albertans that will provide Albertans with the opportunity to elect their provincial representative. You're part of the independent operations that preserve and protect and facilitate our democracy. You've taken this role very seriously, and I urge you to continue to do so.

Specific to Sherwood Park my recommendation and perspective that I presented previously has not changed since the creation of your interim report. I presented my thoughts to you previously. Sherwood Park is a unique community that deserves its own representative. The last time I was before you, I brought up the experience of the federal electoral boundaries commission. It drafted an interim report recommending a Sherwood Park-Beaumont riding. It was met with push-back from the community of Sherwood Park. You have effectively created a Sherwood Park-Beaumont electoral district in your interim report. I expect you will again receive push-back from the people of Sherwood Park. I do maintain my position that there should be only one riding called

Sherwood Park. You've recognized in the interim report that it is a growing community and adjusted its electoral boundaries accordingly.

I welcome questions or discussion with the commission. Thank you.

**The Chair:** So you like what we did?

**Mr. Kasawski:** I feel that in the context of Sherwood Park you ...

**The Chair:** I mean with regard to Sherwood Park.

**Mr. Kasawski:** Yeah. I think you really understood where we have growth going in the community, and there are good ways to grow it into the north. I feel that was good. Then I think the neighbourhood of Hillshire is also being added. I think that's a good addition. There's always going to be the question of why Heritage Hills gets cut into it, which you can see on the map is just kind of a little block that comes off Clover Bar Road, but it's still a part of Sherwood Park. I would encourage you to go all the way to highway 21 and call it Sherwood Park, but I understand that you have to spread some of the good people of Sherwood Park to other ridings.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** No, no questions. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Yeah.

Thank you for coming today. We got a lot of comments on Heritage Hills. I'm not familiar with your fine community. I'm from Sylvan Lake. What are your thoughts on Heritage Hills? Take it? Put it back in?

**Mr. Kasawski:** Yeah. I mean, within Sherwood Park on the eastern border there's a boundary. Clover Bar Road has been sort of a clean delineation in the previous, 27th iteration of the boundary. On the east side of Clover Bar Road are neighbourhoods that go all the way to highway 21. It's fully urbanized. The neighbourhoods are maybe slightly distinguishable between each other because they were developed at different times as subdivisions. I don't think the character of each neighbourhood is unique in any way from the other that dramatically, that it would say that, you know, Heritage Hills is definitely a part of Sherwood Park but not a part of Strathcona-Sherwood Park. I imagine it was moving population around and just finding a spot.

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Kasawski:** Yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** You nailed it. That's exactly how the Heritage Hills bit came. I'm ashamed to admit it. It wasn't a particularly intellectually sound manoeuvre, but it was late in the day. Of course, you know, the population figures are a significant issue, and as you well know, it's not paramount necessarily, but it's certainly one of them. I'm encouraged by your remarks about what we're suggesting as we go further north. I went and I've driven around the new neighbourhood north of the greenhouses, and I'm shocked by how rapidly that neighbourhood has grown. When I went there in September, there were actually people watering their brand new turf in front of their houses, which is a sure sign of home ownership pride, but it's growing very, very fast. Could you comment on your expectations for its further growth?

**Mr. Kasawski:** I've also been very surprised by the growth of that. If you look at one neighbourhood of Cambrian, I think there was a show home or two and seven houses in the last election. Now I think there are over 400 homes in that neighbourhood. Then if we go north into the Mattamy development, it's also growing very widely. There's a nice delineation to the north with the township road that builds on that bridge that connects into the city of Edmonton, so it seems like a nice growth in addition to Sherwood Park. I expect, if the growth continues at this rate, you know, by the time this commission sits again, it'll be fully developed neighbourhoods in that area.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Wright – or Mr. ...

**Mrs. Samson:** Mr. Right? I want to be called that.

**The Chair:** I don't know what – sorry.

**Mr. Clark:** It's been a long couple of weeks. That's all right. It's all right.

Yeah. I think my question on Heritage Hills has been asked and answered, so I won't ask that. I mean, one of the struggles we have – I'm curious. I know there is, it sounds like, a lot of growth happening. If you were here earlier this morning, a lot of the question is not absolute growth but relative growth. How quickly are you growing relative to other parts of the province or other parts even just of Edmonton or a region? Part of the struggle with Sherwood Park and Strathcona-Sherwood Park is that while they have grown in absolute terms, relative to the rest of the province they're growing at about half the rate, sort of 7 or 10 per cent versus about 20 for the rest of the province. I guess the real question I have is: do you feel like that is about to change and the Sherwood Park area in Strathcona county will start to grow at a greater rate than the rest of the province or the rest of Edmonton, or is that sort of relative ratio, in your opinion, likely to continue as it has in the last seven or eight years?

**10:50**

**Mr. Kasawski:** Yeah, and I think that's going to be a question about the density of the development going in the areas that have been zoned for development, and I don't have the answer to that question. I would look at the type of houses that are being built in the new neighbourhoods to the north. I don't think we would reach the 20 per cent. I don't think that would be – if that's what the growth rate you're seeing in other neighbourhoods is.

**Mr. Clark:** So the type of growth in Strathcona county, Sherwood Park tends to be somewhat, not exclusively, single family. But is it fair to say that it's generally a little lower density than you might see in Edmonton?

**Mr. Kasawski:** I would say that, and I would say that the current mayor is very fond of that, too, so the council has kind of a unified support on that.

**Mr. Clark:** That's really helpful. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Kasawski:** Just one question for me then: how did Beaumont end up in this? I forewarned you. How did Beaumont end up in Strathcona-Sherwood Park?

**Mr. Clark:** Cascading. I mean, yeah.

**The Chair:** Dominoes, cascade.

**Mr. Clark:** Every change you make has a ripple effect. So then as you try to solve one, you look and you go, “Oops, we’ve just created this enormous – okay, well, that doesn’t work,” and then you move something and you go, “Wait a minute; now that’s too small,” or “These things don’t belong together.” So you’re dealing with a series of imperfect options, and you try to choose the least worst. But fair to say that we did receive a significant amount of feedback on Beaumont, so we’ll certainly consider.

**Mr. Kasawski:** Sure.

**Dr. Martin:** Of the 1,100 submissions we received in response to the interim report, we had over 150 say, “Don’t split Beaumont” and/or “We don’t want Beaumont in the county.” So we heard that part loud and clear. It’s thrust back in our lap.

**The Chair:** Mr. Kasawski, just looking at the numbers, you should be happy with Sherwood Park. We’re less than 300 over the average. I mean, you’re right almost in the sweet spot, but I want to address something: your opening comments about reminding us of our independent status. We’ve heard similar submissions in Calgary and in southwestern Alberta, Edmonton: yeah, you got it kind of right. But we’ve heard lots of submissions that we didn’t, and that we haven’t used our legislative authority in many ways to make the changes and to try to meet the disparity. So I don’t want you to say, if our final report is different from the interim, that we’re not independent. We have had to wrestle with tons of issues. I just want you to have that message back.

**Mr. Kasawski:** I receive that.

**The Chair:** Okay. Somebody in Calgary described our job as hugging a cactus. I would like to go plural on that: hugging cacti.

**Mr. Kasawski:** That’s good.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Thanks for your commendation on the one we did get right.

**Mr. Kasawski:** Good. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you. I’ll excuse you, but please remain to hear the other submissions if you’re able.

**Mr. Kasawski:** Yeah. Cheers.

**The Chair:** Priya Usman? Hello again.

**Ms Usman:** Hello.

**The Chair:** You presented last time.

**Ms Usman:** Yes, I did.

**The Chair:** Please tell us again what electoral division you are in and which one you’d like to speak to.

**Ms Usman:** Well, I live in Edmonton-Decore, but I’m speaking for all of Edmonton today.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Ms Usman:** Thank you.

All right. Good morning. My name is Priya Usman. I’m a 20-year-old university student, and I was born and raised here in Edmonton, amiskwaciwāskahikan, Treaty 6 territory. I’m here today presenting in front of the commission for the second time

because I believe in democracy. Specifically, I believe in creating a sustainable democracy for the years to come.

I’d like to start by recognizing the work that this commission has already done with the new proposed electoral map. In the first round of public consultations, myself and many others urged the commission to respect city limits and keep like communities together. In the case of Edmonton, the municipal boundaries were for the most part respected. So thank you for that. I believe this is one of the many steps on the path to ensuring that we can create and maintain a healthy democracy for ourselves and for the future of this province.

I would now like to take a moment to share my perspective as a university student. I am so thrilled to have the opportunity to study in my home city; however, this is not the case for many people. Whether it’s to take a one-of-a-kind program at NAIT, to attend the only francophone campus in western Canada, or to enrol in one of the many programs that place the University of Alberta among the top universities in the country, many young adults and families are choosing to move to Edmonton for the exceptional educational opportunities. It is, therefore, without a doubt that a new electoral map must take into consideration the growing number of students coming here to make Edmonton their home.

Next I would like to speak to the ongoing population growth and densification efforts all over Edmonton. Overall, it is clear that Edmonton is experiencing a continuous increase in population. As such, the municipality is responding with rezoning bylaws, housing projects, and more. This is allowing for densification, especially in more mature neighbourhoods. As someone who has lived in Edmonton their whole life and who travels all over the city, I can truly say that there is nowhere in Edmonton that is untouched by the steady stream of newcomers. Whether it is the new apartment complexes in the field behind my uncle’s house in Clareview, the ongoing infill in Bonnie Doon that I see on my way to school every day, the progressing construction popping up every week when I grab groceries in the northwest corner of the city, or the new duplexes on the way to my brother’s soccer on the south side, I see our growth, I see our evolution, and I know that this is just the beginning.

So with all that in mind I therefore strongly believe that it would be in the best interest of all Edmontonians and in the best interest of a sustainable representative democracy to have another seat accorded to Edmonton on the new electoral boundaries map. As it is, the populations of most Edmonton ridings are above the provincial average. And with the aforementioned density and housing projects, I believe it is more than reasonable to expect these numbers to continue to increase rather than stabilize or even fade out in the next eight to 10 years. Thus, an additional Edmonton riding would prove to be a logical choice for maintaining a healthy representative democracy.

All in all, I would like to thank the commission for the work they’ve done thus far for our democracy. Moving forward, I would request that the commission allot Edmonton an additional seat so as to better reflect the ongoing population growth that will continue to rise between now and the next redrawing of the map.

In closing, my presentation today is not just about drawing a map for the next election. This presentation is about shaping our democracy for the next decade and building a strong, sustainable, democratic legacy that we can be proud of. I appreciate your time and consideration. Thank you. Hay-hay. Merci.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms Usman. Where should we take that riding from?

**Ms Usman:** Outside of Edmonton.

**The Chair:** Calgary?

**Ms Usman:** I don't know about Calgary. I'm not familiar with their municipal layouts.

**The Chair:** Okay. I'm teasing a little bit, but that's our question.

Mr. Clark, any questions or comments?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah.

That's exactly, I think, the challenge that we face, but I think you make an interesting point, and I've said this a number of times if you've been here this morning. It's far more than just a mathematical exercise. We're not just simply going by, you know – as Justice Miller said, it's not just one person, one vote; it's effective representation. I'll start with a brief statistic, and then I'll ask maybe a more general question. As it stands, Edmonton is somewhat on average, as you say, larger by upwards of about 1,000 people per constituency than the average. The challenge we have is that we're already starting to, as has happened historically, reduce some of the numbers and increase the size of some of the constituencies outside of the major city. But maybe if you can tell me, and you touched on some of it in your presentation: how would you define a community of interest in the city of Edmonton as distinct from other parts of the province? Or do you think they're actually quite similar?

11:00

**Ms Usman:** I think if we want to talk in terms of, like, you know, maintaining a healthy, representative democracy, it's important to keep Edmontonians together in their communities as best as possible, as is done here in the proposed map. I think that something that distinguishes perhaps Edmontonians from those who are living just outside of Edmonton and those who are living outside of Edmonton, obviously, from those in the city is perhaps access to resources and just the lifestyle.

For example, in Edmonton, you know, we have all the transit and you might be confined to your walkable neighbourhood and similar resources and your school community and your larger community, work community, family communities, et cetera, whereas I do believe that outside of Edmonton, you have a bit more – it's more spread out. People are having to travel more often. I think that just reflects that their needs and their lifestyles are just a bit different than those who are living in the city.

**Mr. Clark:** Great. Thank you. I appreciate your being here and thanks again for submitting today.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you. You mentioned in passing that you yourself live in Edmonton-Decore, and I take it that you take transit to go to the university?

**Ms Usman:** I drive.

**Dr. Martin:** Oh. You drive. Well, you're brave because finding a parking spot at the university is almost as bad as going to the hospital, but your point is well taken. You know, students live all over the city and outside the city for that matter. Sherwood Park has a regular bus route that takes it to MacEwan and to the U of A, for example. Of course, then, the students are everywhere across the city, particularly along major transit routes. Do you see the Edmonton-Strathcona riding as too small?

**Ms Usman:** I'm going to be honest. I know that there are a lot of things that go into how big or small a riding is, so I don't know if I could really speak to that. I think just in general it's important to consider the amount of students that are in that area and that could be coming into that area, not necessarily just in Edmonton-Strathcona around the University of Alberta campus but by MacEwan, by NAIT, and all over the city, actually.

**Dr. Martin:** Again, I'm dwelling on this point. If we're going to put an extra riding into Edmonton, I mean, the ripple effects of that are going to be very significant. There's no obvious way to answer your plea. Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation. I don't have any questions at this time. Thank you.

**Mr. Evans:** Do you find there's any utility in densifying the population of the inner city ridings? We have a population range of between 41,000 to 68,000. Is there utility in densifying those populations in the urban centres?

**Ms Usman:** I don't know if I could really speak to that. I'm not exactly someone who has a lot of experience talking about urban planning and those sorts of things.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you. Those are my questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you again for presenting, Ms Usman. Much appreciated.

**Ms Usman:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** How's your year going?

**Ms Usman:** Yeah. It's going well. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Good. Okay. You're excused. Please remain, if you can, to hear other presenters.

Our next presenter is Irene McDermott. Good morning.

**Ms McDermott:** Good morning.

**The Chair:** Please identify yourself and tell us which electoral division you are from and which one you're commenting on.

**Ms McDermott:** My name is Irene McDermott. I live in Edmonton-Strathcona, but I'm commenting on Edmonton in general with some specifics about Strathcona and the old Riverview.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute. I also have a strong sense of the need for democracy and democratic processes. I submitted a written statement in December to you, and I am going to reiterate some of my points of that in addition.

I grew up in Sherwood Park. I raised my family in Lansdowne, Malmo Plains, lived in Vancouver for about 10 years, came back to a very different city and moved into Ritchie.

I appreciate the work that you've put into the interim report. In my career I undertook a lot of provincial reviews, so I know about hugging a cactus, as you said, and trying to take divergent positions, ideas, all the geographic considerations into account and trying to come up with a coherent report. I also appreciate that you had specifications in legislation, and I appreciate what you did in the interim report. I think the principle of effective representation was recognized and the rapid growth in Edmonton was also recognized. I also like that you respected municipal boundaries. However, I have some points that I wanted to raise about Edmonton.

The first is, I think, the need to recognize overall growth and continued growth in Edmonton. Since 2017 the Edmonton city itself, not metro, has increased by close to 28 per cent, depending on whose figures you use, but it's pretty well that, whereas Alberta overall has raised only by about 15 per cent. We had 20 seats in 2017, and now the interim report gives us 21, and I am concerned about growth.

I also want to talk about voter parity and expected population growth. I noticed in the interim report, on page 22, that there was recognition that there needs to be – I'll take the quote, "urged caution before approaching or exceeding the 25% variance from provincial averages." In the interim report for the ridings four of the ridings in Edmonton are already at 25 per cent variance above the average and three are close to 9 per cent. Another three are at 6 per cent. There are only 10 that are around the actual average and only one that's below, and that has distinct geographic boundaries. That's Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Most ridings in Edmonton still have a lot of potential for growth. Other than Calgary, for the rest of the province except for Red Deer-South, which has around 7 per cent variance above, all other ridings are lower and also have less expected growth. So that is a concern of mine.

Then another point I want to make is kind of to debunk that thing about the core. I've heard other speakers speak about that this morning, but I think the rate of growth – I appreciate that the rate of growth in the core areas of the city has not been as high as in the suburbs, but there has been growth, and there is continued growth. The city allows for density in the core and promotes density, and people want to live in the core.

I have a couple of examples. One is from my neighbourhood alone. In just a two-block area – I live in an infill, by the way, in Ritchie – there were seven residential lots with seven small houses that have been taken out. I know that there was only one person living in each of those houses. They've been replaced by 20 units, and there are 67 people living in those units. So that is an enormous increase. It's actually 857 per cent, and that type of growth is happening everywhere in the core.

Another example I want to draw your attention to, which you may not have known about, is some areas by the university farm basically. There's a big parcel of land in between Grandview Heights and Lansdowne. It was a farm area. I used to snowshoe through there. Now it's going to be the west 240 development, and I think it's completed its approval. It is expected to have 3,200 new units. The Michener Park area has been redeveloped, and there will be an additional 900 units there. The stand-alone Stollery hospital is scheduled to be in that area, and we just have to look at what happened in Calgary with its children's hospital: multiresidential around there. So the total new population in that area is 12,000 to 15,000 people. That is growth.

I feel, given that Edmonton is growing, that some of the ridings are already well above the variance, and the growth in the core continues. I, like some other people here, want to give you a tough suggestion, and that is that another riding be put in Edmonton.

**11:10**

Personally I have a little ask, and that is that in Edmonton-Strathcona I noticed that Ritchie, which is defined by 82 Avenue on the north, Argyll Road on the south, 99 street on the west, and Mill Creek Ravine, has been carved out and given to Gold Bar. I love the people in Gold Bar. It's a nice community, but like Whitemud Creek that's been used to define the boundary between Rutherford and Whitemud, I think Mill Creek Ravine is a definite boundary. I think all the activity of the Ritchie and Hazeldean people is really to the west and not to the east. So just a consideration about that boundary.

But I appreciate how hard it is to do what you have to do, especially within the confines that you've been given. I thank you for everything you've done, and I look forward to seeing your next report.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms McDermott.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** No. No questions. Thank you for your submissions.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your submission. We've been hearing from others that we could afford to use the variances more than we have because they give us plus or minus 25 per cent off the target.

**Ms McDermott:** Yeah. I understand that.

**Mrs. Samson:** And we haven't gone to the max, yet we also are constrained by only being given two new ridings. So because we can't get any more this time, I suspect that some of the tweaking will come at the expense of variances going up as opposed to others. We're limited in solutions.

**Ms McDermott:** Yeah. I understand that, but I also understand that urban areas, large urban areas, are growing much faster than rural areas, and that's not happening just in Alberta. It's not just Edmonton. It is worldwide, and I think that I would just like to see some appreciation of that.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you, and that's an excellent point.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

I'm very interested to hear that the west 240 at the U of A is going to be slated for development. That's been a long time coming. It's always been their development pod. But, you know, redevelopment isn't uniform either, and it doesn't necessarily mean multiplex or several-storey unit development either.

Let's consider Ritchie. Let's consider the block between 97 and 96 street on 77 Avenue. That's 30 homes, a typical style development; 15 on either side of the street. There are 15 new homes there. They're all single-family dwellings. So redevelopment takes many, many different shapes, and I'm quite sure if it wasn't for the institutional backing, the west 240 would be redeveloped as single-family homes as well.

**Ms McDermott:** But it will bring 3,200 – it looks like a beautiful community, and it'll be desirable.

**Dr. Martin:** I'm sure it will be, but I'm just trying to say that discussions about growth: they're not uniform in their character either.

I really just want to ask you a broader question about Ritchie and Hazeldean and Argyll. We moved them, as you mentioned. Do you think we were wrong to do so?

**Ms McDermott:** Well, I wouldn't say wrong, but as a Ritchie resident I feel that our activity and everything is bound by the Mill Creek Ravine, so any neighbourhood stuff and constituency activity goes to the west and north, not to the east. It just feels like it's right to be in Strathcona, but that's just a picky, personal thing.

**Dr. Martin:** Well, I lived in Ritchie, so I feel your pain and I respond to your notion that it's orientated west.



**Ms McDermott:** It is.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much. That sort of on-the-ground, local knowledge, especially for those of us not fortunate enough to be from Edmonton, is really, really helpful. I'm curious. You talked about the big development of the west 240. Can you maybe just show me on a map exactly where that is?

**Ms McDermott:** Well, I can tell you it's . . .

**Mr. Clark:** Aaron is going to ask you to grab that microphone.

**The Chair:** Grab the microphone and just go up there.

**Ms McDermott:** It's right here. This is Grandview, and this is Lansdowne, so it's right in here, this whole area. This is where Michener Park is going in, and this is where the Stollery road is scheduled to go. Now timing of this: I have no idea. This is almost ready for people to go in. It's a mix of residential and commercial, but 900 units, and then this is a whole neighbourhood. I think it will fill up because it'll be beautiful.

**Mr. Clark:** In the west 240 have they started scraping dirt and moving earth at that point?

**Ms McDermott:** Well they haven't, but they've gone through all the necessary community consultations, and it's at the final stage, I think. So it's done, all their consultation, so that they can go ahead. I'm expecting that it will go ahead, but I don't know about timing.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you again, Ms McDermott, for coming. I'll excuse you from the table.

Our next presenter: I'm not sure he's here. Don Ronaghan? Okay. Please come forward, sir. Have a seat, identify yourself, and tell us which electoral division you are from and which ones you want to comment on.

**Dr. Ronaghan:** Okay. Sure.

My name is Dr. Don Ronaghan. I currently reside in Lewis Estates in the west part of Edmonton. My presentation is not so much about my current constituency but generally as regards fairness and community of interest in Alberta.

I'll give you a little bit of background. I'm a retired large animal veterinarian. During my life I've practised in Drayton Valley, Lacombe, Lethbridge, and then in the county of Beaver. I spent the last 20 years in St. Paul. I was grain farming at that time, and my wife and I currently still own farmland in the county of St. Paul and in the county of Two Hills. I live in Lewis Estates now. During my lifetime we've been in Edmonton, we've been in Meadowlark, in West Henday, and conceivably we'll be changing it again.

I realize that you have a difficult job. You're trying to balance population growth and fairness for voters, so I'm not so much concerned about my own situation, but what I am concerned about is that fairness and community of interest should be your top priority. Farming is an increasingly tough business. The rural areas are depopulating, and at the same time the cities are increasing in population, so I'm a bit concerned that Edmonton and Calgary are in danger of not getting as many MLAs or seats as they should have. I'm especially concerned about something that I would call a – there's probably a good name for it. I call it a dog-bone constituency, where you take a rural area that is short of people and

you extend that far, far, far, and you grab a little chunk of a city or an area.

I mean, an example that comes to mind would be Drayton Valley-Devon and Stony Plain, where you have a large horizontal area just to make the numbers work, whereas when I think of community of interest, I think of, you know: where do people work? How do they make a living? Where do their kids go to school? What hospital do they go to? Where do you get your old-timers' hockey league from? When I look at some of the constituencies, there's a danger that we would be divorced from community of interest just to make the numbers work.

**11:20**

Sadly, the rural areas are depopulating. I moved out because my kids are in Calgary and Edmonton. That's happening all over Alberta. My concern is just that you try to avoid – there's probably a name for them. It's a hybrid constituency or whatever it might be. But in order to try and make the numbers work, you nibble pieces off the populated areas and join them onto the rural areas.

Now, when I look at the electoral maps, I recognize that, you know, your goal is perhaps 55,000 people per constituency, which is perfectly reasonable, and there has to be a variance, but the variance can be incredibly large. That Central Peace-Notley is 29,000 people versus, say, Calgary-North East at 85,000: that's obviously not fair, and it won't be seen to be fair.

Again, I'm not so much concerned about my local circumstances because in west Edmonton it may shift 10 or 15 blocks and gain 15,000 people, but that's not going to happen in north Peace. Certainly, areas like Lesser Slave Lake are way below the other areas in Edmonton.

I'm sorry. I'm not specifically addressing this small block of land or that one. Fairness and communities of interest or whatever you want to call it, you know, should be your top priority. That's my short presentation.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, sir. You've identified the conundrum that we deal with. I just want to be sure we're talking apples to apples and not apples and oranges. You mentioned that Calgary-North East in our proposal is at 53,000. You may have been looking at the old one. We realigned it and Central Peace-Notley is at 48,000 or almost 49,000. You know, you used two examples that we wrestled with. Thank you very much.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah. I'm going to give you from the legislation what communities of interest are, and then I want to see if that changes what you presented today. Communities of interest include: municipalities, regional and rural communities, Indian reserves and Métis settlements. I point that out because you were talking about things like how communities of interest would include where you bought your hockey equipment, et cetera. So bearing in mind that that's the legislation that we are guided by, would that change your comments today?

**Dr. Ronaghan:** What I would say is that I lived in the county of Beaver. I was the chairman of the school board and I was on the county council. The items that we were dealing with as municipal councillors and in the school board were just to kind of keep the wheels on. These are different items than people in the cities would have. So when we have these rural-urban, it's really hard for an MLA to ride two horses at one time.

In the farming area we think of Roundup as a useful tool to control the weeds, and I'm a farmer. But the urban people say: oh, cancer. They think herbicides are the same as pesticides, and they don't know. In the school board in the rural areas our chief trouble

is that the bus routes are so long that the little kids fall asleep, you know. The urban areas have different concerns. Some are the same, of course, but they are different concerns than the rural areas. The better farmland is right down the middle of Alberta. Highway 2 separates most of it, and that's where the population is. As a result, many of these constituencies tend to be horizontal, going side to side, and that may have to be the way it is.

As much as you can, I'd just encourage you – you corrected me with regard to the population. I think you've done an excellent job. I've looked at the wrong map. I'm sorry. I'm just concerned that rural areas are shrinking and, as a result, they may have to have larger areas.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation today. You've absolutely hit the nail on the head. It has been so controversial from the first day. We've had everything from communities of interest to, "I'm not interested in your community," so it cuts both ways, but I appreciate your analogies. They're quite good. I thank you again for reinforcing those concerns.

**Dr. Ronaghan:** Thank you for hearing me. You've got a difficult job. Take care.

**The Chair:** Oh, just a minute.

**Mrs. Samson:** We've got more. You're not done yet.

**Dr. Ronaghan:** Oh, good. Sure.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

My colleague Mr. Evans recited the act's statement about communities of interest, and in fact we have been much more latitudinous than the act says about what we would consider as communities of interest. For example, we heard a very great deal in the first round from presenters in Edmonton talking about community leagues, which typify Edmonton, and the argument has been: well, these are communities of interest. It's not strictly true, but if you added up a matrix of factors that would constitute the interests of people, whether it's economic or social or cultural or what have you, then you can start to build a picture that looks sort of, kind of like community leagues but not quite.

We have used that consideration in the way we considered the Edmonton boundaries and also to an equal extent the neighbourhoods in Calgary. According to the act this isn't strictly what we should be looking at, but we're prepared to consider that because it's the real life of real people. And to take it to its fullest absurd extent, we should really have 890 ridings, so you can see that the process of aggregating communities of interest into larger groups is never going to be perfect.

**The Chair:** Are you prepared to recommend that to the Speaker?

**Dr. Martin:** I am prepared to recommend that, yes. Sure.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you.

I'll just thank you for coming in. I think you make a good point about communities of interest, and it is inherently subjective. Literally, in our case, where do we literally draw the line, you know? I think your perspective, having lived in rural Alberta,

having been in urban Alberta – equally we don't have 87 or 89 MLAs at large like you'd see in certain municipalities – right? – where they have councillors at large. We also don't do that. So somewhere between 890 and zero we have to draw some lines. I don't have a specific question beyond just saying thank you for your submission. It does help us clarify our thinking around what communities of interest are. So thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you again, sir.

**Dr. Ronaghan:** Thank you very much. Take care.

**The Chair:** Please remain to hear other presenters if you're able to.

Our next presenter is Mr. Art Lange. Please identify yourself and tell us which electoral division you live in and which one you wish to comment on.

**Mr. Lange:** Good morning, everyone. My name is Art Lange. I am a resident of Strathcona county and the constituency of Strathcona-Sherwood Park. Just to give a bit of background about myself, I am a professional agrologist and still working part-time in that profession. Not in the actual growing of things; I work with farm finances and contract with the federal government farm debt mediation program. I am a long-time resident of Strathcona county. I've lived there for 40-plus years, and I've taken a keen interest in the politics of the municipality, that is the county, and also at the provincial and federal level. At the federal level we've worked through some really weird alignments. I'm here to talk specifically about Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

11:30

As I understand it, there's a proposal to remove the Heritage Hills part from that constituency, my constituency, and to add parts of Beaumont and Leduc county. Well, gentlemen and lady, that absolutely makes no sense to me, and I'll briefly outline my reasons for saying so.

First of all, I'd like to borrow an old phrase that goes something like this: if it isn't broke, don't fix it. On to my points. Right now our constituency is in the neighbourhood of 51,000 residents, so it's well within the legal range. We have growth occurring both in the hamlet of Ardrossan, and we have a new subdivision that started a couple of years ago and is still growing called Hillshire. Shortly, within a couple of years, we should be up to the 55,000 members – not members. Population. Your jargon is different than mine, so I have to adjust.

Beaumont just doesn't fit in our constituency at all. That is a separate entity. It's some distance away. It's south of Edmonton, and the natural flow patterns there as far as jobs, schools, services just don't align with our constituency at all. Heritage Hills, on the other hand, is an integral part of our constituency, and I believe it should stay there.

As you will know, Strathcona is a specialized municipality which includes urban and rural areas. As the previous speaker said: we've already done this urban and rural dance, I guess you might call it, or combination to achieve the numbers that we're striving for within the ranges that have been identified.

Beaumont has its own town council. They do their own thing over there. Again, I see no commonality with Strathcona county at all. Strathcona residents to a large part work in Edmonton, in the heartland, what we call Refinery Row. Beaumont does their own thing, and they're not part of that particular employment or location mix. The boundaries of our area fortunately have been consistent for many years, and I think making this change would really confuse people. I just think it's unnecessary, and I don't know where these ideas are coming from.

That is the end of my presentation.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you, Mr. Lange. So you don't want Beaumont.

**Mr. Lange:** Don't want Beaumont. Right.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** No questions. Thank you for your submissions. Appreciate it, Mr. Lange.

**Mrs. Samson:** Mr. Lange, I just have to smile. Like in my earlier comments, we were overwhelmed by our consideration of putting half of Beaumont into Strathcona-Sherwood Park, and, rest assured, the people of Beaumont said they don't want you either.

**Mr. Lange:** Hey, we agree. Wonderful.

**Mrs. Samson:** I don't know what to do with this now. I don't have any questions; I just have a big problem.

**Mr. Lange:** I know. I'm dumping it on you.

**Mrs. Samson:** I know you are. Thank you.

**Mr. Lange:** You're the brains behind this.

**The Chair:** I'll now turn it over to our local expert from this area. Dr. Martin, go ahead. Any questions?

**Dr. Martin:** I'm the only member of the commission from north of Red Deer, so I'm the local expert.

I wanted to ask you about Hillshire. You know, I have what I call a Tyvek test.

**Mr. Lange:** A what?

**Dr. Martin:** Tyvek.

**Mr. Lange:** That's the wrap around houses?

**Dr. Martin:** You bet it is. Until I see that, I'm not willing to believe that it's really a development. I think Hillshire, then, will qualify from that point of view, but I'm interested: is that 500 units? What's your guesstimate there?

**Mr. Lange:** I don't know. I don't have the specific numbers.

**Dr. Martin:** I should've asked the MLA.

**Mr. Lange:** Part of it is already built, and there's still further construction going on there.

**Dr. Martin:** Right. My Tyvek test, as we've grown to call it, is merely because anyone can make a statement about, "Growth is happening. Honest to God, it's happening. We've got development area plans, we've got good will, and we're going to grow," but you know, the practical reality is that you can't figure out the timing of these things. The Tyvek test is my quick, down-and-dirty way of saying: yeah, it's very imminent. Do you think that that is going to add a lot of people into – well, I guess we've put it into the hamlet of Sherwood Park rather than the county. Do you expect it to add lots of people?

**Mr. Lange:** Well, I don't know what you mean by a lot. That's kind of a nebulous statement.

**The Chair:** Putting Beaumont in is a lot of people, right?

**Mr. Lange:** Yeah. Not as many as Beaumont, no. If I was to grab a number out of the air, I'd say maybe 1,000 people.

**Dr. Martin:** Can I ask a follow-up? If we don't do Beaumont, should we go north of 16?

**Mr. Lange:** Well, that would be a logical extension in my view because of all the local factors and movements and where people shop, where they work, and that kind of stuff. [A cellphone rang] Uh-oh. My phone is ringing. Sorry about that. Shut up.

But then I suppose you're opening another can of worms.

**Dr. Martin:** Inevitably.

**Mr. Lange:** But again, it's on you guys, not on me. Yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. I guess I just want to build on that line of questioning. If we needed to do something, because, you know, it is a real challenge – I mean, Leduc and Beaumont today are about 65,000 people if you put the two together. That's a large number, so we're really struggling with Beaumont. Haven't had anybody actually come speak to us yet from Beaumont although we certainly received a lot of written submissions; there's no question. I'm curious if, in terms of Strathcona county, we needed to go further east into, say, Beaver county, does that make any sense? You don't sort of head out in that direction.

**Mr. Lange:** I don't think so, no.

**Mr. Clark:** I mean, how about north, as Dr. Martin says, above 16?

**Mr. Lange:** That, to me, is the logical expansion, yes.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. Perfect. Thank you.

**Mr. Lange:** Then the other thing is that Bremner is coming on. That's at least a quarter section of residences. Of course, we're looking 10, 15, 20 years down the road, but that's going to be a huge population there.

**Mr. Clark:** That's good. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Lange.

**Mr. Lange:** Okay. We're done?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Lange:** Goodbye. I've got to go.

**The Chair:** Okay. You're excused. Feel free to stay, but if you've got to go, that's fine, too.

Our next presenter is David Jackson. Good morning. Tell us what electoral division you live in and which ones you're commenting on.

**Mr. Jackson:** Good morning, Mr. Commissioner. I live in Edmonton-City Centre, and I'll be speaking of the proposed 35, 48, and 84 constituencies.

Riding 35, Edmonton-Glenora-Riverview. The combination of Edmonton-Glenora and Edmonton-Riverview into 35, Edmonton-Glenora-Riverview, reflects the reality on the ground. A common interest in socioeconomic alignment eliminates the rare and time-consuming river crossing that used to incorporate communities that were less well aligned, university students and rentals. It complements existing political co-operation at the local level between Edmonton-

Glenora and Edmonton-Riverview constituencies. So I salute the commission on this wise decision to combine these neighbourhoods of interest and remove the neighbourhoods nonaligned south and east of the river.

Forty-eight, Edmonton-West-Enoch. The creation of riding 48, Edmonton-West-Enoch, is also an excellent move by the commission. The Enoch Cree Nation reserve is no longer an entity that is out there on its own in the rural west end. It is now an urban reserve with urban services and businesses, and its economy is integrated with that of the city of Edmonton. The River Cree resort is a competitor for the convention traffic that could be going to the downtown Convention Centre. Where the city of Edmonton has policy differences like around cigar bars and shisha lounges, Enoch answers the call to enable commerce. For all intents and purposes Enoch reserve is Edmonton where the corporation of the city does not dictate what happens.

11:40

The constituency is growing, particularly along the highway 628-Whitemud Drive corridor and the highway 627 corridor. This growth is creating infrastructure issues that are shared with the interests of the new constituency 81, Spruce Grove; namely, highway widening, paving, twinning, interchange construction as well as schools and high schools. This will result in two future MLAs working on these issues together.

The rural housing development south of highway 627 and east of highway 60 will need focused representation as the growth from the city encroaches on the rural acreage way of life. This area is a forgotten corner of Parkland county. Given the natural barriers of the river valley, the highway 60 corridor, and highway 627 just south of Enoch the area is quite likely a candidate for future annexation by the city of Edmonton. This area is home to the U of A Botanic Garden, a significant tourism attraction owned by an Edmonton-based entity.

I reject the assertions of the mayor of Edmonton in his letter to the commission reported in the *Edmonton Journal* that an MLA representing Edmonton should not represent any other municipality or an Indian reserve. I question whether the mayor fears that an MLA might find out the true nature of the relationship between the city and its neighbouring municipalities.

As the commission knows, all manner of MLAs represent multiple municipalities. Once upon a time I worked for an MLA that had close to two dozen municipalities to contend with, and it took five hours to drive from end to end of his constituency. I will remind the commission and the mayor of Edmonton that many of those rural residents in the proposed riding 48 use the same capital region water services the city relies on, the same electricity, and the mutual aid agreements are in place. Whomever is chosen MLA here will have to contend with two municipalities and an Indian reserve. No big deal. It is a lot fewer than two dozen municipalities handled by many rural MLAs. I commend the commission for creating riding 48, Edmonton-West-Enoch, and implore the commission to keep the constituency in the final report.

Eighty-four, Stony Plain-Drayton Valley-Devon. I want to turn briefly to this proposed constituency. I believe the commission may have erred in the drafting of the maps. I'm a fan of MLAs not having to drive across ...

**The Chair:** Can you maybe give us a second, sir? That was 84.

**Mr. Jackson:** Stony Plain-Drayton Valley-Devon.

**The Chair:** Okay. Yeah. Continue.

**Mr. Jackson:** I'm a fan of MLAs not having to drive across another MLA's constituency to reach their own. I believe two corrections to the boundary may be in order to provide better representation here. First, take a look at the Calmar area. Don't use range road 270 and township road 500 as the dividing line. Use highway 39 and highway 60, or use the railway going into Calmar and range road 263 as the boundary in that area. It's cleaner and contiguous, and the MLA is not driving through riding 68, Leduc-Beaumont, to go from Calmar over to Devon.

The second is Holbom west of the Fifth Meridian. If Stony Plain is now going into this constituency, make the constituency contiguous such that the MLA can drive highway 627 and highway 770 to reach Drayton Valley without having to go through riding 66, Lac Ste Anne-Parkland. Annex the land south of 627 west of range road 10 and east of highway 770 into 84, Stony Plain-Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Chair, commissioners, those conclude my remarks.

**The Chair:** Have you provided us with a written submission, sir?

**Mr. Jackson:** No, I have not.

**The Chair:** Can you leave what you've just recited in terms of the boundaries?

**Mr. Jackson:** Yes, I can.

**The Chair:** We're really appreciative of the first two kudos you gave to us, and the correction is more important. We need to take a look at that.

Mr. Clark, any questions of this presenter?

**Mr. Clark:** No. I don't think so, aside from our thanks for being here.

We've crossed paths in the past. Are you still currently doing what you did before?

**Mr. Jackson:** No, I'm not.

**Mr. Clark:** You're off doing your own thing.

**Mr. Jackson:** No. Looking for new opportunities, Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Well, then, now that's on *Hansard*, and it will be forever.

Thank you for coming.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Jackson. I wanted to dwell on a couple of the specifics that you offered up. Number one, around Calmar. You are presuming that we wish to continue to have it within the Drayton Valley-Devon riding, and you're offering better roadway. Is that what I heard?

**Mr. Jackson:** Correct. Calmar is in that constituency, but for some mysterious reason the proposed boundary is set north of the eastern end there. Just drop it a quarter section south down to the highway or just even a little further south into the railway so you have a continuous highway corridor over to the traffic circle.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. Do you have any comment on the fact that we have subdivided Pigeon Lake? We don't like that. You know, we look back and said: oh, we've drawn a boundary right across the middle of the lake.

**Mr. Jackson:** No. I have no comments on Pigeon Lake.

**Dr. Martin:** Thirdly, I want to come back to your more broad point about an MLA tasked with having an Edmonton component and an Enoch Cree First Nation component is under no greater complication than is normal in many parts of the province. Could you say a bit more about that? We've heard a great, great deal: oh, don't confuse us. But your point is that it's not really confusing and certainly not out of the ordinary.

**Mr. Jackson:** No, it's not out of the ordinary. You have three jurisdictions that are essentially clumped together, and the local economic units are working together. Everyone is shopping at the same grocery stores, using the same services, and travelling back and forth across the two. It's a short travel time and travel distance in order to represent its three units: a county, a city, and a First Nations reserve. It's unlike, let's say, the current Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock constituency, which stretches from Swan Hills all the way over to St. Lina, over five hours to drive across. You've got dozens of municipalities that you're dealing with, and you're lucky to get in front of a village council once every two years. That's the challenges that we're facing here whereas you're dealing with three – you can still get in front of them all in the same week.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Jackson.  
Mrs. Samson, any questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** No. Thank you for your presentation. No questions.

**Mr. Evans:** Can you give me some more details on the significance of not crossing other constituencies?

**Mr. Jackson:** It just makes the maps cleaner and grouping of communities of interest together and making it easier to identify where those boundaries are. I found it odd that this little carve-out by a traffic circle, which is in the same trade corridor, was not kept in there, in travelling from Calmar to Devon. The same on the west end, from Stony Plain over to Genesee to cross the bridges there. Rural MLAs and even the urban MLAs have opportunities to play the role of road inspector, and that breaks up the amount of jurisdiction.

11:50

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you for your presentation and for the couple of fine points that we can probably tinker with. Thank you so much.

**Dr. Martin:** Can you give that to Mr. Roth, please?

**The Chair:** Yeah. Please.

**Mr. Jackson:** I will.

**The Chair:** Okay. Our next presenter is Ms Moira Vane. Please identify yourself and tell us what electoral division you live in and which ridings you wish to comment on.

**Ms Vane:** Good morning. My name is Moira Vane. I live in the riding of Edmonton-Strathcona, which is 47. I would like to speak about it; 36, Edmonton-Gold Bar; and 72, Mackenzie.

**The Chair:** Okay. Sorry. Can you run those numbers again?

**Ms Vane:** Yeah. 47, Ritchie; 36, Edmonton-Gold Bar; and 72, Mackenzie.

**The Chair:** Okay. Please proceed.

**Ms Vane:** Thank you. I wanted to start by just saying thank you to everyone. I am sure that it's been exciting to visit so many corners of our beautiful province but also, I imagine, exhausting, particularly in the winter. Ultimately, I suspect that this is a job where you will find universal praise for your work perhaps elusive, but nonetheless I'm sure there will be lots of gratitude.

As I mentioned, I live in Edmonton-Strathcona. I have seen and felt the pressures on our city, especially – perhaps it's anecdotal – since we had the Alberta Is Calling campaign, which drew thousands to our city. Over the past 12 years that I've had children, I have felt the intensity of the new arrivals in our city. When my children were first born, if I had to take them to the Stollery, the wait time would be three to four hours. Now it's almost never under 14 hours. When my son broke his arm less than two years ago, it took three days, actually, before we could have surgery. The emergency room was just overflowing with people. So I do appreciate and I do think it's important for Edmonton to get another seat.

Just even anecdotally, I can also say that I have some rental properties in my riding. Certainly, before the Alberta Is Calling campaign when we would advertise it, we would have to have multiple viewings. We would have to wait for enough people to come in. Now we simply put up the ad once; we make one appointment. We have people out the door trying to get the unit. It is wild, the difference in terms of people that have arrived.

In terms of a constructive comment I would like to think of it as, I was a bit sad to see Ritchie leave our riding. With the activities that my children and I do, Ritchie is the community that, I would say, Edmonton-Strathcona sort of pops over into the most. It's where we have Girl Guides and Boy Scouts. Our green shack programs are pretty interchangeable. I can let the kids run to both of those. I would see Ritchie's community league and Strathcona's community league as having very friendly rivalries. Events are often organized and advertised to each other in a way that I don't see Ritchie having that same involvement in Edmonton-Gold Bar. Again, I'm not from Ritchie, so I don't want to speak for them, but I can just say for myself, being in Edmonton-Strathcona, that I've always felt that Ritchie is very much a part of us.

Those are just some comments that I had around my own community and Ritchie, but I also had some comments that I wanted to make about Mackenzie, which I do have some sympathy for. I have a concern around rural and urban votes not diluting one another. I know that some of the rural ridings have complained about the physical size of their ridings, and I wanted to offer a comparison to the commission that you might find useful along with a solution that I do think has worked.

I'm originally from Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories. At a territorial level I'm not sure that this is particularly useful as a comparison because the territorial government operates under a consensus government system. But at the federal level I do think it is a useful comparison perhaps for you to look at in the sense that, of course, the territorial government participates in the federal election and uses a party system. The Western Arctic riding was created in 1979. It remained in its incarnation until Nunavut was created in 1999. It reduced its size; otherwise, it stayed the same along the boundary levels.

The N.W.T. is, of course, huge. If you could drive from the northernmost community of Sachs Harbour all the way to the most southern community of Fort Smith, it would be over 6,000 kilometres. Of course, you can't drive because there aren't roads. When you look at Alberta, the full length of Alberta is 1,200 kilometres, so it's almost five times as large. The N.W.T. is also comprised of, obviously, very different groups of people from many different backgrounds, including both Inuit and First Nations, that

do not share any linguistic characteristics and have very different cultural traditions. But you also can see that they all share one major centre, which is Yellowknife, which is where you find that most of the services are concentrated.

Nonetheless, for the last 50 years the western Arctic has been able to send one representative to Ottawa, and over most of these 50 years the solution that I think has worked very well is that their representatives have come from outside of Yellowknife. We had, for example, Ethel Blondin-Andrew, who hailed from Tulita in the Sahtu. We had Dennis Bevington, who came from the southernmost community of Fort Smith, and we've had Michael McLeod from Fort Providence, which is sort of in the middle.

The boundaries commission, obviously, has no power to select who gets to run as representatives from the various political parties, and I also think you're not expected to solve every problem, but I do think that it is something that should be encouraged by all parties, which is to look to the smaller communities in those ridings to find representatives so that one doesn't dominate the rest. I do think, again, that everyone should be encouraging that, and it is a solution that has worked for the Arctic.

I do think there has to be an element of fairness when boundaries are drawn, and even though some parts, again, of the N.W.T. obviously are wildly different from one another, they are still represented as a community of interest. I realize it can't be perfect, but it can be made as fair as possible.

On that note, I often think of the very famous comment from the U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart when he was talking about obscenity – it reminds me of fairness in this situation – which is that when something is unfair, I know it when I see it, though it might be hard to define.

Those are my comments. Thank you again for your time.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much.

Mr. Clark, any questions?

**Mr. Clark:** No. That's really helpful. I'm just reflecting a bit because that was a wide-ranging submission. Thank you very much.

**Ms Vane:** You're welcome.

**Mr. Clark:** I very much appreciate you spending the time to put that all together.

I'm just thinking a little bit about community leagues and Ritchie and Strathcona. I was frantically trying to align my two different maps to kind of sort myself out around exactly how we've aligned things. We've tried although I think we have not in every case succeeded to follow community league boundaries. In the case of Ritchie, have we split that? Have we respected a community league boundary, or have we managed to slice it?

**Ms Vane:** I believe you have respected a community league boundary. However, we have the ravine that runs through the middle, and of course there's a swimming pool around where Whyte Avenue is, and there's a bridge that goes over the ravine. I would say that Ritchie and Strathcona: we are up and down the ravine, and you have taken Ritchie and you have put it with the community that's on the other side of the bridge. I know just, again, through my own children's activities, that they go up and down the bike lanes and they go up and down the ravine. We walk our dog up and down. There is a long dog park that is an off-leash area that runs through the ravine. To me, I've always thought of Old Strathcona and Ritchie as one long community, but now, again, what I see from the map is that they've been hived into Edmonton-Gold Bar.

I don't want to speak for Ritchie, but just as an Old Strathcona person I do see us sharing many, many sort of communal properties, I guess you would sort of say: our parks, our splash parks, again, the bike trails, the ravine, the dog park, the pool, those sorts of things.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you. I mean, as you identified, one of the great challenges is both keeping communities of interest together but also not overpopulating or underpopulating certain constituencies. Maybe the best thing we can do is make everybody equally unhappy.

**Ms Vane:** That may be your reality. I wish more for you, though, to be clear.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you.

**Dr. Martin:** Well, thank you for your wishes. The difficulty, it seems to me, with respect to Ritchie and Hazeldean and also Argyll to perhaps some lesser extent is, yes, I don't disagree that there's been a lot of – Ritchie faces west culturally and has done. It faces towards Whyte Avenue. You notice we didn't include west Ritchie, which people from Ritchie still believe to be part of their community league. But if we reverted to the map as it had been, that's 9,000 people. If you want me to put them in Edmonton-Strathcona, the immediate ripple effect, of course, is on Edmonton-Gold Bar because that is minus 9,000 people. We're faced with a dilemma of gross inequalities between two districts that are reasonably – well, they share a boundary no matter how you slice and dice it.

**Ms Vane:** That's right.

**Dr. Martin:** There's the lumpiness to growth in the city, and we have geographical features that are quite significant, but in a situation like this we have to squint at Mill Creek.

**Ms Vane:** That's fair.

**Dr. Martin:** Well, thanks.

**12:00**

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your time today. We have struggled with the north and have had extreme push-back from all Albertans right across the province. You know you really got it wrong when everybody is talking about it. But I did look at some of the other provinces and territories, and everybody treats the north differently because the north shows us unique situations that we have to deal with.

I don't know what our final solution is going to be. We haven't got there yet. We just heard what people don't like. But I think it would be fair to say it will certainly be mentioned in the written report because how many more commissions can go by while we struggle with the same thing?

Do you have any comments, like, relating – I know you did suggest a change.

**Ms Vane:** I think just being from the north myself, one of our major concerns is that we tend to be overlooked and we're an afterthought. So I do think, you know, having consultations with people, talking to people. I do think that there is a responsibility on all of the parties to make efforts in those communities to encourage people to run and participate – I think sometimes what you see is a kind of apathy that sets in, and it's always the same old people with the same old party with the same old crew – and encouraging more folks, especially from those smaller centres, to represent.

When they run and they come forward – again, you know, when you look at a community like where the hon. Ethel Blondin-Andrew is from, I'm sure they were less than 300 people at certain points, and then she became the representative for the whole of the Northwest Territories at a time when it still included, actually, Nunavut. She did a very excellent job. She was the first Indigenous woman to go into federal cabinet. She was well regarded across the country. Like, she broke many barriers. Again, such a small community that she came from but raised very well and did lots of education and worked so much with communities. Just a very well-respected person.

I think if we had fallen back to the old – you look to Yellowknife, where the major centre is, where all the government offices are, I don't think you would have had somebody who would have such a nuanced understanding. Being from such a small community herself, she understood all the other small communities. I think that's really important.

Again, I respect that it's not your job to encourage people to run, but I do think it's a message that should be shared with the parties, that they should be working more actively in these smaller communities to make people not feel left out. I do think that's the underlying theme that has been my whole life. The north always feels left out.

**Mrs. Samson:** Right. Thank you.

**Ms Vane:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Evans:** Hi, Moira. Nice to see you.

**Ms Vane:** Indeed.

**Mr. Evans:** Not being from Edmonton, the ravine that you're talking about: is that at 82nd Avenue N.W. along Mill Creek? Is that where that is?

**Ms Vane:** Yeah. If you look at it, you can kind of see the creek itself. Like, it's a squiggly bit, and then it sort of hits Whyte Avenue and goes straight. If you follow the squiggly bit down, that's where the ravine runs along. That's where, again, the trail systems, the dog off-leash, the swimming pool, all of that runs along there. In fact, if you go all the way down to Hazeldean, that's where the Argyll centre is, and that's where my kids took all their bicycle lessons. You can travel the whole length. I live up near the top, near the river proper. You can make it the whole way down just through the ravine system.

**Mr. Evans:** Is that where Dr. Martin said there were about 9,000 people?

**Ms Vane:** That's what I'm understanding. It would be all the way down to – correct me if I'm wrong – 63rd Avenue. That's what you're talking about? Yes. It's a very densely populated area, and I appreciate that. Again, my anecdotal evidence from my rental properties has been that it's just been zany the last two, three years. It reflects the larger issue of the housing shortage, of course, that everyone's suffering from not just in urban centres; rural areas, especially in the north. I can certainly say from the Arctic that we have an absolute crisis when it comes to housing, and it's not unusual to find 14 people living in a one-bedroom or two-bedroom residence. It's a nation-wide issue.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you.

**Ms Vane:** Yeah. You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much for your very fine presentation, Ms Vane.

**Ms Vane:** Thank you so much. I appreciate the time. I appreciate all the work that everyone has done. I feel like it's a bit thankless and the general population might not understand it, but it's really important work, and I really appreciate everyone's hard work, so thank you.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you. Please remain.

We have one more presenter before lunch. We'll call on Laura Paquette.

**Mrs. Samson:** What a dreadful position to be in.

**Ms Paquette:** No pressure. Everybody's hungry for lunch.

**The Chair:** Well, we haven't kept anyone to a time limit yet today, and we won't start with you.

**Ms Paquette:** It's okay. I came early just in case we were running ahead of schedule, but I sure appreciate listening to everybody.

I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to be here. My name is Laura Paquette, born and raised in north Edmonton. I've been to 25 countries. I love travelling. I've also lived in Beaumont and Tofield, but most of my adult life was spent living in Mill Woods. I work in Sherwood Park, and I was commuting from Tofield. When I was in Beaumont, I was commuting from Beaumont, and now I find myself in Mill Woods again because it's just cheaper. Sherwood Park is not affordable, but my kids both go to school in Sherwood Park. That's my context. I'm happy to take questions about any of those places, but I want to speak about Sherwood Park today, if I may.

First, I think it's so important that everybody is participating in this process. That's the main reason I'm here, just because it's such an important thing to participate. My mom was an *Edmonton Journal* reporter for 40 years, so I think that the nerd in me loves maps and local events and what everybody's up to, and just being a participant in all of this is important to me. I think it's so important to advocate for boundaries that reflect the real, lived community on the ground because this supports fair, effective representation for residents.

I'd like to thank you for considering the feedback that I provided in the first round. I had comments about southeast Edmonton and Mill Woods and Sherwood Park as well, and I love so far what I'm seeing of the maps of southeast Edmonton. I do think it would be great to have an extra riding in Edmonton, but I have no idea how to do that, so I won't touch that one at all today. I appreciate that the interim maps reflect much of what residents across the Edmonton region seem to have been expressing, particularly with the rapid population growth happening in the southeast and in Sherwood Park.

Sherwood Park, as a hamlet, really has a clearly defined urban identity within Strathcona county, and I believe it's important that the electoral map continues to reflect that reality. The community functions as a cohesive urban area with shared services, shared infrastructure, and strong day-to-day connections. My own family experiences this directly. My kids attend school in Sherwood Park. I drive those main corridors every day, and I work there, too. I can't afford to live there, but maybe one day I'll win the lottery. It's all those single family homes, you know. We need more density, perhaps. But from that perspective I think the community is

undeniably interconnected and urban in character in Sherwood Park.

I wanted to point out how that manifests itself in our education system there. Two new schools are popping up. One just opened in September. That's where my daughter goes. Forest grove school is opening in September 2026. Both of those are French schools. Forest grove is a French immersion school with Elk Island public, and École Claudette-et-Denis-Tardif is my daughter's school. It's a francophone school that just opened in September 2025. Their capture zone, you call it, is from Fort Saskatchewan all the way out to Tofield. So when we lived in Tofield, she was able to actually bus to school. Now, she was in kindergarten and I worked in Sherwood Park, so I thought maybe an hour long on the bus was too much. But it's a huge catchment area for the francophone school, and 90 per cent or more of the students are bused in from all over Sherwood Park, Fort Saskatchewan, and all the way to Tofield. So a big area for the francophone public school board there.

Both of these are French language schools, and it just shows that there is a lot of growth in young families choosing to live and work and go to school in Sherwood Park. All these families rely on Sherwood Park schools with the recreation facilities, health services, and the transportation network in that urban area, so I'm glad to see the map as it is proposed. I was glad to see that the significant growth south of Wye Road has been included in the Sherwood Park riding. That's where some high-density housing is going up. You mentioned Hillshire, which will be 290 homes. I looked that up real quick while we were talking about it.

Her school is just south of Heritage Hills, so I'm in and out of that area every day, and I think it's fine to add Heritage Hills. I think, like you said, it's neither here nor there. You could throw a dart at the board on that side of things, on Clover Bar Road, and it would be fine. If we weren't under such a crunch, I suppose I would just take all of that urban area west of highway 21 and include it because it really is the urban identity of Sherwood Park that is important. I think that overall the proposed map for Sherwood Park is practical and fair. It aligns with most of the urban boundaries, respects the cohesion of the community, and I look forward to seeing what grows up in Cambrian north of highway 16.

**12:10**

With that, I just have one suggestion, and it is the fact that there are two ridings called Sherwood Park. I know the other one is Strathcona-Sherwood Park, but it always confuses people when they think – especially if you're adding Beaumont. Maybe not. I would suggest that east of Sherwood Park we have a beautiful UNESCO world heritage site called Beaver Hills, and that whole area east of Sherwood Park is kind of known as Beaver Hills. A lot of people say, "Oh, I live near Ardrossan," or "I live just south of Ardrossan," or "I'm in Beaver county," whatever the case may be. I wouldn't name things after counties, but Beaver Hills is a UNESCO world heritage site, which is near Cooking Lake.

All of those names, those suggestions – Beaver Hills, Cooking Lake, or Ardrossan – would be great alternatives to calling something Strathcona-Sherwood Park to reduce confusion and better reflect the sense of identity for those communities in that division.

Beyond this naming thing I am very satisfied with the interim maps that I talked about, and I thank you for your time today.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you. Now your suggestion is Strathcona-Beaver Hills as a name?

**Ms Paquette:** I would just call it Beaver Hills. Beaumont-Beaver Hills sounds like it's not likely to happen, but I love a little

alliteration. As somebody who lived in Tofield, I would sooner align Tofield with Strathcona county than – I know Camrose wants it, too, but everybody on that corridor through highway 14: they're commuting back and forth across Strathcona county, so Tofield really lines up with that. Beaver Hills is that whole area, and it really is full of beavers. There's a lot of roadkill and complaints from farmers, but a beautiful geographic sort of area name for it. Yeah.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, thank you very much for that.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

**Mr. Evans:** No. Thank you for your submissions, though.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you. That was valuable, but I'm still hung up on Beaver Hills. I think, in my opinion, because I'm from Sylvan Lake, you have to have a name that people are familiar with the location.

**Ms Paquette:** Like Ardrossan-Beaver Hills or something like that.

**Mrs. Samson:** Yeah, but would not Strathcona be the more logical one with our names?

**Ms Paquette:** Edmonton-Strathcona is a historic source of confusion.

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay. Right. I get it.

**Ms Paquette:** There's a Strathcona high school, and Strathcona county really is an amalgamation of lots of urban areas, so I think people align themselves with sort of the geographic parts that they land in.

**Mrs. Samson:** So Ardrossan would be the next biggest. Let me just mark that down for consideration.

**The Chair:** Really? How big is Ardrossan?

**Ms Paquette:** There's a whole neighbourhood called the Kingdom of Ardrossan. Very clever marketing with knights and swords and things, but it's up and coming. They have a huge rec centre where everybody goes for hockey, and the Tofield hockey teams all go to Ardrossan back and forth. It's really, like, that whole area of Cooking Lake. Lindbrook is another big neighbourhood in that area. When I was in Tofield, people would say, "Oh, I live closer to Lindbrook," or "We're on the way to Ardrossan. We're near Antler Lake." There are all these little – and South Cooking Lake is a big community as well. That whole region: they kind of look at geographical landmarks when they're talking to each other.

**The Chair:** But Beaver Hills would be doable in the name?

**Ms Paquette:** Yeah. I mean, a UNESCO world heritage site that not a lot of people know about.

**The Chair:** Well, I didn't until 10 minutes ago.

**Ms Paquette:** Elk Island is a big landmark, but just south of that we've got Tofield and Beaver Hills.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

**Dr. Martin:** I'm just thinking about Beaver Hills. I was just kind of puzzled about that, frankly. Sherwood Park proper by the hamlet is an urban service area within the county, which is the government of the whole region. You have – I don't know – eight ward councillors in the county government. Do the wards have names?



**Ms Paquette:** No. They're numbers, unfortunately. Yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** So we could call this electoral district number 82, perhaps?

**Ms Paquette:** Sure. *District 9*. The movie.

**Dr. Martin:** No matter how you slice it, any protocol around naming will be dashed when it comes to this little area.

**Ms Paquette:** It's so tricky, and I think particularly if you're going to keep Beaumont included, they would take issue with being called Sherwood Park-Strathcona county. I'm sure you heard that.

**Dr. Martin:** Oh, you can well believe it.

**Ms Paquette:** When I lived in Beaumont, there was really that dividing line down 50th Street. I understand that, you know, "We live on east of 50th" or "We live on west of 50th," that makes good sense to divide things that way. But namingwise, I think they would be up in arms, especially if they weren't included in the name. It's hard to help – with people googling everything nowadays, when you put in "Sherwood Park MLA," you're going to get Kyle. But everyone living east of Clover Bar Road: that's not their MLA. So it's a real tricky situation.

**The Chair:** His population is even higher than what we note because everybody mistakes him.

**Ms Paquette:** Well, he just helps everybody. If they can pronounce his name, they get helped real quick.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** I don't know if I have any questions. I'm reflecting a little. I'm just trying to do rapid arithmetic on sizes of places. If you've been here for a bit, you know that we're struggling with how to kind of balance everything out and keep it, you know, effective representation. Tofield looks like it's only got maybe 2,500 or so people, and the portion of Beaumont that we've got is 10,000.

**Ms Paquette:** Sorry. Lindbrook and Tofield are the two most populated areas east of Sherwood Park.

**Mr. Clark:** Sorry. Did you say you lived in Beaumont at one point?

**Ms Paquette:** Yes.

**Mr. Clark:** And 50th is a genuine dividing . . .

**Ms Paquette:** Yes. I lived on the east side of 50th Street, and sometimes you had to cross the road to visit a friend or something, but it was noteworthy. The church is kind of this landmark on a hill, and you can see that the road goes right down the middle. I found that the people in Sherwood Park and Beaumont align on a lot of things, but they sure don't cross paths. There's no reason to. They wouldn't have the same economic interests in terms of, you know, where they work or where the kids go to school or anything like that. I had a lot more in common with everything east of Sherwood Park.

**Mr. Clark:** Would you say that they have more in common, then, with Strathcona county and Sherwood Park than they would with, say, like, the south part of Edmonton?

**Ms Paquette:** I'd say the people in Beaumont have more in common with Edmonton than with Sherwood Park. I don't know if they'd have any reason to visit or to do any business there.

Yeah. Certainly, all the people from Tofield, if they've got to run to Costco or something, they're running into Sherwood Park. It's only 2,000 people, but, you know, if I had to pick – and I lived in Tofield. I did have to pick. The only two French schools were in Camrose or Sherwood Park. I thought we're always driving back and forth into the city, so we'd rather take highway 14.

**Dr. Martin:** The hamlet.

**Ms Paquette:** Yes. Going that way, going west from Tofield then driving down into the city of Camrose.

**Dr. Martin:** Right.

**Ms Paquette:** It was equidistant. It was 35 minutes either way, whether we drove from our acreage out to Sherwood Park or drove down to Camrose. Camrose had a Peavey Mart, which kind of swayed them. But their French schools: it's a lot of busing either way. The Sherwood Park school won us over, and they do have kids coming from that whole heartland region, it's called. I wouldn't call it that because that's north of Sherwood Park, the Industrial Heartland.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you. I know I could google it, but I want to hear from a local. Why is Beaver Hills a UNESCO world heritage site?

**Ms Paquette:** The thing that beavers do to a landscape, I guess.

**The Chair:** Oh, is it because of the beavers?

**Ms Paquette:** It literally has a lot to do with it. They've changed the landscape of it, but the original Indigenous populations, as well, had a name for that area as being significant. As soon as you hit Tofield, it's very flat. You go Ryley, Viking, all the way down to Wainwright: so flat. But there's this really special area that's just rolling hills. You could have five acres but only have one place to put a house on that whole five acres because it is rolling and wet and a lot of moose as well.

12:20

**The Chair:** Really?

**Ms Paquette:** It's pretty special. There's a bird sanctuary as well in Miquelon provincial park. Yeah, very special in a science kind of way.

**The Chair:** Great. Okay. Well, thank you. You're a local, obviously.

**Ms Paquette:** I was a teacher for 15 years, too, so I get nerdy about a lot of things. But I appreciate that, and I appreciate the work you're doing.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

Okay. That concludes our morning unless someone else has a burning 90-second presentation they want to present.

Okay. Thank you. We'll adjourn till 1:30 this afternoon.

[The hearing adjourned at 12:21 p.m.]











Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Public Hearings

Edmonton

Tuesday, January 20, 2026  
1:33 p.m.

Transcript No. 44

## **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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## **Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Edmonton**

### **Public Participants**

Bodda Ammar, Constituency Assistant, Edmonton-Meadows

Chelsea Balzan, President, Glastonbury Community League

Dave Bilyk

Nathan Cooper

Alexander Dowsey

Nolan Dyck, MLA, Grande Prairie

Kathryn Joel

Brianna Morris

Scott Sinclair, MLA, Lesser Slave Lake

A.J. Wrenn





1:33 p.m.

Tuesday, January 20, 2026

[Justice Miller in the chair]

**The Chair:** Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the afternoon session of our second day of the second week of public hearings for the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission. We had a very busy day yesterday. I think we had 39 presenters, and no one has nodded off, I can assure you, on the panel.

You can see, first of all, that our Electoral Boundaries Commission is an independent commission established by the Legislature of Alberta. You'll see our nameplates in front of us, and if you want more background information, you can go to the website to get our bios.

We've been given two challenges or tasks to do as a commission. The first task is to deal with the change in the number of electoral divisions. We are moving from 87 electoral divisions or ridings or constituencies to 89 for the next provincial election. That's been prescribed to us by the Legislature. Of course, individual voters in each electoral district elect the MLA to serve them and to represent them in the Legislative Assembly. So expanding the number of seats from 87 to 89 is one issue.

The second issue that we must deal with is population and the population increase, and it is significant. Just to put it in perspective, back in 2017, at the time of the last Electoral Boundaries Commission, the population base for Alberta at that time was just over 4 million people. To put that in context, the 2017 Electoral Boundaries Commission had an average of 46,697 persons per electoral division. That's not our target. The average isn't our target; rather, it's the population range of minus 25 per cent of that average to plus 25 per cent. In 2017 they ranged from just over 35,000 to a little over 58,000 as the target for effective representation.

Fast forward to today. For our commission, we're dealing with a population of 4.8-plus million Albertans, and we have, as I said, 89 electoral divisions to deal with. The average per riding results in 55,000. Again, that's not the target. The target range is minus 25 to plus 25 per cent, so 41,000 to 68,000.

Our task as a commission is to hear from Albertans as to where we should allocate the boundaries and to look at the legislative criteria and review all the submissions and come up with and recommend to the Legislature boundaries that provide effective representation. We are not under the one person, one vote situation, as they are in the U.S. Rep by pop does not reign in Alberta or Canada. In fact, there is no jurisdiction in Canada's history that strictly applied the one person, one vote principle. Rather, we operate under effective representation.

When this commission was established in early April of this past year, we went to work and did these basic tasks. First of all, we looked at a data source for population. We met as a commission and agreed that the population of the last decennial census from 2021, updated and refined by the Office of Statistics and Information for the Alberta Treasury Board, would be the best and most consistent. Ultimately, it was agreed upon that those population figures would be used. We've cut it off at July 2024 for the updated statistics, and that's what we're operating on. If you've read the report, you can see the rationale behind that.

Early on in our life as a commission we received several written submissions, and we reviewed them. Then in late May and throughout June we travelled across the province to hear publicly from Albertans as to what we should do in terms of allocating boundaries. We heard hundreds of submissions all the way from Peace River to Medicine Hat, from Lethbridge to Fort McMurray and points in between and, of course, spent considerable time in

both Calgary and Edmonton. After those public hearings, in the months throughout summer and early fall, we worked very closely with the good folks at Elections Alberta, who had the mapping tools and the population data and ability to help us move things around and create our interim report.

If you're here and you're interested in this process, you probably have looked at our interim report. That was submitted and tabled with the Speaker of the Legislature in late October of this past year. Immediately after we gave it to the Speaker, he presented a copy to each member of the Legislature, and it went on our website.

Of course, in completing our report, we paid attention to the legislative factors of sparsity and density, rate of population growth, communities of interest, municipal boundaries, geographic features, means of communication and transportation between various parts of Alberta, and all that led us to create boundaries for electoral divisions that provide, in our view, effective representation that has boundaries that are both understandable and clear.

1:40

Now, to say that our interim report is perfect – no one at this table, I think, is going to defend it and characterize it in that way. We have humbly made some submissions and made, I think, maybe some errors in our report. We have had lots of people seconding that fact and reporting to us that, yeah, we have overlooked some things. So the interim report is very much subject to revision, and we understand that.

We further heard from Albertans through the public portal on our website from early November to December 19th. We received over 1,100 submissions. I'm told by the folks at the Legislative Assembly Office that this may be the highest or the second-highest – we lag behind the daylight time zone committee, apparently – in terms of public response. So we certainly have got the public's attention on this.

We have had a very full week last week, a very full day yesterday. As I said, I think we had 36 presentations yesterday. Not quite as full a day today. We're conducting these hearings from last Monday till this week, and we look forward to hearing from presenters this afternoon.

Our first presenter is the hon. Nathan Cooper, the person that hired us and then promptly left. Welcome to Alberta, to Edmonton. I'm sure you've looked at our report and you have some things you wish to tell us.

**Mr. Cooper:** Excellent. Thank you. Good afternoon, commissioners and committee clerks and Legislative Assembly Office staff. It's so nice to see so many familiar faces in the room, and it's a great pleasure to be here.

For the purposes of the record and for clarity – I wish to make some lawyers happy before I begin – I wish to state at the outset that my remarks today will be presented solely in my personal capacity, that nothing in my presentation should be interpreted as representing, reflecting, or conveying the views or positions or policies of the government of Alberta. My comments are offered strictly as an individual with unique experiences, including prior service as the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and as a member of the Assembly. I reiterate that the views expressed herein are exclusively my own and not attributable to the government of Alberta, who is my current employer.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Cooper:** Now that that's out of the way. Having said those things in a very formal perspective, I do think that it's important that it is said that my goal here today is solely as someone who has a unique viewpoint as being a member of the Assembly – and I

know that other former members of the Assembly have presented – but also the former Speaker. As the former Speaker and a current private citizen, I do want to thank you for your service to the people of Alberta. You guys are playing a very vital part in our democracy, and I think that the work that you do and the hours that you spend are often thankless, so thank you from somebody who appreciates the importance of it.

I also wanted to thank you for the work that you did in the interim report. My presentation today will not speak to any specific constituencies, as I'll leave that up to those who live in them or have strong feelings about them, but more broadly the report that's presented. I would particularly like to highlight appendix D. It's my hope that dozens and dozens of people also read it, which is probably close to the truth. It really does highlight some very important factors when it comes to creating a boundary commission and, as you mentioned in your opening remarks, Chair, the importance of balancing effective and equal. Of course, equal is important, but so is effective.

Our democracy is one of the institutions of our society that when our democracy is healthy and our society is healthy, those two things are codependent on each other. Having a strong commission that recognizes the importance of both of the cross-section of effective and equal: it is critical to the success of our members to be able to represent their constituents effectively.

For context for you from my perspective as a former member, in the last year that I was elected, the constituency that I represented was about 10,000 square kilometres. Now, that's sort of in the middle of the pack. Immediately next door to me Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre is close to 30,000, and Drumheller-Stettler is, as you know, also close to 30,000 square kilometres. Now, when you compare that against some of the urban colleagues, like say Calgary-Buffalo, who represents 10 square kilometres, 1,000 times larger than the constituency of Calgary-Buffalo was Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. It in its very nature creates some challenges when it comes to effectively representing those constituents.

I had the honour and pleasure of serving 17 municipalities, over 100 locally elected officials, three school divisions, two postsecondaries, nine high schools, and when I compare that to the job that my urban colleagues had, they largely represented less than five municipal elected officials because of the divisional nature of those constituencies. Some of my colleagues had no high school in their constituency, and much different expectations of their presence in a community. For example, if one of my Calgary colleagues attended a high school graduation, it was accepted that there was a member of the Assembly there. It would have been impossible or poorly received for me to ask my colleague Jason Nixon to come to this graduation in Olds on our behalf. The people of Olds would be like: why is that guy here and not our local official? There are very different social, political, and very real expectations that are placed on members representing rural Alberta than representing urban Alberta.

I like to say that we have the same job but our jobs are very different, and I think it's important that the commission recognizes that vital difference. If you look at the last year that I represented the great constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills – this is one of my favourite things that I used to talk to grade 6 students a lot about. They would ask me: what is the worst part of your job? Every time I would tell them: driving. In the last year that I represented Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, I drove 70,000 kilometres in my vehicle. If you take that and divide that – let's say you could drive 100 kilometres an hour. I spent 700 hours driving in a vehicle. That's 29.2 full 24-hour periods or 87 and a half full work days that all I did was drive. That doesn't include all of the meetings and social

engagements, fundraisers for the community that I would have had to do in those days that I also drove, often being out on the road for 12 to 14 hours a day.

These are the types of considerations that I think are vital for the commission to continue to take into consideration when they're looking at the population variance allowances. Your interim report and the history of electoral boundary commissions have done a very good job of highlighting that there is a 25 per cent plus or minus variance that is acceptable when it comes to the difference between equal and effective representation, and I urge the commission to make the most of those variances, to accept with a level of comfortability that the job we do is the same but the expectations and requirements are different. I am of the opinion that there shouldn't be a rural riding in the entire province that is also a plus in population because we've already set our rural members up in a situation that creates additional requirements on their time, talents, and resources. I encourage you, as you consider the final report, that you look at this very, very critical and challenging balancing act that you must make around the difference between effective and equal representation.

I'll conclude my remarks there. I know that you have lots of other people to present today, but I thought I would leave some opportunity if you had any questions that I could be of assistance on, or things you've been contemplating that you might like to ask. I'd be happy to field those questions for you, and if this isn't the format for that, that's okay. I'll conclude my remarks there, again thanking you for your time and energy that you've given to the province of Alberta. At the end of the report I truly believe that our province is going to be better as a result of the work that you've done, the five of you, and it certainly can be a thankless job. I'm sure you've got lots of feedback on the draft report as well.

1:50

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Cooper.

Questions. Mr. Evans, we'll start with you.

**Mr. Evans:** What are your thoughts on use of eligible voters in a constituency as a factor under 14(f)?

**Mr. Cooper:** Like, I think that using eligible voters is a fair and reasonable manner. The reality is that when someone enters the office of a member of the Assembly, presents to them, "I have problem X or Y," at no point in time in my over a decade of service to the Assembly did I ask the question if they were a registered voter or not. The point is that we serve the people that live within the boundaries of the constituency and, quite frankly, sometimes beyond those boundaries, and so using the total number of electorates in the constituency, I think, is a fair number to use, particularly in light of the fact that that is the number that members of the Assembly believe that they're servicing or meeting the needs of, not necessarily the total number of voters.

**Mrs. Samson:** Two questions. One only requires a short answer, but not this one. Thank you very much for coming, too; it's a pleasure to see you here. How do you feel about hybrids based on your comments around that rural has a greater expectation of their MLAs? So hybrids meaning that combination of . . .

**Mr. Cooper:** Sure. I think that there are circumstances where hybrids are a fair and reasonable decision for the commission to make, and in particular, places close and around major urban centres. The reality is that Sherwood Park, you know, very much views itself as a part of Edmonton, and so if there is some expanding of the rural-urban areas in and around major centres, I think that this can be a fair use of those ridings.

I would say that if you were to get quite a ways outside of an urban area, that presents some challenges. But, you know, if the majority of your trade, the majority of your social fabric, of your life, is shared, I'm not of the opinion that it can't be shared in the form of representation as well. I think, like, to do something like Calgary-Olds: obviously that's not possible. The further you get out from the city, I think, the riskier it gets, but I don't think that the commission should be constrained only to urban boundaries, where it may make the most sense.

**Mrs. Samson:** That legislation gave us that opportunity, but just a real quick comment now: what's your button on your lapel?

**Mr. Cooper:** Oh. I'm a former politician, so no short answer is possible. This is the Alberta tartan in the form of the wild rose, and a gentleman by the name of Michael – oh, I can never remember his last name. He created an Alberta tartan dress that now sits in the Royal Alberta Museum, and he came and brought it to the Assembly, and they took some photos of it in the Assembly at the time that I was the Speaker, and he gave me the pin.

**Mrs. Samson:** Lovely. Thank you.

**Mr. Cooper:** The wonderful thing about it is that when I am representing the province of Alberta in the United States, many people actually ask me about it, so it gives an opportunity to talk about the Alberta tartan, which I'm keen to talk on, and the Alberta wild rose is one of our symbols.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Dr. Martin, one question, please.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

Mr. Cooper, it's great to hear you on these topics, and I'm glad that you pitched at a very high level, but you hit some key points I want to dwell a bit further on. You had said that whether urban or rural, it's the same job but it's different, and in particular it's different because of the high expectation of face-to-face meetings with an MLA at every possible club and meeting in your district; 4-H clubs, schools, it goes on and on; 700 hours' driving time just in one year, and we're not talking about the far north, where I'm sure it's more. It represents a huge commitment of time. There are layers of expectation upon you. Would you say that characterizes most of the rural ridings?

**Mr. Cooper:** Yeah. I can't think of a rural riding that it wouldn't characterize. I think that there is a different level of personal connection that rural MLAs experience with their constituents than urban MLAs, whether or not that comes down to going to the grocery store and being recognized in the grocery store. I'm certain that happens to my urban colleagues. My sense is to a lesser extent. I also think that people feel personally attached to their member of the Assembly with respect to rural MLAs.

As I highlighted the graduation situation, you know, someone like Speaker McIver, who has 25 years of service in the city, no matter what riding he is in in Calgary, they feel some connection to him. That's not the same in rural Alberta. People really feel connected to the person that represents them. I think it's a challenge that members face. There's also a massive expectation, whether it's judging a 4-H public speaking event, whether it's at a community fundraiser for the local ag society or Rotary Club or Kinsmen Club, the list just goes on and on. If members aren't present, there is a real sense that that member isn't doing their job.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** Mr. Speaker, good to see you again. Thanks for being here.

**Mr. Cooper:** Good to see you.

**Mr. Clark:** I just want to build on what Dr. Martin was talking about. You raised the comparison between Calgary-Buffalo and its very small geography and Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills or some of the rural constituencies. I completely agree that it is the same job but different. I will say that as an urban MLA you would also get pigeonholed in the grocery store. My kids were not thrilled about that as well.

**Mr. Cooper:** Yes. I can confirm.

**Mr. Clark:** I just wanted to explore some of those differences and similarities. You have multiple councils, school divisions, and a variety of municipalities, and you need to deal with that in the rural areas. But in somewhere like Calgary-Buffalo, you have a very high-acuity population that has needs around AISH or its successors, health care, education, housing, homelessness, addictions. We had someone earlier today from a constituency office talking about some of those unique challenges of the inner city.

That's the trick we have to balance – right? – if we're trading off, which in our interim report we already have in making some of the rural constituencies somewhat smaller than the average and urban somewhat larger. I think we've tried to address some of that, but I think there's a risk that if we go too far, then we're going to put it out of balance and make those two jobs even more difficult, right? I guess I just wanted to get your perspective, having sat in the Legislature and worked with rural and urban members, just how you would square all of that.

**Mr. Cooper:** I guess it's important to note that I don't think there's a perfect solution to the problem because the challenges that both of those members face are uniquely different. Will there ever be the perfect balance? It seems unlikely. But I think to strive to recognize the differences is critical.

2:00

I think many urban MLAs would also have multiple offices, and there are unique costs associated with that. I'm of the opinion that urban MLAs can increase staffing in a way that helps deal with some of those challenges, with respect to interacting with marginalized communities that we sometimes see in urban areas greater than rural areas. I also appreciate the fact that their office spaces are often more expensive than in rural areas. So there is this delicate balance, but I think that it is imperative that the commission undertakes this balancing in a way that recognizes the unique challenges that rural MLAs face.

I also think that it's fair to say that rural MLAs, not on volume but often on per capita, would share similar challenges with marginalized communities, whether it's AISH, access to housing, or other concerns. Sometimes it's easy to believe that those problems don't exist in rural Alberta, and I think that it's important to be reminded that those offices also deal with those concerns and challenges. We need to recognize that they also deal with delicate communities.

**Mr. Clark:** Thanks very much.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Cooper, I want to drill down on a couple of things that you said, not by way of correction but, I hope, by way of clarification. You made the point that no rural riding should be above the average. Did I understand you correctly?

**Mr. Cooper:** Yeah. I think that . . .

**The Chair:** Okay. Let's just leave it at that.

What we're struggling with is terminology and changes to the Alberta landscape. You've come out as a nerd by acknowledging that you read appendix D. You're the first person, I think, in public that's admitted that. It warms the author's heart, I can assure you. But Alberta isn't rural and urban anymore, and that's what I think we learned by going through the history and travelling this province. There's mushy middle stuff. Let me use this example. Would you consider Leduc-Beaumont rural?

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, I used to joke with Minister Horner that the definition of a rural MLA is whether or not you had a Starbucks in your constituency, so Leduc-Beaumont wouldn't fall into that category.

In my opening remarks I didn't address the sort of rest of Alberta: the Red Deers, the Lethbridges, the Grand Prairies. I see MLA Nolan Dyck is here. I'm sure he has some feelings about Grande Prairie. I'm sympathetic to your position that constituencies like Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills are shrinking in terms of the total number that exists like that because of these sort of rural, this cross between rural and urban, constituencies. Even, you know, Sylvan Lake is quite urban, and so we walk these fine lines of: the rest are in the middle. I think Leduc-Beaumont is a good example of a hybrid riding, from my perspective, because much of its commerce is done inside the capital. I don't think that that's a true definition of a rural riding, and that's also why I'm comfortable with the lines of urban municipalities being blurred a little bit into some more of what we would consider to be rural constituencies.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

One last, maybe difficult question. You've served in an independent capacity in the Legislature as well as in a partisan capacity. From your perspective as former Speaker how valuable is a report from this commission that is unanimous as compared to one that isn't?

**Mr. Cooper:** I think the commission and each of you as commissioners have an important part to play in the final report. If there are certain things that the commission decides that members of the commission don't agree with, I think it's important that Albertans know that this is a difficult process and to arrive on a unanimous decision is a challenge. I don't think that any commissioner should feel discouraged from writing a minority report or expressing the areas of the report that they agreed with and areas that they didn't. I mean, I think it would be wonderful if it could be unanimous in arriving at a position, particularly in light of the fact that two members were appointed by members of the opposition caucus and two members were appointed by the government caucus.

You know, any time we can get political foes, if you will, to agree is good modelling for members of the Assembly and political discourse more broadly. That said, I think that political discourse can be done in a way that's meaningful, respectful, and logical. If the report isn't unanimous, provided that it's done in those ways, I think it's a reasonable position for the commission to have.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much. I knew that was a hardball, actually, so thank you for your answer.

**Mr. Cooper:** That's nothing compared to U.S.-Canada relations.

**Dr. Martin:** Can we ask about that?

**The Chair:** Okay. In light of that – and this is even more important – I invite presenters to stay to hear the other presenters to get a perspective. Please, we invite you to stay. I know you probably have other demands, but during the break I'm sure there are people that would love to pick your brain on what you're doing now.

**Mr. Cooper:** Excellent. Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Our next presenter is Kathryn Joel. Good afternoon.

**Ms Joel:** Good afternoon. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Please make yourself comfortable and identify yourself and tell us what electoral division you are living in and which ones you wish to comment on.

**Ms Joel:** Yeah. My name is Kathryn Joel. I live in Edmonton-Strathcona. I live in Allendale, so I want to really comment on urban Edmonton. First of all, I wanted to thank you for your work on the 2025 interim report and for its careful, principled application of the concepts of communities of interest and effective representation. I wanted to in particular thank you for the decision to avoid hybrid ridings and to keep municipalities and established communities intact, which promotes clear, understandable boundaries and preserves shared social, economic, and civic interests. Your approach strengthens voters' ability to engage meaningfully with their elected representatives and supports effective representation in practice.

I think the commission has also appropriately applied the constitutional principle of effective representation by reallocating seats to reflect population growth in Edmonton and Calgary while reducing representation in areas experiencing population decline. The interim report advances relative parity of voting power and ensures Albertans have equitable access to legislative and constitutional representation. It's important this population-based adjustment be preserved in the final report.

I guess I would also encourage the commission to continue recognizing that the growth in Edmonton is not limited to suburban areas. I live in Allendale, near the centre of the city, and I run a small business downtown. I have a small cooking school located on the MacEwan campus. From both perspectives I personally see ongoing residential, commercial, and economic growth in the urban core. In my own neighbourhood this includes infill developments, basement suites, new apartment buildings. Downtown is also continuing to grow. I think these changes increase density and complexity in central neighbourhoods, and the assumption that growth is occurring primarily on the periphery can risk undervaluing the representational needs of urban communities.

**2:10**

I guess, in this context, the proposed removal of Edmonton-Riverview did catch my attention. I know there's a lot of building going on in that community. Also, I do believe that maintaining core ridings will help ensure that central neighbourhoods continue to have representation that reflects our specific needs.

Overall, the interim report reflects a balanced, legally sound, and forward-looking approach to electoral boundaries. I respectfully thank and encourage the commission to maintain these principles in the final recommendations.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, ma'am. Much appreciated.  
Your cooking school: what's the name of it?

**Ms Joel:** It's called Get Cooking.

**The Chair:** Oh, okay. I drive by one every time I go to Elections Alberta.

**Ms Joel:** Come to a class.

**The Chair:** Questions, Mr. Clark?

**Mr. Clark:** No. No questions beyond a thank you for being here. I appreciate your presentation.

**Ms Joel:** Thank you.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. I'll echo Mr. Clark's remarks, really. I'm glad you came. I'm glad you think that overall the interim report is good. I'm glad you read it.

**Ms Joel:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Did you read appendix D, though?

**Ms Joel:** No. I'm sorry.

**Mr. Clark:** There's a test on the way out.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for coming out. I appreciate your comments.

**Ms Joel:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you. I don't have any questions for you.

**The Chair:** Ms Joel, I've been meaning to say this about the Edmontonian presentations. I mean, we've travelled the province, and we've been in communities. Every community has its own sense of pride of ownership or pride of community. You know, I have not spent a lot of time in the last 30 years in Edmonton, but I have stopped referring to Edmonton as in northern Alberta as a result of this commission. I think maybe somebody presenting later will appreciate that. But I am very impressed with the very collegial pride that Edmontonians have almost universally presented, both first round and this round. You exemplified that, so thank you very much.

**Ms Joel:** Thank you. I'm not from here, but I love living here. Edmonton is amazing.

**The Chair:** I'll excuse you from the table, but please remain to hear, if you're able, the other presentations.

**Ms Joel:** Well, thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Our next presenter, Nolan Dyck.

**Mr. Dyck:** Well, it is a pleasure to be here today. Thank you so very much for being here and allowing me also to step in. I'm the MLA for Grande Prairie, and I am very much looking forward to our conversation here today.

I do have a few things just for context. One, I know it's been a huge amount of work for you with this commission. I know it's been at points contentious, but thank you for doing the work for Albertans. It is important work that you do, and it has long and, interestingly, lifelong implications for all Albertans. So thank you.

I'm going to speak on a couple of subjects here. One is just Grande Prairie itself. I'm going to talk about the rural-urban conversation, and then I also want to specifically talk about northern Alberta for a moment, too. I'm going to wrap my comments around kind of those three things. It sounds like those are also kind of where the conversation has gone here so far.

In regard to this whole thing my conversation really goes around effective representation. As some prior conversation has said, representation should reflect the work required to serve a riding, not just the headcount. To be clear, that is a geographical question. Obviously, there's a headcount question in there that you guys are looking at, but representation is, as has previously been mentioned by prior people, geographical. It is a conversation around representation and relationships and also government bodies, and I just want to highlight a couple of those in general across Alberta.

For instance, I represent a Timbit in northern Alberta. I have a very unique riding. I only have two-quarters of rural riding. I am completely urban in northern Alberta. My counterpart has about a quarter of the city, give or take, of Grande Prairie. What we represent would be equal to what all of the MLAs in Calgary would represent. I have multiple school boards while they have two. I also have two I represent, potentially three depending on how you count. There are 15 councillors in Calgary – I have nine – but they have 26 MLAs. There are two of us for our city. Ish. I'm going to count a little high.

Also, there's opportunity for multiple councillors to have multiple effective and elected representation on the provincial level, which one council through a mayor, obviously both similar style, similar official capacity to have the same. But the amount of relationships that rural MLAs are managing is significant to the point that many people have five-plus counties. My counterpart, MLA Wiebe, I believe has four different school divisions. I apologize. I didn't fully count. I believe he has eight different councils plus Grande Prairie, and he has also multiple distances to drive. It's about three hours across the constituency.

Those are variables in the conversation to effective representation that I think should also be – I just want to talk about elected officials for a moment. They have an elected right by their municipalities for access to government services and to represent their constituency needs as well on a municipal level. That is a distinct need for rural Alberta in a different way than a city has. Obviously there's a population count, but each one of those municipalities has unique needs and unique conversation for an MLA to represent, so it's multifaceted. I just want to point that out.

In regard to Grande Prairie, I just want to talk about also the rural-urban reality, and I'm going to speak from my perspective right now. As a mid-sized city MLA, engaging in rural aspects of a constituency which I do not represent is actually part of my job. I'll explain this this way. Many people live in my constituency that work outside. We have significant gas assets and significant agricultural assets from outside the city. Grande Prairie is the hub of the community. We represent roughly a catchment area of 300,000 people, so we have services for significance there. In my official capacity as an urban MLA I often talk about homelessness, mental health and addictions, health care, various other subjects as well, but there's also representation of the workforce that is solely focused on technically rural issues: forestry, energy. I've been able to help and have huge passion for the energy and forestry industry based around these things.

This would just be my perspective right now as well. In regard to the conversation around the effective representation only in the city, broadening that expansion and understanding rural and urban situations and problems is an asset to the MLA because you understand the whole complexity and can understand a further

complexity of our economics across this province. Not to be forgotten, northern Alberta is an economic driver, but so is rural Alberta. If you want to fully understand your job as an MLA, not just for your constituency but as an Albertan and representing holistically that aspect, that is an important aspect. I will stand behind it that the rural-urban conversation, representation in mid-sized cities, is an important one that I think we should consider strongly because of the economics of it, too.

I've been building to this as well. Northern Alberta, rural Alberta, but specifically northern Alberta: the current plan to remove a seat in northern Alberta does remove representation. Once again we're talking about the complexities of being an MLA, the time of being an MLA, the logistics of being an MLA, the representation for other elected officials for an MLA. Those are all aspects – and other nations. Northern Alberta predominantly has most of the nonurban or very close to urban centre nations, and those also require representation. That's important for all northern MLAs. For clarity, I don't have a nation in my constituency, but I believe every single other northern MLA does. Those are important conversations that potentially a city MLA or a predominantly urban MLA aren't going to have, those dynamics at play. It's also time, and time is not a bad thing, but it does add time into your life.

I think we have some other complexities there in northern Alberta, and my hope is that you would leave or build upon the amount of representation, not just based around headcount in northern Alberta but upon the geographical, upon the elected, upon service delivery, which I haven't touched on, and also the economic impacts of this province on those elected conversations. As I've said, the economic contribution of northern Alberta is significant, and with that I'll just tell one quick story here.

2:20

In my riding there is significant investment from those that come – we call it shadow population, but also shadow business population – to Grande Prairie to do business because their workforce is there, or just outside of my constituency, but their population lives in Grande Prairie. Those businesses meet with me because they need to know what's going on in Grande Prairie. And this is across northern Alberta. We are working hard for our constituents, but we also work for other urban MLAs because the business is there. That business is very important, and I think that there's an opportunity there as well, because they are looking to know what's going on in the constituencies and how they can impact the community, sometimes financially, sometimes encouraging their company to be involved in different aspects.

Hopefully I've been somewhat clear in my conversation, but geography, governance complexity, service delivery, economic contribution, elected, are all parts of this that I would contribute as important. Thank you for the time. I believe my six minutes ended maybe two or three times ago, so thank you for the time, but happy to answer questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Dyck. You've given an interesting spin on shadow population. Not a spin, but an interpretation. You know, we've talked about that a bit, but your perspective is I think new. We did read the letter from the northern MLAs, of which you were a signature. It was the first piece of feedback we heard, so thank you for that.

Mr. Evans, any questions of this presenter?

**Mr. Evans:** No, but thank you very much for your presentation and for being here today.

**Mr. Dyck:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation. I appreciate the extra information. You spoke very well about your relationship being a mostly urban constituency and how you understand what's going on and speak for the rural. Can you explain to us your relationship with MLA Weibe and how you work together? Because he's the other side of the coin, where he is just a touch of urban and all rural.

**Mr. Dyck:** Well, absolutely. Maybe I can talk about . . .

**Mrs. Samson:** In relationship to the business of Grande Prairie.

**Mr. Dyck:** Absolutely. Maybe if I take a step back, Grande Prairie is built upon three predominant industries: energy, agriculture, and forestry. There's a little bit of technology in there and some various other things, but those are the predominant three industries that we have.

We work well, and in fact we share office space together to also cut down cost, but the relationship works well not just because he understands Grande Prairie, but we are also able to advocate as a region and take our perspective a little bit larger than that.

Northern Alberta works very well together. Our counties, our cities work very well together, and I always just joke that it's because it's cold outside and you have to be together in order to create warmth, but the reality is that there's a connectivity there because there are fewer people, but you go and find a community. It's also the work aspect as well. Grande Prairie produces a lot of work. Northern Alberta produces a lot of work, so there are different opportunities and different cultural aspects there.

As to how we work together, I was able to help him advocate for a new hospital for one of his small towns. Well, that helps Grande Prairie because it actually gives the opportunity for our hospital in the future to not be one of the only landing zones for emergencies. That's super important, and he was able to advocate with me to start a new medical school, so we have a joint view that the important things in the region can be able to be moved forward collectively, which often are contrary or at times can be contrary not just politically, but maybe a different MLA has a different thought on something. Even those nonpartisan things can be very well worked together as a region. That's, I guess, where I think our partnership has gone really well in representing.

I'm not going to ask, also, if somebody has a problem, and I know them: oh, you live across the street. Right? It just doesn't meld that way in Grande Prairie. You're a Grande Prairiean. If somebody comes from outside of Grande Prairie: oh, my business is in Grande Prairie. If I said that, it would be instantly a refusal of government to help. That doesn't make sense in northern Alberta, so there's a cross-pollination of being willing to engage.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you. That's an excellent answer.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you. I have much appreciated your very rapid-fire description of the number of municipalities and school boards and the like that you and your immediate colleague have to deal with. The portrait that you and several other presenters have given us is that of what we call laminated governance. You have to be involved and appear to be involved throughout that whole stack all the time, so it occupies virtually all your time when you're back in your own riding.

I wanted to ask: we're inclined to make a recommendation about the budgeting that's provided to the Members' Services Committee on behalf of the MLAs because we've heard a fair bit about the complexity of staff work, which is exactly involved in the logistics of that laminated stack of relationships with municipalities and who

knows what. Can you speak to the issue of your own personal staffing budgets and how this constrains your work?

**Mr. Dyck:** Absolutely. As an urban MLA I would say that some of the challenges come in because there is more casework often as an urban MLA. But where the difference between myself and when I'm chatting with MLA Wiebe, who is predominantly rural, is that his logistic is then all of a sudden: what do you do for staff? Well, there's not really a huge budget for travel. What do you do for overnight trips if all of a sudden you have a big constituency? For Minister Williams, if he has to go to one side of his constituency, there's only limited hotel space. If you're on La Crête and you have to go down to the other side, well, that's three hours and you have six hours of meetings. Is it reasonable to put in a 12-hour day? Well, we do it, but also sometimes you're tired and you're like, "I need to get a hotel room," but there's a limitation on that throughout the year.

The budgetary limitations on staff also: they wouldn't be able to come because I don't have a budget for some of those travel things, especially in larger rural constituencies. In my constituency right now it's 20 minutes across. I'm not getting a hotel room, but in larger constituencies there's a logistical problem even for you. For everyone on the commission who lives out of town, you probably have a hotel room, and that's appropriate after a long day of work, but for us we would have to travel back home. So I think there's some of that as well. Is there an expectation for staff to come along? I would love a staff member, but I'm often solo for those so that we can actually be more effective together. Then also just the casework load: there is lots of work to be done, and that's the challenge.

So part of it is staffing dollars. Part of it is that you have to be careful as an MLA because you are responsible for any overtures, personally, for those budgetary concerns, unlike with a ministry where you go to Treasury Board and ask. So there's no contingency of, "Hey, I actually need an extra staff," but I either have to then underpay them or I can't maybe get them to do the work because there's not enough budget to give them full capacity.

Sorry for the long answer. There are some complexities in there, but I can see the challenges myself, yes.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** There are many things that we wish we had control over, that being one of them, perhaps having more than 89 seats to work with, but I think just to build a bit on what Dr. Martin was saying: you know, if we look at how we address some of the unique challenges of the north. Grande Prairie is north, undeniably, but as you say, there is north and then there's north, north, right? Like, there are some even grander challenges for some of your colleagues, which you've outlined, and they've done a fantastic job in also telling us about, too. So we've heard that loud and clear.

I think one of the things we wish we had as part of our tool kit – we don't, but we can strongly recommend to the Legislature – is for Members' Services to provide a substantial differential, actually. It doesn't replace an MLA. Having another office, another staff member is not an MLA, but it's part of the way there. It's one of a series of potential solutions or at least, you know, tools to do that. Again, I say that just empathizing with the unique challenges of being a northern MLA.

2:30

You talked a bit about growth in the region. It's good to see that there has been some growth. Our numbers show about 10 per cent since the last boundaries commission happened, so absolute growth has happened. Relative growth is about half the pace of the rest of the province. That is a bit of a challenge, you know, as things shift.

In the interim report the upshot of it is that those 10 northern constituencies are on average about 10 per cent smaller than the average whereas the previous boundaries, 2017, were actually only about 8.4 per cent. It's not like this is only a mathematical exercise, but just know that we have – in our struggles with how we address this, we have tried to address this to some degree. Having said that, we also have heard loud and clear from the north that we really do need to relook at how we've laid things out. I just wanted to say all of that.

My question, then. The shadow population you mentioned: you feel like we should accommodate for that and count those folks even though they're not eligible voters. Is that a fair statement?

**Mr. Dyck:** Let me put this in context. Let's just use our hospital, for instance. The shadow population around Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray, Slave Lake, High Prairie utilizes that hospital. Now, you can say that other places do as well, but it is because they're working there a significant portion of the year on shift. They are coming to Grande Prairie. When somebody does get hurt, we will be responsible for them. I'm proud of that. We want to service anyone that gets hurt that's appropriate. We're not going to gatekeep health care. That's ridiculous. The shadow population then all of a sudden becomes a part of the services that we offer and we have to represent. If it becomes purely a numbers game, then the services are weighted maybe to those that live there versus actually those that are utilizing services.

I think that it's an interesting question. The shadow population in Fort McMurray, I mean, is in the tens of thousands. That would actually add a couple of seats potentially to Fort McMurray if you count those in. I think there does need to be some weight put on to that because, at the end of the day, I still represent those people. Predominantly – I will say this. Maybe weight it so that those people that hire those people for the area – they haven't moved in, but they are using services a percentage of the year.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much for presenting and for bringing the perspective of your region of the province. Again, I know you're a busy guy, but if you are able to stay to hear other presenters, please remain.

**Mr. Dyck:** Thank you so very much for your work here, and thank you for listening today and asking your questions.

**The Chair:** Okay. Keeping with the Grande Prairie theme, is Adam Woods present? Nope.

Brianna Morris. Good afternoon. Please identify the riding you live in and what districts you wish to comment on.

**Ms Morris:** Good afternoon. I live in Strathcona-Sherwood Park, which I'd mostly like to speak about but also just talk generally about representation in Alberta. I spent most of my childhood and early adulthood actually in the riding of Calgary-Lougheed. While completing my master's degree in political science at the University of Calgary, I married a farm boy from Saskatchewan. In 2015 he and I moved to Fort Saskatchewan. A few years later we bought a home in Sherwood Park, and in 2022 our family moved to the riding of Strathcona-Sherwood Park, where we now live happily on an acreage near Uncas.

In the 10 years since moving to the greater Edmonton region, I can recall visiting Beaumont three times, once for a wedding and twice to meet a colleague who lives there for coffee. I nearly made it a fourth time during a leisurely motorcycle ride, one that ended with me in the ditch off township road 502 just west of highway 21.



The ambulance took me to the Leduc community hospital, not to Strathcona community hospital. I share this because it illustrates something important. The natural transportation corridors and daily rhythms of life for residents of Strathcona county simply do not lead to Beaumont. It's not a place we routinely go. I work in Edmonton, and while I occasionally shop or attend events here, most of my daily life – gas, groceries, church, children's programs – happens within Ardrossan or Sherwood Park.

For these reasons I disagree with the proposal to include half or any portion of the city of Beaumont in the riding of Strathcona-Sherwood Park. Even through my limited visits it's clear to me Beaumont is a beautiful, vibrant community. It deserves representation from someone more familiar with it than a resident of Strathcona county is. While I'm admittedly not familiar with the daily patterns of life for Beaumont residents, I can't imagine why they would go to Sherwood Park when the amenities of South Edmonton Common are closer. I appreciate the difficult task this commission faces, and I hope that you can still accommodate feedback from Strathcona county residents like myself about how community linkages play out in practice.

I'd now like to spend my time discussing representation more generally, not with my Strathcona county resident hat on but my political science hat. I strongly disagree with those beseeching the commission to strictly apply the principle of representation by population count. I appreciate the commission's recognition of the challenges inherent in representing geographically large ridings. Rural ridings should have smaller populations than urban ones.

I say this as someone who worked as a political staffer for several years serving both rural and urban MLAs. The scheduling logistics involved in meeting constituents are simply not comparable. To illustrate, using Google Maps, the distance from the northernmost point of Calgary-Currie to its southernmost point is a nine-minute drive. West to east is eight minutes. Contrast that with Peace River-Notley. Without even considering the furthest extremes, the drive between Manning and Fox Creek is three hours and 18 minutes.

I'm not suggesting rural MLAs work harder than urban MLAs. Effort varies from person to person, but for an MLA who wants to be present in their community, the practical demands of a large rural riding are inherently greater. Rural MLAs have the same 24-hour day as everyone else, and community events do not conveniently spread themselves out to make attendance possible. An urban MLA can feasibly attend several riding events in the same evening. That's not possible when the events are three hours apart.

During my political science studies I enjoyed exploring theories of representation, especially in a Canadian context. The interim report refers extensively to the concept of effective representation and highlights both the legislative role and the ombudsman role of elected representatives. Serving as an ombudsperson essentially means acting as a problem solver and advocate. In your deliberations as a commission I encourage you to place less emphasis on population count when doing so undermines this key advocacy portion of representation.

Provincial issues tend to vary more from municipality to municipality than from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. Consider Hanna, Alberta. When the coal phase-out was accelerated in 2015, the town lost 200 full-time jobs, 7.5 per cent of its population. Proportionally that would be the equivalent of Edmonton losing 65,000 jobs or Calgary losing 92,000. If such an economic shock occurred in Edmonton or Calgary, multiple MLAs would share the responsibility of advocating for those affected. The employees would live all throughout the city in different ridings. In a rural riding they live and work in the same, usually, other than what MLA Dyck just said, and one MLA shoulders that burden while also serving other communities spread across a large geographic area.

Representation is not only about legislating and voting in the Assembly. When it comes to policy-making and decisions about where infrastructure is most needed, the government is supported by a skilled public service that conducts research in province-wide consultations. Political caucuses and parties do their own research and consultations, too.

MLAs are not the sole channel through which constituents can provide legislative or policy feedback. Even if they were, a thoughtful MLA knows that among their 50,000 constituents positions on policy are neither cohesive nor fully knowable. They won't be able to vote in a way that makes all their constituents happy. Responsible MLAs understand they are more than a trustee acting solely on their own conviction, but personal judgment is part of the equation. It's about making informed statements and decisions grounded in strong engagement with constituents and other levels of government.

There is simply no substitute for in-person interaction or seeing a place first-hand. That becomes exponentially harder as ridings grow geographically. There is no substitute for an MLA in the meaningful work of physically showing up and having presence in classrooms to teach students about democracy and at community events that knit a riding together. An MLA cannot send a public servant from an Edmonton office tower to a Canada Day parade on their behalf.

Finally, we all know the phrase: no taxation without representation. Rural Albertans pay the same income tax rates as urban residents, yet geography inherently limits their access to essential public services, particularly health care, which accounts for close to half of provincial government spending. Given this disparity it's reasonable to expect some understanding when rural ridings have smaller populations. Acknowledging the access challenges faced by the people and families who grow our food is a small gesture of reciprocity.

My goal in presenting here today is to embolden this commission that there is public support for boundaries that support multiple forms of representation. Not all Albertans are fixated on numerical parity. Geography shapes daily life, access to public services, and an MLA's ability to meaningfully advocate for the people they serve.

Thank you for your time.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms Morris.  
Questions, Mr. Clark?

**Mr. Clark:** I have no questions beyond a word of thanks for coming in. I very much appreciate your presentation. Thank you.

2:40

**Dr. Martin:** We've heard a very great deal and indeed from the immediate previous speaker about the complexity of relationships and expectations on an MLA and on their constituency staff as well because of the tighter range of relationships between municipalities and school board trustees and 4-H clubs and school boards, and it goes on and on and on. There's a cultural expectation – let's put it that way – of a high degree of presence from the MLA and his immediate staff, and it's because of that, then, and the geography issues and the logistics involved there that you think we should not feel compelled to look for population parity with the urban areas. Is that a fair summary?

**Ms Morris:** Yeah, that seems quite accurate. Yes.

**Dr. Martin:** Very good. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.  
Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** No questions, but thank you for coming out.

**Ms Morris:** My pleasure.

**Mr. Evans:** No questions. Very much appreciated your presentation, though.

**The Chair:** Ms Morris, we cannot definitively say what the future will hold in terms of our final report, but we get the sense that our arranged marriage of Beaumont and Strathcona may not survive.

**Ms Morris:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you. You're excused. If you're able to stay, maybe not, I'd be interested to talk to you about your political science studies and how that affects what you just brought to us.

**Ms Morris:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Our next presenter, Alexander Dowsey. We are moving right along on time here.

**Mr. Dowsey:** Good afternoon. Thank you very much. Yes, my name is Alexander Dowsey. I live in the riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. I'm in more of the Norwood end. I'm here to talk today, actually, about naming more than anything else. I'm a historian. I come from a family of historians. It's always been one of my passions. I suppose I've earned a new badge of nerd, having come to speak at one of these commission meetings now, so I'll add that to my collection.

I wanted to speak today with regard to the naming of several of the ridings proposed by the commission, specifically about the use or overuse of cardinal directions in the naming of many of the ridings in Edmonton in recent years. I understand that especially in smaller urban areas, which are comprised of only one or two ridings, it makes sense to use cardinal directions to provide some differentiation between those two, but in a large urban area, especially a large established urban area like Edmonton with very complicated definitions of what constitutes the cardinal points in the city, it can become impractical and confusing both for voters and representatives to understand where exactly those lie. It doesn't necessarily really reflect the communities that they represent either. Furthermore, as the city continues to expand, the precise location of its cardinal points changes constantly, creating further issues resulting from relying on them principally for names.

I think we've all been in the position at least once or twice in our lives as Edmontonians where someone resurrects the perennial debate about where north Edmonton and south Edmonton are. The answers that people provide to that often demonstrate most clearly why relying on cardinal directions in a fast-growing and diverse city is unreliable at best. If you follow the postal designations, then where I live in the inner city is considered northwest. I'm barely north of the urban core and I'm firmly east of it, which is rather confusing. If you go by the river, then places like Edgemont and the Uplands are considered being in the north despite being as far south as Mill Woods. It's very subjective and interpreted very differently by the general public.

If we have the opportunity to tie a riding's name to a distinguishable feature, a development area, a geographical landmark, or a historical or cultural connection, then I think it's important that we do. It makes ridings easier to recognize. It gives the public a greater ability to place ridings geographically and gives them more certainty and connection to place rather than a broad cardinal direction does. I did a written submission for the commission a while back, and I gave a few examples of what that

could look like for ridings which have been proposed in the interim report, focusing on riding names which rely in part or in full on cardinal directions.

In the case of places like Edmonton-South West and Edmonton-South East I suggested using the names of residential and development areas, which are fully encompassed by the proposed boundaries, Edmonton-Windermere and Edmonton-Decoteau, respectively. For places like Edmonton-West Henday and Edmonton-South I suggested things like local geography. Edmonton-Kinokamau, the lake which sits between the major residential areas of the proposed boundaries of West Henday, and Edmonton-Blackmud as the proposed boundaries of Edmonton-South include much of the southern course of the Blackmud Creek as well as the community that shares its same name. Lastly, for Edmonton-North West and the new proposed boundaries of Edmonton-West-Enoch I suggested names which tie into their historical and cultural connections. Edmonton-Grand Trunk, an homage to the history of many of the neighbourhoods in northwest Edmonton as a crossroads across Canadian railways, and Edmonton-Maskêkosihk, the Cree name for the Enoch Nation.

I hope that this provides some food for thought. I know it's not a very exciting topic but one that I'm particularly passionate about, and I hope you give it consideration. Even if it is a rather mundane issue, it really helps, I can say from some experience volunteering in several elections, voters to know where exactly they are in the electoral landscape. I've had many challenges with friends who live in south Edmonton who are confused which of the Edmonton-South ridings they live in because it's not easily distinguishable right off the bat. It also gives them a chance to develop their own identity and carry that history forward.

Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is a great example of that. Norwood hasn't been the name of my neighbourhood in many, many decades. It was renamed Alberta Avenue with the renaming of 118th Avenue, but it remains part of our riding's history and legacy and certainly an integral part of our identity as a community. I certainly think of myself as a resident of Norwood. I just think it might be an exciting opportunity to introduce that when we're considering the naming of ridings.

I want to thank you all, of course, for all of your hard work on this. I know it's been a sort of marathon every time you have to redistrict the whole province. It comes with challenges every time as well. Thank you so much for your time here today.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much for your presentation, and thank you for focusing on – it is part of our mandate, names, but it's the third, and it's the forgotten part of our mandate. I trust that your presentation is all encapsulated in your written submission.

**Mr. Dowsey:** Yes, almost verbatim, basically.

**The Chair:** Good. Yeah. Well, thank you for that reminder. It's most helpful, and it'll be of assistance.

Any questions, Mr. Evans?

**Mr. Evans:** What are your thoughts on the naming policy that the city used in terms of the various wards?

**Mr. Dowsey:** Oh, it was quite interesting. I thought it was a great opportunity also to invite Edmontonians to learn more about our history as a city. I often describe it to people that the history of Edmonton: you have to scratch beneath the surface to really find it, but there's actually a lot of richness there, especially incorporating names that incorporated episodes in Edmonton's history, Nakota Isga for example, or others that are owing to the history of Inuit

communities coming to Edmonton for treatment for tuberculosis, which is long out of the living memory of the city. It was a fascinating experience. Edmonton-Métis, the ward where I live, has a very large First Nations and Métis community in it. That might not be a history that people might know much about.

Names are a way and have been a way in Alberta's tradition of carrying on that history. Whether it's been the names of figures or historic neighbourhoods, I think it's actually a really fascinating way to get people involved in that identity, even if it's not necessarily our top-of-mind thing when we're thinking about renaming places. I know it's sometimes a little infuriating to experience the thing that you've always known as one name being changed to another one, but it presents opportunities as well. I think that's broadly been the experience of a lot of folks as Edmonton's new names have gone forward.

**Mr. Clark:** Would that be applicable here in light of your concern about the confusion that names can result in as it relates to the electorate?

**Mr. Dowsey:** Oh, certainly. I think also, you know, it's part of that kind of, like, buy-in, that interplay or conversation with people when we're creating these areas. I don't know if they necessarily find that same sense of connection if it's sort of a more generic name. Edmonton-North West could mean any number of areas. Whereas I know for folks especially in the Lauderdale area, where Grand Trunk park sits now, that is something that is part of people's families' history there. I think it would probably be a moment of some pride for some families who are moving to those areas or who have lived there for generations to see that reflected in the name of the ridings that are representing them.

2:50

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Can you comment on the difficulty that people like me have struggling with Indigenous names? Like when Edmonton went to that, do you have feedback on that concept? I notice you have recommended for Enoch.

**Mr. Dowsey:** Well, I always think about it in terms of perspective. If I was a first generation immigrant coming to this country or maybe newly landed, I might struggle with some of our English place names, let alone any other place names that are around. That's always part of the challenge of just words in general.

I think if we have the resources available to especially help folks phonetically – I know during several municipal elections many campaigns include phonetic spellings and pronunciation guidelines for wards as an aid. But once it works its way into the lexicon, it's remarkably resilient. I mean, many Indigenous names have been longstanding names for places in Edmonton, like the Saskatchewan River itself, the word "Saskatchewan" being an Indigenous word originally, as with many of the rivers in our province. I think it's one of those things that comes with repetition and persistence more than anything else.

**Mrs. Samson:** Excellent point. Thank you.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. I take your remarks to heart, although obviously there are a great number of difficulties. I mean, you know, we've got this very lumpy situation. We've got districts in the province named after people. We've got districts named after big geographical features: Livingstone. I'm just looking at a map of Edmonton. I'm thinking Edmonton-Gold Bar: that label has been around for quite a while, but the Gold Bar neighbourhood is just

one little bit of that very large riding. These things get awkward fast.

I'm not a great fan of having lots of hyphens, you know. That's sort of evading the problem. I think we have to pick our spots. That may be as good as we get this time around.

Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** This is the longest conversation we've had about names. Thank you for this because exactly as Justice Miller said, it is part of our mandate.

**Mr. Dowsey:** Much obliged.

**Mr. Clark:** I feel like I've circumnavigated the city on the Henday here in my thinking. I've touched on a number of things as we talk here. On one hand, clarity and understandability is a key part of our role here, so we want to try not to change things wherever we can avoid it. People are used to it. It may not be perfect by today's standards, but people know that name. The flip side is that we have the opportunity to be bold and we can do some of this stuff. One of the things I would observe is that in the past one of the things that the Legislature may choose to change from the report is names, one way or the other. Right?

I wonder if we would approach that with maybe a little – I don't want to say a lack of caution . . .

**The Chair:** Humility.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Humility but also like: hey, you know what? We're just going to based on – the one caveat I would say is that when we're talking about Enoch, I want to be very, very careful to not presume without hearing directly, and we really haven't. That I think would be one distinction. Some of the other suggestions you have are interesting to me.

Thank you so much for that. I've marked it here, and I've got your written submission up as well. Thank you very, very much.

**The Chair:** Yes. Thank you for that. I made a note that generally in our recommendations – taking this job, I had to read a lot of legislative material, and when the last report was tabled, there were a couple of amendments to tweak to deal with names.

I think we just don't have the time to really delve down into this, but it would not offend me if an MLA made some amendments to properly name it after our report is released. We should probably, you know, give them – not as if we need to give them the latitude.

Thank you so much for bringing this to our attention.

**Mr. Dowsey:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay.

David Bilyk.

**Mr. Bilyk:** In the hot seat. Good afternoon, everybody.

**The Chair:** Good afternoon. We're only running 10 minutes late, but don't let that pressure you at all, sir.

**Mr. Bilyk:** I think I'll be quick. Quick and to the point is my style.

**The Chair:** No. Do the same thing that you've heard me say numerous times.

**Mr. Bilyk:** Sure. I'm Dave Bilyk, from Strathcona-Sherwood Park, hopefully your last presenter from Strathcona-Sherwood Park on this matter. I'm just a resident there. I'm here to discuss how maintaining our boundaries is the most mathematical and socially sound path forward for our community.

The interim report proposes moving Heritage Hills out of our riding. I strongly disagree. Effective representation is best served when families and their local schools remain together. Moving Heritage Hills fragments the school catchment areas for Davidson Creek elementary, Heritage Hills elementary, and we urge the commission to respect the status quo of the Clover Bar boundary that our residents already navigate daily.

Just another comment that I just thought about: you were talking about hybrid ridings. We're the perfect example of a hybrid riding, where 50 per cent of our population is represented in that strip on Clover Bar Road, and the rest of it is in the rural area. The reason it works so well is because we're intertwined with our community. We have Strathcona Wilderness Centre. We have all the amenities out in Ardrossan, and we all share those things together with Sherwood Park and with Strathcona-Sherwood Park. At no time do we ever migrate over to Beaumont. But I just wanted to say that a hybrid really works well in our situation.

My second point: our riding currently has a population of 51,006. I want to draw our attention to the shovels-in-the-ground reality of this population. We have 9,600 new residents already in the pipeline through two major developments. The Ardrossan expansion: according to the Strathcona county-Ardrossan area structure plan, the hamlet is being serviced to grow from a base of 1,200 to a target of 6,000 residents. The Hillshire subdivision, which I just drove by today and they're working hard at: per the Strathcona county-Hillshire local improvement plan, the 62-hectare project south of Wye Road contains roughly 1,300 residential units projected to house 4,800 people. These developments alone represent a 19 per cent increase in our current base.

Even if we remove Heritage Hills, which is about 3,150 people, and then add Beaumont, which I estimate to be about 13,000, that creates massive net gain. Combined with our 19 per cent organic growth, this riding will hit over 70,000 residents before the next boundary review. At 29.3 per cent over the provincial average, you would be creating a riding that violates the statutory 25 per cent limit. It is mathematically more stable just to leave the boundaries the way they are.

Next, our identity is tied to the north and east, formalized by the common bonds agreement with Fort Saskatchewan and our membership in Alberta's Industrial Heartland Association. We must also listen to our neighbours there. The city of Beaumont has been extremely vocal in their opposition to this plan, with their council voting unanimously on December 9, 2025, to reject the split. They share no social or economic connection with Sherwood Park. Forcing Beaumont into our riding dilutes the voice of the two distinct economic regions.

Also, the solution to the commission's population goals lies north, not south. Under Strathcona county's municipal development plan, a northward urban expansion has been legally mandated. The scale of growth: Bremner is designed for a target population of 85,000 residents. Active development right next door to them on the north side of highway 16: Akenside and Cambrian Crossing are under construction right now, with Cambrian alone slated for 12,000 residents.

Focusing Sherwood Park's expansion on the northern corridor respects our legal blueprints and prevents unnecessary fragmentation of neighbourhoods like Heritage Hills. Furthermore, if a precision adjustment is deemed mandatory, the town of Tofield, at approximately 2,100 residents, is a superior alternative to Beaumont or Leduc county, as it respects the highway 14 and 21 corridor. However, we maintain that Tofield should be considered as a last resort compared to the stability of our current map.

In my conclusion, in summary, my strongest recommendation is just to leave the 2023 boundaries unchanged. Our current population growth trends provide overwhelming support in maintaining the status quo to ensure we do not exceed the statutory variance limits in the coming years. If an addition is forced, the northern corridor – Bremner and Akenside, like I mentioned, and maybe Tofield as a last resort since they're in Beaver county and not Strathcona county – are the logical path forward.

3:00

Finally, I just want to thank everybody here, the commission. I appreciate the hard work you're doing and the extremely tough decisions that you need to make. Thanks for your commitment to listening to all of us Albertans.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. You said, I think, that a council unanimously rejected – which council?

**Mr. Bilyk:** Beaumont.

**The Chair:** Oh, okay. Sorry. I thought it was another.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much for that. Again, it's very much appreciated when citizens come in and participate in this process. It's, as you said, the hot seat, so it can be a little intimidating. We try not to make it that way, but it's appreciated that you have taken the time to come out.

Just for some context. One of the things that we're struggling with is that Alberta's growth has been so significant that although Strathcona-Sherwood Park and Sherwood Park have both grown in absolute terms, they've grown at a relatively slower pace than the rest of the province. Strathcona-Sherwood Park is about 7 per cent larger compared to 20 per cent for the province. Sherwood Park itself is 10 per cent, so at about half the rate. Growth is happening. Part of the question I guess I have for you is: is it high density, either low-rise, certainly not high-rise, and that sort of development that you're seeing, or is it more single-family, detached-type development that you foresee?

**Mr. Bilyk:** I think it's more single family, but there are, you know, your duplexes and fourplexes and such like that. But like I said, the numbers you might be looking at are in the rear-view mirror. These are actually shovels in the ground going forward that council has approved. What did you say, 7 per cent? I stated that it's probably closer to 19 per cent. Our riding is going to improve just with those two developments alone.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay.  
Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Yes.

Thank you very much. I like the fact that you have lots of numbers and they're very recent numbers, I take it.

**Mr. Bilyk:** Yes.

**Dr. Martin:** I wanted to look at two bits of it. One is the Hillshire development, and you say that that is slated for 1,300 units, give or take, did you not?

**Mr. Bilyk:** Yup.

**Dr. Martin:** Is that three or four storeys high? Does it include any of that kind of construction?

**Mr. Bilyk:** Three or four storeys? There are apartment buildings in there. Yeah. There are many of those in there plus the single family. It's a mix.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. That would characterize as well the other development that you specified near Ardrossan. They, too, are going to have a mix.

**Mr. Bilyk:** They're having a mix as well. They're slated to have 6,000 shortly, and then they've already got approval, preapproval, for up to 10,000.

**Dr. Martin:** Right. And we're not even talking about Bremner. I know they've scraped the ground, but, you know, it's going to take them 30 years.

**Mr. Bilyk:** It's going to take 20 years or so. Yeah. They've already been fighting for it for 30 years.

**Dr. Martin:** And what's the other one? Cambrian.

**Mr. Bilyk:** Cambrian is right next door. They've already got the shovels in the ground.

**Dr. Martin:** Well, I happened to go by there at some point in the autumn and there are 500 single-family houses there.

**Mr. Bilyk:** On the north side of highway 16.

**Dr. Martin:** You know, it's growing very rapidly.

**Mr. Bilyk:** Yeah. We don't mess around out there.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** No questions, but thank you for coming out. I appreciate your time today.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** No, no questions, but thank you very much.

**Mr. Bilyk:** Thank you, all of you, again as well.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Our next presenter is Roxanne Carr.

Chelsea Balzan. Good afternoon.

**Ms Balzan:** Hi.

**The Chair:** Please tell us where you're from and which ridings you wish to comment on.

**Ms Balzan:** Absolutely. I live within the boundary of the Edmonton-West-Enoch electoral district, and I'll also be providing some feedback about the Edmonton-West Henday district changes. If you'll humour me at the end, I'd love to speak about cardinal directions and naming because I have some feedback on that, but I didn't prepare that in my notes.

Thank you very much for allowing me to speak to you today. It's my first time presenting to the commission, so this will be the first time you're hearing from me. I am the president of the Glastonbury Community League in west Edmonton. We serve the areas of Glastonbury, Granville, and the north part of the Hamptons communities. If anyone knows where the west-end Costco is, that's the northwestmost edge of the area that I'm talking about.

Like all of the 160 leagues in Edmonton, our league is led by a group of dedicated volunteer community members who provide opportunities for Edmontonians in our area, including providing places of learning, culture, recreation, and education. I'm here under our mandate of advocating for our community.

First let me say that I appreciate the hard work and care the commission has put into striking a balance between competing priorities. It's clear through the submissions and it's clear through what you're hearing here today that there are so many factors that go into making these recommendations. I don't envy that job. I thank you for acknowledging and reacting to the huge growth that Edmonton has experienced and adding additional representation for our city.

The areas of Edmonton around the outside of the Anthony Henday, where I live, have seen the most growth in Edmonton. To provide a bit of context, the communities that I represent began to be developed about 20 years ago. In that time the league has built several playgrounds and the splash park. Housing development in our area is ongoing, and our league is in the process of building a rink and building for community programming.

For further context the 2021 federal census put the Glastonbury community league catchment population at 13,560 residents. We've had a number of high-density areas developed since that census. Our population will grow significantly again in the coming year or two as the final areas of the Granville neighbourhood are built out. Yes, there is Tyvek on some of them already.

The same is true of most if not all of the urban areas outside the Anthony Henday and specifically within this electoral district. That means that Edmonton-West-Enoch will quickly have a much larger population, and we're also in close proximity to the west line LRT, which hopefully will be completed in 2028 and will continue to increase the desirability of our expanding area.

The neighbourhoods in the Glastonbury community league catchment are directly adjacent to Enoch Cree Nation. We share valued connections. The league supports the nation's facilities by paying for our members to have access to the River Cree twin rinks for skating, and the nation supports our league with sponsorship and advertising in our community newspaper. There's also no doubt that we all depend on provincial and municipal infrastructure directly adjacent to the nation. I hope that much feedback is received from Enoch Cree Nation, its leadership, and its members as they are best placed to comment on their inclusion in the majority urban riding versus rural.

On the elements of Parkland county that have been included in Edmonton-West-Enoch, my opinion is that they do not have more in common with Edmonton residents than they do with those in Devon and the surrounding area. It's true that some may work in Edmonton. In my household it's actually the reverse. We live in west Edmonton, but my husband works in Devon. He travels through the area that we're talking about in question daily and stops in Devon for things on the way home from work, uses some of the provincial infrastructure in Devon on occasion. As a family we spend time in and travel through the area regularly, whether it be to go to a u-pick, the corn maze, the botanical gardens, or get to the family cabin.

We recognize, when spending time in and travelling through this area, that this is distinctly different from Edmonton with differing wants and needs. Spending time in an area is not enough to demonstrate that you are aligned as a community of interest.

Am I right to assume that this is the first urban-rural-First Nations hybrid electoral district?

**The Chair:** I think you are probably right.

**Ms Balzan:** Okay.

I have no doubt that combining a First Nations, rural, and urban riding together will cause a split focus for our MLA and dilute the representation of the residents in the riding. I'm concerned about an MLA being able to effectively represent the needs and concerns of three distinct different constituency groups. I understand that all MLAs need to represent a multitude of needs, but we're talking about a hybrid riding that has three communities of interest with complex needs, not just two. A solution to this dilution of representation would be to keep Edmonton-West-Enoch as a hybrid urban Edmonton-First Nations riding, moving the Parkland county portion to Stony Plain-Drayton Valley-Devon.

My final piece of feedback is on behalf of the area directly north of us, represented by the Lewis Estates Community League. If you look at where Enoch ends, in that top right corner is half of the Lewis Estates neighbourhood. The second half of it is in Edmonton-West Henday, and today in the 2017 districts it's in Edmonton-West Henday in its entirety.

3:10

**The Chair:** Completely, yeah.

**Ms Balzan:** Yeah.

The Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues provided feedback earlier in the process regarding the importance of keeping communities whole. In my conversations with the president of the Lewis Estates Community League, they are against being split between two ridings as it would mean having to advocate with two MLAs and interacting with two constituency offices. As an organization responsible for advocacy for our residents, this hinders our ability to effectively represent our communities and, perhaps even more concerning and more importantly, can cause confusion among constituents.

The communities of Rosenthal, Secord, Lewis Estates, and Glastonbury are well aligned. We call ourselves West Henday. I realize we're not in the West Henday district in the new drawing of the map, but we have a lot of the same concerns. We're newer neighbourhoods. We don't have the same infrastructure that other communities do. So there could be an opportunity to pull those communities all into Edmonton-West-Enoch. My written remarks, that I can provide, show the boundary of what that could look like.

That's the end of my formal comments.

On cardinal naming. Today our riding is in Edmonton-South West. It's not easy to see here, but we're distinctly not south. My street name has NW on the end of it. I agree that the cardinal naming is confusing. I definitely understand what you're saying about needing to have input and guidance from Enoch on whether we might use a Cree name in the new electoral district. What a better way to create conversations. I have learned how to say sipiwiiniwak, which is my ward for Edmonton. I know what that means. It has meaning. I think that thought, that idea is something that merits looking at.

In general, not a fan of the cardinal labels. I'm open to the idea. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you. Thank you for the various points that you've made. Much appreciated.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** No, no questions.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you. Excellent presentation. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** No. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah.

I'm just reflecting a bit; you've covered a lot of ground. Did you say that you have a map you can share with us and give to Mr. Roth?

**Ms Balzan:** Yeah. I did sort of indicate the areas that I was talking about with respect to the community issue of splitting the community.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah, that's incredibly helpful for us. In these high-growth areas it's quite a challenge for us to square the circle, if you will. Your feedback is really very helpful. Thank you very much for coming.

**Ms Balzan:** Okay. Thank you very much for your time.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

That takes us to – we're way ahead of the game now – Bodda Ammar. No?

Okay. That completes the formal list. Although, there's someone here that is wanting to present. We've got the time, so it's perfect.

A.J. Wrenn, please come forward and identify yourself and tell us what electoral division you are residing in and which ones you wish to comment on.

**A.J. Wrenn:** For sure. Thank you. I have five pages, and, fortunately, these are the little pages. My name is A.J. I'm from Edmonton-North West.

**The Chair:** Last name?

**A.J. Wrenn:** Wrenn.

**The Chair:** How do you spell that?

**A.J. Wrenn:** W-r-e-n-n.

**The Chair:** Okay. Edmonton-North West?

**A.J. Wrenn:** Yeah. Before I forget, I like the idea of calling it Grand Trunk.

**The Chair:** Oh, really?

**A.J. Wrenn:** I love the cultural heritage names. That was something that, when I was door-knocking for my city councillor, came up a few times. I still remember the post on the Edmonton subreddit, people complaining about the names. When I posted the playlist from the city of Edmonton and the pronunciation guide and the explanation of all the names, the videos that they made are awesome. If you don't know how to say it, I highly recommend checking there because they're pretty brief and they do a nice job of explaining what it means. I may have cried when I looked up the one from my riding.

I'm going to mostly be speaking about Edmonton, so that's probably the best one to pull up on here. As far as the overall thesis, I feel like I'm going to be saying something that many of you have probably thought many times: given the amount of population growth we've seen, doing your job with only being able to add two seats seems unreasonable. I have a little bit at the end talking about relative populations and what systems looked like a long time ago and how I feel like we've kind of fallen behind.

Edmonton and Calgary are both among the fastest growing population centres in Canada and the provincial government was even spending tax dollars inviting more people to come from other provinces. Now that the job market has been flooded and youth unemployment is rampant and the labour force participation rate is as bad as it's been since the '70s, it feels like Edmonton and Calgary are poised for poor representation.

I think it's most obvious for Edmonton from the numbers. There are only four ridings in all of Alberta with over 61,000 people, all of which are in Edmonton. Edmonton is also one of the most prepared for population growth in Canada, with a large footprint and generally low population density. With excitement from urbanists and chagrin from NIMBYs, Edmonton is also being a leader not only in Canada but in all of North America for being pro development and reforming zoning laws.

Not only are hundreds of thousands of Edmontonians now proportionally worse represented now, but based on growth and being the most pro-market zoning legislation in Canada as well as having a city council that isn't afraid of building more, I think that will just get worse over time. I can see all four of those ridings – Edmonton-McClung, Edmonton-West Henday, Edmonton-Riverview, and Edmonton-North West – all being well beyond the 65,000 in a fairly short period of time.

At some point if urban and suburban centres continue growing and rurals continue stagnating or shrinking, rural voters will effectively be shut out of politics. I appreciate and understand that. According to growth trends it isn't an if; it's just a when. I think many rural folks would agree with me if I were to say that it's already happened.

I don't think the solution is five more seats instead of two, though having more seats to deal with would certainly solve a lot of the issues that people have brought up. I think one of the things that really needs to be considered is that Canada has a very unique demographic makeup, a very unique geography and culture, but our governments don't really reflect that very well. Fair Vote Canada made a system called rural-urban proportional specifically to address this issue. I encourage everyone to look into it and consider it. I know that's not within the purview of your guys' decision today, but I think it's something that I wish I was singing to the choir on. If that's just something that you guys consider in the future, I think that would be great.

For comparison, in 1930 there were 63 legislators for under 300,000 registered voters. Cities used to have district-level single transferable vote proportional representation, and other districts outside of cities used instant runoff voting. Over time we simplified our voting process to first past the post. I think that might have been a mistake. I hope that now in 2026 with the Internet and AI I'm confident that Albertans can do what they did 100 years ago and be able to make decisions by doing more than just, like, a single tick in a box. I think having some sort of changes to the system might really help that.

3:20

I know one of the comments earlier was about having more people in offices. It isn't as good as having more representatives, but it's close. It made me think: okay; what are some comparable things that might have a mix of urban and rural like Alberta does? I looked up Montana. They have a population of 1.14 million. They have 100 representatives and 50 Senators. Edmonton on its own has 1.2 million people in it. I also can't think of a place that talks more about being small government than the U.S., so if their states have much more representatives than we do with a fraction of the population, I don't see why expanding our representation would be

such a bad thing, especially when you look at how much growth there was in the '20s, '30s.

They were adding new MLAs constantly and then taking them away. I do appreciate having a little bit more stability with the eight-year time frame, but if you look at the number of MLAs that have been added in the last few decades relative to 50, 60 years ago, it's not comparable at all. Everyone, I think, is worse represented now than they were five decades ago. In my opinion, the biggest piece that needs to come out of this is that we need a lot better representation or a lot more representation.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

You touched on some really good points. Just to supplement, we operated in Alberta on 83 electoral divisions from 1986 to 2008, and that's one, two, three, four, five, six, seven elections. But the public climate at that point was government cuts, live within your means. As I recall, in my previous life that's what the public wanted and no expansion. Since 2008 we've only expanded six seats to the next election. Yeah.

Comparatively, Montana is maybe a little bit of a stretch to compare.

**A.J. Wrenn:** It was the closest thing I could find that proved my point.

**The Chair:** Well, yeah, and it's in everybody's mind because of all the great TV series that come out of there lately.

Comparatively with our Canadian fellow provinces, we're not that far off the mark. I think we have a little bit of a study in there. But thank you very much for your presentation.

Questions, Mr. Evans?

**Mr. Evans:** No. No questions. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** No questions, but thank you. That was very interesting.

**Dr. Martin:** I'm just having a thought experiment here. I mean, the whole business of what would constitute effective representation is very much on our minds all the time, all the different features that go into it and how it stacks up rather differently in different parts of the province: rural, downtown core, maybe suburbs. You know, there are lots of different ways to weight different factors. I mean, the city of Edmonton: in terms of effective representation I take it that you are thinking largely of opportunities of advocacy, so you want more MLAs. This is a thought experiment. We have no say over this kind of thing, but in terms of effective representation, which is your major concern, you know, you've got a million people and you only got 12 councillors. What if you had – I don't know – twice as many councillors? Would that be an improvement in the effective representation of the people of Edmonton?

**A.J. Wrenn:** I feel like if our municipalities had more ability to make high-level decisions, that might be true. However, when I was learning a lot about the municipal issues that I thought were important, often the answer was, you know: why wasn't something done about this? Well, it's because it's actually up to the province to allow the municipality to make those decisions. So I think if the municipalities had more control over what they could do, that might be a good solution, but as things stand I think there's too much red tape for municipalities to make a lot of the decisions that would be high impact.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Good point.  
Mr. Clark?

**Mr. Clark:** It's a really interesting point, actually. We had submissions in the last go-round from a former Speaker, in fact, that wants fewer MLAs, interestingly enough. I think your point is really well made and interesting about not just the number of MLAs and the type of representation but also the system. Unfortunately, those are not things we control, so we are put in the legislative box that we were knit into, so unfortunately – but we certainly can consider and discuss . . .

**A.J. Wrenn:** I know it's the wrong venue. I just want more people singing the same song as me.

**Mr. Clark:** Well, and as I like to say, *Hansard* is forever, and this is now on *Hansard* and part of the public record. It is something we can consider as a recommendation to the Legislature in saying, you know: would we have found this to be a better process if we had more members to work with? It could very well form part of our dialogue, so thank you for that suggestion.

**A.J. Wrenn:** Yeah. I appreciate the desire for cost savings, but I look at it more from, like, a macroeconomic view in that if you're spending money on a big project and you're hiring foreign consultants, that money just kind of disappears, but if you're expanding the amount of representatives that you have, what are they going to be doing with their money? They're going to be spending it in Alberta and you're kind of increasing the velocity of money. That's one of the things that I think a lot of places are struggling with right now, that a lot of money is going from their community to elsewhere, and I don't see that same problem with political candidates unless they're parachute candidates from the other side of the country, but that's not here nor there or, from what I understand, very common in provincial politics anyways.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Wrenn. A most interesting presentation. We have all taken note, and we'll see if we can make some form of recommendation along those lines.

**A.J. Wrenn:** Okay. Perfect.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**A.J. Wrenn:** Thank you, and thanks for squeezing me in. I appreciate it.

**The Chair:** No problem. I think we have two more presenters for the afternoon list, but they are absent. They're not here yet, so we will take a break. Ten, 15 minutes maybe?

**Mrs. Samson:** See what happens. See who shows.

**The Chair:** Okay. We'll be back here at 3:45.

[The hearing adjourned from 3:28 p.m. to 3:48 p.m.]

**The Chair:** Okay. We're going to reconvene the commission's hearings. Do not be enticed with someone giving you candies to shorten your presentation.

We've got two more presenters for the afternoon, and I'm going to call on Mr. Bodda Ammar to come forward. How did I do pronunciationwise?

**Mr. Ammar:** Well, it's Bodda Ammar.

**The Chair:** Bodda Ammar.

**Mr. Ammar:** Let me just spit out this candy, though.

**Mrs. Samson:** What?

**The Chair:** Aha. Guilty.

**Mr. Clark:** Susan. Gotcha.

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay. I'm quitting. You guys just did it in.

**The Chair:** Okay. We're concluding the afternoon session with two more presentations for the Electoral Boundaries Commission. Please, sir, identify in the microphone your name and the electoral division you live in and which ones you wish to comment on.

**Mr. Ammar:** Good afternoon, commissioners. My name is Bodda Ammar. I live in Edmonton-Whitemud, but I'm commenting on Edmonton-Meadows today. I work in the Edmonton-Meadows constituency office as a staffer there. I know my colleague Yadvinder Bhardwaj presented yesterday as well, making the case for an additional Edmonton seat based on population data and variance distribution. I'm here today to offer something a little bit different, the operational reality of, you know, what these numbers mean on the ground along with new evidence that strengthens the case that he made as well. I want to thank the commission for its thoughtful work, and my comments are offered in alignment with your mandate of effective representation.

Before I present the data, I want to emphasize one critical point about this commission's work. According to Elections Alberta and the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, the commission is appointed every eight to 10 years. The last redistribution was in 2017, and the boundaries you draw today will govern Alberta's elections until approximately 2033 to 2035. Of course, that's not a short window. That's nearly a decade, during which Alberta's population will continue to grow, and, of course, the pressures we're seeing today will only intensify. This means that redistribution can not only reflect where Albertans live today, but it must anticipate where they will live tomorrow. The commission's interim report emphasizes durability, and I'm here to present evidence that Edmonton's growth trajectory requires more forward-looking seat allocation than currently proposed.

Commissioners, I'd like to present data that wasn't included in yesterday's submissions. According to the Alberta government's regional dashboard using data from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Edmonton had 18,384 housing starts in 2024, an increase of 39.4 per cent over 2023. Calgary had 24,369 housing starts in 2024, an increase of 24.5 per cent over 2023. So let me be clear about what this means. While Calgary had more absolute housing starts, today Edmonton's growth rate is nearly 60 per cent faster than Calgary's in terms of housing starts, and of course, housing starts are a leading indicator. They tell us where population pressure is headed, not just where it is today. Every housing start represents future residents, future families, future constituents who will need representation, yet the commission's report proposes giving Calgary two additional seats while giving Edmonton only one.

The most recent Statistics Canada data from January 2026 confirms a trend. From July 2024 to July 2025 Edmonton's growth rate was 3 per cent, while Calgary's was 2.9 per cent. Edmonton is now outpacing Calgary. If we're drawing boundaries that must remain durable for the next 8 to 10 years, we should be accounting for where growth is accelerating, and the data shows that that's Edmonton.

I want to give you a window into what these numbers look like from inside a constituency office. Edmonton-Meadows and some



other Edmonton ridings generally serve some of the most diverse populations in the province. According to the 2021 Canadian census, in the Mill Woods federal electoral district, which largely corresponds with our area, visible minorities accounted for 55.9 per cent of the population. That's more than double the national average of about 26.4 per cent. South Asians alone represented 32.4 per cent of the population. Research from Dr. Sandeep Agrawal at the University of Alberta estimates that approximately 85 per cent of residents in this area are immigrants or their immediate descendants.

These residents don't just need more quantity of service; they often need more intensive service as well. When a newcomer family comes to our office, they're often navigating multiple systems for the first time: health care, education, immigration, housing. They may not speak English fluently. They may not understand how to access government services. They may not have anyone else to really turn to. Our office becomes their lifeline, and we're often the only resource available to them in their own language.

So let me give you a sense of some of the volume. On a typical Friday our MLA may have between 10 and 20 constituent meetings. Our phones are frequently busy. Our waiting area is sometimes full of people who have just walked into our office seeking help. Constituents sometimes tell us they can't get through not because we're not trying, of course, but because we often lack the capacity to serve everyone who needs us at all times.

3:55

MLAs are elected to serve everyone in their constituency, of course, whether they voted for them or not, but when the population is this dense and this diverse and growing this fast, the quality of that representation suffers. We believe the only structural solution is to reduce the number of people each MLA must serve, and that would mean adding an additional seat in Edmonton.

The commission's interim report consolidates six central Edmonton ridings into five, effectively taking away a seat. Then it adds two new ridings in the southeast and west. The net result is only one additional seat for Edmonton. Meanwhile Calgary receives two new seats within city limits plus an additional seat in the Airdrie-Cochrane area. Yet according to the commission's own appendix E, Edmonton has seven ridings exceeding over 6 per cent variance above provincial average and Calgary has only three. As I've shown, Edmonton's housing starts growth rate is 39.4 per cent, significantly higher than Calgary's 24.5 per cent, and Edmonton's population growth now exceeds Calgary as well.

The commission's principles emphasize durability, and over the next eight to 10 years Edmonton's growth will only accelerate relative to Calgary, so shouldn't Edmonton receive proportional seat allocation? I'm not asking you to take away a seat from any other region. I'm simply asking you to reconsider whether one additional seat adequately reflects Edmonton's structural, ongoing, and accelerating growth.

To close, commissioners, the boundaries you draw today will shape Alberta's representation until the mid-2030s. Edmonton's growth is not temporary or speculative; it is structural and accelerating, and the housing starts data and the Statistics Canada figures and the on-the-ground reality for us at the office all point to the same conclusion. Respectfully, I submit that one additional seat in Edmonton would strengthen effective and durable representation not just for today but for the life of the map.

I thank you for your time, commissioners, and for your service to Albertans.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We want to open it up for some questions. I should just note the absence of one of our commissioners, which just occurred just as you started to present, Mr. Ammar. He wears several hats, so he has to be in a special meeting for the next hour. That explains his absence.

Mr. Clark, any questions?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah.

Thank you very much. I just wanted to reiterate, and I believe your MLA had proposed this, that right now Meadows is about 53,000 population and Mill Woods is about 59,000. The thinking there was that on the east side of Meadows there's a lot of net new growth and building out. As you suggest, and to borrow a saying from a great Edmontonian, skate to where the puck is going to be, which is, I think, to summarize part of what you were saying. Let's accommodate for some growth.

But you also want Larkspur back. If we added Larkspur, that would be 6,000 more to you, and Meadows would now be 59,000 and Mill Woods would be 53,000. The thesis we were working on is that Mill Woods is mostly built out, not zero growth but mostly built out. Meadows is still building out, so we were leaving the headroom in Meadows. Would you like us still to flip Larkspur into you? If we can't add more constituencies, which I know you're asking, how would you reconcile that?

**Mr. Ammar:** I mean, I would say that, you know, I'd ask the commission to ensure that the ridings with the highest growth trajectories, I guess, like the ones in the southeast, are drawn at the lower end of the variant range to, like, provide for that extra room.

I want to stress that, you know, just from my perspective, the one additional seat isn't asking for special treatment. It's really asking for proportional treatment based on the data. I would say that an additional seat would help alleviate some of these issues that the commissioners might be having with the map.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Well, thank you very much. We had a lot of fun chatting with your colleague about things like Larkspur and the struggle over getting the population kind of sorted right.

You raised two broad issues. One is about the burden of being a constituency officer and the range of queries. You gave us an illustration. You know, on a Friday we can expect X number of humans with Y number of topics. That is entirely true, and the volume of that is a burden on you and your immediate colleagues. But staffing isn't our remit. We are fully alive to the difficulties that any MLA has with respect to adequate staffing budgets and to hire enough people, to get adequate premises and equipment, and to perhaps pay performance bonuses or have a salary ladder. All those things are consequent of having budget room. We are prepared to make very strong recommendations to the Legislature about the need to make a more robust and generous members' budget allocation. Some of your difficulties: we hear you, it's burdensome, but it's a staffing issue.

**Mr. Ammar:** That's true, Commissioner Martin. But while I agree with that, I also think that a lot of the issues come to having just one MLA being the only representative for so many people. A lot of times staff aren't able to simply fill in for the MLA when it comes to important stakeholder events or community events. For example, on a given weekend in Edmonton-Meadows there might be Diwali celebrations, there might be a mosque event for Ramadan, a Sikh

gurdwara function, a community gathering, all happening simultaneously. Of course, the MLA can only be in one place at a time. We have to pick and choose often. Communities sometimes feel neglected because we simply cannot be present at every event. Of course, having a staffer present helps a little bit, but they need that representation from their MLA.

You know, you're right that a lot of the issues can be helped with increased budgets for staff, but we think that the actual population of the ridings matters as well for the MLAs.

**Dr. Martin:** Well, point taken, but that's true for every single riding in the province.

**Mr. Ammar:** Of course.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. We've heard a lot from MLAs and former MLAs from a variety of places that, you know, clearly are rural. What I call the laminated stack of governance relations that are required for those MLAs is astounding, equally as astounding as those you describe. I'm not convinced that we can make much of a distinction on how the MLA's schedule is subdivided. It always will be.

I also wanted to just mention the population issue. Yeah, there is some headroom, as my colleague said, in Edmonton-Meadows, but it also exists in four of the five central Edmonton ridings, all of which are under the provincial mean population.

You know, we're alive to the issues of Edmonton's growth and certainly that of Calgary's. That is why we struggle with trying to accommodate the problems people can foresee in the period of five to eight years. We want to try to deal with rates of growth of the coming two years, at best, because that is something much more tangible to us.

**Mr. Ammar:** I just want to say again that, you know, when it comes to our areas, where it includes areas of very high diversity and high populations and large numbers of newcomers and new Canadians, it does add a level of complexity to the MLA's work, where it may not exist in all other areas in the province. I think that when it comes to him having to be present at multiple areas, that does also come with dense urban concentrated areas, where various communities coexist and demand his representation and attention.

4:05

When it comes to, you know, the central Edmonton ridings, I understand the commission's rationale that these areas have grown more slowly than the city's periphery. However, I note that the net effect, then, is Edmonton only gains one seat despite having the fastest growth rate among major cities according to Statistics Canada.

**Dr. Martin:** Well, it had the fastest growth rate. We can't predict the future.

**Mr. Ammar:** Right. I presented some data where it could help maybe give us some data on where that might be going, with Edmonton having, you know, over a 3 per cent population growth rate and some of the highest housing starts in the country, so that gives us an idea of where Edmonton's population is going.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for that answer.

Mrs. Samson, questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation. I have no questions. Thank you.

**Mr. Ammar:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Ammar, thank you for your presentation, and thank you for the haunting reminder of the fact that what we do continues on to 2034-35, possibly. Yes. Thank you so much.

**Mr. Ammar:** I appreciate it. Thank you for your service and for your work for Albertans.

**The Chair:** Yeah. We'll excuse you. If you can remain for the last presenter, you're more than welcome to do so.

Our last presenter of the afternoon, Mr. Scott Sinclair. Thank you for coming.

Off the record I'll tell you a story about your lapel pin sometime.

**Mr. Sinclair:** What? Sorry.

**The Chair:** Your lapel pin. I don't want to occupy the time.

Typically we leave six minutes for the presenter and four minutes for questions, but it's a rule that's honoured more in the breach than the observance, Mr. Sinclair. Please proceed.

**Mr. Sinclair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Justice, and I would appreciate it. I did time this twice, and I made a small amendment. I'm around seven minutes the second time, so if there was a minute's grace, I would certainly appreciate it.

**The Chair:** Soldier on.

**Mr. Sinclair:** Thank you.

Hello, everyone. My name is Scott Sinclair, and I'm the MLA for Lesser Slave Lake. Before I begin, I'd like to say thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. I would also like to thank each of the members of this commission for their service on this panel and to the people of Alberta. I'd also like to thank anyone who's taken the time to participate in any fashion in this process, especially those who have joined me in advocating for Lesser Slave Lake and more northern representation. I was incredibly proud to hear last week from Member Samson that our submissions from the north made up almost 10 per cent of the submissions for the entire province. You can correct me after, but I think you said 100 out of the 1,100 roughly, which is pretty incredible given the size of our area. It's also why I often repeat the phrase from the *Game of Thrones* show, that the north remembers.

I'm aware of the scrutiny and the ramifications of the decisions or life-altering changes that this board will eventually propose to the powers that be. This board's decisions will surely have a lasting impact on the people of northern Alberta, and each of your names will have an inevitable connection to these aforementioned changes. This public pressure and heavy burden are not easy to wear, but I've seen each of you demonstrate compassion and understanding in previous presentations that I've watched and listened to online, and I'm optimistic that I can appeal to both your hearts and minds here today, which is why I feel compelled to advocate so strongly for the people of Lesser Slave Lake, those who've elected me to fight for them and make sure that they have a strong voice and a seat at the table.

My mushum, or grandpa, Sam Sinclair always told me that decisions were made by those in the room, wise words that have always stuck with me and are so obvious to me now, now that I've seen it first-hand as an MLA, which is why the passion and commitment that I'm trying to demonstrate is not meant to offend anyone here today but to reaffirm to the people I represent that their voices are being heard in a meaningful way so that any decision being made by the people in these important rooms or fancy buildings should always reflect everyone in this province, no matter how remote or far away they are from them.

Quite simply, a life in northern Alberta is worth just as much as a life in Calgary or Edmonton. Therefore, my specific recommendations will be twofold and concise. Number one, please keep the Lesser Slave Lake riding as is. And number two, I'm pleading with you to not get rid of any seats or ridings in northern Alberta at all because it would further dilute the representation which is already drastically underserved and too often ignored by our neighbours to the south of us. My comments are grounded in the requirements of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act and in the commission's own findings in both the 2017 final report and the 2025 interim report.

Section 14 of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act requires the commission to consider sparsity and density of population, common community interests, geographic features, existing municipal and natural boundaries, and the availability of transportation and communication when drawing electoral divisions. Another important one, section 15(2) of this act states that up to four proposed electoral divisions may have a population that is as much as 50 per cent below the average population if, in the opinion of the commission, the nature of the sparsity of the population, the rate of population growth or decline, or other circumstances justify the greater deviation.

Not only has Lesser Slave Lake historically met the criteria set out in sections 14 and 15(2), but because of all the glaring and obvious examples it feels like this exception was specifically written to protect the riding of Lesser Slave Lake, not delete it. In the 2017 final report the commission identified Lesser Slave Lake as one of a limited number of rural northern divisions that warranted a population variance greater than 25 per cent below the provincial average due to geography, sparsity, distance between communities, and the need to ensure effective representation. At the time the population of Lesser Slave Lake exceeded 40 per cent below the average, and the 2017 commission maintained the division in recognition of those statutory factors. The 2025 interim report confirms that northern Alberta continues to experience sparse population distribution, long travel distances, and limited service centres. Those conditions have not materially changed since 2017.

In addition, on permanent population counts I believe it's worth noting that our region experiences a significant shadow population that should also be weighed and considered. A shadow population featuring seasonal workers, rotational or shift-work employees, wildfire evacuees, previously mentioned by Mayor Franki from Slave Lake in her submission last week, all put significant stresses on the services and infrastructure of our area, all important details I know this commission has already heard from other submissions from the north, but they're all relevant to the exceptional status under section 15(2) of this act.

In closing, it's important to me that this commission does more than just politely listen to us. Positive intentions and understanding for the plight of northern Alberta are considered worthless if not supported by meaningful actions. I believe the private citizen from last week's name was Nathan Steinke, and he made an incredible point last week when he said – I'm paraphrasing a bit here – that the exceptions of section 15(2) should be embraced, not erased. If Lesser Slave Lake does not meet the requirements of exceptional status in 15(2), then, quite frankly, I don't even know why it exists. If this commission recognizes 15(2), it's not just following the rules the way they're intended; it's embracing fair representation and acknowledging that the exceptional status for northern ridings brings our communities together instead of driving them apart. No pun intended on the driving part; I know we've been talking about that a lot with northern ridings.

Deleting a northern MLA is not just inconveniencing our people; it's erasing northern voices completely. I've spent the better part of my tenure as an MLA advocating or educating colleagues, ministers on the challenges faced by northerners, and I'm not alone. It's important to mention that all the northern MLAs have been united in their efforts to maintain the status quo, demonstrated recently by their letter of support that they've sent to this commission a couple of months ago. That show of unity is not only unprecedented; it's incredibly rare and impactful. That means you have the consensus of all the elected representatives saying to this commission what I hope you now realize: the people of northern Alberta do not support the proposed changes in the interim report and do not support deleting another MLA.

I can't tell you how difficult it is to compile a six-minute or seven-minute speech that will impact a decision for so many people for the next seven to eight years before this issue gets revisited. If this commission does not protect ridings with exceptional status such as in section 15(2), it's inevitable that we will continue to lose northern MLAs, and the decay of smaller rural communities becomes real and a self-fulfilling prophecy.

4:15

We could spend endless hours conjuring arguments and specifics on possible changes to the acts, but this commission doesn't need to reinvent the wheel here legally or morally. Somebody already charted a course for you to follow with section 15(2). Please don't abandon the exceptional status. Embrace it, not just because it's been written that way in the act but because it's the fair and right thing to do. The people in this room have the power to change course. You've had the chance to listen. Now it's time to act.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Mr. Sinclair, thank you very much.

Mrs. Samson, do you have any questions or comments?

**Mrs. Samson:** This is very emotional. You had eight MLAs right in. It was quite incredible. When I think about what I heard from around the province, you know, the demise of the riding, it's been personally painful. I can't imagine what it's like for you. I'll leave it at that.

**Dr. Martin:** I think I echo all of the opinion about the difficulty of this current boundary. I think it's well beyond a hundred letters that came in as well as the one, what I call, big northern letter, which all your colleagues had signed and you in your own letter allude to quite extensively. I think the need for a northern voice, the key sentiment and motivation for that letter, is heard loud and clear. We are very much of the mind to reconsider the boundaries that we had put in place. You know, the interim report actually acknowledges that it's interim, and the whole purpose of the second round was to get the input to end up with a better solution, so I'm not stubborn about the boundaries. Some of them we just didn't get right, and this probably is the principal case in point.

We've heard a lot from your colleagues and fellow MLAs all saying the same thing. We've heard from each of them and from at least another 10-odd presenters if not more in the last couple of weeks about the granular details of life in the north, transportation challenges, representative challenges for mayors and reeves and day-to-day citizens. We have learned so much more in the last month than we ever knew about the north. You should be proud of that because it has made a difference.

Thank you.

**Mr. Sinclair:** Thank you. If I may briefly respond. I made I would call them maybe footnotes that aren't really involved in the speech that I think are important to mention, you know, some of them symbolic, some of them real data, and some of them anecdotal. It was already mentioned. Treaty 8 was signed on the south shores of Lesser Slave Lake. Lesser Slave Lake has the highest population percentage of Indigenous people in the province, and right now they have a First Nation MLA that currently represents them. There are 14 Indigenous communities, 11 First Nations – Sawridge, Bigstone, Whitefish, Woodland, Lubicon, Loon Lake, Peerless Trout, Swan River, Driftpile, Sucker Creek, Kapawe'no – and three Métis settlements: East Prairie, Gift Lake, and Peavine.

It also has the historical Pearl Calahasen who proudly served the Lesser Slave Lake riding from 1989 to 2015, who was the first Métis woman elected to the Legislature. I know she was briefly mentioned last week when I listened to submissions. I also think it's worth mentioning Jennifer Churchill made a really thoughtful submission based on a regional group called ANCA.

The really heartbreaking parts of some of these decisions is that we were following – and when I say “we,” I mean the area, not me specifically; it was before I was even an MLA – the directions of ministers at every meeting we would go to for rural municipalities or at the Legislature prior to this, asking us to advocate as a group. ANCA is the first of its kind, as far as I know, the only one that has First Nations, Métis, counties, and municipalities all advocating together as a consensus. Currently, outside of deleting an MLA in the north, just the redrawing itself is going to basically push everybody back not quite to zero but pretty close to it. A lot of the feedback I've been given, that I didn't even share, is that it's hopeless. There's no point in me coming here today. “They're just going to ignore you no matter what,” and “We're going to go right back to the way it was before,” and “Everything is going to have to start from scratch.”

The riding I represent is a very diverse one. To me, when you talk about section 15(2), which I mentioned in my speech, the harmony of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people working together and having two regional hubs, Slave Lake and High Prairie, are really worth mentioning. You've got a teacher there from Jousard, mentioned that she goes to health care appointments in High Prairie and that she grocery shops in Slave Lake. Well, under the Mackenzie county proposed riding, if you look here on the map – now, I can walk up and point to it – if you could see where Lesser Slave Lake is, there's the cut-out that looks like the open end of a crescent wrench here. There are a lot of communities right along the south side of the lake, four First Nations – you have Swan River, Sawridge, Driftpile, Sucker Creek – and the Métis communities as well as non-Indigenous communities: Jousard, Kinuso, Widewater, Canyon Creek. I could go on and on. There are over 30 communities in my riding right now. All of these communities right now utilize both Slave Lake and High Prairie.

I know the leaders of the communities had a bit of a back and forth on which one was the actual regional hub. I would tell you that it's one or the other. But there is not a single person, I don't believe, from Jousard or any of these communities that would ever think of driving all the way to High Level, which would be their new centre hub, to be able to access services. They'd have to drive through both of the new proposed ridings, through High Prairie one way or through Slave Lake the other. This is the challenge of when you just stare at a map as the crow flies. It looks like a straight shot to High Prairie, but there's just no way of getting across that lake.

When I first started as an MLA, I had an impromptu visit from the Premier to East Prairie after the fires that destroyed nearly the entire community. On a day's notice I had to change all my plans. I was supposed to go to Wabasca, which is north of highway 88,

and I was supposed to be there at 1 o'clock. But you hear that the Premier is coming; you drop everything. I made it there for 8 in the morning and met her. Two important facts. The chairman at the time, Ray Supernault, his name is, who's the chairman – that's the word for chief for Métis councils and communities – got tear eyed in the room and pretty emotional because a Premier had never visited East Prairie, as far as he knew. Now, I don't know that for a fact, but he said that, or maybe as far as he knew. That means something to me. That's the first, very important one, is how little they see of our elected leaders.

The second one was when I was jockeying my schedule with somebody who worked out of the Edmonton office. They said: “Don't worry. You could just go straight from East Prairie north up to Bigstone. I'm sure you'll make it there by 12 o'clock.” I said, you know, facetiously, like: I don't know if we have a helicopter or a private jet that I don't know about, but I won't be able to get there till the end of the day. That's one of the most difficult parts already with this riding. I have to choose which side of the lake to go on. No matter how hard I try and how many miles I put on my truck, which is a lot – you mentioned Minister Williams and how he lives in his truck, just like I do – you just can't get there. Going to the same Canada Day: you can go to one side or the other, but you can't do both.

These are real examples and anecdotes from real people. I just want to convey the emotional part. You have lots of data, I think, to review now. But to me it's the feeling of being, you know, ignored. It's almost that they've accepted that this is the way they're going to be treated by people in bigger communities. To me, I think we can do better as elected leaders and as people involved in making these decisions. It's not a difficult one. It's small things.

We mentioned future population with cities. Now, this is not the purview of this panel, but decisions like this have definitely a consequence on it. I speak a lot about resource revenue mapping because I want to be able to identify for Treasury Board areas where resource leaves our area but doesn't necessarily come back for transportation and infrastructure. Now, I won't get into the politics of any of that, but that is a belief. I don't think people in northern Alberta deserve exceptional status or deserve special treatment. I believe that this is the only way we can grow a balanced population in this province.

4:25

If we don't have access to health care, if we don't have access to roads, it's difficult to divide up that population properly. The Grande Prairie county reeve was largely in support of leaving everything the same. She's seen some growth, and I would say that it's not because of industry and the size of the community but access to core services in that area. So although it has nothing to do with this panel necessarily, the reason I make these cases is so that if I come here in eight years and we've got nicer roads and we're delivering health care services, then it would make me very happy to say that our population has gone the other way and we can alleviate some of that population growth that's bottlenecked in Edmonton or Calgary. I know it doesn't have anything to do with your decision necessarily, but it's, I think, the frame of mind for the way I'd like to see this go, and then we would be able to have different conversations here at this table as well.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah.

I just want to thank you so much for being here. Also, through you to your community: we've heard loud and clear that feedback.

That feedback was early. It was forceful. It was reasonable and thoughtful. You know, people really did bring their own perspective as individuals, as citizens and also as elected officials, yourself and other elected officials, municipal and provincial. It's very meaningful for us. It is an interim report, and that is exactly the purpose of it. In essence, as you do an interim report, we're almost asking a question, and the answer has come back pretty definitively as it relates to the north.

I wanted to ask you a little more about the south side of the lake, or really just the lake itself. We've clearly bisected that, and that's been a lot of the feedback that we have received. Maybe can you just tell me a little more about the relationship, the history – I know Treaty 8 was signed on the south side of the lake – but just today, the connectedness and how those communities work together?

**Mr. Sinclair:** Yeah. I'd be happy to. There are the formal connections with groups like ANCA, which are the advocacy groups for bringing communities together to lobby, you know, politicians largely. One big small town is what I say northern Alberta is all the time, and there's nothing more true than the south side of the lake, including Slave Lake and High Prairie.

This is something else I wrote down. When they plan out something as simple as regional events, they'll have rodeos and parades on different weekends because we just don't have enough people, volunteer base, people spending money, and small communities like Kinuso, Smith, High Prairie all actually have rodeos and they get thousands of people. It's really remarkable. Then we have, you know, parades and treaty days at every single one of the First Nations communities, but a lot of them are shared right along the one side of that lake. Right from highway 2, it goes from Edmonton to Westlock to Slave Lake and then it continues west to High Prairie. All of those communities that I mentioned that are now in the proposed Mackenzie county are all communities that share and live and work together in a common-sense way.

Now, they also have shared regional groups on the First Nations side and groups like ANCA, but everybody works together, you know, for the most part. I don't want to pretend it's all peace and harmony. There are, obviously, disagreements over allocations of resources and everything, but largely people make decisions as if they're one big small town. It makes it an easy place to represent because the people are so amazing, and lots of times as long as I give it to them straight, even if it's not the answer they want, they're happy. I just couldn't foresee a situation where somebody from Jossard or Driftpile, which is in that area you're talking about – I could not imagine that MLA for the Mackenzie county, whoever that ends up being, being able to service those communities in a meaningful way. It would be just impossible.

I believe Sue asked the question to somebody – I can't remember the person on the panel last week – about flying from La Crête to Calgary. That's just not an option in our riding. That was taken away a long time ago, but even if it wasn't, we don't have regional airports that are easy to get in and out of either. During Pearl Calahasen's day, she actually did have a few flying communities. I think Garden River might have been one of them.

In regard to the opposite argument, or the counterpoint, I won't mention his name, but I had a conversation off the record with a Calgary MLA at the Calgary Stampede the first year I was elected. He told me he's just amazed by how much driving we have to do in our area because I was trying to explain to him – he asked how long it took me to get to Calgary, and I said: oh, it took eight hours. I was in a Treaty Days celebration in the morning at the Woodland Cree First Nation, which is three hours from Slave Lake, which is my hometown. You're another six hours from there to Calgary. Now, don't double-check my math; I speed a little bit in my truck

sometimes. He was saying he could probably walk or bike ride his riding in less than eight hours.

Now, to me, that is a perfect example of why the exception for 15(2) exists. No more, no less. You know, I heard all the points from the gentleman before me about urban representation and the sprawl and the growth, and I understand all of that, but it's just very difficult to be able to not ignore somebody if they're that far away over such a short period of time with roads.

Access to Internet is another one. I don't get phone service in some areas. I have a booster and a Starlink, but there are just some areas where I have to wait like in Husky and Fawcett Lake. I'm not sure if anyone knows. Between Slave Lake and Edmonton is where I do a lot of Zoom meetings. I start driving because I've got to get somewhere, but I know that I'm going to lose somebody. Everybody is polite the first couple of times on a Zoom meeting, but by the third time they're kind of fed up. So I just sit at the side of the road at the truck stop there and do a lot of the business of the day. Then I get to where I'm going, and usually it's nighttime.

Those are realities that I know every rural MLA faces. My only point, I guess, is that it just doesn't need to be any more difficult.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Sinclair. I do have a couple of points I'd like to just clarify. First of all, it's my assessment of what we read and what we heard last week from the north that it was bipartisan. Everybody rows in the same direction up there no matter what political side they are on. It kind of reminds me of the old joke: why do grandchildren and grandparents get along so well? Common enemy. To some extent, you know, you're in a part of the province where you all – and, in fact, Ms Churchill may have described it. Everybody works together because you have no choice. You've got common distances. You've got challenges of roads and all those things.

So your position is to keep Lesser Slave Lake intact as it is now under the 2017 boundaries, correct?

**Mr. Sinclair:** Yes, sir.

**The Chair:** No tinkering or moving around the edges. You're not really concerned about bringing in new territory or taking some out.

**Mr. Sinclair:** You know, if I'm allowed some latitude on kind of – I've only heard brief conversations and some of the other submissions on this. But based on the feedback I've heard, there are areas, if we needed to add to the riding to gain a population, where the deviation was closer. If you asked if I'm a hard "please don't touch it," please don't delete a northern MLA at all would be my position. However, if we needed to add some population, there are a lot more similarities to Swan Hills being there are lots of people that work in the House Mountain area. My dad commuted and lived in Swan Hills, and it's only an hour from Slave Lake, so a lot of the shared...

**The Chair:** So you'd take those in.

**Mr. Sinclair:** Yeah. There's a lot more in common.

I could tell you the opposite would be true of – this is no slight against anybody from Saddle Lake, but I don't believe there would be anyone from Slave Lake that goes through Saddle Lake or vice versa. People from Saddle Lake don't come to Slave Lake, I don't think, or Westlock or Barrhead, to access any core services. Now, I mean, I'll say that here on the record, and then three people might phone in, but out of the amount of people that live there, common

sensewise it's just not something that's tethered together in a meaningful way at all.

I hope that answers your question a little bit.

**The Chair:** Okay. I think we universally appreciated the presentations from I think it was the mayor of Lesser Slave Lake, Ms Churchill. Is it Jennifer?

**Mr. Sinclair:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** And Mike Evans.

**Mr. Sinclair:** Yeah. And Ken Matthews.

**The Chair:** They really stick in my mind, their presentations, for their, you know, clarity, their professionalism, and just raising the need, as you have.

4:35

I want to ask a bit of a comparative question. This doesn't come up very often, but I am in the process of preparing the narrative for the final report already, and I'm looking at Saskatchewan. You know, each jurisdiction is different. I've actually looked at northern Ontario, and I'm looking at Saskatchewan. Have you as a legislator looked at how they operate in Saskatchewan? It affects section 15(2), the ridings, and all kinds of things.

**Mr. Sinclair:** I have examined, I would say, more of what I would call alternative options for the way I might propose drawings if there was a separate meeting where we were sure that we were losing a riding. You know, I've been very hesitant to go down that road because I want the people that I represent to know that I'm here to do exactly what they told me to do, which is that we don't want to lose a northern MLA. So it's very difficult for me to examine alternative – I mean, obviously, you have the burden of having to make these decisions. I'd be open to sitting down with anybody on interprovincial matters. I think that's important, and in our position as MLAs and ministers we do it all the time. It's, I think, a great yardstick to be able to use. Yeah.

**The Chair:** I would say compare and contrast because Saskatchewan is very different than northern Alberta. Very different. They have taken an approach to just say: okay; legislatively you're not touching the two northern ridings, and here they are, irrespective of population. We live in an unusual world where we have more limited transportation in the north than we did, I'd say, 25 years ago. Commercial air travel is history, as I understand it, in the north where it used to be quite common before. We have a better road system, I guess, in northern Alberta than Saskatchewan, but now we're undergoing far less air travel availability.

I want to go back. If you haven't read appendix D to the report, which provides the history of electoral boundaries in Alberta, often politicians are accused of self-interest. That's one of the reasons we've moved to independent commissions over the last 20-plus years. In the early '90s – I think it's the early '90s; late '80s or early '90s – there was a legislative commission that did a lot of work. It's called the Bogle commission because Bob Bogle chaired it. I tell you, that commission historically has done a lot of work that has impacted what we do now. It kind of arose at about the same time as the Saskatchewan reference came out of the Supreme Court of Canada. Of course, we were just learning about what the Supreme Court says about the Charter for section 3.

That legislative commission actually did a – they went to Winnipeg. They consulted with Manitoba legislators, Manitoba

electoral officers. They did the same in Regina in Saskatchewan and did the same in Victoria. I have to say that it's unfair to tar that legislative committee with the same brush that often politicians get tarred with. They did incredible, groundbreaking work that influences us, and the essence of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act comes from that. Section 15(2) comes from that. And each jurisdiction, it seems, has created their own little niche area to protect the north and provide for effective representation.

I say all that to say that I may want to talk to my commissioners and talk about some groundwork for the legislators to do in the next eight years because you're the people on the ground, and maybe it's time to do a bit more work like that.

**Mr. Sinclair:** I appreciate that.

**The Chair:** I know that's out of left field.

**Mr. Sinclair:** No, I don't mind. I actually appreciate the open communication.

A couple things if I may. One is the very fact that this commission, you know, is having to make a decision on the secondary report here in Edmonton instead of our area of Lesser Slave Lake, one of the ridings that is most impacted by being deleted. I think it says a lot about the difficulty in representing that area right now. You guys are going out under a very tight timeline to try and propose a report back before the legislative session begins and then to be able to make a fair and bipartisan decision before then.

I've also lived in Saskatchewan. I played junior hockey there, so I've got a big love for their community.

**The Chair:** Oh, with who?

**Mr. Sinclair:** Yorkton Terriers and Estevan's.

**The Chair:** Oh, okay. That's near my hometown, where I grew up.

**Mr. Sinclair:** Saskatchewan reminds me a lot of northern Alberta, though, the way they band together and that one big small town theme that I mentioned. It boggles the mind, actually. If you go there, they love the Roughriders, but they don't have an NHL team, so whatever the SJHL team is is fully supported by the entire community. Melville is 20 kilometres from Yorkton, and they both have Junior A teams with different fan bases and sponsorship groups.

Now, I don't want to get off – I'm a politician. I don't mean to, but I could be here until 6 o'clock. What I was just trying to say is that in terms of points of reference, you know, I watch a lot of TV. I'm not formally educated, but I love *The West Wing*, and I like all movies regarding politics. It's one of the reasons I got into it. They mention the founding fathers all the time. I think that when you think about whoever it was – and I don't even know the names; excuse me – who thought of section 15(2) and thought of putting in exceptions for ridings like northern Alberta, I think they were foreseeing what was already happening here with growth in the urban communities. They understood, just like we mentioned to the gentleman before, the forward thinking – Dr. Martin, you mentioned it back to him as well – and trying to predict where it was going.

Well, to me, effective bipartisan people who care about northern Alberta – party politics aside, Danielle Larivee, the former minister, the MLA who represented the NDP from 2015 to 2019: I think she probably came before this community and largely was able to get them to change their minds or at least respect section 15(2) at that time even in an area that's largely conservative. She knew it was

the right thing to do for northern Alberta. I could only imagine – and I don't want to speak for her, obviously – that the partisan politics that you mentioned could have been very prevalent for her to be able to add another urban riding. Now, I think she put the people of northern Alberta and the people of Lesser Slave Lake first, and I'm grateful for that. I say that as somebody who represents, you know, the conservative side of politics.

Now, I'm an independent member, so I would say the same thing. Whether this hurts my place personally or my career personally, it was important for me to speak out in the Legislature and on Facebook and any other means I had necessary because that's what I ran on and that's what people asked me to do.

Travelling to commissions like this is impossible. I know you had a small turnout. We just have, you know, traditional newspapers now to let people know, but it's difficult to get people out. When they're not driving to work two and a half hours one way, sometimes there and back, at the end of the day they come home at 7 and they're rushing to the rink and they get home. It's a crazy rat race of a different kind than the people who live in cities.

You know, the last thing I'd mention, that I forgot to mention earlier, as an anecdote was that I advocate strongly, and it was one of my positions as the parliamentary secretary for Indigenous policing at the time – you hear all these anecdotal stories. One of

them was about a 911 call. Now, it was from the Woodland Cree First Nation. It took six hours for police to show up, and this elder had to sit with this grandson for five hours because the kid just bled out from a stab wound. That's a perfect snapshot of the difficulties. Again, I know it's not related to this panel, all of the real-world experiences that we face that are completely different from arguing over a 25- to 30-minute turnaround time at a 911 call in an apartment building in downtown Edmonton. Those have a direct correlation into the real things that matter to people up there.

I know I could have found a bunch of legal eagle points probably, but I think you guys have all the information in front of you regarding precedent and roughly where to go with this. That's why it was important for me to try and attack a little bit of the heart, not just the mind. Sorry for the long answer.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Sinclair. Much appreciated.

**Mr. Sinclair:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** We will now adjourn the afternoon proceedings and reconvene this evening at 5:30.

[The hearing adjourned at 4:44 p.m.]









Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Public Hearings

Edmonton

Tuesday, January 20, 2026  
5:44 p.m.

Transcript No. 45

## **Legislative Assembly of Alberta**

### **Electoral Boundaries Commission**

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## **Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Edmonton**

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Charlayne Bozak

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Nate Glubish, MLA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park

Jennifer Klimek

Jason Nixon, MLA, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre

Vladimir Pasek

Stephen Raitz

Will van Engen



5:44 p.m.

Tuesday, January 20, 2026

[Justice Miller in the chair]

**The Chair:** Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. We're convening the evening session of our second day of our second week of the second round of the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission.

To be very brief and succinct, our independent commission has been appointed by the Alberta Legislature to do two things, deal with boundaries for 89 ridings rather than 87 from 2017 and deal with the significant increase in Alberta's population, which is in excess of 800,000 more people since the 2017 Electoral Boundaries Commission report. I have a formal PowerPoint presentation, but I think we'll forego it in order to save some time. Our task as a commission is to make sure that we provide boundaries that are clear and understandable and provide for effective representation for all Albertans.

We'll start tonight's presentations with – the first regular scheduled person is not here yet, but Mr. Nate Glubish is here, so we'll start with him.

Please get comfortable at the table, tell us what electoral division you represent, and which ones you wish to comment on.

**Mr. Glubish:** Great. Okay. Thanks for having me. I'm Nate Glubish. I'm the MLA for Strathcona-Sherwood Park. First, let me just say a big thank you to the commission. I know you guys have put a ton of work into this and there's still a lot of work ahead to get to the finished product. I know that you're trying to juggle a lot of competing priorities and a lot of challenging things, including priorities like effective representation, communities of interest, and reasonable population distribution across ridings.

I wanted to just share a little bit of feedback from my perspective as the MLA that represents Strathcona-Sherwood Park, and then I'll also offer just a couple of thoughts about the adjacent riding of Sherwood Park for your consideration. The first point I would like to make is: given that Strathcona-Sherwood Park is roughly 51,000 people today, give or take, it's just about 6 per cent below that mean of 55,000 people that you're looking for, and it is on a growth trajectory that is going to surpass that mean very quickly.

We've got two subdivisions that are undergoing significant growth. You have Ardrossan, which is a small community just outside of Sherwood Park that is growing exponentially, and they're going to add several thousand people over the next couple of years. Then you have Hillshire, which is a new subdivision on the corner of Clover Bar Road and Wye Road. This is a subdivision that's been in the works for over 10 years. They just broke ground a few years ago, and they're now coming into their stride, so they've got, you know, several hundred folks who've already moved in there, but there are going to be several thousand who will live there in the next couple of years.

So in two to three years you could see Strathcona-Sherwood Park under the current boundaries easily reach 55,000 if not 57,000 people, and that's right in the sweet spot of the mean. Then over the next 10 years you'll likely see a shift from maybe having been 5 or 6 per cent below the mean to being about 5 or 6 per cent above the mean, all of which is permissible under the current rules and all of which is very manageable to deliver effective representation. As a result, on the argument of population numbers alone I believe there's a strong argument to be made to keep the riding under the old boundaries. There's no need to make a change from a population perspective. The current size is reasonable, and the growth trajectory is such that the size will be manageable for the foreseeable next 10 years.

Some of the proposed changes in the first draft included adding half of Beaumont. I know you've heard some feedback on that. I just want to get on the record highlighting some of the reasons why I think that is probably not the best choice. First of all, when the federal boundary review process was being conducted, they had considered combining Sherwood Park and Beaumont, and they ultimately decided against that and kept with the Fort Saskatchewan and Sherwood Park combination. It just makes more sense to have Beaumont and Sherwood Park and Strathcona county separate. They are two very distinct communities.

Beaumont is a significantly-sized community, and splitting it into two to take half of it and put it with an unrelated community like Strathcona county I think would lead to a degradation of effective representation. You would have folks in Beaumont who are less happy because they have one MLA that is distracted with the majority of their time focused on Strathcona county, and then another MLA who's in whatever the other half of Beaumont was going to be combined with. Then you're going to have the folks in Strathcona county who are saying: Well, but we're a significantly-sized community that has very distinct priorities, and we're going to have an MLA who has to spend much of their time out in Beaumont. So, you know, the old adage of: if it ain't broke, don't fix it. You've got two MLAs that represent the vast majority of Strathcona county today, and as a result those two MLAs can live in that community, have deep ties to that community, and represent it well. If you were to mix it up, to add the distraction of Beaumont, I think you'd end up with less effective representation.

5:50

Then I'd like to speak a bit about Heritage Hills, which I know is a neighbourhood that is just east of Clover Bar Road that is currently proposed to move out of Strathcona-Sherwood Park into Sherwood Park. I would like to suggest, especially if you agree with the premise of not adding half of Beaumont to Strathcona-Sherwood Park, that there's no need to take 3,000 or 4,000 people from Heritage Hills and move it into Sherwood Park. That community has got deep ties to this riding. It's been there for several cycles.

That whole urban block basically from highway 16 down to Wye Road and from Clover Bar Road to highway 21: that's the urban portion of Strathcona-Sherwood Park. Those neighbourhoods are deeply connected. They're in similar school catchment zones. If you live in Heritage Hills, your kid might be going to either Heritage Hills elementary or Davidson Creek. If you live in, you know, some of the other neighbourhoods like Summerwood or in the Foxboro neighbourhood – like, the families that live in those communities: they're deeply connected by the schools that serve that region. If you start divvying that up, you end up, again, harming the effective representation.

When you look at this riding, it's a hybrid riding with about 50 per cent of the population urban, 50 per cent rural country residential subdivisions. It works because it's a specialized municipality that is 50 per cent – well, maybe not 50 per cent urban, 50 rural, but give or take. It's got several communities like Ardrossan, South Cooking Lake, North Cooking Lake, Uncas, Antler Lake, Hastings Lake, and Colchester, all of which are distinct communities that are a part of that specialized municipality. Being able to represent all of them effectively is part of what I think a good MLA should be able to do. If we keep the riding much closer to its current levels, that will allow for an MLA, whether it's me or someone else in the future, to better represent those communities. It has worked well for the last 10 years. I think it can certainly work well for the next 10 years, even with the population growth we anticipate.

If you absolutely had to add some population to help solve some problems with some adjacent ridings, my recommendation would be that you consider going east towards Tofield because Tofield is a much smaller community and it has much more logical ties to Strathcona county and to Sherwood Park. People who live in Tofield come into Sherwood Park almost every day or at least several times a week. People who live in Beaumont don't come to Sherwood Park and vice versa. The folks in Tofield, if you had to move them into Strathcona-Sherwood Park, I think a lot of them would say: "Well, we used to be with Camrose. They're 20 minutes away. Now we're with Sherwood Park. It's 20 minutes away, but we all actually go to Sherwood Park because it's right along highway 14. It's the logical corridor to bring us in." If you had to add something to Strathcona-Sherwood Park, that would be my suggestion. I think you would see less resistance. While I don't believe you need to do it – that's my personal viewpoint – if you had to, as an MLA I could see it being doable, certainly easier than trying to accommodate half of Beaumont.

Those are my thoughts on Strathcona-Sherwood Park. Recognizing that if you were to adopt my suggestions about not moving Heritage Hills out into Sherwood Park, that raises the question about what the population target for Sherwood Park is, which, again, is about 50,000, give or take, under the current boundaries. So if you don't put 3,000 or 4,000 people from Heritage Hills into Sherwood Park, what do you do if you wanted to raise their population levels a little bit? Certainly, I would advise against trying to add any of Edmonton into there because Edmonton and Sherwood Park are very, very different. And for all of the reasons I mentioned about Beaumont and Sherwood Park, I just don't think you're going to end up with a lot of happy people on either side.

What I do believe is in opportunities to start looking north of highway 16. You already have the neighbourhood of Cambrian that is in Sherwood Park but north of 16. You have about 4,000 people that live in Strathcona county north of highway 16. You could take a portion of that and carve it into Sherwood Park to reach your population targets. Then Strathcona county would end up having two MLAs that represent 99 per cent of the population of Strathcona county, and you would have Strathcona-Sherwood Park, that understands both the urban and the rural needs of Strathcona county as a specialized municipality, and you would have an MLA in Sherwood Park who would also better understand both the urban and the rural needs of this specialized municipality. I think that would allow for both MLAs that represent that community to do a better job of more effective representation for that community.

My suggestion would be, if you were to consider that, to essentially take all of the Strathcona county north of highway 16 up to Fort Saskatchewan and then up to highway 15 and draw the line there. If you were to go all the way to the northern boundary, then you would make Fort Saskatchewan noncontiguous with the rest of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. I understand why that's problematic. If you were to go up to highway 15, that's a logical boundary that would allow for, you know, shared communities of interest. Then the vast majority of the population would be represented by two MLAs that actually live in the community and understand it.

I'll give you one example of why I think that's important. The Sherwood Park arena that is being developed by the Sherwood Park Crusaders is north of highway 16. They have had challenges being able to get time and attention with the Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville MLA because she has to represent 19 different municipalities. She has to drive three hours from one side of the riding to the other. It would be helpful to them and other community groups to have their MLA be in that area.

I know that is some feedback I've heard from them and from others. I think this is a way to solve the population challenges you've identified, to focus on effective representation, focus on communities of interest, and ultimately deliver a better path forward for the next 10 years for the two ridings of Sherwood Park and Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Thank you for your time.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Clark, any questions?

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you. Thanks for being here. We have definitely heard from the good people of the mighty hamlet and Beaumont as well. It's great to hear from citizens, and this whole process is about that, but it's also really good to hear from the people who represent the entire community, yourself and your colleague here as well. We do put a lot of stock in that and just appreciate you taking time to do this because I know how busy your schedule is.

I wanted to ask a bit about growth rates. One of the questions here is not just absolute rate of growth but relative rate of growth. Undeniably, Strathcona-Sherwood Park and Sherwood Park have both grown but at relatively lower rates than the rest of the province. As you know, we've seen a massive influx in the last seven, eight years, most of that, you know, reasonably recently. The province has grown 20 per cent since the last time we drew the boundaries. Strathcona-Sherwood Park has grown about 7 per cent. Sherwood Park has grown about 10 per cent.

I know there are some new developments that are coming. I guess I'm just curious. If they are lower density than we might see in the big cities, are you confident that the rate of growth will exceed the provincial average going forward or will it sort of be, you know, roughly in line with what it's been like historically?

**Mr. Glubish:** I think the key for me is if your target is 55,000 across the board, Strathcona-Sherwood Park under the current boundaries will far exceed that in the next 10 years. I would argue that in the next two to three we'll be at that level. I recognize that in the last 10 years my riding has likely grown at a rate that is not as high as the province at large, but that's because several of these subdivisions are under development.

I mean, you were an MLA. You know how this can go. Sometimes it takes 10 years to get an area structure plan from concept to where you actually have houses being built and people moving in. We're at the end of that 10-year phase right now, where folks are actually moving into houses in Hillshire and in Ardrossan. There's a significant run rate ahead for those homes to get built-out. I'm confident that you are going to see at least another 5,000 to 7,000 people moving into the riding over the next several years.

So we're going to get very close to that 55,000 target mean. Now, if that target mean changes 10 years from now, then I would say: let's address that 10 years from now, because at that point you're also going to have seen – we're at the very beginning of the planning stages of Bremner, which is in between Sherwood Park and Fort Saskatchewan, north of highway 16 in Strathcona county. That's a community that 20 years from now will be 40,000 people, but 10 years from now it's probably only going to be about 5,000 people.

That's just at the very beginning of the growth rate. I would say that 10 years from now, looking at Sherwood Park and Strathcona-Sherwood Park and Fort Saskatchewan and the whole area, we're going to have a whole different conversation about this. But I think that today we only need some minor surgical changes that will set up those two ridings to be very effectively represented. I think the suggestions I've offered here today could allow for more effective

representation than the last 10 years and for them to be well represented for the next 10 years, and then 10 years from now I think we're going to have to completely revisit that area because you will have seen a significant influx and a pipeline of future growth that at that point will just be coming into high gear.

That'd be my thoughts.

6:00

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much, and thank you, Minister. I was taken by your remark about Heritage Hills and how it had been for several cycles within your riding. It prompts me to think about the historical relationship for the county boundaries in general. In other words, have the boundaries of the Strathcona-Sherwood Park riding been stable for quite some time?

**Mr. Glubish:** They have. The last time that the boundaries changed was right around the time I began to get involved in politics, with the intent of running in the 2019 election. I was a volunteer at the time that we were under the previous boundaries, before the 2019 election, and then became the candidate under the 2019 new boundaries. The only thing that changed in Strathcona-Sherwood Park was that there was one neighbourhood called the Estates of Sherwood Park, which is right north of Salisbury Greenhouse, south of Wye Road. It's right on the corner of range road 232. That's a neighbourhood that they took from Strathcona-Sherwood Park and gave it to Sherwood Park. And then there were a couple of spots where there was nothing there. It was just land along the south edge of Wye Road, but there were some future subdivisions being planned. They added that to Sherwood Park, out of Strathcona-Sherwood Park. And now you have Salisbury Village, which is that spot there. Those were the only changes.

I can't remember if Sherwood Park changed much other than accepting that from Strathcona-Sherwood Park. I can't remember when the area where Cambrian is, north of highway 16, was added to Sherwood Park. It might have been in that cycle as well. Basically, the boundary of highway 16 to the eastern boundary of Strathcona county to the southern boundary of Strathcona county to the Henday to Wye Road and Clover Bar Road, that boundary: all of that was completely unchanged. The only thing that changed was the Estates and what now is Salisbury Village, and that was a very manageable tweak.

**Dr. Martin:** I have one supplemental.

**The Chair:** Sure. Sure.

**Dr. Martin:** That's Looma, what I would call the Looma block. I infer that you'd just as soon not have that because it's not in the county.

**Mr. Glubish:** My suggestion would be, if you're looking to add population to Strathcona-Sherwood Park, that Tofield would make more sense than Looma.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** I should say for the audience and for the record that Mr. Evans, who has faithfully been a commissioner, unavoidably is in another meeting for the last hour-plus, and he should be returning, hopefully, sometime this evening.

Mrs. Samson, any questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you, Minister, for your time tonight. I appreciate you coming in person. I want you to know that Beaumont triggered a huge influx of information to us, so although I'm not familiar with your riding, I am now just from what I've read.

**Mr. Glubish:** That's why we go through the process, right? It's all good.

**Mrs. Samson:** Yeah. Thank you for reinforcing what I've read, and thank you for your time tonight.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** As I described to a previous presenter, our arranged marriage between Beaumont and Strathcona-Sherwood Park is not going over well. We recognize that.

**Mr. Glubish:** Well, thank you for hearing me out.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** Sorry. Can I . . .

**The Chair:** Oh, I want to ask a question, but go ahead.

**Mr. Clark:** It may be the same question. Name?

**The Chair:** Okay. I think there are too many Strathconas in this area. Tell me: what would you do with a name change? Too many Strathconas and not too many Sherwood Parks.

**Mr. Glubish:** Well, you've got two Strathconas. You've got Edmonton-Strathcona and Strathcona-Sherwood Park. I have never found that to be a problem as the MLA that represents this area.

**The Chair:** Because you live here.

**Mr. Glubish:** Because I live there.

People who live in Strathcona county: they get it, and at the end of the day that's all that matters. People who live in Edmonton-Strathcona: my assumption is that they get it because they're from Edmonton and it's Edmonton-Strathcona whereas we're Strathcona-Sherwood Park, i.e., Strathcona county.

**The Chair:** Okay. So it's only us unenlightened people from the south that find it confusing.

**Mr. Glubish:** Your words, not mine. I would just say that I don't see that as a problem. I've never heard anybody complain who lives there. I think you could keep that name, and everyone would understand it.

**The Chair:** Interesting. Okay. So that's not a problem we need to solve.

**Mr. Glubish:** I don't suggest that it's a problem that needs solving.

**The Chair:** Okay. Check that one off our list. Thank you.

**Mr. Glubish:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Vladimir Pasek? Good evening.

**Mr. Pasek:** Good evening.

**The Chair:** Please make yourself comfortable, identify yourself, and tell us what electoral division you live in and which ones you want to comment on.



**Mr. Pasek:** Okay. Well, first, thank you. I know that you people work very hard and, you know, these evenings that – yesterday all day and today until night, so thank you very much for that.

My name is Vladimir Pasek, and I am a resident of Pineview in St. Albert-Sturgeon, which was formerly Morinville-St. Albert. A few years ago that part was also part of St. Albert, but then they split. I'm a retired teacher and principal; at the end I was a principal.

All right. So here's why I support the proposal maps of St. Albert and St. Albert-Sturgeon, because they just came out – right? – and everything. Here's why. Both of these riding boundaries delivered effective representation for voters in the 2019 and 2023 elections, and the commission has struck the right balance by maintaining them largely as is in the interim report. Keeping a stand-alone St. Albert riding recognizes our history, political culture, and our role as a hub city of the Sturgeon county region. The approach used in St. Albert, one fully urban riding and one hybrid riding, should be used in other small cities with a similar population like Medicine Hat or Airdrie.

I have trouble. I have rheumatoid arthritis, so to flip pages: sometimes it takes a while. All right. Let's do it. Here we go. Sorry for the interruption.

The changes proposed by the commission to the St. Albert riding's northwest boundary align with planned growth. There are several new neighbourhoods in this part of the riding, including Riverside, Jensen Lakes, and Cherot, that will likely grow over the next few years and bring St. Albert over the average riding population. The St. Albert-Sturgeon boundaries also allow for planned growth in the Erin Ridge North neighbourhood as well as smaller new developments in the Meadows of Morinville and in Jupiter Heights. Keeping these growth areas balanced between the two ridings is the right call.

Now you're probably wondering why I am – but I am concerned that several . . .

**The Chair:** I knew there was a punchline.

**Mr. Pasek:** But I am concerned that several of the recent written submissions have called for moving the Woodlands neighbourhood – polls 43, 44, and 45 – out of St. Albert-Sturgeon and attaching them to the St. Albert riding. That was submitted on the 2nd of December by one of the persons. You don't want to know the name, do you?

**The Chair:** No.

**Mr. Pasek:** Okay. I won't say anything, then.

Now, this would be a poor decision because it would reduce effective representation. As to geography, voters are used to a clear boundary between the two St. Albert seats. Keeping a clear boundary like Boudreau Road as the dividing line between the two ridings minimizes confusion and makes this easy to communicate to voters. Attaching Woodlands – that was the proposal – to St. Albert would make this more confusing by having the north-south boundaries shift around. Is there a map there? You can't see the St. Albert part. It's so small.

6:10

**Dr. Martin:** We've got one right here.

**Mr. Pasek:** Where is it?

**The Chair:** We've got the same thing you have.

**Mr. Pasek:** I can blow it up, then.

**Dr. Martin:** No, we can't blow it up.

**Mr. Pasek:** Oh, you can't? Oh, well. St. Albert: I'm talking about the . . .

**The Chair:** Sir, if you want to take that microphone, go up to the screen, and point out the areas you want us to see, that would help.

**Mr. Pasek:** Okay. St. Albert is here. Now you want to put up Morinville-St. Albert. Oh, no. Well . . .

**The Chair:** St. Albert-Sturgeon.

**Mr. Pasek:** Yeah.

I guess you have Boudreau here. Yeah. That's good. That's good. Go back to it. Okay. Here's what happens. Now, according to that submission – like, here's Boudreau, see? It cuts it right in half and goes up. Now, what was planned there was that someone said to go around here, in other words go around Winston Churchill. I don't know if you can see it here, but Winston Churchill goes right around and goes this way. What was said was to go around here. Instead of going straight to Boudreau, we would just go around, but that's a big point, you know?

**The Chair:** What's the area of the city that you are saying the proponents are asking to be moved out? What's the name of this area?

**Mrs. Samson:** Woodlands?

**Mr. Pasek:** Yeah. Woodlands.

**The Chair:** Woodlands. Okay. So do not move Woodlands into St. Albert.

**Mr. Pasek:** Yeah. That's basically my beef, because you can see – look. It's beautiful. It goes up.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Clear and understandable boundaries is one of our goals.

**Mr. Clark:** So you do like it the way it is? You like along Boudreau Road?

**Mr. Pasek:** Yeah. Boudreau, the way it was. Like, we were so happy.

I submitted also the first time and the second time. You know, at first I said to keep it the same, and then the second time I noticed that you guys did, and I said: that's great. That's what we want. Then all of a sudden you look through the submission reports, and one person there said he'd like to move Woodlands out of it.

**The Chair:** You are conscientious.

**Mr. Pasek:** Well, you know, I believe.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, thank you.

**Mr. Pasek:** Should I continue?

**The Chair:** Oh, okay. Yeah. If you have more.

**Mr. Pasek:** As to history – and I'm going through a few things – Woodlands residents have voted in the same riding as Erin Ridge, Oakmont, and Kingswood residents for the last four years. That's that area. These neighbourhoods are all demographically and economically similar and should be kept in the same riding. On page 25 of the interim report the commission mentions trying to adhere to the status quo as much as possible, which would mean

leaving ridings as is where appropriate. Separating Woodlands from them is a disruptive change that doesn't align with this goal.

As to population, moving the 2,000 residents from Woodlands into St. Albert from St. Albert-Sturgeon would push St. Albert's population up significantly and make it become overpopulated faster. In other words, if they go from there to St. Albert – actually, both areas are growing, right? St. Albert has more growth areas than St. Albert-Sturgeon. They got Cherot, Riverside, and Jensen Lakes versus St. Albert-Sturgeon has Erin Ridge North and the two smaller Morinville developments. This means that if Woodlands is moved now, it would push the St. Albert riding population over the average faster and require more aggressive changes from a future commission to rebalance the population of the two ridings.

As to effective representation, St. Albert-Sturgeon is one of the few hybrid ridings in Alberta that actually provides effective representation because of how balanced it is between urban, small town, and rural areas. Actually, it represents all of Alberta, basically. Any candidate who wants to win the riding must secure support in each of these areas. Removing 2,000 urban voters in Woodlands would disrupt this balance and make it easier for a candidate to win without needing to campaign in and earn support from voters in the St. Albert part of the riding. You see? This would make it less likely that the St. Albert-Sturgeon riding could provide effective representation for its voters, especially those who live in the St. Albert part.

Finally, I shall give you my conclusion. The commission made the right call to keep these boundaries mostly as is. It is a riding that already provides effective representation, both St. Albert ridings, and have the multiple elections. The commission should continue to take a do-no-harm approach. I hope that the commission will continue to maintain the status quo in both St. Albert ridings and avoid any further changes.

Thank you for listening to me. Basically, the beef was that little bump there.

**The Chair:** Right. Thank you, Mr. Pasek.

There may be some questions from the commission, so I'll ask Mrs. Samson first. Any questions of this presenter?

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for coming out tonight. We haven't had anybody from St. Albert, I don't believe, in person, just written responses.

**Mr. Pasek:** In the first one. You hadn't for the second one, but I think the first one you did, you had a person called Andrew Traynor.

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay.

**Mr. Pasek:** Yeah. He was a big guy, red hair, you know, looks like a Viking.

**Mrs. Samson:** I want to say to you that I appreciate you reading the submissions and following it that closely. You're as well versed as we are, almost, so thank you.

**Mr. Pasek:** Well, you're welcome. I'm pleased that, you know, you were listening to me and everything.

**Mrs. Samson:** Yeah. You know, when you say that you like the ridings with no changes, I mean, that makes it easy. The job is quite a bit easier, so thank you again.

**Mr. Pasek:** You're welcome. Yes. Okay.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much, Mr. Pasek. I just wanted to ask you your impressions of the population growth potential in the city of St. Albert.

**Mr. Pasek:** Yeah. Well, you know, I'll be honest. After the snowstorm we were the best city to live in. All the roads were clear and everything was beautiful. Like, I came into Edmonton. It was terrible. You couldn't come in, you know?

Anyways, it's a great place. It's growing quite a bit, both areas, like St. Albert itself and then the St. Albert hybrid is also growing. The way I see it is that it's going to go to Morinville, like along the highway they're going to go, so maybe Boudreau and then the highway will again separate. Who knows what's going to happen in the future? But I see that – like, for example, traffic. There's so much traffic now. When I moved to St. Albert, my area was brand new. We just saw the house being built, and now there's so much traffic because they built that highway, the Henday highway, and then the other, and the buses come. In the morning it's crazy, you know? I'm right on Boudreau, so I see it all the time.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** No questions. Just to echo our thanks because it's very impressive when someone goes to the level of depth of research that you have on this. Thank you so much.

**Mr. Pasek:** Oh, well, you have to. I mean, you have to. I'm a teacher, right?

**Mr. Clark:** We can tell.

**The Chair:** We'll mark you down as in favour of hybrids, too. Is that okay?

**Mr. Pasek:** Yes. That's okay. That's all right.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Pasek:** Okay. Well, thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Charlayne Bozak? Good evening.

**Ms Bozak:** Good evening.

**The Chair:** Make yourself comfortable and identify yourself for the record, please. Tell us what electoral division you are in and which ones you wish to comment on.

**Ms Bozak:** For sure. Hello, everyone, members of the commission, and thank you for your time. My name is Charlayne Bozak. I am a resident of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. I also spoke to the commission at the hearing in June of last year, so it's your second time getting lucky to see my beautiful face.

**6:20**

Anyway, I took some time to review the interim report from the commission, and I want to share my thanks for your careful, thoughtful, and well-reasoned report. Your findings and the explanations to support them were helpful and informative. Overall, I found the interim decisions reasonable and practical. There is one point I kept going back to, though, and this is the item I want to discuss in my second visit in front of the commission, more as food for thought than addressing any concerns with the commission's interim report. In the report there is a section that states:

One presenter from Southern Alberta insisted that Lethbridge be treated the same as Calgary and Edmonton. While this may not

be possible, it is not unreasonable to have Alberta's two largest cities begin to reflect what goes on in the rest of the province.

Second, the assertion that an MLA could not effectively represent urban and rural concerns . . .

I could go on and read the whole thing, but you're probably . . .

**The Chair:** Sorry. What page is that part of the report?

**Ms Bozak:** I couldn't tell you.

**The Chair:** Oh, okay.

**Ms Bozak:** Sorry. I should have made note.

**The Chair:** Fine.

**Ms Bozak:** I can finish quickly, though.

. . . is belied by two examples. First, currently 18 MLAs do in fact represent both concerns

both rural and urban.

Second, 13 federal Members of Parliament in Alberta also routinely represent constituencies with urban and rural populations. We are confident that the democratic process can rise to [these] new challenges.

Third, the Commission is concerned that viewing rural and urban Alberta in constant opposition to each other tends to increase polarization. While this province is less rural than it has been in the past, approximately 40% of the population resides outside Calgary or Edmonton. Having MLAs who represent both a city and areas not in a city may cause MLAs to understand issues important to all aspects of Alberta society. It will help depolarization and increase understanding.

While I understand the commission's intent in this statement, there is something about it that strikes me as not quite right. I can't put my finger on it exactly, but it reminded me of a scene in a book I read a while ago by pop culture writer Chuck Klosterman that addresses comparisons. Calgary and Edmonton I don't think can be compared to the other medium to small urban populations within the province.

If you'll bear with me, I'm going to read this passage. The passage goes:

"Why do you keep saying that?" he asked in response. "Apples and oranges aren't that different, really. I mean, they're both fruit. Their weight is extremely similar. They both contain acidic elements. They're both roughly spherical. They serve the same social purpose. With the possible exception of a tangerine, I can't think of anything more similar to an orange than an apple. If I were having lunch with a man who was eating an apple and – while I was looking away – he replaced that apple with an orange, I doubt I'd even notice. So how is this a metaphor for difference? I could understand if you said, 'That's like comparing apples and uranium.' [I could understand if you say] 'That's like comparing apples and baby wolverines' . . . Those would . . . be valid examples of profound disparity."

There is just something about the hybrid response for me that isn't quite accurate. There will be some urban centres more suited for pairing with their surrounding rural areas. I recognize that the commission has noted several times in its interim report the skepticism expressed by residents such as myself, and I sincerely appreciate that skepticism being noted. I continue to be skeptical of the pairing of Calgary or Edmonton with rural areas outside of the municipal boundaries.

I recognize that addressing issues of inclusion and polarization are challenges for all of us, but if I'm being honest, I don't think electoral boundaries are the best, most effective way of addressing these concerns. Given where I live and the lack of understanding I

see for my neighbourhood and my neighbours in the inner city of Edmonton, boundary changes will do little to resolve that issue.

I also recognize and sincerely appreciate the commission's recognition of setting fair and practical boundaries as historically established in Alberta and Canada and that the American format is not currently being considered.

I understand the changes to the boundary of my own riding due to population shrinkage although I am still a little skeptical. With the changes I have seen in the past 10 years since moving into my neighbourhood, I know it's shifting. In just the past few months since I spoke to you in June, we've seen a new single-family home valued at over \$700,000 in our neighbourhood built and sold, which was unheard of previously. Residences of that size and price range were duplexes or fourplexes before. We continue to see the duplexes and fourplexes being built in our areas changing from more basic to more elegant, high-end-looking designs. While as property owners we see this as a positive impact for our pocketbooks, we do have concerns about gentrification and what that's going to look like for our low-income neighbours and friends in the area.

The repurposing of the Coliseum and adjacent Northlands grounds will also have an impact on our riding's population but perhaps not significantly before the next boundary review. I'm almost finished; I have two sentences left. We are seeing growth, but like with many mature communities in Edmonton like Whyte Avenue and Wihkwentowin, formerly the Oliver neighbourhood, there will be periods of stagnation and ebb and flow before any real impacts start taking place. I'm not entirely convinced removing a riding from Edmonton's downtown is the best decision either.

Generally, although I remain skeptical of the urban-rural hybrid format for Calgary and Edmonton, I have no concerns with the interim report, and again I thank the commission for its efforts and for the clear and informative explanations for its decisions. I also thank you for your time. My experience in speaking before the commission and observing its responses to myself and other speakers has been very positive and fulfilling. I want you to know that I am grateful for the experience and for your contributions to this important democratic process.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

**The Chair:** Ms Bozak, thank you for your comments.

Mr. Clark, any questions?

**Mr. Clark:** No.

I think you've done a nice job of summarizing, you know, some of the differences between rural and urban. As I know you know, we've had a lot of mixed feedback on that. Part of our remit is communities of interest, keeping folks – that sort of old saying: I can't define it, but I know it when I see it. We've sort of seen a fair bit of that. I don't want to put words in your mouth, but is that sort of what I hear you say?

**Ms Bozak:** Yeah. I grew up in Barrhead during kind of its heyday, when Ken Kowalski was the MLA and stuff like that, so I've seen what impact a rural MLA can have on a small community. I lived in Oliver from 1999 to 2016, so for almost 16 full years. When I moved into Oliver, it was just hitting – you were just starting to see the condo conversions and everything. It went from, like, low income to literally within a year you could start seeing low-income families being displaced and the population growing, more condo developments being developed, and now there are high rises and stuff.

I lived in a house. I was the only house on a block with, like, three-storey walk-ups on either side of me and an old school across

the street. Now that school is gone and there's a high-rise there. There's a high-rise behind. They ripped down three houses. I've seen that population explosion happen in up-and-coming neighbourhoods, and with what I am seeing anecdotally within my own community, I don't anticipate it being too much longer before that shift starts happening in Parkdale, Cromdale, or in Highlands-Norwood.

**Mr. Clark:** All right. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah.

I was actually thinking about apples and oranges, and what you quoted to us is basically a philosophy lesson in category mistakes or not. It's relevant to discussion of hybrids. I for my part am skeptical of the notion that these are different categories of community. I think there's a gradation in Alberta, as in many other places, between the stark extremes of a condo and a skyscraper and a guy bailing hay. You know, there are forms of life all the way along that spectrum. I find it very difficult to see it as simply one or the other.

Be that as it may, your riding may very well in fact grow as they sort out what to do around the old Coliseum, let alone everywhere else, Cromdale and so on, but it is in our interim report still the smallest population division among all the Edmonton ridings, so you've got a lot of headroom, so to speak.

6:30

**Ms Bozak:** Yeah, and it's not necessarily, I think, my concern, particularly for my own riding, but just generally for the downtown core going from six to five, and with the . . .

**Dr. Martin:** Well, on that point, if I may.

**Ms Bozak:** Yeah. Of course.

**Dr. Martin:** Four of the five are under the mean still.

**The Chair:** Still.

**Ms Bozak:** For sure. Yeah, and agreed.

**Dr. Martin:** So there is the rate of growth, not the absolute growth.

**Ms Bozak:** Yeah. This is where, like, I get the hedging the bets, so to speak. You know, we do have room for growth. I think, going back to Mr. Clark's point, it's just – I can't quite put my finger on it. There's something, and perhaps it's my shared experience or my lived experience growing up in a small town, living in a developing neighbourhood, and now living in an up-and-coming neighbourhood and seeing that disparity between low income, rural, urban. Like, I understand it. My impulse, my instinct, is that that urban-rural hybrid isn't the solution to that problem. I understand it might be a first step or something like that, but unless you're creating boundaries that are like doughnuts of an urban with a pocket of a rural in the – I know that's not possible, but yeah.

**The Chair:** Okay. Can I . . .

**Ms Bozak:** Yes. I'm sorry.

**The Chair:** We've got a few more.

Mrs. Samson, any questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation tonight. I appreciate that, but I don't have any questions. Thank you.

**Ms Bozak:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans. Welcome back, by the way.

**Mr. Evans:** Oh, thank you for waiting. I apologize. I came in midway, so I'm not really in a position to ask you any questions, but I really appreciate you showing up and participating.

**Ms Bozak:** Awesome.

**The Chair:** You, obviously, Ms Bozak, have looked at this more than casually, and your comments on hybrids are much more generous and nuanced than many criticisms of hybrids. Hybrids are a legitimate tool that have been available to commissions who redraw boundaries for over 30 years. Eighteen ridings in the province do have. Your quoted – I found the quote in page 28. It maybe could be worded a little differently, a little more nuanced. I like your analogy. Some may say that it's a category mistake, but imagine Alberta as a basket of fruit. We've got representatives from every variety – well, not every variety; three varieties – and we have to use them.

**Ms Bozak:** Yeah. Absolutely, and I agree. Like, having grown up in a rural community, I understand how important that representation is.

**The Chair:** But back in the day of the former speaker: that was a different world. Alberta has changed, and we cannot look at Alberta anymore as Calgary and Edmonton versus the rest of Alberta. So we're fans of hybrids but "hybrids . . . if necessary but not necessarily hybrids," to quote.

**Ms Bozak:** And I think urban sprawl is necessitating that as well, right?

**The Chair:** Yeah.

**Ms Bozak:** So I agree. There's just something that's a little – not quite.

**The Chair:** Do you teach literature, by the way?

**Ms Bozak:** No. My education is in journalism, though, so research, and I'm a data analyst, so it's always picking things apart.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much for your second round of presentations. Much appreciated.

**Ms Bozak:** Well, thank you for your time. I appreciate all of you.

**The Chair:** Please remain to hear other presenters if you can.

**Ms Bozak:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mr. Jason Nixon.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Justice Miller. Just before I start, if you would allow me, my former friend and colleague – he's still my friend, I should say. My former colleague Mr. Clark and *Hansard* here today know it usually takes me 10 minutes to clear my throat, and I was told that we keep it to a really tight timeline, so I put my remarks together in this quick presentation very much about what I think we need to talk about. I'm sure you can appreciate that to keep that down to six, seven minutes, given the depth of that area, is not easy.

Just before I do that, though, if I could, Mr. Chair, I do want to emphasize that I'm silent in this presentation about the decision around Rimbey and Ponoka because I agree with it, so I didn't want to waste too much time on that at the moment, as well as bringing

Lacombe together into that area. I also very much agreed overall with the report, though I do think there were some contradictions for the rest of my current constituency that I would like to talk about. With that, I'll get into my remarks, which I've kept pretty disciplined, as best I can, for this process.

My name, first of all, is Jason Nixon, as mentioned, and I have the privilege of being the MLA for west-central Alberta for more than a decade, and I have lived in that area for my entire adult life. I'm here to share my community's concerns with the proposed dissolution of western Mountain View county and Clearwater county into three different ridings, which would disconnect and disfranchise the people of west-central Alberta.

In west-central Alberta our towns act as gateways to the Rocky Mountains and to Banff national park backcountry. For the people in this region these gateway towns are their lifelines, providing access to provincial services like health care, schools, and policing, and unlike other distinct mountain regions like Canmore-Kananaskis and Jasper-Hinton, the Banff-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre region is vast and sparsely populated throughout, and towns like Sundre, Rocky Mountain House, and Caroline provide the home community for thousands of people that live west of them in the foothills and the mountains to the west.

The shared geography and economy of west-central Alberta also unite the region. For example, both Sundre and Rocky are home to sawmills that operate to the west of these towns in the Rocky Mountain forest area. However, the proposed boundaries place the forest they rely on in unrelated ridings, connected to towns that do not even have sawmills. The eastern slopes are critical to communities that I represent. They provide fibre for our sawmills, require unique emergency services and wildfire planning, and are home to a distinct tourism industry recognized by Travel Alberta and the province as distinct to the area west of our communities.

Additionally, Parks Canada has a close relationship with multiple communities across west-central Alberta, including the Rocky Mountain House national park, which is in this boundary disconnected from Rocky Mountain House, very concerning to them – a lot of people forget that we have a national park in Rocky Mountain House that's different than Banff – and the Ya Ha Tinda Ranch west of Sundre. These towns provide some of the only access to the backcountry of the national parks that cannot be provided by highway 1. They provide the emergency services like search and rescue, emergency health care, and police to support backcountry portions of the park.

The service relationship between western communities and the national park does not exist in the same way in Canmore. In fact, isolating the national parks from the rest of west-central Alberta, especially from Sundre and Rocky Mountain House, would be like removing Canmore from Kananaskis. Dividing thousands of people from their closest towns would unnaturally split people from their communities that they share priorities with.

The primary routes connecting communities of interest of west-central Alberta are highway 22 running north to south and highway 11 running east to west between Rocky Mountain House and the national park, which the proposed map does not reflect.

A quick note on highway 93. It's frequently closed for avalanche control in the winter, it has several hundred kilometres of no cell service, and there are no service stations along the road. Even when it's open, it is a federal toll road. For Nordegg and western Clearwater county the only reliable way to get to the rest of the proposed constituency is to drive through Rocky Mountain House and Sundre, which are both in other proposed ridings.

Under the proposed boundaries constituents will have to travel needlessly long distances to reach their MLAs. An Albertan west of Nordegg, in order to have a meeting with their MLA, would have

to drive nearly 400 kilometres each way to get to the MLA's office in Canmore. For a resident of Panther River valley west of Sundre the trip would be 300 kilometres each way. On this journey they would pass through up to four different constituencies, pass by several other MLAs' offices in towns along highway 22, before re-entering their own riding. Their MLA would not represent the provincial infrastructure this constituent relies on, so the representative cannot even intervene without stepping into a different MLA's constituency hundreds of kilometres away. The constituents are completely cut off from the representative.

The proposed boundary also cuts residents off from seeing their MLA at community events. The MLA for thousands of people would never be present at important community events because they do not represent any of the regional towns.

Finally, disconnecting rural residents from the regional towns they rely on will present significant barriers to voting. Some residents will have to drive an extra hour or more each way to get to the nearest polling station in their riding.

I want to bring also to your attention one of the most significant effects of the dissolution, the impact on several First Nations who have called west-central Alberta home for generations. The proposed Banff-Jasper riding will take three reserves within Clearwater county – the O'Chiese, Sunchild, and the Big Horn – and completely disconnect them from their local town. Since 1799, when Fort Rocky Mountain House was established as a fur trading post, Rocky has been the meeting place and economic hub that is important to local Indigenous nations. Today Rocky Mountain House is the service hub for the O'Chiese, Sunchild, and Big Horn. Hospitals, police, and social services are all located in Rocky. Nation members go to work, shop, and participate in community events in Rocky every day. Placing these nations in Banff-Jasper would require members to drive three to four hours each way to get to their MLA's office. This would fundamentally, obviously, harm the representation for these nations because they are disconnected from the region. It's essential to note that the commission has not had an opportunity to hear from the Big Horn, O'Chiese, or Sunchild, and I certainly do not speak for these nations.

6:40

Coincidentally, I did meet with Chief Poucette of the Big Horn reserve yesterday, and he did ask me to share his concerns. The Big Horn are very concerned about the disconnect from Rocky Mountain House and express their opposition to any boundary changes that would disrupt the highway 11 corridor between Saskatchewan Crossing and Rocky Mountain House. He also expressed concern that nation members would be required to use a federal toll road to connect to their MLA. I have been asked to provide a letter from the Big Horn that outlines their opposition to the proposed Banff-Jasper riding, which I have provided to the clerk for the record.

Before I close, it is important for the commission to understand the extensive historical precedent for maintaining a west-central riding that encompasses Clearwater county, western Mountain View county, all the way to the B.C. border. What I have up on the screen right now for you on the left is the 1913 Alberta electoral map with riding 18, which encompasses Clearwater county, western Mountain View county, and portions of Banff national park. On the other side is the 2010 Electoral Boundaries Commission map with the riding of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, which includes northern Banff national park. In fact, I represented these boundaries until the 2019 election. These two maps show how it is unprecedented to not have a dedicated west-central riding.

This historical precedent is not accidental. I want to stress that. It reflects how our communities have developed before there were

roads and continue to be connected. I sincerely hope that the commission will take the time to consider the more than 120 years of history and the many reasons that every boundary commission since Confederation has kept these communities together as you look towards your final report.

I will conclude, though, with an alternative proposal for a Banff-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre riding. I recommend uniting shared geography while keeping communities of interest together and respecting those historical boundaries. In your handout I will leave you several maps that show you how industries like forestry and tourism as well as our natural regions and our transportation corridors are already organized into distinct regions along the mountains. First, Canmore-Kananaskis, Banff-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, and Jasper-Hinton: embracing these regions and historical ties that bind them together will result in effective representation for Albertans.

I will take a moment just before I turn it over to Justice Miller for questions to also put on my former hat as the mayor of Kananaskis. I was Alberta's environment minister for a long time. A lot of people don't know the environment minister in Alberta is the mayor of the municipal district of Kananaskis and operates Kananaskis, and I know it well, not as an MLA; as a minister. There is a deep connection between Canmore and Kananaskis that I think nobody can doubt. I want to stress, as I did in my comments, the deep connection that we have to the back end of the national parks with Sundre and Rocky Mountain House. Canmore has a very distinct relationship with all of the parks that move to the south through there, where we have some of our most significant provincial park infrastructure as a natural connection. While Canmore is close to Banff, it does not provide the same level of services to Banff national park that we do in these communities, which I know that you've been hearing through your submissions.

I want to stress this map right here if I could. I know I went fast, but this shows very much how the eastern slopes are divided up between that Jasper-Hinton, Banff-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre type of corridor that has very different locations. Then, as you can see, as you get thinner into the province through much more of the recreation areas and that corridor, the big difference between those three areas – it's very important to understand. You can't understand if you don't come there or you aren't from there and aren't moving around. I spent a lot of time in a helicopter over these areas. Everywhere else is quite thin. The ridings are very, very similar to the north, where you may have vast ridings as far as landscapes but one or two corridors of roads that go to communities along the way.

That riding there, where my home is, in west-central Alberta is very vast, and the community is spread out all across that area. Often when you look at the map, you'll see just Sundre and Rocky Mountain House, and you'll think that's where all the population is. It's easy to forget that our communities go for hours the other way. I lived right on the Forestry Trunk Road, highway 40, and the Red Deer River. I ran a place called Mountaineer Lodge near the Ya Ha Tinda Ranch for the Banff national park, about 45 minutes hauling to Sundre, more likely about an hour, in Clearwater county. But my closest town was Sundre in Mountain View county. That certainly was my home.

You won't find that in the other districts where they are able to maintain that same level of corridor. That's why you're hearing that conflict with Clearwater and western Mountain View county. They go together like a puzzle piece, and that is ultimately why they've been held together since the very existence of the province.

Justice Miller, I'm happy to take, obviously, any questions.

**The Chair:** Okay. I think there will be one or two.

Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you. Thank you for your time today. We heard from the reeve of Clearwater county yesterday, and he reminded us how big the county is and how Rocky Mountain House is the hub. One county; one town. And now we have split Clearwater county into three. We will certainly be having a look at that. Since the interim report we have had some hot spots, and this is certainly one. We will be revisiting it.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you for that. I just want to add one quick comment to what it sounds like the reeve is saying. I actually think it's really important to identify that a one-town county like Rocky Mountain House is very unique. There are not a lot of them in this province. It has not been divided twice; it's actually divided three times, which I think has created some of those challenges.

I do want to also really identify for the commission that as you go into southern Clearwater county, it is very much connected to Sundre. That's something that can often be missed if you're not looking at the population maps. If you just go just out of Sundre city limits, you enter Clearwater county. To everybody who lives there till about halfway to the village of Caroline, Sundre is home. That's where they go to school. It's a very small community. You know, when we talk about hybrids, these are communities of a few thousand people, and that is – well, Clearwater county residents are very, very much connected to it. The further that you go west, the more you encounter that.

If you go to my home in Mountain View county and you drive just off my home quarter section, like, a hundred feet, you cross into Bighorn county. My neighbour is in Bighorn county. The only way he'd ever be able to get back over to the other corridor is, obviously, if he goes through Mountain View county and our west portion of that. His kids go to school in Sundre. That area that is the Rocky Mountains forest reserve on that map is very much entwined in that population.

I just really want to emphasize that, and I appreciate you listening to the reeve and others who've come in.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** I just want to make sure. When you were talking about the, you know, narrow electoral districts, you're really referring to a north-south corridor?

**Mr. Nixon:** Yes.

**Mr. Evans:** And on the wider ones in terms of specifically looking at here Rocky Mountain House-Rimbey-Sundre, et cetera, that's an east-west corridor.

**Mr. Nixon:** No.

**Mr. Evans:** It's more than that, right?

**Mr. Nixon:** It's more than that, yeah. Yeah. Sorry, John. I interrupted you. I should let you finish your question.

**Mr. Evans:** It looks like it's east and west on 11 but north and south on whatever the ...

**Mr. Nixon:** Yeah. Let me maybe just really emphasize that point. If you're talking from the national park boundary to the town of Rocky Mountain House in that portion of the province, highway 11, which is east to west, is a critical corridor, right? I mean, that's the town. That's the town for everybody who lives there. So everybody

west of town – this current drawing is not attached to that town, but that's where that road goes to.

As you get into Rocky Mountain House, you get back into a primarily north to south corridor: Sundre, Caroline, Rocky Mountain House. Obviously, you know, the county line – highway 22 kind of jogs a little bit to the west as you get closer to Rocky Mountain House. Then down to Sundre it keeps jogging west as you go further through. The county line up around Clearwater county goes a little bit past that. In general the 22 is kind of that east-west boundary.

That highway 11 to Rocky Mountain House – this is something that a lot of people won't understand as you're trying to figure out the roads there as well. I know that Dr. Martin knows this because I've heard him talk about the Ya Ha Tinda Ranch. There's a road called Coal Camp Road, which would be a county road, which is the east-west corridor between the Ya Ha Tinda and the west portion of what is attached to Sundre. That is its road back and forth, the same way as highway 11, but you would not see it on a provincial map. I know that you know it. That's the corridor if that makes sense.

I think I answered your question, John. I certainly tried.

**Mr. Evans:** What about Cremona?

**Mr. Nixon:** Cremona should be – it is not currently; it probably should have been caught in the last map – on the 22 side. If you drive down 22, Cremona is the only populated place that is just over on the east side of the 22 highway. After that, it's nothing but farms all the way to the highway 2 corridor.

Of course, as I know you probably have heard, Mountain View county is so different. You have a very mountain-type community like Sundre, and then you have, to us, the high-population area around highway 2. We have what we call the highway 2 communities and the 22 communities. The 22 communities have much more in common with their friends to the north.

6:50

Oh, and I should mention, because I know highway 93 has been a big topic of conversation for obvious reasons, that if you are in Clearwater county or Rocky Mountain House, you cannot get south without going through Caroline and Sundre. You just can't. Now, you can, once you're in Sundre, take highway 40 down to highway 1A. I lived there. I ran the only service station and lodge on that road. I know it well. In the 10 years I lived there, it wasn't closed once. It flows pretty good. I drive it all the time. But if you go north of there, there's a thing called Corkscrew Mountain, the pass between Rocky Mountain House and there. When you drive there, it is quite beautiful. But you look down, and you'll see cars all the way back to the 1930s and '40s that they can't even pull out of the ravine. Nobody should be driving that in the winter, and it certainly is not a safe corridor, right?

So no matter what, you've got to connect through the 22 to Caroline down into Sundre as you commute through there.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thank you.

**Dr. Martin:** A fascinating handout, and I am very, very grateful for the range of information in it and particularly interested in the historical boundaries because that is one of our considerations, historical expectations of communities in this regard. I have a very kind of picky question if you don't mind.

**Mr. Nixon:** For sure.

**Dr. Martin:** We've addressed this theme with other presenters. It's about: does Rocky Mountain House have commuter traffic? Does Sundre have commuter traffic? Are they similar kind of sets of activities?

**Mr. Nixon:** The answer is no, I mean, as a general rule. If they did have commuter traffic, it would be south and north. South and north are the high-load corridor, which is a large part of our industry. You would not use the eastern highways. I mean, you may swing by Olds occasionally to get to a Walmart, but in general it's north to south.

I think, primarily, you're probably asking about highway 11 and then highway 27, obviously, between Olds and Sundre and between the eastern portion into Rocky Mountain House. Highway 11 is a major industrial route and a major tourism route. I mean, you can come there on the May long weekend: there'll be trailers stretched all the way back to Red Deer. I have represented highway 11 for a long time. I know this corridor. There is no natural flow between Eckville, which would be the middle of Lacombe county as you come out of Clearwater county and back. The flow would be north to south, maybe occasionally heading all the way out to Red Deer if you're doing some shopping with the family. But again, Rocky Mountain House, Caroline, Sundre is the flow of most of the traffic there or to the west, which is obviously a little bit unique, flowing back to it.

I know I was listening earlier, Justice Miller, to my colleague Tara testify, and you made a joke about it being a magnet to the mountains.

**The Chair:** You are following this.

**Mr. Nixon:** Yeah. Well, I followed hers.

What I would have said to you at that time is that, no, actually, Sundre, Caroline, and Rocky Mountain House are a magnet for those who are in the mountains. I think that's hard for everybody who's around Calgary, the highway 1 corridor to understand, that there's nowhere else to go, right? That's where you go. There's no path back over. You're going to have to go back to Rocky Mountain House. You're going to have to go back to Sundre or Caroline, and you'll have to head south. It's not that we like the mountains; we are the mountains. The only corridor is between us and the mountains.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much. Good to see you again.

**Mr. Nixon:** Good to see you, Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** A lot has changed since 1913.

**Mr. Nixon:** The one thing that hasn't changed is those communities being together.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. What has changed is that the Liberals were in power then.

**Mr. Nixon:** I did notice that. Yes.

**Mr. Clark:** It seems unlikely.

Also, I was trying to figure out how this worked, that Calgary seemed to only have two electoral divisions. Don't count this as comprehensive, but Centre Calgary had 20,000 voters and Clearwater had 74, so things were a little different in 1913.

**Mr. Nixon:** You had to be a landowner to vote in 1913.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. There you go. So a lot has changed, but your point is taken. You know, I mean, obviously, a lot has changed.

What I'm interested in – you were talking about the challenges in representing west-central Alberta and the unique nature of that, and it made me think of your MLA colleague Mr. Sinclair, who was in earlier today. We've received a lot of feedback and a lot of input from the north. Do you feel like your area is a little more akin to the north than it would be to areas east?

**Mr. Nixon:** Yes. That was what I'm trying to get across, that my area is much more like the north, even more than the Jasper and Hinton area and Canmore and Kananaskis, because – sorry; it's like the north as far as scale. It's actually unlike the north as far as how the population is distributed. If you go up to my colleague Minister Williams' constituency, he drives one very long corridor, large woods areas all around, but all that is primarily on there, maybe a couple of roads where you divert out to a town. Down in that portion everybody is spread right out, right? It's not like you just go to Caroline and everybody is right at Caroline. The population, the community will just keep going all the way up to the forest reserve and beyond, where they live. We're like the north in the fact that we are unique and we're vast and it's a big place to represent, but we are unlike that north corridor where we just have a real tight corridor. Our population spreads out significantly more.

You'll see down in John's neck of the woods as you get down towards the Crowsnest, it becomes the opposite again because it's so thin on the Alberta border, right? You have all that community right tied up to there. If you ever get the opportunity to go for a flight west of Rocky Mountain House, you will be blown away by how spread out every thing is. You know, when I said those drive times there, it's true. I mean, the Big Horn would have to drive in almost 45 minutes just to get to highway 11, and then they're going to have to continue on there. There are people that live all over there, including myself, who live in very remote places like that.

**Mr. Clark:** I'd love to ask a little bit more about that because I really appreciate you bringing in this letter from the Big Horn. It's my sort of naïveté or maybe lack of understanding. They are connected to the Stoney Nakoda, so that was the rationale, right? That was part of what we thought would make sense, would be to connect those reserves into the O'Chiese, Sunchild, Big Horn in with Stoney Nakoda. That was quite a conscious and deliberate choice, but you're saying that the connection with the Sunchild, O'Chiese, and Big Horn is actually more with Rocky Mountain House.

**Mr. Nixon:** I was with the Stoney yesterday, coincidentally. That's how I talked to the chief. There was a protocol meeting happening with government. They are Stoney, and I'm not saying they're not Stoney, and neither are they, though they are on Treaty 6, not Treaty 7, land. Their home, their corridor, their life is highway 11 into Rocky Mountain House. That's their home.

You know, bringing the Stoney together into the same constituency is not a terrible idea, but it would be a heck of a lot easier to add the Stoney into a west-central Alberta and not force the Big Horn to drive through three or four constituencies to get down to there. Certainly what the chief is saying is that he's not overly concerned about being connected to them in a constituency. He's very indifferent, but what he is not open to is being disconnected from Rocky Mountain House in the constituency. That's what he's saying. Sunchild and O'Chiese, while different nations, have the same challenge. It's the only place. That's it.

You know, it's a very historical community, one of the oldest communities in the province. It's been around since 1799, and it wasn't built off the roads that you and I think. It would have been

flow off the mountains, bring in your fur trade at the forts – it's why we have our own national park; a lot of people don't know about it – and then go back out to the trapline or to wherever you were living. Rocky Mountain House is that hub for those First Nation communities. It predates treaty, right? That's what I'm trying to get across and I think the chief is getting across. They don't want to be disconnected from Rocky Mountain House.

To your comment on that, don't forget, Mr. Clark, not just the 1913 boundary; the 2019 boundary and the current boundary encompass all of that area that we call the west country. It has for the entire existence of this province, and there's a reason that every boundary commission has done that. It's because of how these communities interact with each other.

**Mr. Clark:** No, that's a great point. I'll just maybe end on this thought and one other question. I mean, you know, constituency boundaries are not brick walls either, right? You drove through probably a dozen of them to get here today. That said, we are also trying to connect communities of interest, and I think your presentation here is helpful and compelling. I'm just wondering if you feel like your experience representing the west country is a little different than the experience of those MLAs that you would have a bit to the east of you who have pretty good cell service all the way through, pretty good roads, and even though the geography there may be large, it's not as large as what you're dealing with. It's not as large as the north. Is that a fair characterization?

**Mr. Nixon:** I think I'm the best person to answer this question. I represented what was I think for a lot of people in our community's perspective a gerrymandered constituency in 2017. I mean, it's open for debate. It went and added Rimbey, Ponoka, Lacombe county, little portions of Red Deer county into that area, and I know you probably heard from the highway 2 corridor about that. I have represented as far north as almost Pigeon Lake right now, Winfield, Alberta, in Wetaskiwin county, and down all the way into Mountain View county.

I represent some of those eastern communities, and it's very drastically different. They're very different communities. There's no natural flow between the corridors. You know, if I come home on a constituency day and I can get from Sundre, Caroline, Rocky, whip out all the way to the Bighorn, I'm on a natural flowing highway. I'm doing work the entire way. I'm connecting with people. I'm not in no man's land. Then all of a sudden you've got to divert, head all the way up to a highway 2 community. You take off the rhythm.

7:00

At the end of the day, though, it shouldn't be about us. It should be about, you know, how constituents can get the best access to you, which is why I'm concerned about breaking this into three because you separate from them. But there are some real significant differences in the communities, which is why I opened with: I believe you got it right. I'm not coming here and telling you that there shouldn't be adjustments to Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. I've said the opposite. In fact, I believe that the commission got three-quarters of what they did in this area of the province right: Rimbey and Ponoka being naturally connected to each other. I love representing the people, but it makes sense that they were there. Lacombe, which has been split into two, you know, the beautiful community of Bentley that has been disconnected from the community of Lacombe: you guys have fixed that. Eckville coming into one proper Lacombe county has been fixed.

So I just want to be clear on that, Greg. This isn't me who's coming here and saying: you got it all wrong. This is me trying to



come here and say: there's one portion of this province that is very unique, and it certainly is not going to be easy on that community if they get separated. As Susan said, I think it's really important to recognize that there's nowhere else in this province on any map where we have done that to a small population, one-town county where we divide it into two, let alone three. So, you know, that's what we're trying to do, and unless you spend time there you wouldn't know how these roads connect. You just wouldn't.

**Mr. Clark:** You gave us a B. That's all we got, was a B.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, it's actually really important to me to do the opposite, because this is a hard job. I thought the report was great. I don't think that, unless you want to come and spend the day with me and I could drive you to all these communities and I could show you how the roads connect and all that, that you could know that. That's why you see people like the reeve driving to Edmonton to say: "Hey. Whoa. Whoa. Woah. This doesn't change anything very significant as far as electoral fortunes, but this change is a real significant issue for our community and how it's attached."

**Mr. Clark:** Sorry, Justice Miller. I really apologize. Can I just ask one more?

**The Chair:** Sure, because any questions I ask are going to be dumb because I don't know this area.

**Mr. Clark:** Well, that's untrue.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, when you're all done, you come out. We'll take you for a trip.

**Mr. Clark:** Again, I'm probably stealing Justice Miller's thunder here a little bit. So we have very limited tools at our disposal, right? We're really trying to square an unsquarable circle. One of the things we wonder: why 89 constituencies instead of 91, 93, or 150? In all sincerity, you know, what was that debate and discussion in the Legislature? Because if we had another two or four, these sorts of discussions would be a lot easier.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, I will point out that I think in the past there's been a point where the commission recommended that the Legislature quickly add other seats on top of that. I don't know the history of that, but it may be that you need to communicate that back to us. I can't remember the full debate, and I'm certainly not the one that decided it. I certainly, though, as a rural Albertan was emphasizing the fact that we were going to have to add seats. I was thinking a little bit about the Ed Stelmach era, which was a tough boundary commission where I think in the end they decided: "Hey. Woah. I think we are we going to have to add seats." I believe they added four, if I recall.

So, you know, I won't speak for the Justice minister on exactly how they ended up with the number, but I can tell you as a member of the Legislature because you've asked that question, if the commission was absolutely convinced that they needed more, I would be very interested in that, but that might be a conversation for a different date.

I also want to be clear, Mr. Clark: what I'm proposing here does not make it harder for you, though, to deal with that inside your numbers because it's recognizing putting Canmore and Kananaskis back into that natural corridor that is already an existing riding and letting that quarter go there. So it doesn't disrupt the overall number of problems that you've got; it actually solves some of the problems that you've got in that hot spot, and it allows you to continue to deal with the other challenges you have along the highway 2 corridor.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thanks, Greg.

**The Chair:** Yeah. I was going to ask that question. We received a fair amount of submissions, or it seemed like it to me, about those that are in the emergency response industry along that corridor. For someone that's really ignorant of this area of the province, I have to admit that I don't think I've ever been to Rocky Mountain House or this area. Maybe we could have saved time by having a public hearing there in June.

**Mr. Nixon:** Please come out one day. You will enjoy it.

**The Chair:** Tell me about that. I want to call it an industry, and that's not pejorative. It's a serious service that's offered in that part of the province. Tell me more about where they're headquartered. Are they all in Rocky? What kind of equipment do they have? Helicopters, planes: that kind of stuff?

**Mr. Nixon:** So they're located in both Rocky and Sundre. This is a mountain community in the backcountry there, so they are fully mountain certified. They have helicopters. They hang out of the helicopters; they do that work. As I mentioned earlier, I ran a lodge way in the backcountry there, so I've interacted with them. You're the only place, so obviously there are accidents going on and you're dealing with it. So they're extraordinarily well trained. They're volunteers, just similar to our volunteer firefighters. If your kids or your family are camping out there – and over 100,000 people do on a weekend back there – and they get hurt, it's my neighbours answering a page, jumping on a helicopter, and coming to get them. I've had the opportunity to be back there. Unfortunately, people have been killed by grizzly bears or had quad accidents, and we've participated, obviously, in recovering their body.

So they are high-quality individuals with heavy, heavy equipment, and they're the only ones with proper access back there. You know, there was a terrible grizzly attack that made the news not long ago of a nice couple in the back end of the park, just past the Ya Ha Tinda, which is a name I know I've said lots. There were crews from both Sundre and Rocky who had to respond to that, very, very remote, after the distress call came in, many hours, because we couldn't fly that night, coming all the way in and dealing with the grizzly bear attack. Unfortunately, those people were deceased, but others have lived. So that's unique.

I can tell you as the former head of Kananaskis that we have a search and rescue crew like that that keeps care of the park, but they don't have to keep care of that area that I call the Rocky Mountains forest reserve because we have such a top-notch team that's in there. Justice Miller, I don't know if any of the submissions say this, but the reason it came to be was because a child got lost back there, and then nobody was equipped to be able to go deal with it. The national park obviously didn't know anything about that side as you get into public land, so the community of Rocky Mountain House eventually with their partners in Sundre said: we have to deal with this; we have to come together.

They also run a task force that manages all of that area together. It's called the Rocky Mountains forest reserve. Sundre to Rocky to Bighorn county all the way down to the 1A: that is all run by the municipalities in partnership with the province. Again, imagine 100,000 people camped outside a community like Sundre with 2,600 people in the town. It's a big job for them to be able to manage that. So I hope I answered your question, but it's very vast, and they do a really good job, and I'm glad they submitted some stuff.

**The Chair:** Okay. Good. Well, thank you very much. I think we're all wiser.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well over.

**The Chair:** Yeah, you're well over time – that's for sure – but we are much the wiser for your presentation. Thank you very much, Mr. Nixon.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Justice Miller, and I hope I broke up a little bit of the long Edmonton day. I'll let you get back to Edmonton ridings.

**The Chair:** I do encourage every presenter to remain and hear the other presenters because it's always helpful to hear other Albertans. So that takes us, then, to William van Engen.

**Mr. van Engen:** Thank you, and that will be a difficult act to follow. Let me know when I can begin.

**The Chair:** Yes. Please make yourself comfortable, identify yourself, and tell us what riding you live in and which ones you're wishing to comment on.

**Mr. van Engen:** Thank you, sir. My name is Will van Engen. I'm a resident of the Griesbach neighbourhood of Edmonton, which is part of the Edmonton-North West constituency. I wanted to begin as well by thanking you for the work that you're all doing on this panel and as well to thank Mr. Roth. I had previously signed up online to make submissions, but I was a little late to get to my submissions, and I e-mailed, and he was kind enough to make some space, so I did appreciate that.

I'm going to limit my submissions to the Edmonton-North West electoral district.

**The Chair:** Sorry. It was Edmonton-North West you're commenting on?

**Mr. van Engen:** That's right. That's right. Just so you have a bit of background about myself, I live there with my wife and two young sons. I've lived there since about 2021. I work downtown here in Edmonton as a criminal defence lawyer, and my wife is an elementary school teacher who teaches in the Calder neighbourhood, which is incidentally one of the neighbourhoods that has been contemplated to be included in Edmonton-North West.

My submission today is simply to ask that the commission not expand beyond what it has contemplated in the interim report. In the interim report I see that the neighbourhood of Calder will be included. I understand it has been part of Edmonton-North West in the past, so it's not a significantly controversial inclusion, but it does put Edmonton-North West at about 11 per cent or so over the average, and so I would just urge the commission not to go beyond that.

**7:10**

There are a couple of reasons that I'll say for that, the first being that – and you'll probably have access to better data than I have – anecdotally, being part of that neighbourhood, there is significant growth in the neighbourhood, at least from what I can see. I live in a newer development. There are new developments in the area as well that are growing. There's also another development that I'm aware of called Goodridge, which is a new development that's on the Anthony Henday and 127th Street. My understanding is that the community is growing quite quickly. I think being at 11 per cent is already higher than usual, but I would just urge the commission not to go further than that.

The other reason I would urge the commission to keep the boundaries as they are or not too dissimilar from how they are is that we already have a pretty good, cohesive makeup in Edmonton-North

West. There are a number of communities of common interest. Edmonton-North West is a largely middle-class community. There are similar needs, interests, and challenges for this community. You also may be aware that Edmonton-North West houses the Al Rashid mosque. There is a large Muslim community in Edmonton-North West. You may also be aware that the Al Rashid mosque is historically, I think, the first mosque in Canada, actually. I believe it was somewhere else previously, but it is now in Edmonton-North West. So there's a large Muslim community here, which I think is important to keep in that riding.

Finally, the current structure as it is: there's a logical geographic structure to the riding being bounded by 127th Street, Yellowhead Trail, 137th Avenue, and 97th Street.

In short, my submissions are simply that the commission keep the riding as it is or not significantly different.

**The Chair:** Do no harm. Okay.

**Mr. van Engen:** Thank you, sir. Appreciate your time.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans, any cross-examination of this lawyer?

**Mr. van Engen:** They say lawyers are the worst witnesses.

**Mr. Evans:** No. He dodged a bullet. Thank you.

**Mr. van Engen:** I've got King's Counsel staring me down.

**Mrs. Samson:** I'm not going to question you if you like the riding the way we drew it out. I'm going to take that.

**Mr. van Engen:** Take that and go?

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah.

Thank you very much. I appreciate that you think the interim is, you know, on balance good. I mean, you have a mix of very classic historical neighbourhoods near the rail yards, a very, very old, traditional layout as well as neighbourhoods, and then you move into more modern, suburban styles of laying out roadways and housing. I'm glad you think we got the balance right there.

Also, if you didn't happen to know it, that mosque is now in Fort Edmonton Park.

**Mr. van Engen:** The actual original mosque.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah.

**Mr. van Engen:** That's right, and I've seen it. It's quite beautiful.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. I've visited it, and it's very beautiful to see it there.

**Mr. van Engen:** Yeah. Indeed.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah.

Thank you. Your Member of the Legislative Assembly was in here I think yesterday and basically made exactly the same point that you've made.

Earlier today we had a presenter talking about the name of the constituency. His concern was cardinal directions. We have lots of northwests, southwests, southeasts, whatever. He suggested Edmonton-North West be called Edmonton-Grand Trunk to respect the railway history of that area. Do you have an opinion on that?

**Mr. van Engen:** Not particularly. I mean, I think I like Edmonton-North West because I've known it as Edmonton-North West for a time. Grand Trunk certainly is a feature of the community, but I don't know if I would say it's sort of the defining feature, the defining nomenclature for that area. I see the challenge that exists with using northwest in various ways and places. I think I would err on the side of keeping the name as it is and keeping it as it has typically been known.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. Good. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. van Engen:** Thank you. Good day.

**The Chair:** Please stay if you can to hear the other presentations.

**Mr. van Engen:** Thank you, sir.

**The Chair:** I believe that takes us to Kate Faight.

**Ms Faight:** That's me.

**The Chair:** Good evening.

**Ms Faight:** Good evening. I also note the challenge of following a minister, but I'll do my best.

Yes. My name is Kate Faight. I'm a resident of Edmonton-Whitemud since 2009. I live in Brookside, within that community. I'm a lawyer. I'm a mother of three children, who each go to three different schools in the community. My husband is a software developer who works at home, and I work downtown. So I do think we have a broad range of experience within our community. Given my comments this evening you also might be interested to know that I have deep rural roots. I grew up in Castor, Alberta, but I am here tonight to mostly comment on Edmonton-Whitemud but also on the combination of the two Edmonton ridings in the centre, Edmonton-Glenora and Edmonton-Riverview.

Like my predecessor, I'd also like to thank you for your hard work in preparing these proposals. I found the interim report very interesting. As a lawyer I was tempted to start by reviewing the foundations of effective representation, but I see that was very well canvassed in the interim report. I certainly concur that, although my comments are somewhat directed on the population of these ridings, I would not want us to march towards the American one person, one vote approach. I'll leave that there.

I did take interest in the commission's comments in the interim report on their assessment of the relative difficulty in representing rural versus urban ridings. That piece goes to my commentary on the difficulty in amalgamating those two central Edmonton ridings.

Time after time we see in polling and the media that the most concerning issues to Albertans are health care, education, cost of living, and public safety. In my view, each of these four items disproportionately affects and needs to be addressed by urban representatives. In health care we see that ER wait times are, you know, approaching a state of emergency, of course, depending on who you speak to. But there's no denying that that is highly contentious, even resulting in a death in an Edmonton hospital just before the new year.

In education we saw a teacher strike this fall, of course, like, very similar timing with the interim report, and the issues giving rise to that teachers strike, again, were disproportionately involving issues in urban schools related to classroom sizes. Certainly, we do not see those issues arising in rural schools.

The cost of living. We see housing costs being much higher in the cities. Utilities and insurance, the cost of recreational opportunities: these pieces are dramatically higher in urban settings.

Finally, the public safety piece that I mentioned mostly arises due to a drug crisis and mental health issues in our visibly unhoused people in urban core areas.

Out of these four pieces the matter of addressing these issues largely falls to representatives of urban ridings. I do note that this to some degree was spoken to in the Carter case that's mentioned in the commission's interim report. In that case the Supreme Court of Canada felt that the rural divisions were more difficult to represent. They cited difficulty with communication, transportation challenges. However, I do note the significant change in our society since 1991, and I find those comments quite dated.

The changing demographics resulting from immigration policy even over the last 10 years have had a far more dramatic effect on urban centres than rural ones. Three-quarters of the growth, as we know, from 2021 to 2024 has landed in our urban centres, and that's made representing residents in urban ridings more difficult due to language barriers, access to services, and more. Representing an urban riding might be more geographically contained, but it's far more complex in my submission. Social media and the availability of face-to-face meetings over Zoom or Teams has vastly increased the ability to interact directly with constituents even when not directly in person. I know that's imperfect, but it does address those concerns somewhat.

7:20

More directly, though, in the Edmonton context the commission – again, I also want to echo the previous speakers in saying that for the most part I was very happy with the map as it is presented in the interim report. However, I did feel that there was still some room for improvement that would improve even the voter parity and effective representation even further. The amalgamation of Edmonton-Glenora-Riverview creates a population that's 12 per cent over the midpoint. That's based on numbers that are from 2024, which have likely increased even more since then given the population growth even since the 2024 numbers came out. I do agree, of course, with the commission's decision to add an additional seat to Edmonton's west and southeast, but for that to come at the expense of the amalgamation of the central Edmonton ridings I think is an error.

Both of these ridings, Edmonton-Glenora and Edmonton-Riverview, are experiencing infill and population growth, and that's likely to increase, in my view, in the coming years as more housing projects break ground pursuant to the city of Edmonton's efforts and policy to increase housing density in neighbourhoods near to the city's core. You see that in these neighbourhoods they are seeing the push or neighbourhood pressure to sign restrictive covenants, for example, to limit that infill coming their way. There's also going to be the imminent operation of the Edmonton Valley Line west LRT, which likely will also draw people into those neighbourhoods. Again, to put these two neighbourhoods together to create a superriding that's 12 per cent over the average population in my view is not a step that's necessary here, and I hope that you'd reconsider that.

As to my own riding, as a resident of Brookside we're on a little bit of an island, so I was actually very pleased to see that we remain in Edmonton-Whitemud, and I want to ensure that I lend my voice to support that no change would happen there. My interests are closely aligned with Riverbend and Terwillegar. My kids go to school in all of those neighbourhood schools. We do all of our grocery shopping; my daughter has a part-time job; all of their sports are centred in those neighbourhoods, so I want to ensure that there's no reconsideration to move us into Riverview. Bringing Mactaggart into that riding also does make sense, and I support that as well. It'll allow for more growth in Edmonton-South without that

riding becoming too overburdened. Their interests, I think, and daily activities are well aligned with Edmonton-Whitemud, so I do support that as well.

While for the most part I think the interim report is an excellent reflection for Edmonton, I think it's an error to combine Edmonton-Riverview and Edmonton-Glenora, and I would hope for a reconsideration on that point.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

**Ms Faught:** I'm open to any questions.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson, any questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** No. We have heard quite a bit about the combination of Edmonton-Glenora and Edmonton-Riverview. I don't have any questions on that. I'm pleased that you're happy with Edmonton-Whitemud. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** No questions. Thank you for your presentation.

**Mr. Clark:** The community you live in: I think that's still within Edmonton-Whitemud or we've moved that – what is it?

**Ms Faught:** Brookside.

**Mr. Clark:** Brookside?

**Ms Faught:** Yes.

**Mr. Clark:** Brookside. Perfect. My only shortcoming is that I'm not from Edmonton.

Sorry. You're generally happy, then, with Edmonton-Whitemud?

**Ms Faught:** Yes. I was concerned that my community, because it's sort of geographically set apart, might fall to a different riding, but it's much better suited to remain in Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Just so I'm clear, you're happy with our report, but you're a little disappointed with the fact that we shrunk five into four in Edmonton.

**Ms Faught:** That's right, sir.

**The Chair:** Six into five.

**Ms Faught:** Six into five.

**The Chair:** Now I'll let Dr. Martin ask you a question. Sorry; I shouldn't set up a lawyer like that, but I just did.

**Dr. Martin:** Brookside is isolated. It's only got one access and egress, and you've got the Whitemud freeway and you've got the ravine, so it really is an island – lucky you in many respects – but that's the virtue of living along that Whitemud Creek. There are a lot of opportunities of that kind along there.

I don't think this is the place to debate it, but it would be fun sometime elsewhere to debate the points you make about: you aim to make a significant distinction between urban situations and rural ones. One of them, just for example, that you point out is public safety, and I would have to disagree with you fundamentally on that point. The rural situation with respect to public safety is very dire, and I think that's probably not one theme that you want to pursue if you want to build out a story of the differences.

**Ms Faught:** I take your point, and I didn't mean to focus on trying to sow those seeds of division, but I was interested in the commentary that was already in the interim report that went to that point, so I felt it was fair to speak on it. But certainly, yes, I take your point that there is a lot of discussion. Particularly in years previous to perhaps the rise of attention paid to the fentanyl crisis, certainly the rural safety, you know, was a more visible-in-the-media issue, and I certainly wouldn't minimize that conversation for rural people either.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms Faught, but I can't let someone from Castor leave without asking, and I know it's a generation before you, but do you know my colleague Charlene Anderson?

**Ms Faught:** I do. I know her well.

**The Chair:** And my good friend Dan Hein, who graduated in the class in 1980?

**Ms Faught:** I worked for Charlene's brother in a grocery store.

**The Chair:** Okay. Good. Well, say hello to them when you see them next.

**Ms Faught:** I will. Thank you so much.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Jennifer Klimek.

**Ms Klimek:** Klimek, right.

**The Chair:** Welcome.

**Ms Klimek:** Thank you. I'm going to be brief because I've listened to the people before me and I don't have much to add, especially to the woman before me. I live in Gold Bar, and this is my second time before you.

**The Chair:** I know. That's why I said welcome. I was going to say welcome back.

**Ms Klimek:** I had no idea this existed, so it's been a real learning for me, and I thank you.

**The Chair:** Neither did we 11 months ago.

**Ms Klimek:** It's really interesting, especially when you watch the stuff in the States about all the gerrymandering, so I want to thank you for doing the good job you did. It gives me confidence. I was a little skeptical. Like, what do these people do? What are they doing? And you did well.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you. We were unanimous, and our goal is to be unanimous in the final report.

**Mr. Clark:** And we can't spell gerrymandering.

**Ms Klimek:** Well, you're not going to do it, so you don't need to.

**Mrs. Samson:** Or unanimous.

**Mr. Clark:** We can spell unanimous.

**Ms Klimek:** I liked what you did, with a few little tweaks that I think you need to do. I was happy that you didn't create a lot of

hybrid urban-rural. I grew up in rural Alberta. I grew up near Vermilion, so I still have a lot of contact out there, and there are different concerns. Every time I go home we have the city folks, the rural debates about concerns, and I think it would be hard for an MLA to separate those out as much. So I like that you left what was there.

**The Chair:** Well, we added a few hybrids.

**Ms Klimek:** Yeah, but it could have been worse.

**The Chair:** Or it could have been better, some people say.

**Ms Klimek:** Yeah, and I think it's important to keep that in mind because especially now I think the demographics are changing so much. When I go back to my little town, there's nothing there.

**The Chair:** Where's your town?

**Ms Klimek:** Dewberry.

**The Chair:** Oh, my goodness. Where is that?

**Mrs. Samson:** Where is Dewberry?

**Ms Klimek:** You're going between Vermilion and Lloyd, you turn north and go about 20 miles.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Dr. Martin:** Towards the river.

**Ms Klimek:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** Battle River.

**Ms Klimek:** Yeah.

**Mr. Clark:** You'd be a chuckwagon racing fan, then?

**Ms Klimek:** Yes. The Bensmillers.

**Mr. Clark:** That's right. Exactly.

7:30

**Ms Klimek:** Yes. They grew up there. And you see that everywhere in rural Alberta, and I think that's part of the problem here. How do you deal with that? I think that's the hard part for you.

I also live in Bonnie Doon, and I'm watching infill. When I moved into the neighbourhood 30 years ago, the schools were almost closing. There were places to park on the streets, you know. Only half the houses have been replaced, so it's going to become denser, and that's okay. I'm okay with that, but we need to deal with that. I think when you're looking ahead, you have to project that even more people are going to be in the cities. That's my big thing. I think you need to account for maybe another seat, not putting some together, so that the urban people are well represented numberwise.

Even within a city you see disparity in how neighbourhoods see each other. My neighbourhood seems to be quite open to infill where other neighbourhoods are not so open. You know, so you have to kind of keep them together so you have stuff.

I guess my only thing I'd say is that a tweak we do need, especially because I think it's 10 years to do the next one – right? So there could be maybe one election? Two? Three?

**The Chair:** That'd be two. Every two election cycles.

**Ms Klimek:** Oh, every two elections.

**The Chair:** It works out to be eight to 10 years.

**Ms Klimek:** Yeah. So if we're pushing up to that top now, where are we going to be in the next elections? You know, it's even going to be more disparate between ridings, one representative representing way more people than someone who has less. It's not everything, but it is important that, you know, my vote counts the same as someone else's.

I guess that's the only thing I really have to say today. I'm happy with mine. Nothing to complain about Gold Bar. We're kind of caught anyhow behind industrial stuff, so you can't move us out anyway.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Do you like the name still?

**Ms Klimek:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** Okay. Good.

**Ms Klimek:** I ski down at Gold Bar.

That's all I really want to say. I just want to say thank you. It was a pleasure to learn about you. For me that was a real education.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Dr. Martin, any comments, conversation?

**Dr. Martin:** The one significant thing we did with this – well, we did two. We moved Riverview – is it? – back into the . . .

**Ms Klimek:** Riverdale.

**Dr. Martin:** Riverdale. We moved it back north of the river because we like the river as a boundary. But we also have added Ritchie, Hazeldean, and Argyll. We've heard quite a lot from people from Ritchie. This really was one of the situations where we felt we were really pressed because of the population. Gold Bar has a very, very slow growth pattern, perhaps more than anywhere else in the city. You know, there are about 9,000 people there, and adding them to Gold Bar gets you just about on the mean. If we didn't move it – it's traditionally been in Edmonton-Strathcona – then it would make Edmonton-Strathcona 63,000. So that's why that came about, just in case you were thinking: why did it happen?

**Ms Klimek:** Yeah. And it makes sense to put them in. I mean, they can go either way: Hazeldean, Ritchie. I spend a lot of time in Mill Creek Ravine. We all congregate there from both sides. It's very similar, you know, so that's fine. I can see, like, Gold Bar doesn't grow as much, partly because, I would say, its proximity to the industrial area.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah, thanks. It's, again, helpful to get the on-the-ground, you know, lay-of-the-land kind of input.

**Ms Klimek:** Yeah.

**Mr. Clark:** You know, part of our struggle and challenge, as you've identified, is that we've had this significant influx of population in the last seven or eight years. Most of it, the vast majority, three-quarters of it, has ended up in the big cities, Calgary and Edmonton.

**Ms Klimek:** Yeah.

**Mr. Clark:** And we are also tasked with effective representation. You've heard from other folks, if you were here for Minister Nixon's comments, about some of the challenges we have in particular in the far north. We're trying to balance almost, really, the impossible. What we've done is, in essence, and this is not a strict mathematical exercise either, but on average – let me see. The city of Edmonton: the average constituency is about 3.5 per cent over, which is kind of a consequence of having the areas outside, in particular the far north, quite a bit under.

**Ms Klimek:** Yeah.

**Mr. Clark:** You know, there are even some adjustments, potentially. I guess my question to you is: do you feel that is sort of about right given the challenges, you know, the push and the pull, right? There are different challenges for rural and remote areas. We have challenges in the inner city as well, right? MLAs have lots to do. Do you feel like that's an appropriate balance that we've struck, or would you advocate something different?

**Ms Klimek:** Well, I think what you have now I'd say we could live with. Okay? It's fine. Having come from rural Alberta, I can't be – like, some of my friends have never been out there. It is a different world. That's for sure. I can't imagine being an MLA trying to – like, with the hybrid, they're very different concerns, but they need to be represented. I know my family keeps saying, "Well, no. You guys don't appreciate us out here," you know, my family in the farm area. I do worry that it might be okay now, but where are we going to be two election cycles down the way?

**Mr. Clark:** I don't know.

**Ms Klimek:** We have to look ahead. I mean, I would assume we're going to grow. It's just going to happen. See, I did environmental work. We don't want to keep growing out. We want to become denser because that's good farmland. I'm a good farm girl. That's good farmland we're putting houses on. That's your challenge, I guess, and I don't know how you do that, like, how much you project ahead. My neighbourhood is suddenly: there won't be any parking. Now there's at least one parking spot. You know what I mean? I don't know how do your job to project that, but I think you have to give yourself some leeway in there for it to bump up, and maybe rural Alberta is going to even get smaller.

**Mr. Clark:** It's a real dilemma. Generally, I think if you look back at past boundary commissions, basically, we're always chasing it. Right? Because the large urbans do tend to populate quicker. At least, you know, even when other places outside have absolute growth, they grow relatively slower. So I think the answer to that question is that we're probably always chasing it. That's actually why I asked Minister Nixon about the number of seats, because that would potentially help.

**Ms Klimek:** You don't get a say on that, do you?

**Mr. Clark:** We don't. We can nudge and ask nicely, but no. We don't get any control there.

**Ms Klimek:** Can you write back that you're hearing a lot that the public wants more seats?

**The Chair:** That's exactly what we may very well recommend.

**Ms Klimek:** Because, I mean . . .

**The Chair:** We have one more presenter yet this evening.

**Ms Klimek:** Yep. Okay.

**Mr. Clark:** Sorry. I've taken too much time.

**The Chair:** On the issue of hybrids, it's a legitimate tool that we have to use if necessary, but not necessarily hybrid. I think we're being very selective. The communities of interest have to be there. Eighteen different areas of the province have had hybrids for decades. I had someone read back part of our report – she wasn't necessarily convinced – earlier today, but we have to keep hybrids as an option.

Mrs. Samson, any questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** No. I want to thank you for coming out. With you liking the changes to Gold Bar, I'm happy to carry on. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** No. No questions for me. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you for coming again.

**Ms Klimek:** Thank you for the opportunity.

**The Chair:** Yep. Okay. I'll excuse you.

We have our last presenter, Stephen Raitz. I'm sorry, sir. You came late.

**Mr. Raitz:** No, that's all good. That's my bad.

**The Chair:** No extra charge for you. You got to see the whole evening.

**Mr. Raitz:** Yeah. I appreciate it.

I don't have a specific ward that I'm speaking to. I came in June to speak when you were . . .

**The Chair:** Tell us what riding you are in.

**Mr. Raitz:** I guess I'm now in Edmonton-Gold Bar. I'm in the Ritchie neighbourhood. Yeah. I think it's important to reflect on where people come from because I feel like I might have something to say about the hybrid stuff as well. I did not grow up, like, in the country at all, but I grew up outside of Edmonton and Leduc, and my partner grew up in Sherwood Park, so very much have that commuter mindset and understand the connection that some of those smaller cities have to the bigger cities.

Some of the main points I wanted to raise today: I just wanted to bring some of my experience as an urban planner and a lawyer and someone who was on the ward boundary commission for Edmonton in 2019-2020.

Just a quick story to start with. Presenting the proposals for that, we had some concerns, and then we tried to adjust for those concerns and presented the final proposal. Then there were still concerns, but it was that right balance. Ultimately, I think you guys are already well aware that there's always going to be some sort of concerns, and it's about trying to find that good compromise. I think you're on the path to compromise. I would reflect a lot of the comments that came from people from Edmonton earlier today where I think it's close, but there's maybe some tweaking. There might be other parts of the province where, yeah, there might need to be a little bit more juggling to accommodate for some larger scale concerns.

7:40

But reflecting on that community of interest idea, I think broadly some of the big pieces were gotten pretty close to where we'd want

to see it, with a lot of those mid-sized cities that are across the province, you know, not getting distributed out but still kind of being their own anchors and having their own electoral districts. Then, you know, pretty similar in the Edmonton or Calgary regions and some of those municipalities on the edge, where those municipalities can anchor their own electoral districts. They still are proposed to be, so I think that's positive. I think you're headed in the right direction there.

I would say, like, if there is an opportunity to shake things up, it might be some of those commuter cities like Leduc or Beaumont. I formerly worked for the city of Beaumont, so I have some experience with folks out there, and then grew up in Leduc. Right now the split with Beaumont: I've heard concerns, and I could see how that would be concerning for that community, to have it split down the middle. Does it make sense to adhere it just to one district and then have it flip into Edmonton if 50th Street is such a corridor into the city? That just might be a proposal that you'd want to consider as not necessarily a hybrid but not necessarily not, or whatever the statement that you were saying was. It's in those edge-city cases where I think the hybrid might make the most sense. Like, similar to St. Albert and Morinville, there's that clear connection between a pretty urban place and then a smaller city there.

I think the community of interests are close. The only other one that I would maybe mention is the Edmonton-West-Enoch. I guess the point on communities of interest is that we're trying to keep similar communities altogether, but there are, of course, different scales of these communities of interest, so when you see a smaller community of interest get split or subsumed in a larger community of interest, just really listening to that community's feedback, if it's the Enoch First Nation or if it's Beaumont, like, understanding that their voices would be underrepresented in that situation and seeing where they see themselves in that broader community of interest.

Yeah. The last point that I'd just be making is something that's come up a couple of times, and there are references to some of the electoral districts that I had in my notes that I then heard about in presentations earlier, so I can just be pretty brief. But specifically that line on page 33 about some of the growth patterns, especially in Edmonton, reflecting specifically that electoral districts near the core of the city like Gold Bar, Strathcona, Riverview, Glenora are growing at slower rates than more suburban areas of Edmonton. There's some truth to the that being the case in the past, but just some of the stats in recent years of 40 per cent of new development permits approved in the city of Edmonton were in those core neighbourhoods, so I would caution against really relying heavily on the assumption that the suburbs are going to be booming.

**The Chair:** What page is that?

**Mr. Raitz:** Page 33.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Raitz:** It's not something that's totally untrue, but it's just something that I don't think you can rest on too heavily because it might present a situation where 10 years from now we have, you know, discrepancies of 40 per cent like we do right now. Like, let's get in front of some of that.

Just some of the specific ones that I would point to – again, it's maybe reflecting on some of the city plan maps, like, where densification is identified. You know, you'd maybe consider how Century Park in Edmonton-Rutherford is already 5.7 per cent over, but there's a lot more intensification that's going to occur there. Similarly, Mill Woods Town Centre in Edmonton-Mill Woods: that's 8.6 per cent over. The electoral districts mentioned earlier: west Valley Line spurring a lot of growth in Edmonton-Glenora-

Riverview, which is already 12 per cent over; Edmonton-McClung, which is 12.6 per cent over; and then the example from earlier today, Edmonton-North West. Griesbach is a redeveloping neighbourhood, but then it's also Goodridge Corners, which is a Greenfield neighbourhood.

Just assessing those situations and seeing if there are ways that – and this was our experience on the ward boundary commission. Like, if some ridings can kind of nibble at other ones and then nibble around until you address those potential discrepancies, that might be just some of the areas where you need to do that adjustment. But, yeah, I would just hope to see some additional context on that page 33 comment and then just some adjustment there.

**The Chair:** Sure, and that's fair. Have you submitted that in writing to Mr. Roth?

**Mr. Raitz:** I can submit my written comments by e-mail.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you. Thank you for your presentation, and thank you for giving us hope that there's life after the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

**Mr. Raitz:** Yeah. It's great, guys. It's great. It's fun.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** No. Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for the presentation. I appreciate that. Just in your comments you indicated that you had experience with Beaumont. Could you give us some suggestions what to do with it? Just because, you know, we're getting push-back. That split: okay; I won't go in any further. Tell me what you think.

**Mr. Raitz:** Well, I just think what it's split into might be the concern, especially, like, the east half reaching all the way around to Strathcona county and Sherwood Park. Like, when we talk about communities of interest and communities of interest relating to one another, you know, it's kind of a quarter around the Henday. Like, it's kind of not in that same quadrant of the areas around Edmonton, so, you know, right now it's Leduc-Beaumont, but it's also pretty high above the thresholds that you'd want to be at, and it's probably going to get worse if it were to be kept the same. So it might be that, you know, in all these compromises, that might be one of the compromises, having Beaumont split that way, but it would also be worth while to explore: is it worth it to cleave off a part of Leduc that might make sense and then keep Beaumont and Leduc together, or does it make sense to consider flipping part of Beaumont into Edmonton, like the southern expanding area just because of that 50th Street corridor?

I don't purport to speak on behalf of these communities, but that's some of the experience. That's where my mind would go in trying to solve some of these issues.

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay. Thank you for your expertise.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah.

I'd like to pick that up, your more general point about edge communities. Now, this is planner speak, but I am fascinated because we've heard about gateway communities with respect to the mountains, for example, but edge communities are very interesting and I think pertinent because there are many examples of that, I suggest, in Alberta. So can you tell me a bit more about what characterizes these spaces?

**Mr. Raitz:** Well, I think if you're looking at your average kind of population, like, how much does that community fill it up? If you're in a situation where 20,000 people are in that edge community, it's going to have to cleave on to something else. I guess just community writ large, like a 20,000 population community is probably going to have to merge with something else in its surrounding, and an edge community, like those communities that are just on the edge of the big cities – yeah; like, growing up in Leduc, you know, my weekdays were in Leduc but my weekends were in the city, and I think that's the experience of a lot of people who grow up in those places. They do a lot of the day-to-day going to school or going to doctors' appointments, but they might, you know, go to Costco or that kind of thing in the city. Like, there is still that connection that might be more strongly felt in that increasingly urban direction instead of that increasingly rural direction.

I guess another point to raise, that I brought up in June, is that if you go in that increasingly rural direction from those edge communities, that rural voice gets diminished over time just proportionately because these edge communities are growing so fast. So, like, you're kind of grouping together two areas that are growing very quickly, but they might also be just two areas that are more connected and more tied into a community of interest along a corridor like highway 2 or 50th Street for that kind of thing.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** I'll just pick up quickly on the edge community comment. Not being from Edmonton, I don't always fully understand

the context. Sherwood Park: I mean, it sure seems like it's an edge community.

**Mr. Raitz:** Yeah, it's literally right on the edge. This is an example of numbers, where Sherwood Park probably fills out an entire electoral district like St. Albert fills out an entire electoral district. Spruce Grove, Leduc: like, they get pretty close because they're 30,000, 40,000 people. Stony Plain is in that 20,000 range. So, really, the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board: like, you're obviously familiar with that with Calgary, I'm pretty sure. So that's kind of a good blueprint to, like, look at. What would have seen itself as a part of that region or as a part of that, being on the edge of something more urban?

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you again for presenting, and thank you for, well, you didn't have any choice . . .

**Mr. Raitz:** I didn't have a choice, but it was good. It was good to listen to everybody else. I appreciate your work. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

This is the conclusion of our public hearings for the second round except for a special day tomorrow. Thank you, everyone, for appearing – such great presentations – and for listening, and we conclude today.

[The hearing adjourned at 7:50 p.m.]















Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Public Hearings

Edmonton

Tuesday, January 20, 2026  
9:08 a.m.

Transcript No. 43

## **Legislative Assembly of Alberta**

### **Electoral Boundaries Commission**

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Greg Clark

John D. Evans, KC

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## **Electoral Boundaries Commission**

### **Public Participants**

Victor Carpay  
Dwight Dibben, Chief Administrative Officer, Village of Forestburg  
David Dorward  
Sandra Houston  
Hermina Joldersma  
Bradley Lafortune, Executive Director, Public Interest Alberta  
Michael Mathiote  
Matthew McLennan, Councillor, County of Sturgeon  
Tara Sawyer, MLA, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills  
Kayden Tonita  
Lisa Vanderkwaak, Mayor, City of Beaumont





9:08 a.m.

Tuesday, January 20, 2026

[Justice Miller in the chair]

**The Chair:** Good morning, everyone, and welcome to day 2 of our second week of public hearings for the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission. We are glad to be in Edmonton for the second week.

I want to just give some background of our commission and the work we've been doing and what we expect to complete in the weeks and months ahead. First of all, our commission was established by the Legislature of Alberta, and it's an independent commission composed of the five of us. If you want to see some background on us, you can go to the website. Our task is to basically deal with two issues that have been handed to us as part of our mandate. First of all, the Alberta Legislature has expanded the number of seats in the Legislature from 87 to 89 for the next provincial election. Our task is to draw new boundaries, taking into account those two new seats. Of course, individual voters who reside in the electoral division are the people that select their member of the Legislature to sit in the Legislative Assembly in Edmonton. So we have to deal with the increase from 87 to 89.

To give you some idea about the second challenge that we have, it has to do with population. To put things in perspective, in 2017, when the last Electoral Boundaries Commission reported, Alberta had a population of just slightly over 4 million people. They then used the formula based on the population at that time to determine the average number of residents in each electoral division. As you can see – the math is portrayed there – the average population per electoral division is 46,697. That's not the target for our purposes of effective representation. Rather, we have a range that we shoot for. That range is minus 25 of that average to plus 25 of that average. As long as we're in that range, we're designing effective representation for Albertans.

Fast-forward to this commission. The population of Alberta is 4.88 million at this point, and we divide that among 89 ridings, which gives us an average of just under 55,000 inhabitants per electoral division. Again, that's not the target. The target is the range of below 25 to plus 25. Our goal as a commission is to fulfill the legal requirements for voter parity in this country, and that is to provide new boundaries for the 89 electoral divisions that provide effective representation.

We were appointed as a commission in April of last year, and we have been fairly busy since that time. I want to touch on four things that we have done leading up to our interim report. First of all, we met and discussed the various possibilities as to what standard to use for population. We agreed upon a source of population based on what the legislation requires us to refer to being the last decennial census. But that was in 2021, so it's somewhat dated. We then employed the statistics used by the Alberta Treasury Board Office of Statistics and Information to update the 2021 census. That's updated quite regularly, on a quarterly basis, so we determined that the most accurate census data for us to use was the census data as of July 2024.

After we agreed on some of the ground rules, we then reviewed hundreds of written submissions that were presented to our commission after our website was up and running. From late May to throughout June we travelled the province, all the way from Pincher Creek to Fort McMurray and down from Peace River to Medicine Hat and the major metropolitan centres in between. We had several public hearings, heard from hundreds of Albertans, and took all that information, both the written form and the public presentations, into account.

Then we sat down with the staff from Elections Alberta, who have very sophisticated mapping tools and population data, and they assisted us greatly in preparing our first, interim report. That report, which you probably have seen or referenced if you're here and are interested in this process, was provided to the Speaker of the Legislature on October 27 of this past year. Immediately he tabled the report and provided a hard copy to each of the members of the Legislature, and that is on our website. The key term is "interim report." It's an interim report in order to get the feedback of Albertans. In preparing that interim report, we relied on the legislative criteria such as sparsity and density and rate of population growth, communities of interest in the areas, municipalities, regional and rural communities. We took into account geographic features and available means of communication and transportation between the various parts of Alberta, all leading to the task of providing effective representation with understandable and clear boundaries for the electoral map.

We then opened up our portal on our website from November 3 to December 19 for further public input and submissions, and we received in excess of 1,100 submissions on our interim report. Now we're in the next to final stage before we prepare our final report, and we're conducting public and virtual hearings. Last week we were in Calgary for two and a half days and then conducted two full days of virtual hearings, and we're in Edmonton early this week. We will commence deliberation at the end of this week after we complete our public hearings. That gives you an idea as to where we are at, what led us to this week. I'm sure you have reviewed the report. We're now open for public presentations from those who have signed up.

+ I believe our first presenter is here, Mr. Dwight Dibben. Just make yourself comfortable. Have a seat. Identify yourself. Tell us what electoral division you are in and which ones you wish to comment on.

9:15

**Mr. Dibben:** Well, good morning, Mr. Justice and commissioners. My name is Dwight Dibben. I am the chief administrative officer for the village of Forestburg in southeast Alberta, currently in the Camrose electoral division. My comments today would refer to both the Camrose electoral division as well as the Drumheller-Stettler electoral division, which we would like to make representation to.

The village of Forestburg did submit a written submission. It is EBC 2025-2-253, which I will be referring to in my presentation. I believe commissioners have it or have the ability to access it. As well, we provided our recommendations on what we consider to be a modest boundary change for these two electoral divisions for the next provincial election.

Just in my brief comments I would also make note that I am the immediate past public school trustee for the Battle River school division from Flagstaff county as well as a volunteer firefighter for the Forestburg fire station in our regional service, which has a point of relevance to the presentation that I wish to make.

I would say at the onset that Forestburg, in our council in reviewing the interim report, absolutely supports the principles that were espoused in your executive summary, absolutely supports the principle of effective representation and the notation that absolute parity is impossible. Just as this is true for the provision of public services across the province, we feel it is the same for electoral boundaries.

In our written submission we brought forward to the commission a little bit about the history of Forestburg and the southeastern portion of Flagstaff county. Up until the provincial election of 2019 and the ceasing to exist of the Battle River-Wainwright constituency,

Forestburg and areas south of it were actually a part of the former Stettler electoral division. You have to go back over 45 years before you would see Forestburg included in the Camrose electoral division. The genesis behind our suggestions to the commission as well is backed up in our submission about recent activities, communities of interest. Where our economic development activities have largely resided these past especially seven years have been with communities and rural municipalities south of Forestburg, not those north that are currently in the Camrose electoral division.

Some may know, but the 2017 federal policy decision to shut the coal industry had a devastating impact on our community, as it did with communities such as Hanna, Grande Cache, and others in the province. Council has been working tirelessly over three iterations in terms of working with government, working with its neighbours to actually reposition the community and the surrounding areas for life after coal mining. We lost the Paintearth mine.

The Battle River generating station, which is located some eight kilometres south of Forestburg, although it is on the south side of the Battle River and in the Drumheller-Stettler riding, actually has an agreement with the Forestburg fire department that we are the first first responders that actually arrive or respond to an emergency at the Battle River generating station. This has been in existence for over 50 years, when it was owned by Canadian Utilities. In fact, there was a gas feeder line break two and a half years ago that our station was the first on scene. We arrived on site in under 15 minutes and were able to help local services and aspects control the blaze while other authorities were able to address the supply issue and ultimately arrest the issue. I use that by way of example of demonstrating the ties that we have with communities that currently are in the Drumheller-Stettler electoral division going forward.

In terms of trying to assist the commission in its mandate of understandable and clear boundaries, that led us to take a look at: what would an understandable and clear boundary change look like for these two divisions? That was our proposal to the Camrose electoral division. I'm not sure if you have colour, but it shows, basically, a removal of the southern highlighted area from the Camrose electoral division to Drumheller-Stettler.

When looking at it from the Drumheller-Stettler perspective, it really kind of squares the top of the riding, which would in fact make it much more palatable, I would say easy, for an elected representative, regardless of where they would actually hail from or where their constituency office may be in the riding, to effectively represent the electoral division with the changes that we are proposing.

One aspect, too, just in terms of geography: when we look at distance from major centres, Forestburg is actually 20 kilometres closer to Stettler than it is to Camrose. While Stettler is around 7,000 people and Camrose is around 20,000, most services that our residents require, whether that be in the way of medical, ophthalmological, physicians, dentistry although we have a clinic and a dentist in Forestburg, chiropractor – we have one – massage therapy: a number of our citizens already go to Stettler rather than Camrose even though some would look at that and think that that would be the natural trading area for our community.

We certainly appreciated the opportunity to take a look at the interim report. Certainly, as a former public service – my last job was with the government of Alberta. I had the honour of being Alberta's Public Service Commissioner and going through a couple of these exercises in my past and presenting to one in Calgary some 20 years ago now, it seems. It's not an easy task, and certainly in reviewing the submissions that came forward, it is not surprising, the vast differences of opinion when it comes to large urban residents and smaller rural residents. In many ways you have a

thankless job, but I do on behalf of our council thank you for doing it.

I should mention, before I leave, our submission. We have also advised our partners in our economic development and other activities in the BREOC Committee of our presentation to the commission to solicit their support. That includes Paintearth county, the towns of Castor and Coronation, as well as some of the other members in the northern part of the current Drumheller-Stettler electoral division. We have asked them if they would provide, you know, letters of endorsement to the commission. Of course, councils are just getting back into the swing of things after the new year – we've only had one meeting ourselves – so we hope that those submissions may come back to the commission here in the weeks to follow.

We just wanted to make one note of curiosity on our part on the suggestions of the interim report, and that was to make a carve-out of the Camrose riding. Basically, take a sliver of the Camrose riding north to include the town of Hardisty and a minor part of the rural area south. As the former school trustee for this area I found that kind of curious as the communities of interest for the town of Hardisty and surrounding areas, if not Camrose, actually fall into the Wainwright area, which includes Buffalo Trail and other areas along those lines.

I noticed from the public hearing – I believe it was held in Drumheller – my friend Mr. Golka, who made the presentation to the committee along those lines. With all due respect to Mr. Golka and some of the objectives there, more than half of the students in the Hardisty area actually go to Central high school, which is in Sedgewick, in the Camrose constituency. About 40 per cent go to Irma, which is actually in the Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright constituency. The same with communities of interest on sports, minor sports. A very few number of students actually go into communities which would be in the Drumheller-Stettler constituency, which includes the Clearview school division. I just wanted to make that note.

9:25

Certainly, when it comes from proximity to major centres, Hardisty is closest to Wainwright. It's over 100 kilometres away from the two major areas in Drumheller-Stettler and 70 kilometres away from Camrose.

Just for purposes of when the commission goes back if looking at this, our proposal would bring in the urban communities of Forestburg, Alliance, the surrounding areas, which right now – and I appreciate the comments the chair made about population and the challenges of population. Certainly, since 2021, if you take a look at the most recent estimates to the end of 2024, Forestburg's population is either 807 or 934. We know we haven't lost that. Our school has increased over 20 per cent in the past five years in our K to 12 school. We know our community is growing, and we do have a spur line that's being constructed this coming year. We have, pending once the spur line is done, economic building activities that should be in the neighbourhood of \$4 million to \$10 million. The community is growing. We plan on doing our own census as now we are required by provincial law if not later this year, in 2027, once these industries have built and started operations, with high belief that we will actually achieve formal town status within the next three years.

With that change, we note that the population numbers certainly would not impact the Camrose average population. In fact, the reduction to that still has Camrose well within if not above your average line, and it certainly serves to bolster the numbers of Drumheller-Stettler. I understand the commission's job would need

to look at augmenting those boundaries in the population for that riding going forward.

With that, I'll stop. I don't know if there are any questions, but I do thank you all for your time and the opportunity to present today. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Dibben. You noticed maybe a smile on my face and my colleagues'.

**Mr. Dibben:** I did.

**The Chair:** I'm not going to exaggerate it, but Hardisty was of some controversy the first time around. I was the only one that took the position that you're taking, but don't tell anybody that.

I'm curious to know – the rivers are good natural boundaries until they're not good natural boundaries. We've used the Battle River. You're suggesting hiving off that little tip. What's that highway? I can't read the print. Is it 608?

**Mr. Dibben:** Yep. I believe so.

**The Chair:** Is that an adequate boundary, then?

**Mr. Dibben:** Yeah. We suggested that as the northwest boundary of the Drumheller-Stettler electoral division, which is just north of Donalda, township road 430.

**The Chair:** So 430 all the way across?

**Mr. Dibben:** That's correct. And that catches up to, actually, highway 13 just south of the town of Hardisty.

**The Chair:** Okay. So continue on, and in one fell swoop we can solve both of your problems.

**Mr. Dibben:** Correct. From a numbers aspect and given your controversial Hardisty issue, you could easily loop up on either end and include the village of Heisler as well as the town of Hardisty. Heisler would give you another 160-odd residents that would go to Drumheller-Stettler. Of course, I believe the population of Hardisty right now is some 550 people give or take. I'm not sure what your numbers of July 2025 suggest. That's a data set that we haven't seen, but that, again, would not be material to the Camrose numbers and their averaging.

**The Chair:** Good. Well, thank you for that clarification.

**Mr. Dibben:** Yes, sir.

**The Chair:** Any questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation. I did study it when I was reading your written submission, and I like the fact that you're asking your partners for support so that nobody is caught flat footed with a possible change in the riding.

Just out of interest, what did Forestburg switch to economically after the coal disappeared? In a short answer. Sorry; I don't . . .

**Mr. Dibben:** The Battle River generating station converted to natural gas, but that resulted in unit 3 being shut down and a reduced output of units 4 and 5, which are the only other active ones. Their retirement dates have been pushed out into the 2030s, but since then the station has been sold to TransAlta, and as a part of their larger acquisition of a number of assets output from that station has declined very significantly in the last two years.

We're also an agricultural service centre but with the Battle River railway, which is a short line operator and building a spur. Ashcor,

which is a subsidiary of ATCO, mines the fly ash, which is a by-product of coal-fired generation. As the plant operated through the decades, fly ash replaced coal in the seams as the land was being reclaimed. Now it's a commodity that's essential in concrete, so fly ash is being remined, bagged, and basically shipped domestically as well as internationally as a necessary building block of concrete. The world's demand for concrete is not shrinking. We are looking at a transload facility on the spur line. We have a couple of other companies that have purchased land along the spur line to build once it's in place that, basically, are looking at manufacturing commodities and then shipping them by rail.

**Mrs. Samson:** That's fascinating. Thank you. I appreciate that.

**Mr. Dibben:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans?

**Mr. Evans:** No questions. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.  
Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. Thank you very much. Really intriguing. I will note, however, that our numbers – you know, in this interim configuration Camrose is 54,500.

**Mr. Dibben:** Oh, so just below your average number.

**Dr. Martin:** It's in the target range.

**Mr. Dibben:** Right.

**Dr. Martin:** We're not obsessed whether you hit the number or not, but it's there, and your proposal would strip out 2,000.

**Mr. Dibben:** Probably about 1,800 is our calculation. Yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. We're pretty close, then. Our magic machinery tells us a bit higher, though.

But, you know, I'm intrigued by your remark about Hardisty. From certain points of view, certain communities of interest, Hardisty is linked with Wainwright as much as anything else.

**Mr. Dibben:** I would agree.

**Dr. Martin:** So, you know, your line of argument is: yeah; the linkages are to Sedgewick on the one hand and to Wainwright on the other, so it's a toss-up which way it goes, but it should go.

**Mr. Dibben:** Or it could stay where it currently is. Yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. Right.

**Mr. Dibben:** When you get into the corners like we are kind of in in electoral boundaries and you have, you know, smaller urban centres, we've seen that, if you go back even beyond my time, when you've been where you are in municipal jurisdictions, often those are the ones that get shifted to make those boundaries and those numbers work.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. The Hardisty block, so to speak, including along the Battle River and the older configuration: that's 900-ish, that whole block. Okay.

Well, thank you.

**Mr. Dibben:** Thank you, sir.

**Mr. Clark:** No questions, I guess. I was just looking to see if we had a submission from Hardisty. I don't know. I don't think we did. I couldn't find one, but that doesn't mean . . .

**Mrs. Samson:** Oh, 253.

**The Chair:** Way back. The first round.

**Mr. Clark:** But 253: that's Forestburg.

**Mrs. Samson:** Oh, sorry. Yes.

**The Chair:** There was a specific request, as I recall, from Hardisty.

**Mr. Dibben:** We didn't see a written submission from Hardisty. We just saw the verbal presentation that was made at your Drumheller hearing during the first round.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Just for your reference our numbers would say that the part you talk about in your submissions, moving about 2,300 people just south of 430 under highway 13: Heisler is 132 according to this. Just to be really clear, Heisler is north of 430, but in your view, it kind of fits with Forestburg. If we're going to do it, just a little bit of a bump in, and we're not going to have dozens of people from . . .

**Mr. Dibben:** And I'm sorry, Mr. Clark; 2,200, you said, would be that sort of . . .

**Mr. Clark:** Twenty-three hundred would be that number south of 430 on the alignment you talked about going south of Hardisty plus 132 for Heisler. And then, yeah, as Dr. Martin said, that Hardisty piece that you would suggest is another 1,000 people roughly, that bump out there. Again, it's all within the range although it starts to shift things a little bit.

9:35

I just want to say thank you for your public service. This sort of really detailed information from folks who live in the communities and tell us exactly how things go is just invaluable. It really, truly is because we can look at lines on a map and we can read submissions, but actually hearing from the folks who are there in the communities makes a huge difference. Thank you.

**Mr. Dibben:** Thank you very much. Thank you all very much for your time.

**The Chair:** Mr. Dibben, thank you.

For people listening to this conversation and hearing the small numbers, it may seem like peanuts. It may seem very insignificant to ridings that have 60,000-some in the large urban centres, but this is a big deal for large landscapes and people that travel hours to get to their service centres. That's the conundrum that we face: how to provide effective representation across the province. Thank you very much, sir.

**Mr. Dibben:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Please remain, if you are able, to hear the other presenters.

**Mr. Dibben:** I will.

**The Chair:** Our next presenter is not here, but we're going to substitute just like they do in – we've got a designated hitter. Bradley Lafortune, we're going to pull you up from this evening. Anybody who makes our evening shorter.

**Mr. Lafortune:** I'm not usually early, so I'm pretty proud of myself today. This is good.

Thank you very much. I'll be brief today. My name is Bradley Lafortune. I'm here from Edmonton, Treaty 6. I appreciate the opportunity to present on the interim report today. I'm here with, I guess, three hats on, as many of us wear different hats. I'm a long-time resident and voter in Alberta. Specifically, I live in Edmonton-Strathcona, currently Edmonton-Strathcona, with my family. I'm the executive director of a small nonprofit called Public Interest Alberta, which is a society under the Societies Act in Alberta.

I want to speak to a few interrelated themes very briefly today. First, I'd like to talk about the importance of maintaining alignment between representation and the material realities and concerns of communities in general within the interim report. I was very pleased to review the interim report's dedication to maintaining and strengthening effective representation while managing to add two electoral divisions to the current 87. We also appreciate the commission's careful consideration of population variance in this regard. You know, a 25 per cent variance to us one way or the other is high. We've long advocated for a tighter variance of five per cent, but I understand that that's just not really feasible given the constraints that you have as a panel.

With that in mind, you know, it is very good to see that the commission is considering this sort of very careful rationale for going to the outer edges of those variances. We think that you've done a fine job on that – kudos – but we do want to state that Public Interest Alberta has advocated for a tighter variance of five per cent on either side.

Second, I want to talk a bit about hybrid ridings, you know, going from the current number to expanding that, especially in Calgary. The commission does a good job of highlighting in the report the balance of written submissions that highlight, I think, the general skepticism towards rural-urban ridings, or hybrid ridings as we call them here. I share this skepticism in general from a number of perspectives: fiscal, democratic, representative, and practical as well. In Edmonton, in greater Edmonton in particular, where I kind of have direct interest as a resident as well as where a lot of our advocacy focuses on urban issues, there is, as I'm sure we're all aware of, a long-term and largely unresolved policy conversation and tension between the provision of services in greater Edmonton and within Edmonton considering the tax base issues that we have.

I'm sure that you've seen, if not our submission – we did submit a written submission, I should say, for your reference as well as, you know, echoing some of the concerns that the new mayor of Edmonton has stated when it comes to condensing some of those central ridings in Edmonton given the population growth that we're experiencing in the city centre. Then when you consider access to acute care and health care, even recreational centres in greater Edmonton, the relationship that we have between our communities in Edmonton proper and greater Edmonton, it's, I would say, very concerning for us to go from six to five central ridings in the city of Edmonton. I want to make that pretty clear.

We've touched on a little bit of, you know, stress on our basic infrastructure to programs and services, acute care, recreational facilities. It is clear that the burden of representation and governing is different and distinct within Edmonton proper at all levels, including within the Legislative Assembly. In particular, when I look at the proposed riding – I believe it's Edmonton-West-Enoch – I do have concerns about the ability for that new member of the Assembly to effectively represent the interests of Enoch First Nation as well as the urban population and then going out into Parkland county because of the difference of the interests of those communities. Of course, they're overlapping, but they are distinct, as we know. They do have

different relationships with the government and with the Legislative Assembly. You only have to look at Enoch Nation's relationship with Alberta health and the new corporations that administer our health care system when it comes to addictions care and recovery as well. There are a lot of different relationships there between that nation and the city of Edmonton.

Then, generally, I would just say that, you know, as Edmonton and Calgary's fiscal positions become increasingly strained, in our view, by a number of factors and our urban populations continue to boom, quite frankly, I think these tensions between communities and bedroom communities or suburban communities and the larger centres will become more fraught. That's a major concern for us.

Specifically, the reduction of central Edmonton representation from six to five seats is – I have in my notes here “a mistake.” I don't want to be aggressive, but I do believe that it is a mistake. I'm just going to say it, you know, quite plainly.

I've been a long-time resident of central Edmonton. I've lived in Edmonton centre, on Jasper Avenue. I've lived on campus, specifically as a university student 20 years ago. I now live in Edmonton-Strathcona in the Ritchie neighbourhood. I can speak to personal experience and say that, you know, while I consider myself to be someone who believes in public health care being available to everyone, regardless of their ability to pay, and I believe that it's very important that the provision of services, especially with the increased strain in social distress that's happening in our urban communities – it is becoming much more challenging for members of the Assembly to effectively represent their constituents, whether they are homeowners, renters, or even unhoused. Those issues are becoming more and more fraught in our communities while at the same time our population in urban settings in those five or six ridings – five being proposed – is booming.

The new bylaw renewal – I don't know if anyone's an Edmonton resident here, but you probably got involved in that conversation if you are – has meant that infill housing and, you know, zoning changes are happening very, very quickly, including in my home neighbourhood of Ritchie. I think in the past four to five years we've seen about a quarter increase in population in those core constituencies, from 2021 to 2025, and that's only going to accelerate further with that zoning bylaw and mature neighbourhoods turning over and people wanting to live closer to amenities and services.

9:45

Specifically, you know, I want to speak to Edmonton-Strathcona briefly. Proud resident of Edmonton-Strathcona. Been in Ritchie neighbourhood, which is now being proposed to move over in large part to Edmonton-Gold Bar, which is just the constituency west here in Edmonton. I know it's down in the weeds. It's a bit of a microdigression for me, but as a resident, I have to speak to that. You know, if you look at the 99th Street boundary there just south of Whyte Avenue, which is 82nd Avenue here in Edmonton, what we're currently looking at in the interim report is separating the Ritchie neighbourhood from west Ritchie, which is just west of 99th Street towards the University of Alberta campus, and that would remain in the currently proposed Edmonton-Strathcona. But the rest of Hazeldean and Ritchie, which is about 7,200 residents, 7,300 residents – higher, 7,500?

**Dr. Martin:** Nine thousand.

**Mr. Lafortune:** Nine thousand. Holy smokes. I'm looking at 2021. Okay, we're booming. Nine thousand residents would go over to Edmonton-Gold Bar. And I believe there's room for play there when I look at the variances. Strathcona is under by about 1.5 per

cent in the proposed, and you could maintain Ritchie and Hazeldean in Edmonton-Strathcona and still be well within our margins.

As the previous presenter said – you know, I have this in my notes as well – it's probably a thankless task that you're doing. You're travelling a lot of miles, so I want to say thank you. I'm probably not the first. I think it's a good map. I think you followed the principles very, very well and there's some room for tweaking, so I appreciate the opportunity today, and I'm happy to chat about any questions you might have.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much, sir. Yes. A Calgary presenter described our task as hugging a cactus, or a thankless task. I don't want to take up too much time because I know there are going to be questions from the rest of the panel.

Your public interest group advocates for a five per cent variance. Do you do a comparative analysis to reach that? In other words, do you study other jurisdictions?

**Mr. Lafortune:** Yes, we have looked at other jurisdictions.

**The Chair:** Okay. So all I want to know is: can we chat after, and maybe I'd like to look at your material?

**Mr. Lafortune:** Absolutely.

**The Chair:** Okay. So questions, and I'll start with you.

**Mr. Clark:** You know, more just a comment because we were chatting this morning, actually, about Edmonton-Strathcona and, really, we've heard a lot of feedback on that inner-city Edmonton piece. What we're really grappling with is where the growth is in Edmonton, how present tense that is. MLA Hoffman yesterday brought in some photographs of actual, you know, building in progress and infills and more multifamily, so that, I think, bears us to have a good close look, which we absolutely will.

Part of the challenge we have right now with Edmonton-Strathcona is that if we include the neighbourhoods you're talking about, we're upwards of, like, 62,000 or so, and then Gold Bar becomes underpopulated, and then you need to kind of cascade. Part of Edmonton's glory and challenge is the river and the ravines. It's a fabulous feature but also presents physical barriers and kind of psychological barriers, right?

**Mr. Lafortune:** Totally.

**Mr. Clark:** It's how Edmonton has organized itself, right? That's what we're kind of struggling with and is part of the rationale for the previous Riverview straddling the river, not straddling, you know, all of that sort of stuff. So I'm sure you can well imagine, you know, the conversations and debates we have behind closed doors of how to kind of sort this all out. So this was really the accommodation, I guess, to say: “All right. Well, we'll keep those neighbourhoods together. They just won't be within Strathcona anymore. Now they're in Gold Bar.” Right?

I recognize Mill Creek and the ravine is a big boundary. We actually originally looked at what that would be, and the numbers were quite high in Strathcona, quite low in Gold Bar, and we frankly decided to go the way we've gone. But your feedback is helpful, and we also will take a close look at those development plans you mentioned.

**Mr. Lafortune:** I appreciate that.

**Mr. Clark:** Not a question so much as just some context.

**Mr. Lafortune:** Wonderful. Thanks.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah.

I thank you. I follow on that very same line of remark. Ritchie, Hazeldean, and Argyll: 9,000. Surprising. Most of it in Ritchie. But then you're faced with the dilemma that my colleague just described. You put them into Edmonton-Strathcona and pump its number high by doing so, and simultaneously the Gold Bar number is low. What we've done is sort of try to balance it out.

On that point, you will notice that of the five ridings that our interim map provides in sort of central Edmonton, all four of them are below the mean. There hasn't been the growth that one may have anticipated. The growth rate from the earlier configuration to July 2024 was nowhere near what the growth rate outside the Heday has been, so that actually is a macrolevel consideration.

You know, people say that things are growing, but the data doesn't support that. I mean, let me add colour to that. The anticipated addition of more densified housing stock in the last two years: some of it will appear. Area structure plans are fantasies built by planners. They're not the same thing as bricks and mortar. So we're very interested in the imminent construction of things, which is why bringing in photographs of current buildings is interesting, because it passes my Tyvek test, right? If they're really building it, then I'm really going to take it seriously. The rest of it is aspiration.

We're always struggling with that problem. No one is suggesting at all – our interim report is quite careful to say, you know, that it's the rates of growth that need to be compared. Absolute figures are one thing, but rates of growth are another. The central core is not growing at a rate that the outer areas are, and they need the attention more immediately.

Thank you.

**Mr. Lafortune:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you. Thank you for your presentation. I appreciate it. I like that you used the word “skepticism” with hybrids because we've heard a lot harsher language. I was pleased to see the hybrid with Enoch into Edmonton. We had a submission that talked about communities of interest and the trading corridors and things like that. I take into consideration that the way they manage themselves, the Enoch, will be completely different from what's going on in Edmonton, like running the casino and what that does to some of the Edmonton properties – I like that relationship that was brought up yesterday – but that would happen no matter where the boundary was. I am interested in seeing how that plays out because we did use hybrids very sparingly, not just because it was there but because maybe it was appropriate. Did you want to add a comment to that thought?

**Mr. Lafortune:** Sure. Yeah. I mean, I will just say initially in response that I agree. You know, the special relationship that nations have with the provincial government will exist in positive ways regardless of where the provincial boundaries are – I fully agree with that – engagement on things like health centres and other programs and services directly with the nation, and that's a good thing.

I do think in principle that I like the interim report's reflection on, you know, the careful considerations of the impacts that hybrid ridings have on representation. While I did notice that the report reflected on the feedback that – rural-urban divides are not black and white, right? I grew up in Saskatchewan, and if you lived in Saskatoon, you were only a few miles and maybe one generation

away from the farm, and that's very similar to here in Alberta. So it's a grey area.

At the same time, using hybrids sparingly I think is the right approach because of the intergovernmental issues with respect to asymmetrical provision of services and the ability to tax and provide those services, so I appreciate the commission's careful consideration of hybrid ridings. I just think that with this sort of – you know, you have this domino effect, which I imagine is talked about a lot, and that's tough. So it's less specifically about Enoch and more a general skepticism of hybrid ridings that I have.

9:55

**Mrs. Samson:** Right. Thank you very much. I appreciate those comments.

**Mr. Lafortune:** Yeah. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** I have no questions. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Lafortune, please . . .

**Mr. Lafortune:** Yeah. I'll follow up.

**The Chair:** If you are able to stay, great. We can chat during a break. I'm afraid that you and I could nerd out for a long time on the discussion of hybrids and the variance, but I am interested in your organization's research on that area.

**Mr. Lafortune:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

It takes us to Mr. Chris Gallaway. No, he's not here. Okay. Sorry.

Hermine Joldersma. Good morning, ma'am. Just make yourself comfortable. Tell us what electoral division you are in and which ones you wish to comment on.

**Dr. Joldersma:** I will if you just give me a paragraph.

**The Chair:** Sure.

**Dr. Joldersma:** I thank you for the opportunity to make this presentation. I appreciate your work to ensure that electoral representation in Alberta is optimally fair, and I wish you wisdom as you make your difficult decisions. I have lived in five different ridings in Calgary and Edmonton, and that's why I didn't say a riding: Calgary-Buffalo, Calgary-Currie, Calgary-Varsity, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, and Edmonton-Strathcona.

In between Calgary and Edmonton I spent 10 years in Yellowknife. One of the jobs I had there was assistant returning officer for the 2019 federal election, second in command for making sure that election happened fairly and properly. I have good tales to tell about it. That job and my time in the north generally gave me great appreciation for the challenge of effective representation in huge geographic areas with sparse populations.

I have always been an alert, engaged, and especially curious citizen. Besides getting to know my Calgary and Edmonton neighbourhoods and then the north, I have also explored much of this province, from High Level to Drumheller to Medicine Hat and Waterton. I have given talks to quilt guilds in Vermilion and Camrose, ridden the Stettler steam train, gotten stuck in gumbo at Red Rock Coulee, and with my late husband even took a road trip to Manyberries to see the old CPR station and section house. In other words, I pay attention to and love all of this beautiful province.

My key message today focuses on the ridings I've lived in. Their common characteristic is that they're core or inner city. That means dense populations, walkable neighbourhoods, need for public transportation, significant current development, and social challenges. It is important to provide these ridings and their communities effective and fair representation that recognizes and respects their unique character.

About population growth in these ridings reliable statistics are not easily available for people like me, and I trust that you have better information. What I was able to find indicates that growth has been steady for several decades now. This accords with my experience. For example, I was on the Parkdale Community Association's development committee some 20 years ago. At that time we were dealing primarily with infill duplexes, so two homes on one 50-foot lot. Proposals for condo complexes were few. I visited a couple of months ago. The number of new multifamily buildings was staggering. In Calgary Beltline, where I owned a condo for 10 years, development of large, multiunit buildings continues apace. In Killarney low rise seems to be preferred, and there are lots of those.

A few examples from my own riding, which is Edmonton-Strathcona. I live in a new low-rise, condo-style building that was completed in 2023. Our 26 units and 45 residents replaced four small post-1950s homes. From my window I can see another condo building, newer than ours, with 50 units. There is an eightplex on the next block replacing a single-family home. I recently walked by what I took to be an infill duplex still under construction, past the Tyvek stage. Since I am curious, I accosted the youngish man who was just exiting. He was happy to talk. He, his brother, and his cousin had pooled their money to purchase the lot and replaced the single house on it with not two but seven new units. He was just waiting for the final city inspection. I wished him luck. One of the units was townhouse style, he said, and he and his wife planned to move in. He asked about the neighbourhood.

What is the unique character of these core neighbourhoods? I think the people who live there, like myself, are curious folk who love interacting with strangers. We value the spaces and amenities that allow us to do so. We value choice in amenities and unique small businesses. We value interesting streetscapes, fun festivals, meeting people while walking, biking, or taking the bus. I do have a car, but I prefer walking and public transportation because I have more interesting experiences. We value community gardens and open yards. For example, on our property we chose not to erect fences. As a result, we have great chats with folk walking by, and seniors from neighbouring high rises do daily tours of our gardens in the summer. We often interact with those living more precarious lives, and we value the social services which seek to support those who are less fortunate than we are. What I am asking is this. Please see our inner-city ridings for what they are, vibrant, cohesive communities with significant population growth in their futures.

Having lived in Calgary-Buffalo and having Manyberries on my brain because of this presentation, I compared numbers. In 1991 Manyberries had 96 residents. Now it has 60. Its electoral district of Taber-Warner sits at a minus 10 deviation from the average. I do not begrudge the citizens of Manyberries or Taber-Warner their representation. Concerns of rural areas are important and need to be addressed. But urban core communities are similarly cohesive. They similarly have interests and concerns. When I see that Calgary-Buffalo, with almost 78,000 people, if I read the map right, deviates at plus 41, I do raise an eyebrow. There may be good reasons. I just want to plead that residents in core neighbourhoods, current and especially future residents, should also have fair and effective representation by MLAs who appreciate and understand them.

Thanks again for the work you do and the opportunity to make this presentation.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.  
Questions, Mr. Evans?

**Mr. Evans:** No questions, but thank you for your presentation.

**Mrs. Samson:** I loved your presentation. Thank you.

**Dr. Martin:** Which neighbourhood in Edmonton-Strathcona are you residing in now?

**Dr. Joldersma:** I think it's called Old Strathcona. We're just east of Gateway, where it meets Saskatchewan Drive.

**Dr. Martin:** Yes. Okay. Thank you. Thank you. Well, that's just about as dense as it gets in Edmonton-Strathcona.

**Dr. Joldersma:** It's very dense. I heard what you said about, like, the stats not showing that there is that kind of growth, but I wonder whether, for example, our building is included in those stats already, whether that new condo with the 50 is included. There's another one coming, which amazingly has, I think, 18 units in it. There's that eightplex, which is brand new. What I see is a lot of development, and it's very recent. I don't know whether – your statistics will be better. I hope they're better than anything I was able to find.

**Dr. Martin:** Well, our statistics are keyed on July 1, 2024. Of course, things have grown. I could nerd out on census building and how to use them, but we're quite confident that our numbers are solid, and that data set covers every part of the province. That's the other part. Growth can be lumpy in the country as well as in the city, but these data sets seem pretty good at any rate. We're not trying to ignore continued growth. We are really quite interested in the rate of growth compared to other places.

**Dr. Joldersma:** Sure.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you. I really appreciate your presentation and you coming out here. I've said it to one of the previous presenters, and I say it quite often, to the point probably of getting a little tedious to my colleagues here, but it really matters when we have folks who are from those communities, and especially someone who's lived around the province, provide us some context on the specific conditions on the ground in your neighbourhood or your community. That's what this is all about, and we appreciate your thoughtful work in preparing that submission.

My question is that one of the things we're wrestling with is – we've heard perspectives from all over the province. Part of the challenge we have is that you have some areas that are far north, very remote, and it's quite – you know, there are unique challenges to representing the far north. It's a vast geography. What I've heard you say is that that is – I don't think you would deny that. Don't let me put words in your mouth. But at the same time, you're saying that in inner-city Edmonton, inner-city Calgary there are some of those wicked problems, too. Some of those things are different maybe, but they're quite unique to these neighbourhoods. Could tell me a little bit more about that?

**Dr. Joldersma:** There are only six minutes, but I was thinking about access to health care in Manyberries and in my neighbourhood. I live a 25-minute walk from a really good hospital. When I get there, though, I might have to wait for an incredible number of hours. Somebody in Manyberries who needs to go to a



hospital needs to drive quite a long way. That, too, means that their access to it is delayed. What we share in common is delayed access to health care, for example, and that has in some ways very different reasons that need to be looked at in both instances.

10:05

I would say that people in the north need representation. People in sparse areas need representation because they have unique needs such as that, for example. That wouldn't be unique to Manyberries. Then people in sort of the denser populations also have unique needs that need people who understand and would seek to address those.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. You know, at least as you've seen in the interim report, we've tried to balance that out by saying that we will somewhat underweight on a percentage basis. It's not just a numbers game by any means. It's effective representation. But at the end of the day numbers are what we're using. We've said we'll have a slightly smaller constituency in areas outside of the urban areas and a slightly larger constituency, but we've tried to kind of balance that.

**Dr. Joldersma:** Yeah. To me it looks pretty decent, actually.

**Mr. Clark:** That was going to be my question. Thank you so much.

**Dr. Joldersma:** Yeah. I was thinking about that deviation in Calgary-Buffalo. I'm thinking East Village might be the kicker there. I don't know.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much, Dr. Joldersma. Anyone who is from Strathcona and mentions and knows Manyberries impresses this panel.

**Dr. Joldersma:** I know.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

**Dr. Joldersma:** You know Manyberries? That would be my question. It used to be on the CBC weather report. They would say, "And in Manyberries it is," and that made me want to go see it. It was a great trip.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Our next presenter, and we're actually bang on time: Kayden Tonita.

**Mr. Tonita:** Good morning.

**The Chair:** Good morning. Tell us what electoral division you're in and which ones you want to comment on, please.

**Mr. Tonita:** I reside in the Ritchie neighbourhood in Edmonton-Strathcona. That will be in the Edmonton-Gold Bar constituency should this map move forward, but I also work in the office of Edmonton-Gold Bar MLA Marlin Schmidt, have for the past couple of years. I do call Sherwood Park my home, though, and I will speak briefly to that at the end of my presentation.

**The Chair:** Okay. Please proceed.

**Mr. Tonita:** As I said, my name is Kayden Tonita. I work in the office of MLA Marlin Schmidt, Edmonton-Gold Bar. I currently live in Ritchie and hope to move to Sherwood Park again, back home, soon, in the coming years. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this feedback.

I do appreciate the commission's recognition of growth in major centres; however, Edmonton's population growth, both recent and

projected, requires more representation than currently proposed. As constituency staff in Edmonton's urban core I do daily see first hand the strain on social services, the increasing number of residents seeking help. Constituency offices often serve as the first point of contact for folks in distress, connecting them to central resources, helping them navigate a complicated bureaucracy, and often dealing with these folks on some of the worst days of their lives. This demand for services is concentrated in urban core areas, where vulnerable populations live and where those front-line services exist, so I please ask that you consider that.

When I did see the proposed amalgamation for Edmonton-Glenora and Edmonton-Riverview, I did have some immediate concerns. These are some of Edmonton's most high-needs and complex constituencies. From my experience in Edmonton-Gold Bar I know how overwhelming casework can be, walk-in traffic. Our office already manages a high volume of urgent requests for assistance, casework, daily correspondence. Merging Glenora and Riverview would make it increasingly challenging for one MLA and one constituency office to handle that high volume of correspondence and casework. Keep in mind that the MSA, the budget for an elected official, really only allows for one full-time staff, one part-time staff. So that's one and a half staff members to manage, you know, tens of thousands of constituents and growing.

Additionally, as I mentioned, the urban core is where most front-line services are located, where the Albertans who require the most assistance and even in crisis live. Reducing representation here risks leaving residents underserved. It will push surrounded constituencies to have to absorb those higher volumes of casework. I strongly urge the commission to reconsider this amalgamation and instead explore adding more seats in Edmonton to reflect the scale of current and future growth.

I do encourage the commission to consider the impact of infill and densification on Edmonton's urban core. In my neighbourhood of Ritchie I live on the corner of 75th Avenue and 97th street. On my corner you can see five lots that have been razed to the ground, split into multiple properties, multiunit dwellings, garage units, so where there might have been a dozen folks living two years ago, in about a year we'll see upwards of 30 folks living in those same properties. That scale of growth and concentration needs to be considered.

Like I said, temporarily population might dip, but it will ultimately go up again after that construction is complete. This is not an isolated trend. It reflects Edmonton's broader push towards infill development, which will significantly increase population density in those established neighbourhoods. These changes underscore a need for adequate representation in Edmonton to match the scale of future growth.

I do want to commend the commission for keeping Edmonton ridings within municipal boundaries, avoiding those rural-urban constituency combinations. This approach respects those communities of interest, which is so important, as well as local governance structures.

In closing, I would like to just speak to Sherwood Park. I encourage the commission to review the municipal boundaries in Strathcona-Sherwood Park when finalizing the maps. We just underwent a municipal election. As well, they reviewed their ward boundaries. Specifically, you know, including Beaumont in the Strathcona-Sherwood Park constituency is concerning. These are definitely very different communities, significantly different geography obviously, municipal government structure, also cultural identity. Beaumont does have a vibrant francophone community, which would be a shame to see split up down the centre of the highway there. That doesn't necessarily make sense, to have

representation from Strathcona-Sherwood Park representing a francophone community in Beaumont.

Additionally, looking at those municipal maps in Sherwood Park and the area structure plans, the development structure plans for the new communities north of the Yellowhead, Bremner specifically is expecting 80,000 people in the next coming years. If you look at those municipal maps, they account for that growth. I would just ask that the commission to please consider those areas as well as you map out the Strathcona-Sherwood Park and Sherwood Park constituencies. Incorporating this growth in your calculations will help ensure fair population distribution and effective representation.

Thank you so much for the work and for considering my points. Edmonton's urban core and Sherwood Park's future growth deserve thoughtful boundaries that reflect communities of interest and ensure Albertans deserve the representation that they need.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Tonita.

Mr. Clark, any questions?

**Mr. Clark:** You know, you've raised a point here that I haven't actually heard raised before but have some personal experience with in my past life, the nature of the constituency work. Again, as you've probably heard if you've been listening this morning and throughout the process, we really are grappling with the kind of work and the challenge that it is to be a rural MLA, in particular in the far north. Even just dealing with the vast geographies of rural areas is its own challenge: lots of different municipal councils, lots of different school boards, just time on the road, windshield time as we say.

But you've raised something I haven't quite heard put that way, at least this round, and that is the complexity of some of the issues you're dealing with and just the sheer volume of it. Can you just speak to what that looks like on a day-in, day-out basis in the constituency office?

**Mr. Tonita:** Yeah, for sure. Obviously it's dynamic as current events or actions from the government cause concern. You know, rollbacks to AISH or the addition of the ADAP program resulted in hundreds of calls and visits, walk-ins to our office of folks whose livelihoods depend on those programs who are concerned they're not going to have them anymore.

Two years ago, when I first started in the constituency office, it was at the peak height of fear about vulnerable people and, you know, perception of unsafety in communities, so town halls, walk-ins to my office, folks very concerned about that, but then also, as we've seen since COVID, vulnerable folks' populations have doubled. Those folks are coming to our office for basic needs, finding out how to get connected to resources.

Then, of course, you know, folks, in light of changes to our health care system, struggling to get hip and knee surgeries: that has increased significantly as well as folks trying to get Alberta Works or work permits to stay in the community where they lived for a number of years. All have increased precipitously. I know from speaking with my colleagues that that has also increased significantly. As I mentioned, the services for a lot of these folks, the front-line services, folks in most distress, exist in the urban centres.

I think that answers some of your question.

10:15

**Mr. Clark:** It does. Can you just remind me: you've used the acronym ADAP for the AISH replacement. What does that stand for?

**Mr. Tonita:** AISH is the assured income for severely handicapped folks. ADAP: forgive me. I don't know the acronym, but it's a work

replacement for folks who should be on AISH. I don't want to get too political.

**Mr. Clark:** It's ADAP. Okay. I can look that up. Thank you.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much. That was very interesting. I just have a couple of comments that I've offered earlier today. I guess I'll repeat myself. You see this map. We have a screen here, too. I'm looking at this one, but perhaps you can see this one. You see the five proposed ridings, and four of them are below the population mean. That's in our adjusted figures. As you well know, because it was desperately low in population we've included into Gold Bar Ritchie, Hazeldean, and Argyll, which is awkward, as we've been told, but the awkwardness cuts both ways, right? If we put them into Edmonton-Strathcona, then that riding would be 62,000, because that's 9,000 people. If we take them from Gold Bar, then, you know, you're way too low. So that's the set of dilemmas that we have.

Now, we've heard a lot and it's certainly the gut feeling that things are growing, and no one would deny it, but it's the rate of growth. The updated map takes us to Canada Day of 2024. Growth is continuing. The rate of growth in all five of these areas is significantly lower than outside the Henday. That's our first responsibility, I think, if you've got to choose between the two. The rate of growth in Gold Bar is the lowest of all. That's a problem for us, but it is part of the reasoning behind why we've configured these things the way they are.

My other remark is with respect to Sherwood Park. The mighty hamlet is not a municipality. It's a hamlet inside a county government.

**Mr. Tonita:** It's a specialized municipality.

**Dr. Martin:** It's specialized. The boundaries you see there, particularly on the south and the north, are the urban service area. Sherwood Park is not growing very fast.

**Mr. Tonita:** It's going to double its urban population in 20 years.

**Dr. Martin:** No. That's wrong. Bremner . . .

**Mr. Tonita:** Bremner accounts for 80,000 people. Cambrian and Hearststone as well.

**Dr. Martin:** It's fifty years. I have asked the county government, and Bremner will take that long to come out to 80,000. The area immediately north of the Yellowhead, Cambrian, is filling out now. There's 500-ish and soon to be 1,000 people there, but Bremner, even though they've scraped the ground, isn't projected to grow at a very rapid rate. Again, that brings us back to a problem we struggled with, which is: how much forward projection can we take on board? Not very much is the answer. That, too, is a constraint on how much anticipated growth we can take on board in our present deliberations.

**Mr. Tonita:** May I comment on his comments?

**The Chair:** Very briefly because we're over time already.

**Mr. Tonita:** Briefly. Absolutely.

You're talking about greater growth in Edmonton-Gold Bar, and I don't invoke Edmonton-Gold Bar as reading into population but, again, keeping in consideration the amount of constituency work that's going to be impacted for all the surrounding communities in the Edmonton core areas. Sherwood Park: I would also just remind you to look at the Hearststone development, which I think in one or two years has increased by 5,000 people. There are a significant

number of folks there. The rate of growth there is higher than we were expecting. I just ran a municipal campaign there. It's growing quickly.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Very quick answers; very quick questions.

**Mrs. Samson:** Just going to comment. You talk about being stretched in your office financially. Well, I think we're going to recommend a note in our report because of the kinds of stretching are occurring right across the whole province. And if we as a commission are not given enough of the electoral divisions, more than two, the least we can do is ask for more financial support. Thank you for highlighting that aspect.

**Mr. Tonita:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** No questions. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Just in light of what Mr. Clark said and what Mrs. Samson said, you're a full-time employee for your MLA?

**Mr. Tonita:** Yes.

**The Chair:** So that's 40 hours a week or the equivalent.

**Mr. Tonita:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. And you're the only one.

**Mr. Tonita:** I'm the only full-time staff. Yes.

**The Chair:** So there is another staffperson.

**Mr. Tonita:** There is a part-time staff. She works three days a week.

**The Chair:** Okay. Okay. Good.

Thank you. I'll excuse you. Please remain, if you can, to hear other presenters.

Our next presenter is Lisa Vanderkwaak. Make yourself comfortable. Tell us what electoral division you are living in and which ones you wish to comment on.

**Mrs. Vanderkwaak:** Thank you. My name is Lisa Vanderkwaak. I'm the mayor of Beaumont, so I'm in the Leduc-Beaumont riding currently. As you know, there is a proposal to . . .

**The Chair:** And want to stay there.

**Mrs. Vanderkwaak:** Absolutely.

The gentleman before me kind of set up my presentation beautifully. If I may continue, thank you, Chair Miller and members of the commission, for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today. I recognize the complexity of your work and the responsibility you carry in balancing population parity with the constitutional principle of effective representation.

I am here today on behalf of Beaumont residents and Beaumont city council to respectfully ask that the commission reconsider the interim proposal to divide our city and instead keep Beaumont whole within a single provincial constituency for these reasons. Beaumont is a small, 25,000-person city that's cohesive, and we deserve to have representation as a whole. With a population of 25,000 and growing, we are less than half the provincial average for a proposed riding. Given that scale, dividing Beaumont into two constituencies, I believe, is unnecessary.

More importantly, while 50th Street is a visible roadway, it is not a meaningful political boundary for our residents. Electors understand their representation through municipal boundaries, not through internal roadways, and residents share schools, recreation, all kinds of facilities across that 50th Street boundary. That, I believe, would weaken the voter clarity about that kind of invisible line down 50th Street.

The second reason is because of effective representation. I believe it will weaken our representation in the Legislature as well as our municipal governance. Effective representation depends on clarity, coherence, accountability. Under this proposed split, as you know, Beaumont would have two MLAs for the same city-wide priorities: transportation, education, all the things that we would advocate to the province for. This creates duplicated advocacy for a small city, inconsistent messaging, and, I believe, diluted accountability.

From a governance perspective, city-wide issues function best when we have one clear provincial advocate. A split would complicate intergovernmental co-ordination from a municipal level, increase administrative effort, and weaken Beaumont's ability to advance shared priorities. Rather than strengthening our representation, I believe it will divide the city and would actually weaken our representation.

Now, the final point I want to make is probably the most important and strongest – the previous gentleman alluded to it – and that is in determining electoral boundaries, the commission is asked to consider community of interest, minority representation, and municipal integrity as well as growth patterns. Beaumont aligns strongly with each of these principles. Beaumont forms an integrated and functional regional community with parts of Leduc county and Leduc city. Our residents already share commuting patterns, economic ties, school divisions, recreation programs, regional services. These are precisely the kind of connections that the commission, I believe, relies on when identifying coherent communities.

By contrast, Beaumont does not have the same functional ties with Strathcona county or Sherwood Park. Residents do not orient their lives in that direction, so by including part of Beaumont in Strathcona-Sherwood Park, it would place our residents in a constituency that does not reflect how we live and function.

10:25

Now, the last point here is that Beaumont also has a distinct cultural and linguistic identity as one of four officially bilingual municipalities of Alberta and, more importantly, the only city that is bilingual in all of Alberta. The other three are either a town or a hamlet. This uniqueness matters, I believe. It represents a city-wide recognized minority-language community that deserves clear, unified representation. The principle of effective representation under the Charter expressly allows for consideration of minority representation and community identity, which supports keeping a culturally distinct bilingual city like Beaumont, especially because it's small, intact within a single constituency.

Yes, Beaumont is a fast-growing community. In fact, it's the fastest growing in the Edmonton area and remains well below the provincial average population, but I believe any population imbalance will naturally correct over time while if you divide a cohesive, culturally distinct city, this would create a lasting representation issue.

Let me just put it into practical terms. Splitting Beaumont into two constituencies would be assigning two principals to the same school. The students, teachers, and programs are exactly the same, but leadership, advocacy, and accountability are divided. It doesn't improve outcomes; it actually creates confusion.

In closing, I want to reiterate that Beaumont is a small, unified, bilingual city with shared services, strong regional ties, and a clear community identity. Keeping Beaumont whole respects the commission's own criteria, strengthens effective representation, and ensures our unique city continues to be clearly and fairly represented at the provincial level. On behalf of the city of Beaumont, the Beaumont city council, and the residents of Beaumont I respectfully ask the commission to keep Beaumont whole within a single provincial constituency, preferably with parts of Leduc county and Leduc.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mayor Vanderkwaak. A most appreciated presentation. We cannot make promises at this stage although we recognize that we have made mistakes in the interim report. Let me leave it at that. However, you do appreciate that if we restore it, your electoral division and your MLA may be faced with a higher than average population in the riding, right? I mean, there are trade-offs.

**Mrs. Vanderkwaak:** Yes. There's variance, for sure, within that.

**The Chair:** And you'd rather have that?

**Mrs. Vanderkwaak:** Yes, I believe, for the reasons that I expressed in terms of community of interest, just natural regional partnerships, and the way our residents already live and function along with, of course, our cultural identity. I think it is very, very important.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Okay. Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah.

Can you tell me about the school districts? Which school districts apply to Beaumont?

**Mrs. Vanderkwaak:** Black Gold school district. Within the city of Beaumont we have both the private Catholic school system as well as French immersion. In fact, one of the reasons why a lot of people move to Beaumont is because we have French immersion from kindergarten to grade 12.

**Mr. Evans:** So is Black Gold school district just in Beaumont?

**Mrs. Vanderkwaak:** No, no. That goes into Leduc, Leduc county, I believe, all the way over to Calmar. Yeah.

**Mr. Evans:** And did I understand you to say that there's connectivity between Beaumont and Leduc, not Leduc county but Leduc? Would you say that that's greater than the connectivity between the residents of Beaumont and going into the city of Edmonton for services?

**Mrs. Vanderkwaak:** I would say the connectivity with Leduc: because of the airport and because of the services over there, we often share emergency services as well as recreation. For example, when our pool shuts down for repairs, we send our people over to Leduc city, and they do the same for us. So we have a lot of shared collaboration that's already happening.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Vanderkwaak:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you. I'm so glad you showed up in person here because Beaumont has been a real hot spot. I want to just repeat

what I heard; that is, you would be prepared to have Beaumont join in with the city of Leduc and sit at a population of approximately 64,000, with Beaumont being 25,000 and Leduc at 39,000, which is high over the target population, but you're prepared to do that knowing that you're going to experience growth. And you would prefer that over joining Edmonton?

**Mrs. Vanderkwaak:** For the reasons that I mentioned as well. Thank you for that question. It is purely from the already existing community ties that we have, the recreation facilities that we share, the collaborations that are already happening. It better reflects how our community already lives and functions. So, yes, I believe this is the best case scenario to continue to help Beaumont thrive as a city.

**Mrs. Samson:** Perfect. Thank you very much for your time.

**Mrs. Vanderkwaak:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** By the way, are you a new mayor, or were you mayor before?

**Mrs. Vanderkwaak:** No. I am a brand new mayor.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you. Congratulations.

**Mrs. Vanderkwaak:** Thank you.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much, Mayor. I wanted to continue this theme. I wanted to ask you about commuter patterns. Now, you suggested – and it's traditionally been true, I think – a lot of people going to Nisku, for sure. What about the commuters going north? Let's take it for granted they're not going east, right? What about the commuter patterns of people living by preference in Beaumont but working in Edmonton? Is that a significant commuter pattern?

**Mrs. Vanderkwaak:** Obviously, you have people who do work in Edmonton as well. That's going to happen just naturally because we are close to the Edmonton border as well. But historically and what we see continuing is that the patterns of migration and transportation and all those pathways more go towards the west.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much. Yeah. That was something I was wondering as well. Interestingly, I was just looking up a presentation we had from – we have two options in south of Calgary, blending Okotoks with a piece of Calgary and then not doing that. One of the presenters said that, you know, just because there are a lot of commuters from Okotoks to Calgary actually indicates that they're very different places because people choose to live in Okotoks very deliberately. Would you say that that's also the case in Beaumont even if there are people who commute to Edmonton?

**Mrs. Vanderkwaak:** I agree a hundred per cent. People move here for a different reason.

**Mr. Clark:** Just for total clarity, if we were to say, "Well, actually, what we think we'll do to address this challenge is loop Beaumont into Edmonton as a part of Edmonton as a hybrid constituency, Beaumont-South East Edmonton," would you be in favour or opposed to that?

**Mrs. Vanderkwaak:** I would not favour that just for, again, the reasons that I expressed. We already have very strong ties with parts

of Leduc county and Leduc city that really help us just to move forward together and also representation at the Legislature.

**Mr. Clark:** Last question on that point. What's really interesting is that we get both sides of it. Sometimes we've moved a constituency such that somewhere used to have two MLAs or even three, and they say: "Wait a minute. You've reduced our representation. We have fewer MLAs to advocate for us. We used to do a strength in numbers thing, and now we only have one." Then we also have – and I'd say it's running about 50-50 – those who will say: "Whoa, whoa, whoa. We have one MLA. We want to build a strong relationship with that one member of the Assembly. They understand us, and they will strongly advocate, and we won't be diluted." I'm just curious. Obviously, I think the latter would be your argument. You've made that very strongly. But had you thought about, "Wait a minute; maybe there's some value in having more than one in MLA"?

**Mrs. Vanderkwaak:** I mean, there is but not at the expense of splitting our city in half. I take into account – I know when you're making these decisions in terms of population parity, you don't really necessarily look at how many voters are there. If you look at Beaumont currently, 25 per cent of our population is under the age of 14, which means there's a large demographic that do not vote. Currently it's a very family-oriented community, and it's only going to continue to be that way just because of the uniqueness of Beaumont. When looking at it from that perspective, I believe that the best case scenario is to keep it with Leduc county and/or Leduc city.

**Mr. Clark:** That's incredibly helpful. Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

**Mrs. Vanderkwaak:** You're welcome. Thank you for the time.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Our next presenter is Tara Sawyer. You've heard my routine. Welcome. Tell us about your electoral division.

10:35

**Mrs. Sawyer:** Good morning. I'm with the Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills electoral area. Firstly, thank you for allowing me to speak today. I did want to acknowledge the significant amount of work that goes into the process, balancing the geography and the population, the services, and community connections is complex, and I did appreciate the thoughtful approach reflected in your interim report.

But, as I mentioned in my written submission, I do have concerns about adding the Sundre, Foothills area into the constituency. The Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills region primarily is agriculture based, and daily life reflects that. People are focused on the issues that affect their ability to farm, ranch, move goods, and support food production. That shapes everything about how people travel to the businesses they rely on and to the services that matter most. The Sundre area, by contrast, is shaped much more by forestry, outdoor recreation, and its foothills geography. Those communities often focus on different practical issues, things like wildlife management, land-use access, forestry operations, and tourism-related activity. Neither set of concerns is better or worse; they are simply rooted in different landscapes and industries.

When two regions have such different day-to-day realities, it can make it challenging to represent both effectively, especially across a very large geographic area. Rural representation relies heavily on being physically present, understanding local priorities, and staying connected to long-standing community relationships. Expanding

the riding westward changes those dynamics in ways that are important to consider.

There are several areas where the proposed boundaries reflect how people in my region live and do connect. Keeping Trochu, Huxley, Three Hills together is one of your decisions that I do encourage. These communities share school systems, health services, recreation, cultural programs, and many daily travel patterns. Highway 21 ties them together naturally. I appreciate that Carbon remains aligned with Kneehill county. Carbon's tricampus school partnership with Acme and Linden is important to families. They share many recreational and educational resources. Keeping those communities together maintains stability for students for the wider region.

The region has a long history of consistent boundaries, which is an important consideration. Communities such as Trochu, Three Hills, Acme, Beiseker, and Irricana have been represented together for decades, some since the 1940s. That continuity matters. It builds a sense of strong identity for residents and supports long-standing relationships between MLAs, municipalities, service organizations, and community groups. In rural areas those relationships are especially vital. When boundaries shift suddenly, it can disrupt those connections and affect how local needs are understood and communicated.

More broadly, rural communities function differently because of their geography: the distance and the daily life. In agriculture-based areas like mine, people regularly travel for equipment, vet services, auctions, inputs, and seasonal work, often along predictable corridors that connect specific towns and hubs. These realities differ from regions shaped by forestry or tourism, where priorities naturally include wildlife interactions, Crown land access, and seasonal recreation. Recognizing those differences helps ensure boundaries reflect cohesive communities of interest and practical service patterns.

I also want to note in a broader context about representation in central Alberta. Rural and urban regions often prioritize different day-to-day matters. In agriculture-based areas residents watch closely for policies that affect their ability to grow food, access inputs, move goods, and manage land and water. In more urban settings the emphasis can look different, more on dense transportation networks, housing, and urban service delivery. Both perspectives are important, and people expect to see their lived realities reflected in how constituencies are organized. In this part of the province residents consistently express that they want to feel that their rural experience is understood and visible. When constituencies cover very large geographies or when the number of rural seats is reduced in a region, it can affect how present their MLA can be and how their specific priorities are heard. That context is front of mind for many families, producers, and small-town organizations in central Alberta.

I am concerned about what appears to be a reduction in rural seats in the overall revisions and ask that this be revisited with careful consideration of submissions from the affected regions, including ours.

Irricana and Beiseker have strong practical ties with Acme and nearby towns. Students from those areas use the Acme pool for school swim lessons, families rely on Beiseker's hockey arena, and many volunteer organizations draw members from all three of those communities. People commute regularly between them for work, school, and services. These connections form a natural social and economic corridor that has existed for many years.

Transportation routes play a key role in rural daily life. Highway 2 is a major link for Olds, Didsbury, and Carstairs, and aligning communities along this corridor reflects how people actually move for work, school, business, and recreation.

In summary, what I wanted to say is that there is a long-standing tie between Kneehill county, Mountain View county, and the town of Olds. Trochu, Huxley, Three Hills, then Irricana, Beiseker, and Acme all maintain strong practical connections with their communities. Pardon me. Sorry.

**Mrs. Samson:** We're getting you some water.

**The Chair:** Aaron, can you get the . . .

**Mrs. Sawyer:** I tried to drink some before I came up. I'm sorry.

**Mrs. Samson:** Everybody's getting you water.

**Mrs. Sawyer:** I thought I could hold it back.

Rural regions require attention to geography, service demands, and established community patterns. As noted in my written submission, Cremona's geography does align more naturally with the Foothills region.

Thank you again for your time. I hope the local context I've shared today is helpful as you consider the boundaries.

**The Chair:** Certainly, take your time.

Aaron, can you bring the screen up, this particular riding, Mountain View-Kneehill, please, in a large format?

**Mrs. Sawyer:** The other thing I wanted to mention is that I encourage maintaining rural population thresholds 10 to 15 per cent below the provincial average to account for the unique demands on rural MLAs. Thank you for your time.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I just had the map brought up. Any questions, Mr. Evans, of this presenter?

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. I was just doing the exact same thing, trying to see what the proposal was as compared to the existing. You're suggesting that anything west of Cremona should not be in – that's where we should draw the boundary?

**Mrs. Sawyer:** Yeah. Like, putting that western line sort of back where it was – off the top of my head I'm already forgetting – just outside of Olds. I can't see it from here.

**Mr. Evans:** Isn't it highway 20?

**Mrs. Sawyer:** I think it's highway 20. That, over putting that on the other side.

**Mr. Evans:** Twenty-two.

**The Chair:** Cremona was the old boundary.

**Mrs. Sawyer:** Yeah.

**Mr. Evans:** We heard submissions from Crossfield, and Crossfield was quite happy with where we had put them in Airdrie. Do you agree with that?

**Mrs. Sawyer:** Well, as the MLA of the area – I think I forgot to mention that part. I am the MLA for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Evans:** We knew.

**Mrs. Sawyer:** I have a good relationship with them, so I do know that, in speaking with the mayor, she likes the idea. I, of course, would love to keep them, just because I do know that they still do some work within that corridor, but it's one of those things. When

we talk about the numbers, I know, when you're looking at our area, trying to keep us within a certain number of population: it's harder on the rural side, so of course, for me, maintaining Crossfield and knowing how they interact a bit with Carstairs, but I do understand that she's not opposed to that change.

I actually am not opposed if it went that way either. However, just in terms of that corridor, I know with the interactions I'm already doing with all of the different counties, villages, and knowing all the groups that work together and that, it's just concerning to me whereas Sundre and over really is a different kettle of fish that does not really fit into what primarily is my area.

**Mr. Evans:** We kind of moved things east and west, and what we've heard from almost everyone in regard to this area and central Alberta is that it's more north and south. There are a couple of areas where there is an east-west corridor, but otherwise it's north-south. Would you agree with that?

10:45

**Mrs. Sawyer:** Yeah, I would.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for coming out today. I have two points I'd like your opinion on. Trochu, Three Hills on highway 21 is of great interest to all the people on that route, including Elnora, Delburne, and they have expressed some interest in communities of interest and joining it into Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. I'd like your comment on that. Then I have one other area I would like you to comment on.

**Mrs. Sawyer:** Yeah. I would disagree. That's why when I mentioned Trochu, Huxley, Wimborne, that whole area, Trochu-Three Hills, they're all very closely tied to each other. But, also, those school systems are tied closely. I mean, when you talk about the sports teams and the community groups, the 4-H clubs, that all belongs in Kneehill county, so suddenly moving those ones into there doesn't make sense. Like, families, schools, the agriculture: Trochu-Three Hills should – it makes more sense to keep it here. I find that there is still a lot more connection that happens on my end than on the Sylvan side.

**Mrs. Samson:** My other area that I would like your comment on – and I know that it's a change for the riding – is for Sundre to come in. I want to just say that in a province as vast as we have, we often have electoral districts that have different points or different ways of economy and geography, but I suspect, like, Sundre is not that far off the main highway 2 corridor. Would you not suspect that they're going that way for their services, schools, medical, all that? Is there not a community of interest at all with Sundre?

**Mrs. Sawyer:** Even in speaking with the Olds mayor, it really is quite different. There are some that come through, but, as I mentioned before, in terms of their needs and what they focus on, it is very different. You would think that because it's close to Olds – but there is a very real difference.

I will say that just in terms of size, I mean, presently having a rural riding, obviously, it's quite large. I'm going all over, which is why when you moved some of the lines, it made sense. But going far in that direction, to me, isn't necessary, and I do think it really waters down the representation on what matters to them and how they connect with what matters within my area. That, to me, is still something that needs to be considered, and the corridor is just different. Highway 2: all the towns that I have, I mean, that is their

common connector for businesses. I'm not seeing people go into Sundre because of what it is. Do you know what I mean?

**Mrs. Samson:** Yeah. One way.

**Mrs. Sawyer:** They're not coming into there for school and things, right? I hope that helps.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

**The Chair:** Would you say that the magnetic field of the mountains sucks Sundre, but the field loses its power east of Sundre? Is that what you're saying?

**Mrs. Sawyer:** I get to enjoy it from afar, from my farm. I mean, yeah, to jest about it, but the reality is that it is really different. They are different. To me that is something, when it comes to the community and knowing the groups and how they interact.

**The Chair:** But you appreciate, then, that puts us into a numbers problem.

**Mrs. Sawyer:** Well, that's what I did want to stress because it also seemed like our numbers were sort of being played with to put us more up. That's why I was saying that we really need to remember keeping that 15 per cent less threshold for rural MLAs. I can tell you that to get to places to give proper representation when you have a large – you know, where I reside within my constituency, it's a little over an hour to hit each quarter and, with a lot of those towns, trying to be there and make sure they feel seen and to address them can be tricky.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you, and thank you very much for your presentation. I, too, want to talk about highway 21 and some issues associated with that. We heard a lot about Trochu. I was very intrigued by your remarks about the long history of quite stable boundaries for this riding, and in doing so, you mentioned Irricana and Beiseker, which are currently not in your riding.

**Mrs. Sawyer:** They are in my riding currently, yes.

**Dr. Martin:** You were making an assertion about a community of interest. One can see an economic interest because it's on the railway, but you're saying that interest exists in other spheres as well.

**Mrs. Sawyer:** Beiseker and Irricana are in my constituency at present. In your proposal, you're taking them away, and I'm saying...

**Dr. Martin:** You want them back.

**Mrs. Sawyer:** Give them back. I mean, I can understand, and I will say: that is the connection. I mentioned it in terms of the recreational side, which sounds unlikely, but the close ties like Acme and Beiseker school have together: coming to use our pool for their swim lessons, all of our kids. That's the hockey arena. If you're going to play hockey, unless you're going to Beiseker, they all become Blazers, right? So yeah, they're still in there. I understand moving it into Airdrie, given proximity, especially potentially Irricana. I can see you wanting to do that, but that divider right there – and if you think of even the banks, like, the community of Beiseker, and it's agriculture businesses that all the farmers in our area. That is very closely tied.

**Dr. Martin:** So that hope is, to follow the final sum: that whole area is classic rural. This is grain-farmer world.

**Mrs. Sawyer:** Yes. Grain and cattle.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mrs. Sawyer:** Yeah. Ag society is very strong.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much. I've got a few questions. First off, I just want to thank you so much for coming because it's so important for us to hear from folks who actually represent their communities and have a clear understanding of what the literal lay of the land is. So thank you very much for being here.

Mrs. Samson already asked about Trochu, so I won't to ask about that again. What I'm interested in is that the current boundary in 2017 stretches a long way east and south, south actually all the way from Strathmore to the Siksika reserve and includes Hussar. So in essence, what we've done is sort of cut that part off and gone the other way. My friend Google Maps tells me that it's an hour and fifty minute drive from Hussar to Olds, which is a long way, but in this new configuration Olds to Caroline is only a little less than an hour, about 50 minutes, so you save about an hour driving.

I'm kind of wondering about the part west of highway 22 there. That feels like that's the mountains, right? That whole big part up over there: highway 22, highway 53 – I think that is under Caroline – the Clearwater River there. I guess I'm just curious if you feel like losing the south and east portion in this new configuration makes a bit of sense relative to – like how does that, kind of, land with you now in your current constituency configuration? It won't show on here because it's sort of south and east of that, but it does stretch quite a long way south. I'm just kind of curious about that.

**Mrs. Sawyer:** You're referring to down...

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. The current 2017 boundary goes all the way – you can't really see it on the map.

**Mrs. Sawyer:** You're referring to, like, going down, Rosebud to Standard?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Exactly.

**Mrs. Sawyer:** Which is why you'll note, in my submission, that I never commented on – I mean, I understood moving those the way you wanted to, which is why I didn't argue that point. I understood why you would do that piece. I guess the way I looked at it: even, you know, maintaining that original boundary, therefore leaving Sundre where it was, we would both be okay in our numbers just because of the percentage being rural. I guess what I'm saying is that we shouldn't be topped back up to those numbers and keeping it lower. And we are seeing growth. No, we're not going to see it the same way. Obviously not. But that's why as rural keeping that lower percentage, I think...

**The Chair:** So your presentation is a two-pronged approach. Cut off the west, and use the average towards the 15 per cent.

10:55

**Mrs. Sawyer:** Well, yeah, like, as it states that you normally would. I noticed that you weren't really following that. I don't mean that as a criticism. It had gone up, and I was just saying, well, that you adjust here and here and then we're basically, in my mind, in that sweet spot of that, you know, 15 per cent difference as a rural riding. It does make a difference to an MLA representing those areas.

Again, I can't stress enough that people in rural ridings really want to feel represented, and when things start to get too large – they already feel there's fewer of us than in an urban setting, so not wanting to see it get bigger and lose that voice.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Clark:** Thanks so much for being here.

**The Chair:** Yes, thank you, Mrs. Sawyer.

**Mrs. Sawyer:** Apologies for that cough.

**The Chair:** Just to give you some perspective, we have 10 minutes for each presenter, in theory, six minutes of presentation, four minutes for questions. You can see that I as a chair have failed miserably in enforcing that. On average it looks like we are using 20 minutes per presenter. We've rushed through our break or we've missed our break. So in that context I'm calling the next presenter, David Dorward.

And don't expect more than 20 minutes. I guess that's what I'm saying. Mr. Dorward, have a seat. Tell us where you're from and which ones you want to comment on.

**Mr. Dorward:** Firstly, maybe a minute or two cough time. That's a blessing that you would allow this MLA some time for that, and take your break. I mean, I don't know how many . . .

**The Chair:** No, no. We're soldiering through.

**Mr. Dorward:** I'm David Dorward. I was an MLA 10 years ago in Edmonton-Gold Bar. I'm not going to be very micro; I'm going to be more macro today. I hope your final report will speak to future Legislatures. Please take the time to let them know what you have learned through this process. I believe you have severe handcuffs on you through the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. I see places in your interim report where you're somewhat boxed in.

I'm happy to see in your report that many times that you consider the needs of people over the needs of the Assembly or the government or something else, and I thank you for your service on the commission. But I don't think you do that necessarily enough when I see the words like "having either lost population or grown at a rate that is less than the province as a whole." I say: so what? Arguably these areas need more attention, perhaps, not necessarily less.

Sections 15(1) and 15(2) are prime examples. Why four? I won't elaborate on those sections. For those watching, I'm sure you're aware. That's an overly prescriptive number, perhaps, of what your good work could determine. Why does that section not allow a number of constituencies to break the rule on the high end? Why is it just the low end? I'll bet a lot of folks in this room think that we have two large segments of Alberta: rural and urban. I submit, with respect to representation, we actually have three.

As an MLA who literally was three minutes from my constituency of Gold Bar when I was at the Assembly, where I could be visiting with constituents right after a session of the Legislature or door-knocking, my constituents were favoured over those, for example, in Calgary or Red Deer or other places who had to wait for a Friday or Saturday to see their MLA in person. Of course, both being completely different than a geographic expanse of rural area. Do you see how equality fails and fairness must form a big part of all you do?

I know there will be other presenters who will comment on the incredible difference that it was for me and other urban MLAs to share responsibilities with 19 others. In Edmonton, 20 MLAs presently. An MLA in Edmonton shares with 19 others because we

as a group support a comparative handful of school boards and one municipality. Rural MLAs' work with groups is incredibly different than urban, and I'm not sure that the representation reflects that enough. In other words, a rural MLA by him- or herself must look at maybe six different community areas, municipalities, way more school boards, et cetera.

Overall, please consider and pass on through your report the difference between equality and fairness. Fairness must trump equality, and people, individual Albertans, must trump rules.

You use the words "Indian reserves" in your report, which is acceptable. However, consider speaking to First Nations and see if they are okay with that. The option is "Indigenous reserves."

Why would the Assembly diminish the work of yourselves to the extent that they sat in a room and decided 89 was the right number this time around? If they knew that, why have a commission? Please recommend that that not necessarily be done in the future. Perhaps a close range of seats would have been better, with a view to letting the commission decide what would be the most appropriate. What I see is you pitting one constituency against another, indeed, even the rural-urban divide, to see who wins in the keep-it-to-89-seats rule. In this regard, I would draw your attention to page 38 of the report. The second-last paragraph is a real head scratcher. This is not your fault; you wrote it as it is. I just think that you really don't have the flexibility you need here, and that paragraph really states that quite well.

Throughout your work I hope that you see things from a person's perspective, not the perspective of the act or the MLAs or something else. Consider the person who needs help with health care or a business owner who needs help with a regulation. Is it easy for them to contact their MLA? Is it as easy as it was for folks in my area to contact me? No. It never will be. We can't correct that, but let's not make it worse for them.

Even if population goes down or doesn't meet the average, they didn't do that, the people still there. Their needs don't change. So what is running the ship here? Page 37, second paragraph: when you said in the interim report, "the Commission's dilemma," that's a hint that you indeed have some handcuffs causing you to have a dilemma.

Back to the act. Section 15(3) is an interesting little part of the act. It says, "Crowsnest Pass is not a town" – good grief – just to support section 15(2). How silly. I think that the Albertans in that municipality likely believe that they're as important as any other location of 6,000 good folks.

Let's talk about situations where you have recommended that the urban-rural divide – hybrid, I think I might have heard from Mr. Clark – be broken down. Where you have a constituency that's both rural and urban, I say: yes, yes, yes. I think you need to discuss and talk about the individuals there. For me, the people that live close to Edmonton or any other urban centre are my folks. I mean, they'll interact, they'll shop often at the same stores, they'll come across the same boundaries, and they're affected by the same rules. It's being Albertans. I think that's what we need to focus on rather than this divide between people. Let's bring people together and have homogeneous scenarios.

Many of the points I've made are well said in your report on pages 7 and 8, where Justice McLachlin discussed the right to vote. I hope in the week before the sign-off of the report, a date which is coming fairly quickly here, that you review those words. They include the following statement. "It emerges therefore that deviations from absolute voter parity may be justified on the grounds of practical impossibility or the provision of more effective representation."

Thanks very much.



**The Chair:** Thank you, sir.

Mr. Clark, any questions?

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, and thank you very much for being here and for your past service to the province. Good to see you. Really interesting. You were the MLA for Edmonton-Gold Bar. Is that right?

**Mr. Dorward:** Correct. Yeah.

**Mr. Clark:** You referenced that earlier. Interestingly enough, we had the constit assistant for Edmonton-Gold Bar's current MLA in here this morning, and he was talking about the challenges that are faced in representing complex populations and the workload that it takes to manage AISH, health care, social service, Alberta Works, education, you know, those sorts of things, addiction, housing, homelessness, the sort of urban issues that tend to kind of come to the front door of a constit office. Can you speak a bit to that work you had to do as a constituency level MLA?

**Mr. Dorward:** There certainly is a tremendous amount of that, but I do want to emphasize with regard to my comments that there are 20 coming together to support individuals and groups in the community that assist and support and help those individuals. So while you're the MLA speaking to that particular constituent, you have this body of reference. If you're a smartwise MLA, you will know what the doors to get open for that individual are.

11:05

You didn't ask it in this way, but if you were to compare with rural and if the population is similar in a rural setting, you have maybe different but very similar situations in many communities in rural Alberta as well. I think they are more dramatic in the inner constituencies, no doubt, but you have a lot more in an urban setting to be able to handle the weight of that and supporting and building and finding ways to help the groups that do look after those individuals.

**Mr. Clark:** I agree completely that the geography in rural Alberta is a big challenge. We've just heard from the previous presenter in central Alberta. It's especially acute in the far north. That's undeniable. The vast geographies are really a challenge.

Previous commissions have recommended that there be a differential funding for constituency offices. It's not a replacement for the MLA. It never will be, especially with technology emerging and Zoom calls and a little bit better cell coverage, again, between different parts of the province. When you were in the Legislature, was that ever contemplated, having a somewhat substantially greater budget for those rural and remote MLAs?

**Mr. Dorward:** Yes, it was. Absolutely. I wouldn't call it an issue, but you happen to be talking to the person that probably cared about it the most. I'm an accountant. I was a CMA cost accountant before I was a CPA, so it's very close to me. The model of that, in my opinion – still probably is; I haven't thought about that issue for a long time – is a broken scenario. I would support the rural more in that regard than I would me in an urban setting. I always thought that the rural scenario did not properly look after the individual person that happened for whatever reason to be a rural Albertan. Even look at staffing. I mean, the cost of having one person at an office in an urban setting versus having disparate offices in rural settings is quite a big difference.

**Mr. Clark:** You and I are one hundred per cent aligned on that. I think, in the grand scheme of things, it is tremendous value and, frankly, not that much money, you know, for the value it provides back to Albertans. You and I are aligned on that a hundred per cent.

Thank you so much for being here.

**Mr. Dorward:** You bet.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much. Thank you for being here, Mr. Dorward. I, too, think that we need to make a set of recommendations about legislation and, with respect to Members' Services, about a significant review of not only the budget but the rationale for the work that that committee does.

I wanted to press you further on your characterization of Alberta as urban and rural and, I would suggest, suburban as well, which leads into the discussion of hybrids, I think. We struggle with what might constitute a reasonable hybrid, if I can put it that way, because at this very moment there are at least 18 hybrid situations in the ridings of Alberta. We've recommended a few more, but much of the discussion seems to presume a dichotomy, urban and rural, and I think that's false. I think there's a whole spectrum of forms of life in different communities between the core condo in a skyscraper and a guy bailing hay. A huge spectrum in Alberta is increasingly about that piece in the middle as well as the growth in the urban centres.

Now, you've said that fairness must trump population equality. Translating it into our technical terms such as they are: that's where our discussion has to go. That's about how we deal with hybridizing here and there. Can you speak more to your notion that hybrids – you said, "Yes, yes, yes," so let's put a bit more flesh on it, please.

**Mr. Dorward:** Yes. For sure. Thank you for the opportunity. Having the advantage of 74 years under my belt, I think that I am at an advantage situation in that mom and dad both grew up in rural places in Alberta, so we, as urban kids with an engineer and a nurse parents, exited the urban setting about 4 o'clock every Friday and came back Sunday night because we went either, you know, to Viking or Morinville. We lived a lot of rural. Back in those days in the late '50s and '60s and '70s Alberta was much more segmented as far as that was. Rural folks were kind of rural, and they might have travelled into Morinville, or they may have made the long, long trek into Edmonton. That doesn't exist in our culture anymore. People are way more able to make decisions to get them out of the urban settings.

In fact, I'm not a sociologist, but I think there's been a change of that in the last 10 years whereby people are exiting cities and making decisions to be able to get somewhere. They can work from that place on their same jobs and travel once a week. Therefore, this whole thing about there is a – you know, what really bothers me, unfortunately, is that the discussion often breaks down to, "Well, you're going to get more votes in the urban regarding this party, or you're going to get more in rural regarding that party," which absolutely should be not a part of the conversation whatsoever with respect to any of this conversation. It's about the individual people that live there.

I think that if you were to say in 1965 that you got red for this and blue for that orange for this and purple for that, you would see: oh, that's urban kind of context where I grew up, and there's the rural folks. I think if you now did that picture, you would see those colours coming right together in a lot of ways and coming really close together when you get within, say, a 20-minute or a 30-minute drive.

Let me state it another way. You know, some people inside the city have to drive 30 minutes to get to work. There are lots of people who say: I'll drive 30 minutes rural to get to work. That puts them out 40 miles. As you get closer to the urban centre, then you've got a real blending of the Albertan. You get a little further away, sure there are the rural areas. I don't want to discount the fact that they have their own areas that need to get looked after.

I'm getting really close to my 20 minutes.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Very quickly, Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

Thank you for your presentation and your history, too, to bring to the table. I like your comments on EDs. I think that's where we really struggled, only getting two and trying to make sense out of the growth with only two extra. If we had more, we wouldn't be here. Well, we would, but we wouldn't be arguing.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** Briefly. I wasn't going to ask a question to, you know, accommodate time, but this has come up and I do want to pick your brain on this. Would you agree, having been an MLA, that even in Edmonton-Gold Bar you would have had various communities of interest, people with different interests and groups of different interests, that you would have to accommodate and represent?

**Mr. Dorward:** No. I can interpret . . .

**Mr. Evans:** It was homogeneous?

**Mr. Dorward:** Homogeneous. That's how I've always pronounced it, but same thing.

I guess Gold Bar is very much like that. We don't have any strong ethnicity within Gold Bar. We don't have a slice of the downtown, which brings a whole, you know, socioeconomic issue relative to that. When I said no, I really meant not that other people wouldn't share with the 20 that are there to share that. I mean, if you want my honest opinion . . .

**Mr. Evans:** The 20 what?

**Mr. Dorward:** The 20 constituencies.

**Mr. Evans:** Oh, I see.

**Mr. Dorward:** You've got 20 MLAs, and literally eight can show up at a board meeting for whatever. You know, like, I'm going to overemphasize here, but I will do it. If we had 16 MLAs in Edmonton versus 20, I can honestly say that I'm not sure that any one person at any one time would be disadvantaged.

**Mr. Evans:** There's that much overlap?

**Mr. Dorward:** Absolutely. There's a ton of overlap.

**The Chair:** Thank you, sir. Can I just encapsulate? I want to do that and then clarify. First of all, hybrids: you're fine with them as long as they're appropriate, right?

**Mr. Dorward:** Absolutely, and it's really hard to make a general comment. It absolutely needs to be specifically looked after with a focus on the people that live there.

11:15

**The Chair:** You made some mention of the term "Indian reserves." I tried to follow the legislative language, and I know it may be outdated. Anyways, that was the language of the legislation.

**Mr. Dorward:** I was the associate minister of Aboriginal relations, so I'm sensitive to that. My comment was that if the First Nations are okay with that wording, I certainly don't have a problem.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Well, I mean, we've not heard from them on that. We're following what the legislation says.

I'm confused on your comments on 15(2).

**Mr. Dorward:** Well, 15(2) demands – it demands – that you can only have a variance of three. You can have three constituencies that break the rules.

**The Chair:** I think it's four.

**Mr. Dorward:** No. Well, I think there are three that you can, but they have to break four of the following rules.

**The Chair:** I would say: meet four of the following conditions.

**Mr. Dorward:** Let's say it's four, is one. Yes, four constituencies, but there are only three that can do that. I think you can break those rules in three cases. Here's the bottom line for me. I think it's overprescriptive.

**The Chair:** We've only used one in our report.

**Mr. Dorward:** Okay, but I think that you should open it up and say that we should do more perhaps. We shouldn't even have that restriction. Why is the restriction in the legislation if you've only had one? Maybe somebody else in a future commission wants to have four or five, is my point.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, I'm not sure I'm following you, but I don't want to prolong it. I'll excuse you. If you can stay, maybe over the lunch hour we can have a further conversation.

**Mr. Dorward:** Oh, yeah. I'll put some more money in my meter. Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much.

Our next: Michael Mathiote. Please take a seat and just give me a minute here.

Okay. Sorry, sir. Please identify yourself and tell us what electoral division you're in and which ones you wish to comment on.

**Mr. Mathiote:** Yeah. Sure. Good morning, commissioners. My name is Michael Mathiote, and I live in Edmonton-City Centre. I registered to speak because I took the time to read the interim report carefully and review the population data behind it. I understand the constraints that this commission is working under. I want to be clear at the outset. I do not believe this commission has full freedom to solve the problem that it's been given. This observation is central to my remarks.

Under the current legislation the number of seats is capped at 89, and only two new seats are permitted. At the same time, the commission has correctly concluded that further consolidation of rural and northern ridings would undermine effective representation by creating districts that are geographically too large for a single MLA to serve and, you know, not to mention the Carter decision. I agree with that conclusion. Given these constraints I understand the trade-offs in the report.

As the previous gentleman alluded, you've actually mentioned, you know, things in the report. Edmonton: effectively, there's a consolidation, a hybrid riding, so they get a net gain of one. I think Calgary gets a net gain of one. In rural Alberta there is, I think, a consolidation of two seats – was it four? – off-set partially by the growth in the Airdrie-Cochrane area. Anyway, from a mechanical perspective I understand why these choices were worked.

Where I want to focus on is what the updated population data implies about how quickly this map will age. In your report you've used the data from 2024 midyear. The data for 2025 came out six days ago. I think the current total population is 5,029,346, which gives us a provincial average of 56,510 per riding. This is an increase of roughly 3 per cent in a single year compared to the interim report baseline. More importantly, this growth is not evenly distributed. Edmonton and Calgary are growing faster than the provincial average. Suburban areas are growing faster still, and rural and northern regions are growing more slowly. Even where rural populations increase in absolute terms, they fall below parity because the provincial average keeps rising.

The result is that even a well-designed redistribution becomes outdated almost immediately and always in the same direction. I initially came prepared to oppose the core merger and the creation of a hybrid riding in Edmonton, but after working through the numbers, I reached a different conclusion. Even if this commission were to reverse that decision, which I understand it cannot, the result would simply be dilution of the urban vote elsewhere. This is not a failure of the boundary design. It is a structural consequence of the framework. The arithmetic is unavoidable. If the number of seats is capped and you can't reduce the number of rural seats and population is increasing in the urban areas, then the only result is going to be dilution of the urban vote.

This is reflected in the proposals that are in the interim report. Urban populations are increasing their share of voter populations. The number of seats is capped. Rural seats cannot be further reduced without violating effective representation. Therefore, urban voters must absorb the imbalance. No configuration of boundaries within the current legislation can eliminate that outcome. At best it redistributes where the dilution appears.

You know, just looking at the numbers from the 2025 estimates for July 1 published by the Office of Statistics and Information can already infer certain things. Like, for example, in your report Drumheller-Stettler is already at 23 per cent. By the next election it'll hit or go over the 25 per cent. In fact, even with the 2025 information it is probably very, very close, less than 1 per cent to going over. There are also several ridings that have probably gone over the 15 per cent. This would be, like, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, Slave Lake-Westlock-Athabasca. Mackenzie, as we already know, is over the 25 per cent.

I understand that the plus or minus 25 per cent is often treated as the outer constitutional guardrail, but the plus or minus 15 per cent functions as an early warning line. It signals the representation quality is beginning to erode and future drift is likely. In a fast-growing population ridings that start near minus 10 per cent will cross minus 15 per cent quickly, long before the next redistribution. We already see this happening in the updated data. Ridings that were previously inside the range are now crossing it not because of boundary choices but because growth in urban Alberta is pushing the average faster than the framework can respond. The plus-minus 15 per cent is a predictive indicator of structural stress, not a snapshot.

My concern, therefore, is not that the map is careless. My concern is that the legislation guarantees persistent worsening urban vote dilution regardless of how careful the map is. That has three consequences. Urban underrepresentation will re-emerge quickly after redistribution, the commission will be forced to rely increasingly on section 15 justifications, and public confidence in electoral fairness will reduce not because of bad faith but because the system cannot keep up with growth.

I'm not asking the commission to redraw Edmonton. What I'm asking, I hope, is more realistic. I ask that the final report explicitly state that under the current statutory seat cap ongoing urban vote

dilution is mathematically unavoidable. Boundary adjustments alone cannot resolve this, and future legislation should reconsider the seat cap, redistribution frequency, or other growth-responsive mechanisms. Putting that conclusion on the record matters. It clarifies that this is not a failure of the commission but a limitation of the framework you are required to operate within.

Thank you for your time and the work that you are doing.

11:25

**The Chair:** Mr. Mathiote, thank you so much for a real punchy and comprehensive presentation.

I'm going to limit it to one question per side just to kind of catch up. Mr. Evans or Mrs. Samson.

**Mr. Evans:** No questions. Thank you for your work.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your work. That was very well said, that the system can't keep up. Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** No questions for me, but thank you so much for being here.

**Dr. Martin:** I'm doing something I almost never do, and that's that I entirely agree with you. I wonder if we can get a copy of your presentation.

**The Chair:** Please provide a copy to Mr. Roth.

**Dr. Martin:** Wherever Mr. Roth is. I'd be happy to take a copy of it because I'd like to review it at my leisure.

**The Chair:** I'd like to comment on a couple of things. First of all, I don't think we can go the step to 2025. I'm quite certain we have agreed as a commission that we're going to have a standard, and we're going to stick to it. We're not happy, but no census is perfect. So that's the one thing.

Secondly, you perfectly identified the tripartite issue that we deal with, and that is that in order to provide effective representation, we either need a lot more seats or we take seats out of the rural to accommodate the cities, but you said: or dilute the urban vote as the third option. That's how I understood it. I would phrase it a little differently. I would phrase it as the courts have given us the option of hybrid or blended ridings. I'm not sure if I understood you correctly, but I try to shy away from terms like "dilution." However, I did really like your early warning sign of 15 per cent. I think I may plagiarize that in the report.

Thank you very much. If you can provide it to Mr. Roth, we'd appreciate it.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you for being here.

**Mr. Mathiote:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Our next presenter is Trenna. Trenna Benesocky?

**Mr. McLennan:** I don't know if I'm as good looking as Trenna, but I'll have to do.

**The Chair:** So you're not Trenna?

**Mr. McLennan:** No, sir.

**The Chair:** Okay. Who are you?

**Mr. McLennan:** My name is Matthew McLennan. I'm a councillor with Sturgeon county, second term, division 3 councillor. I do have some prepared remarks. They are on my phone, so they're a little bit challenging for me to read. Bear with me if I stare at my phone

for a while. I just wanted to give you a quick insight as to maybe perhaps some of my perspective.

**The Chair:** Sorry. Just organizationally here: Trenna booked this time for you?

**Mr. McLennan:** Correct.

**The Chair:** You know who she is and all that?

**Mr. McLennan:** She's our chief of staff.

**The Chair:** Okay. Good.

**Mr. McLennan:** Myself I was born in Leduc, Alberta, raised there, moved to the city of Edmonton to go to university and completed university in 2004 and lived in the city of Edmonton until 2014. Then I made the decision to move west, to move to Sturgeon county. I've been living in Sturgeon county for over a decade now. I just thought that might help to preface some of the comments.

Again, I want to thank you for the opportunity to provide input on behalf of Sturgeon county council. We appreciate the commission's work and the thoughtful consideration that has gone into the interim report. There are several significant changes being proposed, and we recognize the challenge of balancing representation across Alberta's growing population. Sturgeon county is pleased to see the proposed St. Albert-Sturgeon riding name maintained as it better reflects the unique character of our region and its close connection between urban and rural communities. We also believe the decision to keep its boundaries unchanged is a sound one.

However, council has deep concerns with the proposed changes to the Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland riding. While we understand the intent is to move closer to the provincial population average, the outcome of these changes would in our view be detrimental to residents. The proposed 12 per cent population increase represents considerable shift, combined with a significant expansion of the geographic area. This would make it more difficult for constituents to access their MLA and, likewise, for the MLA to effectively serve their communities. Today the constituency office of MLA Getson is located in Onoway, centrally positioned to serve residents across the current riding. Under the proposed boundaries residents in the north such as those living in the Vega area would face well over an hour's drive just to reach the office. For many residents across the north and outlying communities such travel distances create barriers to access and engagement.

The proposed riding also brings together communities with very different local priorities. The needs of residents living near St. Albert or the Edmonton border are not the same as those in the far north of the riding. That diversity of needs makes equitable and effective representation a real challenge.

Council is also concerned about the broader trend we continue to see, a gradual erosion of the rural representation in the Legislature. The last boundary revision already shifted seats towards urban centres, and this report appears to continue in that direction. All newly added seats are in Edmonton and Calgary, with more blended urban-rural ridings across the province. While it is true that most Albertans live in cities, we cannot overlook the rural Alberta contribution. The majority of the province's land base and economic activity takes place in rural centres.

Rural issues are just as significant as urban ones, but they are different, and they are compounded by distance and access. Meeting your MLA should not require setting aside a full day. Sturgeon county council respectfully urges the commission to revisit the proposed boundaries for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland and consider maintaining

them as they are today. The existing population remains well within the legislative threshold, and keeping current boundaries would reduce confusion for residents and support more equitable access to representation.

Just a kind of personal comment to conclude is that I've seen even in my area, which is the division 3 area, which is just west of St. Albert, so it touches the St. Albert boundary, and I go as far west as west of 779 – Lac Ste. Anne county is to the west of us – even within that area we see a real divergence of priorities. Recently St. Albert, three years ago, annexed a portion of Sturgeon county. There are real challenges around where rural meets urban, and the priorities are even different from, you know, a few miles away from St. Albert to 779, the highway there.

Thank you for your time. I appreciate your position. If there are any questions, I'd be happy to try and answer them.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Clark, Dr. Martin, either of you?

**Dr. Martin:** I'm actually focused now on this map of Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland. You feel it is far too sprawling and produces many confusions and complications. Is that correct?

**Mr. McLennan:** Yes. I would say that the biggest concern that we have is focused more on the distance, I believe. It's more the travel time towards a meeting with the MLA. You know, before I presented here today, I was curious if there was an online option. What I've come to find is that the online and the virtual options are good, but there's something important about face-to-face contact. I mean, there are so many nonverbal cues that you get when you speak with residents or people face to face. We really feel that's very important. The further distance a resident needs to travel really impedes that connection, and then likewise for the MLA to be able to physically be in all of the areas.

**Dr. Martin:** Can I ask one question about this area?

**Mr. McLennan:** Sure.

**Dr. Martin:** The city of St. Albert annex: is that what this dotted line may represent? That's their city boundary. It seems quite a bit of it's in a different riding.

11:35

**Mr. McLennan:** I'm actually, yeah, just to the west. There's Big Lake there. I'm west, and then I go up to just south of Rivière Qui Barre. The area that St. Albert annexed was north of highway 2 primarily and then west of Carrot Creek. The area sort of highlighted to my right is not the newly annexed area.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans or Mrs. Samson?

**Mr. Evans:** No questions for me. Thank you for coming and providing us additional submissions.

**Mrs. Samson:** No questions. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. McLennan:** Thank you kindly. Have a good day.

**The Chair:** Our next presenter is Victor Carpay.

**Mr. Carpay:** Thank you, guys. Yeah. Normally I work at home, actually, and the blinds go down and all of the natural light comes

in, so it's a lot to sit in a hotel like this with this lighting for five or six hours. I'm not used to it.

Thank you, guys, so much for listening to all of the presentations and everything else. Mine is for a specific area, the Sherwood Park boundaries. I moved to the Edmonton area four years ago from Calgary to Sherwood Park, and I've grown to love Sherwood Park and the community there. I have lots of friends in Strathcona county. I go there for a lot of different church events, community events, and I know a lot of the schools there well and the people who teach. So I'm very connected with the Sherwood Park community. What I want to talk about – if we go to the current Sherwood Park boundaries, if that's possible, on the screen.

**The Chair:** Yeah.

**Mr. Carpay:** Thanks. I speak quickly, so maybe that'll save you guys some time. We'll see.

Right now you can see that little box there going, what used to be a part of the Strathcona-Sherwood Park riding. That area there is Heritage Hills. The current boundaries for Sherwood Park in terms of the urban division have been existing there for well over a decade. I would argue that in Heritage Hills, since it's been represented by the east side of the riding for 10 years, to abruptly make this artificial cut into that side and looping into Sherwood Park doesn't make sense. It's sort of an invisible neighbourhood line that doesn't make sense with the history of Sherwood Park currently. It would disrupt long-standing community ties, the connection that they've had to their MLA for 10 years. So there are a few problems there with splitting Heritage Hills.

I'm also here today because there are a few nurse shift workers who can't be here who've submitted reports on suggestions for how to change the Sherwood Park boundary a little bit to include all of the Strathcona county residents who are currently under the representation of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. My idea is pretty straightforward. Rather than carving up the Sherwood Park urban area, the commission can instead adjust population and representation by extending the constituency into the northern part of Strathcona county, where there are strong existing ties and shared municipal priorities already.

What I would propose is that to the west the constituency of Sherwood Park would follow the North Saskatchewan River, which coincides with the Strathcona county boundary, and to the north it would follow the Fort Saskatchewan city limits up to highway 15 and then follow highway 15 east to the county boundary at range road 204 and to the east follow Strathcona county boundary south along Elk Island national park down to highway 16 and then to the south follow highway 16 west back to highway 21.

The reason for this: the configuration would not disrupt the urban divide that exists between the two ridings. Secondly, it would hit the goals of having 53,000 to 54,000 residents in the area. And then, most importantly, a big priority when we're looking at local maps is that there are municipal levels of government, there are the Strathcona county levels of government, and they're supposed to connect to the provincial and to the federal in a manner that makes it easy for politicians to represent their constituents well.

If you look at what I'm proposing to take out of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville and loop into Sherwood Park, the places there in Strathcona county include residents who vote there, who pay property taxes to Strathcona county and to Sherwood Park. It would ensure effective representation and that the whole of Sherwood Park is under two MLAs, the same way that the map is trying to do with Lethbridge and other areas to keep things in good correspondence.

Another thing that I'll add is that a lot of the things that exist in the north of highway 16 like the multi-purpose recreation facility anchored by the Sherwood Park Crusaders, not the Fort Saskatchewan Crusaders, and The Pointe Agricultural Events Centre and the Warren Thomas Josephburg Aerodrome are all in Strathcona county and should be looped provincially into Sherwood Park. The other thing I'll mention is that the airport in the north of highway 16 area is operated by Strathcona county, but the name for it, if you look, is Josephburg, which is really interesting.

So, yes, because the residents pay property taxes in there, they vote, and they're inside of the Strathcona county, I think it makes sense for that area to be under one.

In terms of why I'm here, again, Kara Birns is somebody who submitted a submission to make this amendment to have Strathcona county included into Sherwood Park. She's a shift worker and a nurse and can't be here today. There's Ron and Nadine, Lisa and Claudio, Daniel Laschet.\* I'm good friends with the Duggans, who have an acreage in the Strathcona county area and have a whole bunch of cows. They also have six kids, so it's harder for them to be here today. If you look at all of the proposals, there are a lot of people who live north of highway 16, and for the purpose of them communicating with their MLA who they have for representing them in Strathcona county, I think there are a lot of projects in that north of highway 16 corridor where Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville has something like 20 different places to represent in it. It absolutely makes sense that Sherwood Park should go under two, and that could be done. Even if you look at Strathcona-Sherwood Park, the eastern part, right now it's looped to go all the way down to Beaumont. I mean, if we can keep those two places with the municipalities under two provincial ridings, I think it just makes for a better ladder of communicating and representation.

That's it on the local side. I'll just say, on a broader level, that I just went to Saskatoon for a week after Christmas for a wood-carving thing just to take a little bit of a break before going back to work, and it was five and a half hours of driving from Edmonton to Saskatoon. I'm 21 years old. My back is sore from doing that. So I'll just add, on an overall level, that I know two people who live in farther rural ridings, and one of them likes their MLA a lot and says that he or she – I'll keep it anonymous – is really good at being present in the riding. The amount of driving that's, you know, done to be able to say that they're present like that: I just can't imagine their poor backs from all that driving.

I do think that if there's the 15 per cent variant rule, absolutely, that should serve to help the rural ridings that have a really long driving distance. I mean, the northern riding right now, Mackenzie, is a total of seven hours to drive from one end of the riding to the other, and if you're expecting your MLA to be present and to do that, we need to keep those in mind.

I'll just add that I've lived in the city my entire life in Sherwood Park, Calgary, and Edmonton. I've kind of been in all three of those for my lifetime. One of my favourite things to do in my free time is to try to connect to people who have farms and volunteer to do some work with fences or to get to observe and see how they milk cows and manage and have relationships with the livestock. There's just something to be said about precious rural common sense. Yeah, I think it's important that if that 15 per cent variant rule is there, we need to make sure to preserve rural Alberta voices in our democracy as much as possible. They do have unique needs.

I mean, on another note, I know rural people who just have given up complaining about rural crime because it's hard to reach their MLAs and they don't see that as a possibility, and they take matters – it's just different. That's a broader level.

So that's it. If you guys have any questions, I'm happy to take them.

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

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Carpay. You are familiar with the saying: a picture is worth a thousand words. Have you prepared a draft map of what you just described, or has someone in your group done that and submitted it to us?

11:45

**Mr. Carpay:** Yeah. I could send you an e-mail right after with one.

**The Chair:** Okay. Please do it.

**Mr. Carpay:** I'll do that. I'll talk to Aaron. I would have had it; it was just . . .

**The Chair:** Okay. Please do it.

**Mr. Carpay:** You got it.

**The Chair:** Questions on this side?

**Mr. Evans:** No questions for me.

**Mrs. Samson:** No questions. Thank you for the presentation.

**Mr. Carpay:** You're welcome.

**Dr. Martin:** Your arguments are equally applicable with respect to north of the Yellowhead, adding that large parcel of the county to the riding Strathcona-Sherwood Park, as they are applicable to adding them to the mighty hamlet of Sherwood Park riding. Which would you prefer?

**Mr. Carpay:** Between – sorry – the hamlet and . . .

**Dr. Martin:** Well, you prefaced your remarks about the whole area up, including Josephburg, as appropriate, you reckon, to go into the Sherwood Park riding whereas it's equally applicable, it seems to me, on the same argument for adding them to the Strathcona county and Sherwood Park riding.

**Mr. Carpay:** I see. Okay. Yes, that's a good point. Well, I think there's something beautiful to be said about an urban riding like Sherwood Park just outside of Edmonton having a rural contingent. I mean, it makes for a good balance of interests. They're still a part of the same municipality. In terms of whether you could loop it into Strathcona-Sherwood Park, I mean, I'm not sure what a revision for that would look like. I know the current map adds a little bit of Beaumont into the eastern side, right?

I mean, what I'll have to do is I'll have to send you guys a nice, beautiful, clear image with the proposal, and I can even CC the many people north of highway 16 who want to be under Sherwood Park. I'm primarily here today because there are a lot of people who want to present and it's hard to come somewhere in person. It's a delight to. A good opportunity to practise public speaking, you know?

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Carpay. Much appreciated.

**Mr. Carpay:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** We have one more presenter this morning which we've tacked on, Sandra Houston. Good morning.

**Ms Houston:** Good morning.

**The Chair:** Have a seat.

**Ms Houston:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Make yourself comfortable, and tell us where you're from and which riding you want to comment on.

**Ms Houston:** I am a resident of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, and I more want to comment on Edmonton as a whole. I'd like to start by thanking you for the work that you're doing and the work that you will continue to do. I know that this is a super challenging project, to try and get the balance and also to address all of the concerns that many people are bringing to you.

I am concerned, however, about the growth in the inner city. That's not to say that I am against growth. In fact, I am a big proponent of greater density, and I really don't like to see the big urban sprawl that is happening. But, you know, in my own neighbourhood across the street from me there was a tiny, little bungalow that was torn down and replaced by a couple of huge, skinny houses, both of which have room for two bedroom suites in the basement. Down the street from me another little cottagelike house was replaced by two skinny houses. An empty lot around the corner from us, where it had been vacant for years, now has a townhouse complex. A lot that had a small store on it has been replaced by an apartment building with several storeys, and they're not all filled just yet.

I think that the density is going to continue. The city, of course, has been encouraging density, and I know that that has resulted, certainly, in my neighbourhood, and I know some friends who live in these cottage – not these. What do they call them? Garden suites. More people are putting basement suites in their homes to help them to pay mortgages, and that is just going to continue as time goes on.

I understand that urban ridings will always have larger populations than rural ridings. I understand the need for some fairness in, as some of the other people have talked about, the driving distance for MLAs who represent rural ridings.

I also think there's a question of fairness to constituents. Constituencies in Edmonton: often the MLA offices are dealing with very complex issues and a lot of casework. I've spoken with a lot of constituency assistants, and I know that there is a lot more casework often in the inner city than there is in rural ridings. That is unfair to citizens when they cannot get the same level of service.

MLAs who represent inner-city ridings don't have a budget that allows them to hire more staff to serve the constituents who live in their constituencies and, of course, there are not more hours in the day for MLAs to be available and accessible to a greater number of constituents who need and want service and assistance.

In particular I'm concerned about the elimination or the proposed elimination of Edmonton-Riverview and splitting that between Edmonton-Glenora, Edmonton-West Henday, and Edmonton-McClung. All three of those constituencies are growing. There are new developments in each of those constituencies; there are infills, there are the garden suites, there are the basement suites. So those constituencies, I believe, will be out of whack in terms of the population that they hold.

I also think that Riverview is a community that, despite the fact that it's on two sides of the river, has a community of interest. It has the University of Alberta in there as well, which probably has some population that has not been captured by the census. It probably has a larger population than we have reported.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you. I hope that my thoughts and those of others will be taken into consideration.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms Houston.  
Questions on your side?

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah. A couple of questions for you. You mentioned casework. I'm not exactly sure that I understand what you mean by that.

**Ms Houston:** People who have concerns or people who need assistance, need assistance accessing government programs, getting help with a whole variety of things. It's called casework by constituency assistants.

**Mr. Evans:** Then that bring me to my next question, more of a comment. It seems like what has been going on and has been consistent from all MLAs and people expressing their concerns about being able to do the work the MLA and the constituency office needs to do is really a staffing issue. For example, the casework is going to be, by and large, done by the staff, not the MLA. That's a consistent concern whether it's rural or urban, the staffing issues. It's nothing that we can actually deal with, but it seems that there's been a consistent conflating of the shortage of staff and the needs of staff, and we're transposing that on to: well, this is impacting effective representation by the MLA. I think it's important that we draw a distinction there.

Just one other comment. Over the last three years Edmonton has, by the city's own reporting, had a population increase of 140,000, just to put the growth into context.

11:55

**Ms Houston:** Yeah. I might add that, yes, you're absolutely correct about the staffing issue, but constituents also want to talk to their MLA. They also want appointments with their MLA, and there are only so many hours in the day, and MLAs have a myriad of responsibilities that they need to attend to, not just meeting their constituents. And, frankly, that's not often understood by constituents.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** No questions. But rest assured that we've heard a number of submissions that make exactly the same case.

I'm just doing a bit of work right now and looking into where some of that growth has happened within Edmonton, that Mr. Evans references. The growth has been substantial. One of our questions is – and I've said this to a number of folks, including outside of Edmonton and Calgary, in rural areas. It's not just a question of absolute growth. I think most places, not all but most places, in Alberta are growing in absolute terms. How are we growing in each area in relative terms to the overall? Alberta has grown 20 per cent in the last seven or eight years. So which areas have grown, and then to your point, which areas will grow into the future? We also, to a degree, to borrow a phrase from a great Edmontonian, skate to

where the puck is going to be to whatever degree we can. That's a little tricky to sort of tease out all of those different pieces, but just rest assured that all of that is in the conversation that we're having here.

Thank you so much.

**Ms Houston:** I mean, I might add that I looked at what you've done in the southeast of Edmonton, and I thought that was a brilliant way that you had created the new . . .

**The Chair:** Could you repeat that for the record again?

**Mr. Clark:** Yes, exactly. That's right.

**Ms Houston:** I looked at that very carefully because I've worked in that area and worked in the community there, and I thought that that was very forward thinking.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Ms Houston, thanks very much. You made one reference to a term that I think just forces us to clarify our language, when you talked about the casework and you said that it was unfair to citizens. Okay. MLAs represent more than citizens, they represent more than voters, and we all . . .

**Ms Houston:** You're absolutely correct.

**The Chair:** And that's not a criticism. It's just to highlight to us to say: there's sloppy language in this whole business.

**Ms Houston:** Yeah. My apologies.

**The Chair:** No, no. That was not – it was a highlight. We tend to forget the categories and clarification, so I just highlighted that and thought: okay; in our report we've got to clarify our terminology a bit more because when there's ambiguous or unclear language, it's easy to criticize and it's easy to have arguments over things. So thank you for that.

**Ms Houston:** Yeah. If I'd heard somebody else say that, heard somebody else say citizens, I would have made the same criticism.

**The Chair:** Okay. Good. Good.

**Ms Houston:** So thank you for that. I appreciate you bringing that up. Thanks very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

We will close our morning session and reconvene at 1:30 this afternoon.

[The hearing adjourned at 11:58 a.m.]









# Legislative Assembly of Alberta

## Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings

Virtual

Wednesday, January 21, 2026  
1:31 p.m.

Transcript No. 47

## **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 - Virtual**

### **Participants**

Jasvir Deol, MLA, Edmonton-Meadows  
Christina Gray, MLA, Edmonton-Mill Woods  
Janis Irwin, MLA, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood  
Martin Long, MLA, West Yellowhead  
Brandon Lundy, MLA, Leduc-Beaumont  
Rakhi Pancholi, MLA, Edmonton-Whitemud  
Joseph Schow, MLA, Cardston-Siksika  
Heather Sweet, MLA, Edmonton-Manning  
Peggy Wright, MLA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview



1:31 p.m.

Wednesday, January 21, 2026

[Justice Miller in the chair]

**The Chair:** Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to our afternoon session of Wednesday, January 21, of the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission, the tail end of our public hearings. We completed truly the public hearings yesterday, and today we reserved for those members of the Legislature that wish to address our commission.

Very quickly, we are an independent commission appointed by the Speaker of the Legislature, and our website has all the backgrounds of the five of us as commissioners. Our task is to redraw the electoral boundaries of Alberta for the next provincial election dealing with two issues, basically, the increase in the number of seats from 87 electoral divisions to 89, and of course it is the voters in each electoral division that elect the member that they want to represent them in the Legislature. So while we deal with the increase in the number of seats, we're also dealing with the significant increase in Alberta's population.

To put some context to this situation, if we look back at the time of the last Electoral Boundaries Commission report, which was 2017, that commission dealt with a population of just over 4 million people in Alberta. Based on that population they had an average of 46,697 individuals per electoral division. That average is not the target in Alberta, and in Canada we deal with the term of effective representation, not representation by population. Our target is the range of minus 25 per cent to plus 25 per cent of that average, so that ranges from 35,000 to 58,000. At least, that's what the Electoral Boundaries Commission of 2017 had to deal with.

For our commission we have settled on a population figure of 4.8 million, which is based on the 2021 decennial census, which is updated and streamlined by the Office of Statistics and Information of Alberta Treasury Board. That population figure divided by the new number of ridings then reveals an average for each electoral division of 54,929 or 55,000. Again, that's not the target for each electoral division; rather, the target for effective representation is the range of minus 25, which is 41,000, to plus 25, just over 68,000. Our task as an Electoral Boundaries Commission is to comprise a map of 89 electoral divisions that provide effective representation to Albertans.

Since our appointment as a commission in early April of last year we have done several things. First of all, we met and discussed fully the basis for our population and demographics. We had an agreement as a commission that we would, as I said, use the 2021 federal census, which is required by legislation and that is updated by the Alberta Treasury Board Office of Statistics and Information.

After our formation we received many submissions, written submissions, to our website and by mail as to how we should go about our work. We reviewed those presentations. Then in late May we started a public tour of the province. We started in Pincher Creek, and we went across the province. We had sittings in Fort McMurray, Peace River, Grande Prairie, down to Medicine Hat and all points in between. That occupied our time in late May and throughout June. After we reviewed those submissions, heard the public input, we met with the good staff at Elections Alberta and their map people, and they assisted us in drawing maps and allocating boundaries that would best fit our goal of effective representation.

That all led up to the preparation and finalization of our interim report. We were pleased to provide that to the Speaker of the Legislature in late October, and he immediately tabled that report and provided a hard copy of the report to each of the Members of the Legislative Assembly. That report was put on our website, and

we then opened it up for public submissions. We drafted the report considering all the factors outlined in the legislation: sparsity and density of population, considering natural boundaries, roadways, means of transportation, and all those various factors. Our ultimate goal was to provide boundaries that provided 89 electoral divisions that could provide effective representation, and those boundaries needed to be understandable and clear.

Shortly after the submission of our interim report we provided a portal to the public on our website to receive public input and information, and that took place from November 3 to December 19, and we did receive input. In excess of 1,100 written submissions were provided to us, and we're wading through all those submissions now and in the days ahead. We did open it up, as well, for in-person presentations, and that started last Monday, January 12. We spent two and a half days in person in Calgary. Then we went across the province virtually on Thursday and Friday, and this week we have been in Edmonton hearing from the public for the last two days. Today, Wednesday the 21st, is specially reserved for Members of the Legislative Assembly. We've had a full morning, and we've got a full afternoon as well.

I'll turn it over to our first presenter, Ms Christina Gray of Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much to the commission and everyone for doing this work. I'll just start with that. This is my second opportunity to present, so thank you for letting me come back around to follow up and give feedback on the interim report. I want to start by saying that I was so surprised and impressed that a consensus report was delivered, so kudos to the team for that. I thought that was really, really fantastic because in talking to people about the process, especially in kind of the political times that we're in, I often heard skepticism or: how will this work? Being able to talk about a nonpartisan, consensus approach has really helped to settle people down and to buy into the process, so thank you for that.

I also wanted to say that I appreciated that the interim report reflected the growth in cities with added ridings in Edmonton and Calgary. Southeast Edmonton is my area of location and expertise, and I agree with the commission that going from three ridings to four ridings in southeast Edmonton is really important given the massive amount of growth, particularly in the Meadows area as well as the Ellerslie area, which are the current riding names, so thank you for that. The interim report also, I think, did a really good job of respecting municipal boundaries. From all those perspectives, I think that you've done really excellent work.

1:40

I do think that the interim report still shows a lot of ridings in Edmonton starting above average, and knowing that Edmonton and population growth is still surging, that is a potential concern for me. We have our Mill Woods map up. I'm going to focus my comments now more on specifically the changes to Edmonton-Mill Woods, the area I represent. In Edmonton-Mill Woods in the draft map the one thing I wanted to start by pointing out, to begin with, is that the Edmonton-Mill Woods development concept and what Mill Woods is is a really defined square. The draft Edmonton-Mill Woods map that the boundary commission has come up with goes outside of the boundaries of Mill Woods to include a neighbourhood from Meadows called Larkspur. My first bit of feedback to the commission is that I don't think that it makes sense to include any communities that are outside of the Mill Woods area in the riding called Edmonton-Mill Woods. I think that it makes it less clear, less understandable for someone as to where they are.

Just as a reminder, Mill Woods' borders are – and this is not the riding but the city neighbourhood, the city development – Whitemud, 34th Street, Gateway, and then the Anthony Henday. There are essentially nine community leagues and 27 neighbourhoods within that square, and then Larkspur is outside of that in Meadows. Larkspur is one of three communities that make up the Meadows Community League. They have a lot of commonalities in that they are all named after local flora and fauna – they have Larkspur, Wild Rose, Silver Berry – and have their own community league. One of the original recommendations that I made to the commission and I think I heard other presenters make is that in Edmonton being aware of and respecting community leagues would be my recommendation. When we talked about that last, you had talked about maybe your GIS people could put in a layer that shows you community leagues. I don't know if they were able to do that, but I want to draw your attention back to that because not breaking up the Meadows Community League would be my recommendation.

I mentioned the average size of various ridings. Your draft Edmonton-Mill Woods has Edmonton-Mill Woods at plus – where are my notes? I've got it somewhere – 8.6, so even larger than what was done in the last boundary commission report. My looking at this and knowing that if I'm going to suggest you do a change, you're going to say, "Well, what does this also impact?" my recommendation for Edmonton-Mill Woods is: don't include Larkspur. That will put Edmonton-Mill Woods at, I think – my math tells me it'll be plus .4, so essentially dead average. We know that Mill Woods from last report to this has grown at exactly provincial average, and I suspect that Mill Woods is going to grow slightly faster because we now have the LRT. We know we've got the Mill Woods Town Centre development that is expected to begin in the next couple of years. It's a 22-storey tower planned by McLeod Development Group, and it's going to be a multiphase project where they're eventually hoping to bring 6,000 to 8,000 homes onto that site. It fits with the city of Edmonton's plan to do more transit-oriented development.

I'm saying that I know Mill Woods is going to grow. There are development plans as well as the infill and what's happening with the huge number of building permits. My recommendation is: do not include the neighbourhood of Larkspur, and leave Mill Woods at the average size so that it has some of that growth. I agree with what the commission had done with the other three southeast ridings – Edmonton-Meadows, Edmonton-Ellerslie, and Edmonton-South East – where it was negative, because their growth is likely to be more. But there's still a lot of growth in Mill Woods.

Removing Larkspur from Edmonton-Mill Woods likely makes Edmonton-Meadows too big, so you will have to adjust a little bit around the edges there. Without the mapping tools I don't have an exact map for you. Really, my concern is more around that understandability. Mill Woods means something in Edmonton, and having only neighbourhoods that exist in Mill Woods in the Edmonton-Mill Woods riding makes the most sense to me.

The other comment I will have in the southeast is that the new riding you've created you've named Edmonton-South East, but I wanted to flag that that matches a federal riding name and I think an alternate name would be better. I am not that creative of a thinker, but I ran into a community stakeholder. She used to work for the Leefield Community League for many, many years, long-term Mill Woods area resident, and I think she's now working for city councillor Jo-Anne Wright. Her name is Jackie, and she told me, at one of the Christmas events where I saw her, that she thought Edmonton-South East could be named Decoteau. I hope that that recommendation has come to you from another way. I think that makes some sense. There's a community there, and I know from

the interim report that using communities with the largest population as electoral names is something you've tried to do in places. That might make sense there just to avoid the overlap between Edmonton Southeast federal and Edmonton-South East provincial.

**The Chair:** So Edmonton-Decoteau?

**Ms Gray:** Potentially.

**The Chair:** How do you spell that?

**Ms Gray:** D-e-c-o-t-e-a-u, maybe. I can send that to Aaron and find that for you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Is that the name of a district?

**Ms Gray:** Yeah, it is. Now, this is in part of the city that I don't know as well. It's outside of my Mill Woods area, but I've heard this suggestion from community. It's from someone who knows the area really well. It made sense to me, so I thought I would mention it here as well.

Let me look at my quick notes. I think I've hit the main parts of what I'd hoped to say.

**The Chair:** Greg, have you got the population for Larkspur?

**Mr. Clark:** I do.

**The Chair:** Okay. I'll turn it to you right away, then.

**Mr. Clark:** You bet.

**Ms Gray:** I think maybe I might leave my comments there. Let's do conversation. That's great.

**The Chair:** Yeah. We have not suffered from lack of conversation with presenters like you.

Mr. Clark, pose the problem to this presenter.

**Ms Gray:** Please.

**Mr. Clark:** The southeast of Edmonton – and much of this is elegant, and I'm sure you would agree for lots of reasons – one of the reasons it's somewhat elegant from our perspective is that 220,000 people divides very neatly into four; 220,000 by four is 55,000, so that works out really nicely. The question, though, is: how do we divvy that up? I can tell you the rationale, including Larkspur, as one of my only shortcomings is not being from Edmonton, so I don't have that on-the-ground knowledge. I know Mill Woods is a meaningful area. I didn't realize 34th was. I think we tried to keep community league boundaries together, not recognizing Larkspur maybe looks east instead of west, so that's a very useful bit of feedback.

I think the upshot of it is that what you're saying, then, is keep Edmonton-Mill Woods basically on average but overpopulate Edmonton-Meadows. Our thinking was that there's more net new development in Tamarack and Aster likely in Meadows, so let's keep that a little smaller to create a bit of headroom. At the end of the day, you know, it may become a little bit unbalanced, but – and I think your MLA colleague from Meadows yesterday was advocating to keep Larkspur, interestingly enough. That's what I wrote down, anyway.

**The Chair:** Yeah. I think so, even though . . .

**Ms Gray:** To keep it in Meadows?

**Mr. Clark:** To keep it in Meadows, yeah. I'm just looking here. There's a written submission. I can look that up. Maybe the two of you can have an arm wrestle and decide. Like, it would actually be quite useful if the two of you . . .

**Ms Gray:** We did talk.

**Mr. Clark:** You did? Okay.

**Ms Gray:** Certainly, because my colleagues: we work together to represent the southeast in many ways. I often get people from Meadows who come to the Mill Woods office looking for service because lots of people get confused who is the representative, so we do try to work together. Having Larkspur stay in Meadows I think makes sense because of the Meadows Community League, because it is Larkspur, Wild Rose, and Silver Berry all together. And then I also agree with what the commission was trying to do, which is to put Edmonton-Meadows under the average because of the expected growth there. Like, I support that.

1:50

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Sorry; I misspoke. It's Laurel, which is not Larkspur. Those are different places.

**Ms Gray:** Yes, Laurel is different.

**Mr. Clark:** Makes sense. Yeah.

Sorry. Just to be clear, the trade-off, then – if you were to advise us, would you say to put Larkspur into Edmonton-Meadows even though it's going to overpopulate it now and likely quite a bit in the future or keep Larkspur with Edmonton-Mill Woods and sort of offend that 34th Street kind of issue?

**Ms Gray:** For clarity, for where people live as well as if Larkspur becomes part of Edmonton-Mill Woods – essentially, what that does, lengthening the riding, brings in another kind of major street, 17th Street. As well, the people who live in that neighbourhood of Larkspur are using lots of different – they're more likely to go to the Meadows Rec Centre than the Mill Woods Rec Centre. The schools and districts are over on that side. I think that would cause confusion.

My suggestion is to include Larkspur in Edmonton-Meadows and perhaps cut out some of the population on one of the other edges so that Edmonton-Meadows still stays under. Where exactly that line would go, I'm not sure. I know right now Laurel is cut in half. Like, Laurel is not completely in one riding or the other, so perhaps moving that line a little bit just to adjust the population numbers may make some sense. Yeah. Chop more of Laurel into Edmonton-South East so that Edmonton-Meadows still has room for growth.

**Mr. Clark:** I will look at what that will mean. Thank you very much. That's all.

**The Chair:** Okay. Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. Thank you. I'm looking at the map now in quite some detail. My colleague is correct. We did take your advice very seriously, when we spoke to you in the spring, about keeping mature and existing community league boundaries together as best we can. Certainly, to the west of 34th I think we've achieved that, not only in your riding but in the Summerside riding, so to speak, which continues to leave us with juggling problems with places like Pollard Meadows, Crawford, areas down there immediately north of the Henday and have been, I think, in the past in Ellerslie as it then was called. We're left with the problem of not only that area but also the fact that Summerside is growing extremely rapidly.

Although my colleague says that, you know, it's 220,000 as a group, no, it's probably 235,000 before you blink. So those are the dilemmas we face, right?

**Ms Gray:** If your assessment is that Edmonton-Mill Woods should have a higher than average population, my . . .

**Dr. Martin:** Well, that might be a conclusion, but it isn't our initial position.

**Ms Gray:** Well, in your current map right now Edmonton-Mill Woods has a higher than average population by 8.6, including Larkspur. If you want to maintain that higher population for Edmonton-Mill Woods, my suggestion would be, instead of giving one neighbourhood from Meadows, to include a different neighbourhood that is in Mill Woods. Along the ends here there are the neighbourhoods that are part of Southwood or the neighbourhoods that are part of Millhurst or the neighbourhoods that are part of Knottwood. I just think . . .

**The Chair:** Okay. Sorry; what electoral division is that? Edmonton-Ellerslie?

**Ms Gray:** Across both of them. Sorry; I'm going to take this.

**The Chair:** Yeah, take the mic.

**Ms Gray:** Let me take this.

The square that is Mill Woods comes down, and then this is Knottwood, this is Millhurst, this is Southwood, and all of those are community league names, not neighbourhood names. All of that is Mill Woods in Edmonton. If you took one neighbourhood from in there – because I imagine as a community league the numbers are way too big there to do all of it. So if the concession is that we can't keep every community league whole because the math doesn't work – and I can understand that – give Edmonton-Mill Woods a neighbourhood in the Mill Woods area rather than out of . . .

**The Chair:** Move south.

**Ms Gray:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** Okay. That makes sense.

**Dr. Martin:** So that's 23rd Ave, where we put it now, but you would suggest finding some more room on what is your side of the boundary and add – no; take . . .

**Ms Gray:** Take Larkspur away and then add in a neighbourhood like Meyokumin or Ekota. Again, there will be some . . .

**The Chair:** I know all those are south of 23rd.

**Ms Gray:** That's correct. Yeah, those are all along that south. That puts them still in the city district of Mill Woods.

**Dr. Martin:** It's also consistent with your notion of mature and recognized community leagues of Mill Woods as a whole. So if we pick up another one there rather than keep Larkspur, it has some consistency with the overall concept. I see. Thank you.

**Ms Gray:** Yeah. In case anyone who's living in Larkspur is watching or reading *Hansard* later, I will say that if I become the MLA who represents Larkspur, that's great. Love Larkspur. I'm worried about the confusion. That's all.

I appreciate that the commission has been doing a lot of really tricky math and design and so on, and I really appreciate the work that you're doing and the challenges that you face.



**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much.

Have I opened it up for questions already? Yes, and you're both done. Okay. Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** No. Thank you for coming out, but I have no questions. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** Nor do I. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Could you just list the ones you know, the community leagues below 23rd Avenue? Just list them for us.

**Ms Gray:** Sure. Yeah. Just give me one second. I will start from the west and go across. On the west we've got the community league of Knottwood, made up of three neighbourhoods: Satoo, Menisa, and Ekota. Those three community leagues are all part of my current Mill Woods today. Then going over just a little bit east is the community league of Millhurst, made up of the neighbourhoods Meyokumin and Sakaw. Then east once more is the community league of Southwood, made up of the three neighbourhoods of Pollard Meadows, Daly Grove, and Crawford Plains. Those are all the Mill Woods neighbourhoods that we have.

**The Chair:** Good. Okay. That gives us something to work with, some flexibility, then.

**Ms Gray:** Absolutely.

**The Chair:** Yeah.

Okay. Mr. Evans, did I ask you?

**Mr. Evans:** You did.

**The Chair:** Sorry; I'm losing track here, the last afternoon.

Okay. Ms Gray, thank you very much. Much appreciated.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Martin Long is not here. Janis Irwin is not here.

**Ms Gray:** Here she comes.

**Member Irwin:** Right now? Aren't I up at 2:30?

**Mrs. Samson:** Right now.

**The Chair:** Oh, we're prompt. We are prompt.

**Member Irwin:** I swear it said 2:30 in my calendar, and here I thought I was super early.

**Mr. Roth:** The 2:10 is not here yet.

**Member Irwin:** Okay. Can I, like, get a second to catch my breath?

**The Chair:** Ms Irwin, we've not complied with the time schedule much during this whole process, so why should we start now?

**Member Irwin:** Holy. Well, I'm glad I didn't stop for a coffee as I was going to.

**The Chair:** Yes. You would have got kicked right off the list.

**Member Irwin:** Okay. Well, give me a second.

**The Chair:** Take a moment. Relax.

**Member Irwin:** Aaron, I wasn't wrong, then. It was at 2:30, right?

**Mr. Roth:** It was.

**Member Irwin:** Good to see everybody in person. I was one of the few people watching last night – well, listening as I was preparing.

**The Chair:** What did you think?

**Member Irwin:** You guys did great. Unfortunately, there's not video; it's just audio.

**The Chair:** Better than Netflix?

**Member Irwin:** I don't have Netflix, so 0yeah, way better.

**The Chair:** Okay. Whenever you're ready to proceed, identify yourself and commence your presentation, but no rush.

**Member Irwin:** Perfect. Well, thank you very much to all of you for your work, and I'm grateful to everyone who has presented virtually and in person so far. It's always an honour to be here on Treaty 6 territory with all of you.

As many of you know, I'm quite honoured to be the MLA for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, a privilege that I've had since 2019. You know, while I've only been in that role for six or so years, I've had the honour of living in the area that I represent for almost 15 years. Although I've spent many of the last years in the core area of our city, my life prior was mostly in rural Alberta. I grew up in Barrhead, and I taught in Bawlf, Alberta, and Forestburg, Alberta, so I believe that I bring a pretty good lens to this conversation. But today I really want to focus mostly on my constituency of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood and on Edmonton overall.

2:00

In my time as an MLA and even prior I've really had a chance to learn a lot about the communities that I'm so proud to represent. You know, I have a bit of a reputation for being everywhere in my riding, so I'm always happy to talk about the neighbourhoods that I represent, the folks who live there, and all the gems that make Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood one of the best places in the province.

I want to just touch on the proposed map and just say that I am pleased with where it lands. You know, it makes sense to keep the riding relatively the same. I'm fine with the addition of the Westwood neighbourhood, which will move the riding to include more communities west of 97th Street, which is a bit of a change because as it stands it's primarily 97th Street which is the western boundary with a slight area where it juts out throughout Chinatown for a few blocks to 101st Street, but generally it's the 97th Street boundary.

I want to touch on the fact that some might argue that a riding like mine should take on additional neighbourhoods due to its current population. I actually think that that's fairly unwise because we predict additional population growth in our area.

Firstly, we will see growth in the core neighbourhoods that I represent through a massive development project within the neighbourhood, and that's the Exhibition Lands redevelopment. At 200 acres Exhibition Lands is Edmonton's second-largest urban infill site. For folks who might be watching at home and not sure where or what I'm talking about, this is the area that encompasses the old Coliseum arena, the Expo Centre, the Northlands racetrack area, and Borden Park. That project, once under way, would add potentially thousands of new residents to our area.

Secondly, the city of Edmonton's focus on densification and infill means that the core communities I represent will surely see

increases in population as we see more and more multifamily housing, garden suites, and other creative forms of housing.

Those arguments make a pretty good case for keeping Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood relatively the same, but I do worry greatly about the proposed combination of two other ridings that represent more core, older neighbourhoods, those being Edmonton-Glenora and Edmonton-Riverview. While adding an additional seat to Edmonton's suburban area is reasonable, I don't think it should come at the expense of a loss of a core riding. If anything, we should be adding in another additional seat to Edmonton.

As the Official Opposition housing shadow minister, we can actually look at the data of housing starts as an indicator of where population is headed in Edmonton. In fact, just this morning I spoke with the media about housing starts. You know, I'm always okay with giving credit to the government where it's due, and in fact, I think Albertans like it when we show collaboration. We in the Alberta NDP do try to support the UCP when we can, when we agree with their legislation and whatnot. I can acknowledge that it's positive to see those housing starts, but we have to look at the impacts of that, so that's where I would hold the government accountable when it comes to affordable housing, as an example.

Those housing starts being record numbers in Edmonton and Calgary: that's more than just a house. A house represents a person, represents a family. So taking into consideration those housing start numbers, taking into consideration interprovincial migration – in fact, Edmonton and Calgary are leading the way with the largest net gains in interprovincial migration. In fact, Edmonton is actually leading Calgary on that one, which is a surprising statistic to some. It's clear that folks are coming in droves to our fair city of Edmonton, and we're seeing multiple indicators showing that Edmonton will just continue to grow. In fact, Edmonton grew by over 10 per cent, more than 100,000 people, from 2022 to 2024. You can imagine, honestly, like, the whole city of Red Deer basically coming into Edmonton, which is huge.

You know, I can say that I love nothing more than having new folks in my community, in our constituency. I knock on a lot of doors in my riding, and every time, you know, I'm blown away by the diversity of folks that I meet, the number of languages spoken and so on. I very much agree that we are strengthened by having so many folks choosing Edmonton as their home, but we need to make sure that those folks have a voice in the Alberta Legislature. I worry deeply that without an additional Edmonton seat not only do we risk underrepresentation; we lose out on an opportunity to plan wisely for the unprecedented growth that we're already seeing.

Furthermore, as you all know, the commission's interim report shows three proposed Edmonton constituencies – the aforementioned Edmonton-Glenora-Riverview, Edmonton-West Henday, and Edmonton-McClung – that would have more than 12 per cent population than the provincial average. Again, I think that's concerning given what I noted earlier with the expected increased population, particularly in core areas.

I just want to end on one more thing, which I do think is worth a mention as I haven't heard anyone speak, really, to this issue in these meetings. My area of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is the second-lowest income riding in the province. I represent a lot of folks who are precariously housed and unhoused, and in the past six years in Edmonton we've seen homelessness numbers triple, with the latest count showing upwards of 5,000 folks on our streets without a home. While I know that houselessness affects all ridings across Edmonton and, of course, across the province, too – rural homelessness is certainly an issue – it has the most significant impact on core urban neighbourhoods that I represent, where we have the bulk of social service agencies.

While this isn't a typical community of interest, it's a community that demands recognition and attention. These are Albertans, these are my constituents, and they deserve, you know, adequate representation and access to constituency services. Often they require it more than perhaps their housed or securely housed counterparts. The reduction of Edmonton's core ridings from six to five has the potential to make accessing those constituency services more difficult and adds more barriers to a community that already struggles greatly.

All that to say – I said a lot there – that we really do need an additional riding in Edmonton. It just makes sense to add one.

I want to again thank you all for considering my submission, and I'm happy to take any questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms Irwin.

Mrs. Samson, questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** Just two items. You know we were only given two ridings, to go from 87 to 89?

**Member Irwin:** I know. You're in a tough spot.

**Mrs. Samson:** Edmonton got one, and Calgary got the other, but the other ridings came from the reduction in the rural, and man, are we hearing about it now, just so you know. There were no more. That's something to keep in mind as you stay in politics and in your political life: you have to keep up with the growth in Alberta to give proper representation to the people. If you can comment on that.

Also, just a quick question. When is the Exhibition Lands starting up?

**Member Irwin:** On the first piece, yeah, I totally agree that you're in a tricky spot. I know that. I believe – was it Bill 31? Christina is still here. One of the bills that came through the Alberta Legislature where the suggestion was 87 to 89. Obviously, as you all know – it's not a partisan point; it just is a fact – we do all we can in the opposition to try to amend and make bills that we disagree with a little bit better, but we're often unsuccessful. Certainly, had it been a different government in power, perhaps we could look at the number of seats, but it's something we can take back, too. You know, I know it was discussed last night with I think it was Scott Sinclair you were talking to – right? – and you mentioned that. So perhaps it's something that you could recommend, saying: we were only given the two additional, so where does that give-and-take take place? Yeah.

On the Exhibition Lands it is primarily city. I know the groundbreaking hasn't happened, for instance. You know, in my office we get questions about the Coliseum, the arena, wondering what's going to be happening there. There hasn't been the movement on the demolition yet, but I can get back to you on the specific timelines. Like I said, it's mostly been city, but I'm someone who's pretty connected to it because it's not only my riding, but it's also close to where I live. As far as the explicit timelines, I'll get back to you on that one.

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay. Great. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah. Two things. You mentioned the development project. I think you just touched on it now. Where is it at in terms of being permitted? It sounds to me like this is a ways off.

**Member Irwin:** Yeah. That's a totally fair point, and I should have acknowledged that. Like, the development, especially the housing

development, is not happening right now, but I just think building for that – and even though . . .

**Mr. Evans:** Has it even been planned?

**Member Irwin:** Yeah. The planning stages are absolutely happening. Again, it's primarily the city, so I'll be full disclosure: I'm not at the table for those conversations. But, yeah, they're certainly in the planning stages. I'll come back to you. In fact, maybe I can submit in a written form to you just around the timelines, and I can double-check with our city councillor, too, to see if there have been any updates.

2:10

**Mr. Evans:** The other question is: you mentioned housing starts, and then you quickly moved to housing starts for all of Edmonton and then into Calgary. I want to know if you can tell me the housing starts for your riding.

**Member Irwin:** Good question. I'll look at Katie. I don't think they break it down – yeah. I'd have to look into that. I don't think they break it down per riding.

**Mr. Evans:** They'll have development permits per riding.

**Member Irwin:** Oh, I guess. Okay. Yeah. Good point. Now I'm curious.

**Mr. Evans:** Me, too.

**Member Irwin:** Especially because it would be interesting to contrast, right? The core versus suburban. Great question.

**Mr. Evans:** Just a follow-up on that one. You were talking about new housing starts, but there is a growth plan. It was a bylaw that they amended to allow infills, backyard houses, et cetera. Are you talking about that being applicable to your area?

**Member Irwin:** Yeah. Absolutely. We're seeing that in my area, in the core neighbourhoods that I represent. You know, we're seeing a lot more. Again, I'd have to pull out the specific numbers, but we're seeing a lot more when it comes to what would have been an older home, one-family home, in a neighbourhood like Bellevue, which is close to the Exhibition Lands, that now there's a fourplex on that lot because, just like where I live in the Parkdale area, a lot of our lots are really large.

A great example is when I moved into my house in 2016, the house behind me was a very old, tall, dilapidated home that only had one family, and now it houses five humans. That's pretty cool, right? I mean, that kind of thing where you might not see it necessarily visually just when walking down the street, but especially when you door-knock, you realize: oh, that's a garden suite; that's a basement suite. We have a lot of folks in my riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood who've upgraded or renovated so that they have legal basement suites as well. You know, that's great for folks who are moving to Edmonton, looking for something affordable, right? It might not be their forever home, but kind of that starter home.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much. I'm staring at the map. We have a screen here, so I'm staring at that.

**Member Irwin:** Okay.

**Dr. Martin:** I have a couple of questions about the footprint and the character of the residential areas. Am I right to think that the area they call Highlands, all the stuff that's east of Gretzky Drive, is more middle-class and affluent developments? You know, the lots just are bigger. It's been developed a very, very long time ago for the most part, so the parcels are with a presumption of bigger homes. Is that still the case?

**Member Irwin:** Yeah. That's certainly the case when you – am I allowed to get up and point?

**The Chair:** Oh, sure. Take the microphone with you.

**Member Irwin:** Oh, wow. I can use this?

**The Chair:** Oh, yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** For a while.

**Member Irwin:** Does that work, Aaron? That works.

Okay. Wow. The teacher in me is really excited by this opportunity. This is great. I didn't even realize we had a map up there. I was so focused on you all.

This area in here is kind of like Ada Boulevard, where you'll see, like, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has mansions, right? That's what people will say to me, like, "Oh, you've got such a wealthy riding," and then I can point to the fact that actually we're the second-lowest income in the province.

So this area here is kind of what we call Highlands – this is me being short – but north of 118 you have neighbourhoods like Montrose and Newton where it remains a lot lower income. But even in this area, even in the Highlands area where it is historically larger homes, some of those homes are coming down, and some of those homes are being replaced by multifamily residences, right? You are seeing a bit of a shift. You know, I want younger families to be able to afford homes in our area. That's one way that they're able to do so.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. If I could follow on with that. Classically Norwood was a very working-class neighbourhood, and the land parcels and the housing stock reflected those needs, so I would expect there's a lot of renovation and redevelopment in that area. So you have quite a contrast throughout the riding is where I'm really going.

**Member Irwin:** Absolutely. Yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** At present, then, the redevelopments are relatively low scale. You don't have high-rises going in, do you?

**Member Irwin:** No, we do. In fact, we're very lucky to have sort of – people often think I don't represent downtown, but I represent the east part of downtown, right? We have the east end of Jasper Avenue, where actually we've seen a number of newer high-rises in the last decade or so come up. We're talking hundreds of units. So we do have some of that. Not so much, though – you're right – like, say, for instance, in the Highlands area or where I live in the Alberta Avenue, Parkdale area.

**Dr. Martin:** My final question, if I might, Mr. Chair, and that is that some presenter – I was looking back through my notes. It wasn't your colleague Mr. Shepherd; somebody else was here presenting. This gentleman suggested that we consider putting the Spruce Avenue neighbourhood into your riding, so the whole area immediately north of the Queen Alex campus. I mean, obviously it's a bit of poaching, but his idea was that it

would help with balance and his estimate of growth in the city centre in the near future.

**Member Irwin:** Yeah. You know what? I would be totally fine with that. Spruce Avenue area is very similar. A lot of the young, you know, families and whatnot live in Spruce Ave. Their kids go to school in my area. For folks who don't know what I'm talking about, Spruce Ave is just this area right here. Yeah. If we were moving westward, before I saw the interim maps I thought that you might have included Spruce Ave as opposed to Westwood. This is kind of Westwood here. That's NAIT. Spruce Ave is very similar in comparison to Alberta Avenue, or Norwood as it's historically called. Like, those neighbourhoods are almost indistinguishable. So yeah, I'd be totally fine with that as well.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.  
Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** No. No questions for me, but thank you so much.

**Member Irwin:** Aw.

**Mr. Clark:** I know. We have a big agenda here today.

**Member Irwin:** Appreciate it.

**The Chair:** Ms Irwin, thank you for being so flexible.

**Member Irwin:** Yeah. Thank you. What's the best way to get back? In my haste of sitting down I didn't even have Internet to fill you in on some answers.

**The Chair:** Check with that young man, Mr. Aaron Roth.

**Member Irwin:** Mr. Aaron Roth. Okay. We'll talk to him just because I would like to get you those specifics around the Exhibition Lands.

**The Chair:** Now, I'm not sure if you're a gambling person at all, but I wouldn't put a lot of money on Edmonton getting another riding realistically. You know, we've got huge pressure. I don't want to leave you with unwarranted optimism.

**Member Irwin:** No. Like, again, I appreciate what you're up against. It's just, you know, seeing this unprecedented growth and seeing the growth in the core areas, I worry deeply about representation for those folks. I don't envy what you're having to balance.

**The Chair:** We will be assisting you in likely giving a recommendation that, you know, two seats was not enough. Plain and simple, it was not enough. It probably should have been more.

**Member Irwin:** Yeah. Appreciate that. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.  
Is Martin Long present? Oh, switched. Okay.  
Mr. Joseph Schow, have a seat. Make yourself comfortable.

**Mr. Schow:** I always do.

Well, I hate to disappoint, but I thought you'd be happy to see me. It's not Martin Long today; it's me. You'll see Minister Long at probably 4:10 today.

**The Chair:** Okay. That is our proposed map. We have changed the figure eight. Okay. Yes.

**Mr. Schow:** Is there a time limit on my presentation?

**The Chair:** I think we've been allowing 10 minutes for MLAs. Yeah.

**Mr. Schow:** Okay. Lovely. Just go ahead and start?

**The Chair:** Please.

**Mr. Schow:** Excellent. Well, thank you very much, and thank you for accommodating the switch in rotation. Minister Long will be joining you later this afternoon. I also want to thank all the members of the committee. This is a difficult job, going around the province and consulting members of the public about their representation and the importance of, you know, having proper representation, proportional representation, and something that is, of course, important to all of us, feeling like our voices are being heard in Alberta's Legislature. So the work you've done so far has been great. Much appreciated, but there's more to do yet before we see, I think, hopefully some variations and changes in the maps, and that's what you'll hear from me today.

2:20

So as a resident of southern Alberta I do want to offer some perspective on the electoral boundary design that prioritizes shared regional identity and common interests over strict adherence to existing municipal borders. I respectfully suggest that an electoral district including areas of the city of Lethbridge, the Crownsnest Pass, Waterton Lakes national park, and the communities of Cardston, Magrath, Raymond, and Stirling would align well with the concept of effective representation as outlined in the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. In section 14 of the act it instructs the commission to pursue effective representation and explicitly permits consideration of communities of interest, including economic, social, and regional interests as well as geography, including natural boundaries and patterns of human activity.

Now, in practice the southern Alberta region described above operates as a single integrated community of interest across many aspects of daily life. Social and family ties in southern Alberta are routinely extended across municipal lines. Over multiple generations residents have lived in different towns within the region while maintaining close relationships with relatives, faith communities, and cultural organizations everywhere in southern Alberta, and I'm an example of that as fifth-generation southern Albertan. It is common for individuals to grow up in one community and later settle in another, marrying someone from a different community, often in or around Lethbridge, without losing those long-standing connections. This shared social landscape reflects the type of social and regional cohesion contemplated by the act in my opinion.

The region is also strongly connected through economic activity. Lethbridge serves as a cultural hub for employment – or rather central; not cultural; also cultural, though, I would say – and essential services in southern Alberta, particularly in sectors such as health care, postsecondary education, retail, agriculture, and professional services. Many residents in Cardston, Magrath, Raymond, Stirling, and nearby areas in rural travel regularly to Lethbridge for work while remaining rooted in their home communities, so what happens in one affects the other. This degree of economic interdependence illustrates a clear regional community of interest under section 14(a).

Now, education further links this region together. Students from across southern Alberta attend the University of Lethbridge and Lethbridge Polytechnic, sharing academic, social, and professional experiences that transcend municipal boundaries. These institutions

play an important regional role, fostering long-term connections between Lethbridge and surrounding communities.

Cultural and faith-based relationships also contribute to regional unity. Many of the churches have long-standing presence throughout southern Alberta, particularly in Cardston, Magrath, Raymond, Stirling, and Lethbridge. This shared cultural and historical background has encouraged co-operation, volunteerism, and civic engagement across communities, reinforcing a strong sense of regional identity.

Geographic features and patterns of movement further support a regional approach to electoral boundaries. Waterton Lakes national park and the Crownsnest Pass are integral to the recreational, cultural, and historical experiences of residents throughout southern Alberta. Just to name one, for example, would be Scouts. They used to be administered through the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and southern Alberta has been a great place for training. These areas are commonly accessed by families, schools, and community organizations from across the region, reflecting shared use of natural spaces consistent with section 14(c) of the act.

Now, the Electoral Boundaries Commission does not require electoral districts to replicate municipal boundaries. Instead, it provides the commission with flexibility to balance population equally with communities of interest and geographic considerations in pursuit of effective representation. Now, in southern Alberta districts shaped around how residents actually live, how they work, learn, worship, and recreate would more accurately reflect this goal than one based primarily on municipal divisions.

So I respectfully urge the commission to consider a regional model for southern Alberta that acknowledges these shared interests and lived connections, and offers representation grounded in genuine common regional identity. I'd also just like to highlight that when you're looking at the third-largest city in the province, it is one that needs effective representation. I think more MLAs representing that area is a good thing.

The new boundaries of 2019 – that was the year that I was elected – if I'm not mistaken, I believe there were two constituencies that were removed from rural Alberta and put into the urban centres. This was a problem that I heard consistently through the election but also I've heard since I was elected in 2019. Concern about representation is likely something you've heard in every presentation and every submission as you travelled around this province, and you're going to obviously hear it from me again because as a city grows, it is important to have a perspective on what that city needs but also the surrounding areas that are dependent on that city. That's why I think that having what you consider a bit of a mix between the city and the rural areas is important because, as I noted in my remarks, a number of my constituents commute into Lethbridge daily for work, for errands, for sports practices, club meetings, and the list goes on and on and on.

I'd also like to say, you know, a riding that makes sense: I think sometimes we look at boundaries in a vacuum and we look at, as I mentioned earlier in my remarks, municipal boundaries explicitly, which then creates some constituencies that maybe follow this letter of the act but not necessarily the intent, which goes back to the purpose of representation. If you live in a constituency, like you're in Calgary, the distance for your constituents to travel to a constituent office or MLA to travel out would be maybe a matter of 15, 20 minutes, but for me my constituency is about three hours tip to tip, north to south, and I actually travel through other constituencies to get to other parts of my own. I love Cardston-Siksika. It's a fantastic riding, and it's been one of the greatest honours of my life to represent it for the last seven years, but I also understand that it's important that the residents of any constituency

in the province feel as though they have access to their MLA, their MLA has access to them within a reasonable time frame.

I'll give you an example. For me to go from Cardston to the northern part of my constituency, it's about two and a half hours and then the same distance back. That is a long way to go that I'm more than happy and I do often, but sometimes I look at effective representation. I know that some of those travel distances aren't going to change, particularly in the north, where my colleagues have to travel much greater distances. I am sympathetic to that, but I would say where possible to take into consideration travel time for constituents to reach their MLA office and also the MLA to reach them. I think that a hybrid of Lethbridge with more MLAs representing that city but also representing the areas that surround that city would be an effective way of doing it.

I also know it's important that the Blood Tribe would have access to Lethbridge. Blood Tribe is a part of my constituency that I represent, and it's been a tremendous honour. There are a lot of services that are relied upon by members of the Blood Tribe in Lethbridge, so having shared interest between those two regions would also be important.

I know that I have about a minute and a half left, but what I'd just simply say is: please take into consideration more than just the letter of the act and understanding the spirit of responsible, effective representation in adding two constituencies where we're putting those. I suspect some of my colleagues in the urban centres are going to be, as I've already heard, advocating for more in the city, but I can tell you that rural Alberta has always and will always punch well above its weight, has always provided for the rest of the province, particularly in the agriculture sector and oil and gas. If we don't have effective representation, we don't have proper services in those areas, people will not live in rural Alberta. We need rural Alberta to thrive in this province because this province not only feeds and powers the rest of the country but in many cases other parts of the world. We need rural Alberta to continue on that legacy.

As a fifth-generation southern Albertan I can tell you that I ran to represent that area and make sure it's effectively represented. I'm here today to make sure that stays the case through the new boundary redistribution.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Schow.

Mr. Clark, any questions?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you very much for being here. It's something we say to a lot of members. It's really important to get that local, you know, on-the-ground perspective, so thank you very much for being here.

I just wanted to ask a bit about communities of interest. You talked about members in your community commuting to Lethbridge, which is about an hour drive, my friend Google Maps tells me. It might be slightly less.

2:30

**Mr. Schow:** Depends on how fast you're driving.

**Mr. Clark:** It depends on your perspective.

**Mr. Schow:** I, of course, always go the speed limit.

**Mr. Clark:** Undeniably. Yeah.

I guess I'm just curious. We had a presenter speaking about the proposed Calgary-Okotoks hybrid. His point was that people live in Okotoks because they don't live in Calgary. That's why they live in Okotoks. And they live in Beaumont because they don't live in

Edmonton, and they live in Sherwood Park because they don't live in Edmonton.

I guess I'm just curious: why don't you live in Lethbridge? Why do you live in Cardston? What's special about Cardston? It feels like they're, you know, different places, I guess. I'm just kind of curious about why you feel like those things could be blended.

**Mr. Schow:** Well, I'll begin by giving you an open invitation, Mr. Clark, to come and visit Cardston.

**Mr. Clark:** I have been there. Beautiful place.

**Mr. Schow:** You've been there? Well, then you know exactly why I live in Cardston. I went to high school in Magrath. My mom's a Harker from Magrath. My dad's a Schow from Cardston. People say that I should live in Spring Cooley because it's a town right between the two. Mr. Evans would understand that joke probably as well as anybody.

I live in Cardston because it is a great place to live, but I also understand the interdependence of the two communities, and that's why I think it's important that there are shared interests, both from a representation standpoint but also from a constituency where people who work in Cardston, who work in Magrath, will commute to Lethbridge, they'll buy their products in Lethbridge, so what happens in Lethbridge does affect rural Alberta and vice versa.

Having those two together is not to say that I should just be living in Lethbridge. That would also run contrary to the point that I made, that southern Alberta needs to continue to thrive with residents who stay in those areas; otherwise, you'd be living in Lethbridge and commuting to Cardston, and that town would cease to exist without the population we have.

To that exact point, I live in Cardston because I want to be there, but I think it's important that Cardston understands Lethbridge and vice versa. That's why I think a hybrid constituency would be an effective way to represent the area.

**Mr. Clark:** Can I ask? We recognize that the Cardston-Siksika constituency was awkward, and you've mentioned something about a figure eight.

**The Chair:** It's not too late to change the figure eight.

**Mr. Clark:** That's right. Yeah.

**Mr. Schow:** Was that a common turn of phrase in the last boundary commission?

**The Chair:** One of the presenters from I think the county said that.

**Mr. Clark:** I think so. Yeah. Perhaps it should have been in the last boundary commission. But my question is: what do you think about the proposed Taber-Warner?

**Mr. Schow:** Sorry. I think I missed the question. The proposed what; sorry?

**Mr. Clark:** Oh, sorry. Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**The Chair:** The proposal we have.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. The current one.

**Mr. Schow:** Well, I think that when you look at that constituency, you are beginning to bring together communities of interest but not necessarily of common historic and religious and communal backgrounds. That line kind of drops off around your Raymond,

Stirling line, so I think your shared interests actually go from that Raymond, Stirling line west, not from the Blood Tribe area east.

I think Cardston-Taber-Warner would be a difficult constituency because you have a lot of different interests. Like, the current constituency I represent, I believe, has 28 or 29 Hutterite colonies, has a large population of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a large Netherlands reformed Dutch congregation community, and then different kinds of agriculture. So, you know, I'm going to hear a whole swath of interests, and it's important to hear those, but I think, where possible, bringing community interests and aligning them so that they are being brought to the table, whether it's the cabinet table or the Legislature.

Now, in terms of the figure eight, I wouldn't be able to speak to the nature or the thought process. That's probably actually a better question for some of the members behind me, you know, who helped put that one together, or at least who were in government at the time, but what I would say is that right now I think that this current iteration would probably be best served if the boundaries moved further to the west. I also look at this and, as far as I can see, it does remove a constituency out of southern Alberta.

**Mr. Clark:** I don't know if it does. I don't think so.

**Mr. Schow:** Well, it depends on how you define southern Alberta.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Okay. In Calgary south.

**Mr. Schow:** Yes. I have heard nonstop about this map, about the lack of representation and the removal of representation, so, you know, I will filter some of those comments as they come to you and just let you know that the people that I represent feel strongly that this map would not help grant them effective representation. We'll leave it at that.

**The Chair:** Okay. Dr. Martin?

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you, and thank you for being here as the MLA for the big hourglass, the figure eight. You certainly travel a lot, but I'm not going there because then we have to compare and contrast with the far north, where the travel is spectacular.

I want to focus on something we've discussed with several presenters, both this week and previously, and that is the economic activities in this area, which is something you pointed out. You suggested that southern Alberta is a single community of interest. Presumably you mean economically as well as culturally when you speak of that, and I want to drill down into the economic piece.

I had a discussion with someone this morning about commuter patterns. It had been put to us some time ago that, gosh, you know, it's not just people going into Lethbridge; it's people coming out of Lethbridge to go to work sites, to the extent that Lethbridge becomes very dynamic for commuters. Maybe even 25 per cent of the daily population, at noon on a Friday, are people that, you know, live elsewhere. So the point about Lethbridge being a significant economic hub and magnet I think is well established.

Historically, the railway lines tied the whole region together, for obvious reasons. This was a way to transport bulk goods, particularly grain; Cardston being a terminal, as it were, the butt end of a railway line. I don't think it goes south or west from there, to speak of. You're bringing grain and bulk freight up to more central hubs, as it were. That must be true for Taber, Coaldale, Fort Macleod, and Pincher Creek as well. All those things are connected by the railway, and for good reason, I think.

Now, railways aside, do you feel that the commuter traffic going in and out of Lethbridge, you know, that comes from Picture Butte, Fort Macleod, Pincher Creek, Cardston, Magrath, Raymond, that

all of those places are participating in the daily throb of commuters in and out?

**Mr. Schow:** The short answer is yes. But I'm a politician, so I never give a short answer. I can tell you that often I have to go into Lethbridge or travel through Lethbridge to get to other parts of my constituency. But there are a lot of professionals who have their offices – doctors, dentists, teachers – who drive into Lethbridge from the surrounding communities. As an example, a bit of an abstract one, Waterton Lakes national park is actually one of the biggest employers of high school and university students in southern Alberta in the summertime. It is, unfortunately, though, because of the workforce and the nature of the school term, really most populated throughout April into kind of late August, mid-September. A lot of those students coming back will live in, you know, Cardston, Magrath, or a lot of them in Lethbridge, and then commute down to work every day into Waterton.

So it doesn't just go out to the surrounding areas into Lethbridge for commerce; it's also the opposite of going into the outside areas. Many of the residents in Lethbridge will live there in Lethbridge and then work on farms or feedlots, ranches in southern Alberta, in the Picture Butte area, Magrath, Cardston. So I think, as I mentioned in my remarks, it goes both ways.

We have a couple of main highways that all lead into Lethbridge. It really is the end point. There's an airport there. There's also rail. Now, the rail access doesn't go quite as far as Cardston anymore. But I can say that the commerce lines are all still there through roads and trucking. You'll see all kinds of trucks going up and down that highway all the time, just because it is the nature of southern Alberta. They're all going to Lethbridge. Then they're coming back into rural Alberta to pick up more, be it livestock or grains or what have you.

**Dr. Martin:** I have one last question if I might, and that is that in order to go from north to south in your current riding, you travel through the Blood reserve, right?

**Mr. Schow:** Correct.

**Dr. Martin:** Is it your impression that they have a strong linkage, commuter traffic or whatnot, with Lethbridge?

**Mr. Schow:** Yes, I agree. There are a couple of access points into Lethbridge from the Blood Tribe, and those are important from a commerce perspective but also for access to health. Some will come into Cardston; some will go to Lethbridge. There are a number of access points into Lethbridge from the Blood Tribe. I wouldn't be able to see them on this map, but if you looked at a road map, you can see that it is . . .

**Dr. Martin:** You have to go into west Lethbridge.

2:40

**Mr. Schow:** Yeah. I go into west Lethbridge, whether it's for seeing a physician, grabbing groceries. It is very much dependent upon Lethbridge.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson, questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** Yes. Thank you for your time today. I appreciate your comments. You know, when I look at the current riding that you're in, and I look at the proposed riding that we're offering up,

am I correct in interpreting what you're saying, that you have a disconnect between what we're proposing, including the Cardston, Magrath, Raymond, Stirling linkage into what was previously Taber-Warner? Like, you yourself don't have a connection? You don't see the communities of interest between that portion of your riding and the existing Taber-Warner?

**Mr. Schow:** Well, I think there's a connection across southern Alberta. As I've mentioned, you know, we grow up, go to high school, strong rivals playing sports and football or basketball, and we say we'll never talk to someone from a different town. Then we graduate high school and go to university and then end up marrying someone from another town, and then you move to the other town. But if you're looking at the current map here as it is on the screen: if you were to divide it up along what I would say are traditional cultural lines and you want to break it into something that is more of a homogeneous group, I would argue that the Magrath, Raymond, Stirling area probably would be better suited going west than it would be going east.

This riding here effectively, with the exception of probably, with my MLA math, maybe – what? – 15, 20 per cent of the entire Alberta border, like, that is spanning a long way east to west. I would say that you'd probably want to cut that in half and, as I mentioned, just go with that Raymond, Stirling, Cardston, Magrath line towards the west, and make Taber-Warner, with some other iterations, part of a hybrid Lethbridge riding of its own.

**Mrs. Samson:** I just want to make one other comment because when we first started off, we heard very directly from people who live in Lethbridge that they wanted it to stay the same, and they told us why. It was not until the end of our public presentations that it came out very clear that there is a group of people who want us to consider the economic agricorridor and to consider dividing it into four, or any other possibility. I heard that loud and clear, too, and then the interim maps came out, and we didn't show that connection of hybrids, yet what I heard loud and clear again was that the people of Lethbridge want to be the people of Lethbridge. They always will be. They want to stay. They don't want to mix it up. So can you comment on that for me?

**Mr. Schow:** Sure. Change is hard. Not everybody likes change, and it takes some time to adapt to it, but what happens in Lethbridge doesn't happen in isolation. It is an economic hub. It's an economic corridor. It's one of the reasons that we've invested over a billion dollars in irrigation infrastructure, because we want to make that Lethbridge east-west corridor and north-south a place that is an attractive jurisdiction or region to do business in southern Alberta, with access to water, rail, roads, air. As the Minister of Trade, I can tell you that it is vitally important for us, as I travel around the world and talk about not just the major city centres but the rural parts of the province that are an attractive place to invest in. Not just for small businesses, which are an integral part of southern Alberta, but I'm talking new, large-scale manufacturing plants.

I can understand that people in Lethbridge want to be just Lethbridge, but what happens in Lethbridge doesn't happen in isolation. I think that is the entire reason that I've talked about hybrid ridings. Having two MLAs in that area who, regardless of political stripe, have done a good job representing their constituents, but I think that going forward Lethbridge would be well served with more MLAs. This is one way of doing it: having hybrid ridings where there are more than just two MLAs representing the third-largest city in the province.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thanks for your time today.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans?

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah. Aaron, could you put up the proposed Cardston-Taber-Warner? Thank you.

We heard from Minister Hunter this morning, and he made a good point with respect to Livingstone-Macleod including Coaldale and the lack of connectivity between Coaldale and the balance of what's in the proposed Livingstone-Macleod. I agree with his assessment on that. With respect to the proposed Cardston-Taber-Warner electoral district – you can see where Foremost is – at the point of Foremost would you agree that the corridor of flow, so people in Foremost: some would gravitate to Medicine Hat, some would gravitate to Lethbridge?

**Mr. Schow:** Yeah. You're probably looking at half and half. I don't know a lot about the community of Foremost, but what I could say is that the surrounding area that you're looking at, where we have Warner, Stirling kind of on that line all the way down to Coutts on the highway line, further west of that would all for sure go to Lethbridge, and I think east of that you'd be looking at Medicine Hat, depending upon road conditions.

Also have to take this into consideration, something that a rural MLA would probably understand as well as anybody, that you need to get to your constituents. Sometimes the conditions are less than ideal, so you're going to take the path of least resistance. Weather patterns actually come into play when you're talking about this and how Cardston won't get all the snow that other parts will; sometimes it gets more. You take main highways. If your best access is a longer one but it's a better road and you're going to go to Medicine Hat, they have to take into consideration how you're going to drive those main highways. Traffic patterns to me are actually quite important because it's really just ease of access to your constituents.

**Mr. Evans:** If you look at our boundaries, we've used counties. You can see the county of Forty Mile is what divides up – for example, why Bow Island doesn't go into Medicine Hat-Cypress. Then over on the west side of the proposed constituency we have the MD of Taber boundary, and then we have the county of Warner boundary. How important are those counties or those municipality boundaries in your mind? Are they dividing boundaries between communities of interest?

**Mr. Schow:** Well, I'll use my own constituency as it stands, Cardston-Siksika, where I have parts of the MD of Taber but not all of it. Some of the interests of the MD of Taber probably better align with others and would be more of a cohesive group. I don't think it's uncommon to break constituencies up even if you're drawing lines across county or municipal boundaries, but when you look at the makeup of southern Alberta in the area that I live, cultural boundaries I think would supersede your municipal boundaries. I would find that you get a lot more cohesion and interest in those cultural areas, not so much just upon municipal lines.

Now, I live in Cardston. You know, I identify as a resident of Cardston, but I went to high school in Magrath. I have family from all around the area. To me, when it comes to high school sports rivalries, those boundaries matter, but when it comes to local dances, everyone is going to each other's dances. Everyone is going to each other's community events. Everyone is going to go visit each other's families at different times of the year, Thanksgiving, Christmas.

An overemphasis on municipal boundaries I think is the wrong approach. You can't just completely disregard it, but I think

exclusively looking at that or just looking at population sizes – again, you need to have effective representation, and sometimes that requires the ability to travel a reasonable distance to get your constituencies, northern Alberta excluded, because I know that they do have some very, very large ones. If I was to counsel the committee, it's to focus on cultural boundaries particularly and the groups that would be of interest with each other and then have greater effect. Like, I don't think what happens in Lethbridge, you know, just anecdotally, has as big effect on Foremost as something in, say, Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mr. Schow, we've got a bit more time. I'm going to jump in here. Well, yeah, you probably know the pressures. There's huge opposition to hybrids in some, especially in Calgary. You know, it's just a campaign against hybrids. They're a legitimate tool. Someone cautioned us this morning: don't overuse them. That person was right, but we've underused them, in my view, historically. So that's a big pressure point for your proposal.

2:50

Also, the population: no matter how you – I've tried to discourage people from focusing on the average because that's not our goal. Our goal is to meet the target of minus 25 per cent to plus 25 per cent. But even then, if you use that rather large target, it's hard if not near impossible to justify putting a seat in the rural, you know; all the extra seats have to go into the urban areas. What I find, quite frankly, frustrating with what your colleague has termed, which I like the term, the “quad hybrid model” for Lethbridge is that all it does is give us another problem. It doesn't give us a solution. In other words, I have no map; I have a proposal as to, those of you who propose this quad hybrid, how we do it. Do you understand my frustration?

**Mr. Schow:** I can see it, and I think . . .

**The Chair:** And your response is going to be: well, that's your job; do it.

**Mr. Schow:** No. I think my response would be, you know, that you kind of understand the nature of even drafting legislation, right? Like, somebody will ultimately be unhappy depending on the size of the group, but you have to make decisions that you think best fit the spirit of the problem you're trying to solve. In this situation, this quad hybrid model, you're looking at growth patterns as well. Our population is growing at the fastest rate of any jurisdiction in the world, with the exception of South Sudan, at about 4.4 per cent in 2024. So you have to look at those things, the growth patterns.

I'd also go back to the conversation about effective representation. If you're living in a city centre, you could be representing a large number of people that may even exceed, not saying it should, your plus/minus 25 per cent, but access to that MLA is usually a matter of minutes depending upon traffic patterns. But if you're looking at rural Alberta, access to that MLA is either a Zoom call, a phone call, or you're driving several hours potentially in bad weather – actually, most likely in bad weather, which is how we do it.

I think it's important to note – and I've acknowledged this as well – that your job is an impossible one as a committee because you have to draw lines based on what you believe the intent of the legislation is, the intent of what you're trying to accomplish. People will ultimately be upset. I understand that. You know, we can overcome, we can adapt, but I believe that the province is best served and the regions that I've referenced in my presentation are



best served with what would be considered, you know, a rural-urban hybrid model in southern Alberta.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, then let me show you the stakes or illustrate, I think, the stakes we're at. When it was first presented to us by – I'm not sure – you know, someone in our Lethbridge hearing back in late May, he gave us a good demonstration. He said: look, consider the south as a band. Cypress-Medicine Hat and Brooks-Medicine Hat are kind of a good match. I could be wrong, but I thought he even acknowledged that there might be pressure to take a riding out of the south. So he said: move from seven ridings in the south to six; you've got the two in the southeast corner, and then create four, the quad hybrid model for Lethbridge. Do you acknowledge that if we were able to accede and create a quad hybrid model for Lethbridge, that means taking a riding out of this region; in other words, moving from seven to six?

**Mr. Schow:** I'd have to look at a map or a breakdown on that, but I'd go back to my original point, which is: do you have effective representation for the city of Lethbridge and the surrounding areas that are dependent upon that city? If you do, then you've accomplished your job. If it doesn't, then either I have failed to articulate myself well enough, or we have all failed to understand each other. But you talk to the good people of Cardston-Siksika and the surrounding areas, and they'll tell you how important Lethbridge is to them but how important living in a small community is to them as well.

**The Chair:** Okay. Good. Well, we've kept you a while, Mr. Schow. Thank you. You're excused. Feel free to remain to hear other presentations.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you very much to the committee members. I wish you all the best.

**The Chair:** Martin Long is coming later, right?  
Rakhi ...

**Ms Pancholi:** Rakhi.

**The Chair:** Rakhi?  
Rakhi Pancholi. How's that?

**Ms Pancholi:** I like the way you said it, actually.

**The Chair:** Welcome again.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you very much. Let me know when you're ready. I'm going to guess you're going to pull up the constituency there.

**The Chair:** We're ready. Is it Edmonton-Whitemud specifically you wanted to deal with?

**Ms Pancholi:** Correct. Edmonton-Whitemud. Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. Please proceed.

**Ms Pancholi:** Okay. Well, good afternoon. My name is Rakhi Pancholi. I'm very proud to serve the constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud as MLA, and I appreciate the opportunity to present once again to the commission today on behalf of the people in my riding in my city of Edmonton and, of course, on behalf of our province. I want to begin by thanking all of you as commissioners for the work that you've done and that you're still doing to develop an electoral boundary map for the province of Alberta that ensures the principles of effective representation are respected and met.

I'll begin by noting that the changes proposed in the interim report to my constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud reflect my expectations and, frankly, what makes sense given the geographic boundaries of the riding – Whitemud Creek, the North Saskatchewan River, and the Anthony Henday – the communities of interest in the riding, and the stated population target. The addition of the communities of Magrath and Mactaggart, currently part of Edmonton-South, to Edmonton-Whitemud also makes sense as historically these communities actually were part of the riding of Edmonton-Whitemud. Overall, I believe the proposed boundaries for Edmonton-Whitemud are reasonable and will serve the people in the riding well.

However, as a proud Edmontonian I feel compelled to make a few other submissions for the commission's consideration. The first is that, given the rate of population growth in Alberta since the last boundary review, there is no doubt that Alberta's electoral map requires more seats. As members of the Official Opposition myself and my colleagues raised concerns and voted against the government's Bill 31, which only allocated two new seats to the electoral map, on the basis that Alberta's population growth warranted much more than that. The city of Edmonton alone grew by 200,000 people since the last time a boundary review was done, and the city of Calgary grew by over 400,000 people since then. Given the population average of around 55,000 that the commission is working with, that population growth in those two cities alone could be argued to be warranting at least 11 new seats.

However, the provincial government only allocated two additional seats to the map, so the commission ...

**The Chair:** How many did you propose?

**Ms Pancholi:** Sorry. How many did we propose?

**The Chair:** Yeah.

**Ms Pancholi:** Specifically on behalf of Edmonton-Whitemud?

**The Chair:** No, the opposition. What did you recommend for a number of seats?

**Ms Pancholi:** I can't remember exactly. Well, sorry; we didn't propose a number. What we did argue was that that was not adequate to reflect the population growth.

**The Chair:** You're speaking to the converted here.

**Ms Pancholi:** Yeah.

As the provincial government only allocated two, the commission had the challenging job of determining how to best redraw the boundaries to account for that degree of population increase with so few additional seats.

It's my view that the proposed boundaries in the interim report correctly identified that new seats must go to the parts of the province that have seen the most significant and rapid population growth, that being the cities of Edmonton and Calgary. While population is not the only indicator of effective representation, the commission's report states that it is a key and objective starting point and states that "having electoral divisions of relatively similar population is sensible, indicating the equality of voters."

I appreciate the commission's efforts to bring most ridings closer to the provincial population average than they exist right now. However, I will note that under the proposed boundaries in the interim report the city of Edmonton continues to be an outlier with an average variance 3.5 per cent higher than the provincial population average while other parts of the province are closer to or still well below the provincial average. Seven Edmonton ridings are

more than 8 per cent above the provincial average, and four of those are more than 11 per cent higher than the average.

3:00

You only have to turn on the news right now to see how the provincial government's failure to plan, fund, and deliver public services to account for population growth has affected the people of Edmonton. From a state of crisis in our emergency rooms to overcrowded schools and inadequate infrastructure, Edmontonians are rightly concerned about whether their voices are effectively represented with the appropriate number of MLAs to reflect the growing population of the city of Edmonton. For this reason I believe the commission should give consideration to adding at least one more seat to the city of Edmonton given the limitations on your parameters.

Secondly, in my review of the interim report I noted that in the reasons for the commission's recommendations on page 26, the commission took consideration of the challenges and concerns in representing rural and northern communities. I'll admit that what I found interesting is that those concerns primarily focused on the challenges that MLAs face in rural and northern communities in representing their ridings, not the challenges of the people they represent. The report highlighted the difficulties in the MLA having to travel long distances between communities to attend events and meet constituents, and this is undoubtedly a significant challenge that affects representation and makes it more difficult for the MLA. But there are also unique challenges that arise in urban, densely populated ridings that affect an urban MLAs ability to effectively represent their constituents and their constituents' ability to connect to their representative.

I remember a conversation that I once had with the now MLA for Central Peace-Notley, where we swapped stories about how long it took for us to each to drive across our constituencies. For him it was four hours. I told him how I could do the same thing in my riding in under 15 minutes, truly a different experience, I acknowledge. However, I also represent almost twice as many Albertans as he does, people who may be new to the city, to the province, or the country; people of diverse cultural, heritage, and language backgrounds; people competing for limited access to housing, schools, and health care; people who may have just moved into the riding or will move out before the next election even takes place: twice as many people who expect me to be accessible and present.

The interim report noted that the typical rural constituent may be older and place greater demand on their representatives, but I can tell you that in a densely, highly populated riding like mine, constituents also have high demands. For example, they expect their representatives like me to physically knock on their door multiple times between elections. As someone who has knocked on doors in rural ridings and seen the surprise when you turn up unexpectedly at the farmhouse door, I can tell you that is a different expectation than what some rural or northern MLAs face.

I believe the commission should not just consider the challenges placed on MLAs to represent rural and northern ridings but also the challenges placed on constituents trying to be heard by an urban MLA who is serving a much larger number of people with highly diverse needs. This cannot be addressed, as suggested in the interim report, by simply hiring more staff. Urban constituency budgets are stretched thin to serve a larger number of constituents, and office costs, especially rent, are much more expensive in urban areas.

I do not in any way want to disregard the challenges faced by my colleagues outside of major urban centres, but I encourage the commission to know that there are challenges inherent in effectively representing constituents in urban ridings as well, and

those challenges are faced not just by the MLA but by the constituents themselves.

Third, I know that the commission continues to consider and hear submissions on the issue of hybrid ridings. I want to highlight the importance of considering communities of interest when determining the boundaries for ridings on the edges of cities and to argue in favour of respecting municipal boundaries to minimize hybrid ridings. While Edmonton-Whitemud is not itself on the edge of the city, we do border two of the largest ridings in south Edmonton that are right on the edges, Edmonton-South and Edmonton-South West. So in Whitemud we have a front-row seat to see which communities the people of those ridings are most connected to. Although they may have geographic proximity to some municipalities south of Edmonton, the people of Edmonton-South or Edmonton-South West travel north into the city of Edmonton for many of their connections.

Many of those kids in those ridings attend schools in my constituency. They attend Lillian Osborne, Riverbend junior high, George H. Luck, Monsignor William Irwin, and Brander Gardens schools. These families are part of the school community in my riding. The community leagues of Blackmud Creek and Heritage Point from Edmonton-South are part of the southwest area advisory council with community leagues in Edmonton-Whitemud and Edmonton-Rutherford. The community league of Windermere in Edmonton-South West is part of the Terwillegar Riverbend Advisory Council in Edmonton-Whitemud. People from those southern ridings shop at the grocery stores and farmers markets in my riding. They bring their kids to play hockey and to attend swimming lessons at the Terwillegar rec centre in my riding, and they attend church in my riding. Their commute to work and home relies heavily on the Anthony Henday and Terwillegar Drive that go through Edmonton-Whitemud.

I raise these examples to show that while many of the people living in the ridings on the southern edge of Edmonton may have close proximities outside of Edmonton, their connections, their communities, and their services are in the city. They travel into the city more so than out. In other words, their community of interest lies within the city of Edmonton, and that is where they should remain connected through their electoral riding and their representation. I've used south Edmonton as my example because, of course, it's where I see most, but I'm certain that this is applicable to many other communities on the boundaries of urban centres and that the commission should continue to try to minimize hybrid ridings as much as possible.

Lastly, I would also like to take a moment to address an issue that I understand has been raised in written and oral submissions to the commission, and this is the suggestion that riding numbers should be based on the number of eligible voters in the riding or based on voter turnout rather than population. I believe that both of these suggestions undermine the principles of fair representation and democracy.

In our democratic system the right to vote also includes the right not to vote. Now, let me be the first to say that I will always push everyone to vote in all the elections that they are eligible to vote in, and it is one of the hardest things for me to hear when a constituent tells me they don't vote. I usually can't resist taking the time to try to persuade them about why voting is so important. Regardless of whether I convince them or not, I always respond to those constituents by saying: even if you don't vote and if you didn't vote for me, I represent you and I serve you.

Voter turnout is a fluctuating measure that is affected by many factors: accessibility of voting information, how easy it is to vote, the weather, availability of advance voting, how pressing certain issues are, how effective political parties or candidates are on communicating their positions, and how engaged the public is at a

given moment in time. Citizens have the right to express also that no candidate or political party has earned their vote. None of these justify diluting or limiting that person's representation in the Legislature. That person is still a resident of the community accessing public services and deserving of full representation. In my view this is equally the case for those who are ineligible to vote.

In Edmonton-Whitemud over 10,000 of the people that I'm proud to represent are ineligible to vote for one specific reason. Why? Because they're kids. The absolute best part of my job, the part I get the most joy out of, is speaking to students, especially grade 6 students, about provincial government and my role as an MLA. Over the almost seven years I've been an MLA, I've spoken to thousands of students, and every single time I do, I walk them through how many of my constituents are ineligible to vote. I ask them who they think makes up the majority of that group of that people. They always yell: kids. And I ask them: do you think that I represent you even though you don't vote? And the best part is that they always yell: yes. I tell them that, in fact, kids in our community are the most important people I represent because everything I do in the Legislature affects them, from health care to education, clean air and water, making sure they're safe and have the skills they need to be successful in jobs and as citizens. And, of course, the choices we make today will affect them long into the future, when they'll be the ones making the decisions.

I represent all people in my riding: those who didn't vote for me, those who did, those who chose not to vote, and those who can't vote. That includes children and, yes, that includes permanent residents who may not be eligible to vote but are still entitled by law and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to access provincial services. All of the people who live in my constituency deserve representation because they all live, work, learn, contribute, volunteer, seek support, make connections, spend their money, and are neighbours in our community, and they have ideas about how to make that community better and how to make our province better. I urge the commission not to consider any recommendations that would codify the creation of classes of Albertans, those who deserve representation and those who do not.

Thank you for your time this afternoon and for all the work you're doing to make Alberta's electoral map a more fair place, and thank you for serving the people of Alberta. I'm happy to take your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that presentation.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

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

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for coming out today. I appreciate your time again.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** I just wanted to share this with you, that we have been asked numerous times, particularly by Edmontonians and Calgarians, for another riding. I agree with that, and we talked about how we only had two, but I think what makes it even harder for us is that the extra riding that Calgary got came at the expense of the rural, and the heat from that is very great. Because of the context of your presentation today – you talked about a variety of things – I think that that would be something that I would like you to continue to talk about. That decision made to only give us two: the cost of that was a lot greater than I recognized until I got down to this stage.

3:10

**Ms Pancholi:** Yes. I think, as I said, as an MLA my colleagues and I spoke very clearly about the fact that two additional ridings given the significant population increase we've seen in this province was simply just inadequate. That does force, I think, the commission into a position where they are looking at how you accommodate for an enormous increase in population not just in Edmonton and Calgary but in various parts of the province, but really significantly in the cities. There's no way to make that math work without taking away seats from other parts of the province.

Now, I certainly don't want to see, you know, other parts of the province feel underrepresented either. It's not a great position for anybody. That kind of change is difficult whenever we see boundaries change, but we have seen an extraordinary degree of growth, as Alberta has in the past before, but this is really remarkable, and we have to I think begin from that objective standing point which the commission identified in its report. You begin with population because that is objective. That is the most extraordinary factor that I believe has changed since the last time the boundary review happened, and that's where we see that you have to make some difficult decisions.

I believe strongly that there could have been many more seats added to the electoral map that would have more fairly provided that distribution of population, which would have allowed for some rural ridings to not be changed or to be eliminated, but unfortunately the government made a choice of only two, which puts the very large cities competing with each other for a limited extra seat.

**Mrs. Samson:** Exactly.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin, any questions?

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. Just a comment. I think you make a straw man argument when you're talking about eligible voters and saying we don't want to have classes of voters. That has nowhere occurred in the discussions that we have heard.

**Ms Pancholi:** Okay. Thank you.

**Dr. Martin:** I mean, I think your thought experiment is taken to a place that the facts haven't.

**Ms. Pancholi:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** This is ideal, so thank you. We've been at this for a while.

The interim report is based on population, our numbers based on population, and I agree with your broad point that population, exactly as your point said – how many kids did you say there were in your constituency?

**Ms Pancholi:** Just over 10,000.

**Mr. Clark:** So 10,000. If I look at Whitemud, it's a little over 53,000, so 20 per cent.

**Ms Pancholi:** Well, that 10,000 is based on the previous 2021. That was based on 45,000. I actually think that it's probably higher than 10,000.

**Mr. Clark:** So it's probably higher. I think it's an essential point, and I don't want it to get lost. I agree with you, and I think we do need to make sure that we are accounting for – and I believe we are. When you look at that number, 56,752, in the proposed draft,

Whitemud includes the population, like you say, whether they vote for you or not. I just wanted to get that point down. Thank you very much for being here.

**The Chair:** Let me do something really bizarre and tell you that, you know, I don't like going to the dentist. In fact, for a while there, I thought that I went to the dentist too often.

**Ms Pancholi:** Too often.

**The Chair:** So I slowed down. I stopped going twice a year. I was just there a little while ago, and that wasn't a bright idea. Nobody likes to go to the dentist, and very few people like hybrids, but hybrids are the electoral dentist in our world, and we have to make use of them.

**Ms Pancholi:** That's why I said in my position to minimize it to the extent possible. Right? Because I recognize . . .

**The Chair:** And that's why I said I stopped going to the dentist, and it didn't work.

**Ms Pancholi:** I think it's to avoid, and I think the interim report has shown that. To the greatest extent, you know, I think probably I would disagree about a couple of other pieces, but overall I think it recognized the need to keep municipal boundaries together where it made sense, right? Obviously, when you get into the smaller cities and smaller urban centres, you're going to have to look at things like also looking at that population number that you're trying to meet, that provincial average, also looking at maybe the fluidity between certain communities that takes place a little bit more. I think my argument was that when you look at – I can't speak for Calgary, although I spent a fair bit of time there, but I will say that in Edmonton . . .

**The Chair:** Don't worry. There's a lot of people who have spoken in Calgary on that.

**Ms Pancholi:** I'm sure there's lots of people who will speak for Calgary. I will say that in Edmonton, you know, there is some fluidity between, obviously, the city of Edmonton and some of its metro areas around, for sure, but to do some sort of artificial boundaries when we have enough population, quite frankly, within the city of Edmonton, there's no need to kind of create a hybrid where it's – I look at south Edmonton as a perfect example of that, too, right now, Edmonton-South and Edmonton-South West being very large constituencies. With only the creation of one new riding there would be no need to then take one of those ridings and stretch it into, you know, another community, another municipality because there's simply enough population and community of interest within the city to keep those boundaries together.

**The Chair:** Right. That's one way to look at it. But if we, you know, have a riding in the south of Edmonton or we create one that's well below the average and we can lop a place like Devon into it, or something like that, I mean, that's a natural and not unrealistic or unjustifiable creation. Would you agree?

**Ms Pancholi:** I mean, you're going to be looking at a map as a whole, right? I don't need to tell you the cascading thing that you do, right?

**The Chair:** You use a word that we use a lot.

**Ms Pancholi:** It's easy to say in isolation, "Yeah; Devon can fit more with there, or Devon could be . . ." but I know the effect that

that has when you change that and you move into something else. I guess my submission is that as much as possible keep the city, at least in southern Edmonton – I look at those communities, knowing those communities, knowing the people in those communities as I do, and I know that they see more connection within the city. They're not likely going to Devon for their services. They're coming further into the city, which is sort of the argument I was trying to make.

Absolutely, there may be times where that makes sense, but to the extent possible. I think you've done that with the city of Edmonton to really show that it is possible to keep the greater city boundaries and respect those boundaries and keep those communities together.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much, and thank you for the give-and-take and for your gracious . . .

**Mr. Evans:** I have one question.

**Ms Pancholi:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Oh, Mr. Evans woke up.

**Mr. Evans:** Exactly.

I want to know about the population growth in your riding. The proposed would have you at 56,000. Are there development projects that are taking place? Are there slated ones? Is there something on the horizon?

**Ms Pancholi:** I think the population increased by including the communities of Magrath and Mactaggart.

**Mr. Evans:** I just want to know if there are developments.

**Ms Pancholi:** No, actually. Not a whole lot. One of the things about – and I presented at the previous submission . . .

**Mr. Evans:** What about infills?

**Ms Pancholi:** Infills are going to happen at some point. It has not become a major challenge in my riding as of yet. We do have some older neighbourhoods where that may be taking place. You know, obviously infills are a major discussion in both Calgary and Edmonton. I do think that there are parts of the community – I think about Brander Gardens in particular, Rhatigan – where we might start to see that. It's not really happening much right now.

We don't have a lot of free land open for development either in Edmonton-Whitemud. Almost all of it is already, you know – already the residential areas are coming up. It would be infill where growth would happen. I anticipate that, without being an expert in this area, is happening sometime in the future and not quite having hit our community yet. I imagine the next time a boundary review comes along, we might be having a different discussion and saying, "Yes, we're seeing some of that infill happen," because we do have a lot of families as well. We are seeing sort of just that age of the population in the riding that, you know, some empty nesters and some of those big homes might start to be sold off and maybe we'd be looking at infill. I could see that happening for sure.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thank you.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms Pancholi.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** I believe that takes us to Jasvir Deol.

Good afternoon, sir. We were just speaking of you, actually, about an hour and a half ago. Make yourself comfortable.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Edmonton-Meadows is right next to Mill Woods, right?

**Mr. Deol:** It is. Southeast.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Okay.

Okay. As soon as we get the map up there, then feel free to tell us – obviously, you’re going to speak on Edmonton-Meadows and anything else you wish to tell us about the map as well.

**Mr. Deol:** Yeah. A little bit about the general process. City of Edmonton, maybe.

Ready?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, sir. Good afternoon. It’s my pleasure to have the opportunity to provide feedback to the Alberta boundaries commission. I would like to begin by sincerely thanking the commissioners and staff for taking on this important and complex task. This work requires careful judgment, extensive consultation, and strong commitment to fairness, and I appreciate your efforts to listen to Albertans across the province while striving to create fair and effective boundary maps.

3:20

I commend the commission for recognizing rapid population growth in many regions of Alberta, particularly in the city of Edmonton. The proposal to add an additional seat in Edmonton south to account for this growth demonstrates a clear commitment to fair and effective representation in our democratic system. At the same time, it’s important to note that Edmonton has also lost the Edmonton-Riverview riding. According to the census metropolitan area data Edmonton is now the sixth-largest city in Canada, and its population growth shows no signs of slowing. This reality is especially evident in areas such as Edmonton-Meadows. To ensure fair representation, Edmonton’s representation in this Legislature must keep pace with the city’s continued growth. Even without requesting the restoration of the Edmonton-Riverview riding, CMA data clearly supports room for an additional riding in the city of Edmonton to reflect these demographic realities.

As the commission has noted, representation by population is fundamental to ensure that citizens’ voices are heard democratically. Population balances directly affect the ability of elected representatives to advocate effectively for their constituents on critical issues such as education, funding, transportation, infrastructure, health care access, public safety, and other essential public services.

Historically Edmonton-Meadows has exceeded the provincial average. In 2017 the riding’s population was approximately about 11 per cent higher than the provincial average. Since then the growth has accelerated significantly. By 2025 the population of Edmonton-Meadows had increased to approximately 67,736, the latest figures available, placing it more than 23 per cent above the new provincial average of 54,929. These figures clearly demonstrate the scale and pace of growth in the area and the challenge of keeping the riding closer to the provincial average to ensure fair and equitable representation.

I recognize that the commission’s proposed boundary changes in southeast Edmonton were particularly challenging. Growth in this part of the city has been rapid and concentrated, making it difficult to balance current population pressure with future growth projections. The proposal to create a new riding in southeast

Edmonton reflects careful consideration and a genuine effort to address both present imbalances and anticipated growth. Under the proposed boundaries the population of Edmonton-Meadows would be reduced to approximately 53,318, allowing room for future growth.

While I understand the rationale behind this approach, I have concerns about one specific aspect of the proposal, the removal of Larkspur community from the Edmonton-Meadows riding. I know you have heard about this a lot. Removing Larkspur results in Meadows Community League being split between two ridings, which undermines the principle of keeping communities of interest intact. Larkspur is closely connected to Edmonton-Meadows socially, geographically, and practically. Residents share schools, transportation routes, shopping areas, recreational facilities, and community services, and they strongly identify with Edmonton-Meadows. Moreover, Larkspur does not naturally align with the demographic, cultural, and community composition of the Mill Woods based riding to which it has been assigned. The historical and community ties of Larkspur are far more consistent with Edmonton-Meadows. I have heard clear feedback from residents expressing concerns about this change and a strong preference to remain within Edmonton-Meadows.

For those reasons, I respectfully request that the commission reconsider this specific boundary adjustment and allow the Larkspur community to remain within the Edmonton-Meadows riding. I believe this modest change would better preserve community cohesion while still supporting the commission’s broader objectives of population balance and effective representation.

Thank you again for your time, your service, and your commitment to a boundaries review process that reflects the democratic values of fairness, inclusivity, and respect for communities across Alberta.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Deol.

We need to have a break because of technical issues. Can we do at least the questions first? Okay.

Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you so much. Your colleague, who was great, was here earlier today and made exactly the same case. I guess if the only thing we change is moving Larkspur into Edmonton-Meadows, what effectively we do is that we flip the two constituencies. Currently Edmonton-Mill Woods is set at 59,673; Edmonton-Meadows is currently set at 53,318, the idea there being there’d be a lot of growth near the Henday or the boundary, which is the same thing. That was the theory. We’re sort of trying to overpopulate a bit of Edmonton-Mill Woods because it was a bit more built out, underpopulate Edmonton-Meadows because it’s a little less built out. However, it’s kind of a distinction without a difference. It means that you would have Larkspur and additional population, Mill Woods would have lesser population, but we still have two constituencies. I guess that’s really the question. If we were to just put Larkspur in, are you okay at 59,000 constituents with likely, you know, significant growth? By the time we do this again in eight years, not us, it’ll be quite a bit over. Is that okay?

**Mr. Deol:** Yeah. As it was framed many times – you know, I understand it’s a bit challenging. I look at this issue two ways, you know, from my own riding perspective and the feedback from the constituents. Also, I don’t know which way the boundaries commission wanted to look at it. The city has grown, actually. Specifically, I know lots of growth is on the outskirts of the city and from the north. The majority of the growth is in the south part of the city. When we see the population variance, like, the one argument I would probably have – I don’t know how strong that is.

The average population per riding is higher, actually, in the city of Edmonton when you compare it to all other regions of the province. So that is one way to look at the issues.

I mean, I tried to give a nice argument in my presentation. You know, there is still room for another riding, and there's a way to create it. I know when the new boundaries proposed Edmonton-Meadows – a significant part of Laurel, actually a big chunk of that, is becoming a heavily dense population area. So that's one way of looking at the issue when addressing your broader goals and maybe bringing in another seat. But if there is nothing else – there's nothing else, probably – and that is the last resort, I would prefer to do that.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah, Laurel is challenging because all of Laurel is 24,000 people, and then the area that we've got in Edmonton-Meadows: that portion is 16,000.

**Mr. Deol:** Half of the riding.

**Mr. Clark:** You know, again, we've tried to leave southeast relatively slightly underpopulated. A lot of growth down there. So it's a bit of a puzzle, frankly.

I think I have an answer to my question. Thank you.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.  
Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** No. That was my question, too. We've had this conversation with your constituency manager, if I recall, as well as MLA Gray, so I've heard the to and fro on Larkspur. Thank you.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** No questions, but thank you so much for coming out this afternoon. I appreciate your time.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** No questions. Thank you.

**The Chair:** You know, Edmonton MLAs often say, "We need another seat," but nobody wants to give up any of their district, so what good would it be?

3:30

**Mr. Evans:** It would be the empty seat.

**Mr. Deol:** In this case, yeah. Very good question, Justice Miller. You know, it's very hard to ask, first of all. In my case, yes, there was room. If there are new seats coming in, I don't know which way the adjustment will come in. But as Mr. Clark has mentioned, Laurel itself, like, with a population of 24,000 people. Oh, my God. I tried to help my colleague in the by-election. We three of us were stuck all three weeks in the Laurel community only, just reaching out to people.

There are two ways, you know, maybe that would help. One extra seat would probably help chalk down the fairness around boundary redistribution in Edmonton-South East. The second solution is, as Mr. Clark asked: I don't know; 59,000 in Edmonton-Mill Woods, or 59,000 in Edmonton-Meadows? One or the other.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, thank you.

We're going to take a break. Normally we kind of soldier on through, but for technical reasons we'll break for 10 minutes.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, sir.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Thank you for presenting.

[The hearing adjourned from 3:31 p.m. to 3:41 p.m.]

**The Chair:** Peggy Wright.

**Ms Wright:** Yes. That is me.

**The Chair:** Okay. Let's reconvene, ladies and gentlemen and commissioners.

**Mrs. Samson:** We're missing two yet.

**The Chair:** Thanks for coming up at my request. I don't know where you are on the time sheet here.

**Ms Wright:** I was scheduled for 3:50.

**The Chair:** Oh, so you're five minutes early.

**Mr. Clark:** You have 60 per cent of the commissioners.

**Ms Wright:** And 1 per cent of the tech folks.

**Mr. Clark:** We could ask 100 per cent of the questions.

**Ms Wright:** There you go.

**The Chair:** Appreciate that we are about an hour and a half from closing or maybe two hours from closing, so if we're a little punchy or rushed . . .

**Ms Wright:** It's okay. No, no. That's fine. It's like the end of a school day. I taught for 23 years, so I get it.

**The Chair:** Yeah. I was going to use that.

**Ms Wright:** It's when you bring out the games.

**The Chair:** That's right. Dodge ball, anyone?

Okay. I am assuming the commissioners can hear us.

**Mrs. Samson:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. We have Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview up. Ms Peggy Wright, you're here to present, so please proceed.

**Ms Wright:** Thank you very much. I appreciate that. I'm here today to follow up on several observations from the interim report and to offer some additional context that I hope will be a help to you as you make all your deliberations over the next few months. First of all, I wanted to express my appreciation for the consideration given to the proposed redraw. Expanding the riding by moving north rather than taking a piece here and a piece there from several different areas creates a much more cohesive result.

The proposed boundaries, at least to me, feel very natural as well as intuitive. Using the railway on the west, 167th Avenue to the north, and the river and city limits along the west and southern edges ensures the lines reflect existing geographical features as well as significant transportation corridors. This matters because boundaries that follow residents' lived experiences better reflect how those communities actually function. Adding part of what is currently Edmonton-Manning, the neighbourhoods of Fraser and Kirkness, also makes sense because these neighbourhoods already

have clear ties to the community leagues, just as one example, within Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

When I presented to you almost a year ago now, I stressed the importance of maintaining communities of interest, and this remains paramount. I'm reminded of my colleague MLA Deol's remarks, which are quoted on page 22 of the interim report, when he said: "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." I believe that the proposed boundary changes for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview do indeed support that.

The additions also reflect and help sustain the strong diversity of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. As I noted also in the first round of hearings, diversity is indeed a defining feature of this constituency. Over one-third of the residents identify as visible minorities, and I have no doubt that that number will do nothing but continue to grow over the next decade. Recognizing that diversity and the complexities it can present is essential. In my view we must avoid decisions that risk marginalizing communities that are already underrepresented. I also believe that Quarry Ridge, while a relatively new area, is a good fit and a welcome addition.

Residents of all three of these communities are already part of the rhythm of life in northeast Edmonton, whether that's shopping at the Belmont Sobeys, visiting the Clareview rec centre, or spending time at the Beverly farmers' market, or even Kuhlmann's. Given Quarry Ridge's proximity to the new Northeast River Valley park, it aligns well with the central and southern portions of the riding that also include Hermitage and Rundle parks.

As you all know, and I know you've heard this a lot, Edmonton is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Canada. Our population increased 18.3 per cent over the last five years, bringing an average of 3.38 per cent growth per year, and while this pace may moderate, it's clear that Edmonton will continue to grow. Even at a more modest 2.5 per cent annual rate, that would see us reach a population of 1.5 million around 2035. Given this reality I strongly encourage the commission to consider future-proofing by adding an additional seat to Edmonton. I'm sure that's not a surprise to you. I know you've heard it lots. The proposed redraw of central Edmonton, specifically the amalgamation of Glenora and Riverview, might offer a logical starting point.

Turning specifically, though, to Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, the interim report projects a population of 54,440, as noted on page 51, based on expected development, and certainly I expect the riding will exceed that estimate within the next decade. Several developments are already under construction or in advanced planning stages while others are at an earlier point. Like MLA Hoffman I've brought some pictures for you that highlight some of the current and upcoming development. I don't know if you've got the appendix that I provided or not.

Aaron, do we have the extra pictures? Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Ms Wright:** Yeah. What I've done is I provided a picture and then an idea of where it was actually taken from. That first example on the very first page is Victoria Trail and Hermitage Road, two major intersecting roads within the community. When this apartment complex started, I thought it was going to be sort of three or four stories. It clearly is not, and I would expect that there could be easily about 700 people in this particular apartment complex on its own.

On the second page what you have there is Hermitage Road, which is an old Domtar site. It's been rezoned at the moment, and certainly at some point there will be some developer, I'm sure, that

comes in and snaps it up. Again, you could have as many as a few thousand folks there.

On the third page is an example of some condo developments that have happened in Clareview Town Centre just really behind the Clareview rec centre. It's really in the Kirkness area.

On the fourth page from that same area, just about a half block away, you have both apartment buildings as well as multifamily units similar to townhomes.

On page 5 I've given you an area that's actually very, very massive, and over the last number of years it's been developed. It's hard to see, but in there are some newer homes. This area, as you can see, is in the process of being sold, and I have no doubt there will be some development there. This is just off of 50th Street right before the Yellowhead. That's where that one is.

And then Beverly is also seeing a new seniors' residence as well. We expect that there will be somewhere between 300 and 400 folks living there. One of the things that I can say as well is that this particular area is not particularly well-served if you are a senior and you do need a residence as you age. So I would expect that in addition to what we're seeing in Beverly, at some point in the next decade we will see something similar happen in Clareview as well.

Then the last page is simply an example of the many infills that are currently happening in Beverly itself. The picture that I've given you is a picture of a sixplex that's going in. There are many, many, many skinny homes. There are many of the sort of, four- and sixplex developments happening as well, which is interesting because Beverly certainly is one of those neighbourhoods where those old 1940s war houses are. It's fascinating that on what I would consider to be a relatively tiny lot, you can actually put a four- or sixplex. So certainly the population will continue to grow in both the Beverly and the Clareview sides of the riding.

In addition to that, there were two recently awarded school surplus sites which will add around 270 new housing units. These particular surplus sites are everything from a one-bedroom to a four-bedroom either townhouse or apartment. So they expect that families will be moving in. It could be over 400 people. It could be a few 100 more than that as well. West of the Hermitage Road Domtar site that I talked about is also an expanding development of single-family homes and row houses. Every time I go over there, it seems like there's another house or another 10 houses that have been built in the interim. Together, that Domtar site, which is now vacant, along with this other site, I would imagine, will be seeing thousands of people in the next decade for sure.

3:50

As both presenters and commissioners have noted, much of Edmonton's newest population growth is indeed occurring outside the Henday. However, I also believe it's important to consider that along with current and future new development, densification has arrived in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. Growth might not be as rapid right now in the northeast as it is in the southwest particularly. However, it is steady, and I believe it will do nothing but increase. The proposed riding of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview is well positioned for continued development and a corresponding population increase over the next decade.

As I finish, I really just want to convey to all of you a very deep appreciation for the work. I know it's an incredibly complex job. I've been listening to the hearings over the last couple of days, and to balance all of the disparate needs of all of the different folks you've heard from is quite the mammoth task. I do very much want you to know that your work is very much appreciated, and we are all very much grateful that you are sitting there and we are sitting here.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comments? Well, maybe that's unfair because you missed part of it.

**Mr. Evans:** No, I'm ready to go.

**The Chair:** Okay; go. That energy drink helped.

**Mr. Evans:** It doesn't hurt. School surplus sites. I don't really understand that concept. Maybe if you could tell me that, and then if you could show me where that is going to be in your constituency.

**Ms Wright:** Sure. This one?

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah.

**Ms Wright:** Okay. Right now the ones that have just been allocated are . . .

**Mr. Evans:** When you say allocated, what does that . . .

**Ms Wright:** They've been given over already to housing developers, and they're kind of in the later stages of consultation within the community. There's one in Belmont and one in Overlanders, which is very close to where our office is. This is the Henday here, I think. The Overlanders is somewhere around here, and then Belmont is in this area over here. Soon there will also be a couple of surplus sites in the Beverly side as well. We've got some school modernization as well as consolidation that's occurring right now. So there will soon be two Catholic schools that will be sitting empty. At some point infrastructure will decide when it's time to let those go and, I'm sure, work with the city of Edmonton much like they have with the two on the Clareview side right now.

**Mr. Evans:** But if there's going to be all this growth, don't the kids have to go to school?

**Ms Wright:** Well, they do. Because it's a consolidation of schools, what they're doing is taking a junior high and two smaller elementaries and making one big K to 9 school in the Beverly side. They're doing it right now on the St. Jerome school site. St. Jerome will now have an old building, and I don't know what the new name of the school will be, but there will be a new school on that same site, which also means that St. Bernadette's, which right now is a junior high, and St. Nick's, which is an elementary, will soon be vacant.

**The Chair:** Okay. School allocation sites: that's the term to deal with old schools.

**Ms Wright:** I think so. Yeah. Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Your presentation was very clear, so I don't have any questions on that. I just want your observation on when you saw the interim report: did you look at the whole thing, like, cover to cover?

**Ms Wright:** I did, and I will confess that I skimmed it. Certainly, you know, the loss of the riding around Slave Lake and that sort of thing to make the bigger Mackenzie, that's an incredibly tough decision to have made in terms of all the balanced work that you have to do.

**Mrs. Samson:** You know, I hear you, and that's been a pressure point for us. I think what I want to hear, and I heard it from a few presenters but probably not enough: did you think, because one of the biggest things we heard was hybrids versus no hybrids, that the interim report was good, bad, fair, balanced? Specifically on that.

**Ms Wright:** I thought it was as fair as it possibly could be. I know, having listened to my colleague earlier, that because you were only given those two extra ridings to work with, there are many, many limitations. You know, you're not quite as free to maintain some of those rural areas or to add all of the seats that we as Edmonton MLAs would like to have for the capital city. I believe that it's as balanced as it could have been.

I also know that there are people in some communities that were – distraught isn't the word, but they would certainly like to see some changes made and would like you to consider other factors. I certainly do understand that. Given all of those complexities and the needs of everyone the work that you're all doing is really to balance the needs right now that exist in the province but also to think about the future over the next decade and what may or may not occur. You know, it's making sure that there is fair and as equal as possible representation available to each and every resident of Alberta over the coming years, and it's an exceptionally difficult task.

Yeah. I thought it was as fair as it could be, but of course, speaking as an Edmontonian, I would like one more riding in the city. But I understand. I do understand.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you. I appreciate your comments even though I had to fish for them.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much, and thank you for your presentation and your handouts. I wanted to direct your attention to the areas in the north of this interim proposal, the area north of 153 inside the Henday and then the area north and outside. I mean, both of those areas are a bit of a mixed bag. Historically there's been sort of small farming, and then in the bigger area in the north it's really a mixed bag. You've still got quarries. You've got a couple of golf courses. You've got greenhouses. You've got a bit of suburban-style development. It's a real mixed bag. Do you anticipate rapid residential pods going up in both of those areas?

**Ms Wright:** Certainly that area that's closer to 167th, Quarry Ridge: I know that not all of the lots have houses on them at the moment, but my understanding is most, if not all, of those lots have indeed been sold. Right now I think the eastern sort of part is like the older part of Quarry Ridge, and I know that there have been some new houses kind of as you come towards Meridian, I think it is. So there is this massive kind of open area at the moment, and I would suspect, certainly within the next two or three years, we will see additional housing development there since those lots have indeed been sold.

In terms of the two communities that are south of 153rd, and that's Fraser and Kirkness . . .

**Dr. Martin:** No. Just north of 153rd.

**Ms Wright:** Oh, just north of there?

**Dr. Martin:** That little triangle.

**Ms Wright:** Oh, okay. Yeah. I would think it would be very, very similar. Certainly, one of the advantages – although there are parts



of Quarry Ridge that don't really hold true in terms of what it is I'm about to say. In the northeast of Edmonton, for the most part – there are exceptions – housing is a wee bit cheaper than it is in some areas of the city. When I was looking at those lot sizes, for instance, they are no longer the mammoth lot sizes that you see in that older part. They tend to be much more narrow, kind of your standard rectangle. So I would suspect that they will be a little bit easier for folks to afford, and that's one of the reasons why I have no doubt that soon that population in that area north of 153rd will increase.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**Ms Wright:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** I don't have any questions for you, no. But I have to say I very much appreciate the handout materials. That really does help, you know, focus our mind.

I was going to ask you, but I looked it up and I figured out that everything south of the river is not people. It's geography. It's . . .

**Ms Wright:** Gravel and the garbage dump. Yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** A city has to have those.

**Ms Wright:** A city does, in order to function. It's important infrastructure. It is. Yeah.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you.

**Ms Wright:** You're most welcome.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you for presenting.

**Ms Wright:** You're most welcome. Thank you so much.

4:00

**The Chair:** Please remain to hear other presenters.

Our next presenter is a little earlier according to the schedule, but I think you're the only one here, so please come forward. Oh, no. Right. Okay. Flip a coin. Who wants to come first?

**Ms Sweet:** I got up to Peggy, so it depends. Do you want to keep going northeast, or do you want to go Hinton, Edson, and things?

**The Chair:** West Yellowhead. You were scheduled at 2:10. You don't get penalized for being late, but Mr. Schow filled your spot.

**Mr. Long:** And many more spots.

**The Chair:** Good. Okay. Identify yourself and tell us what we need to know about West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Long:** Oh, that could go on for days. It's a beautiful riding. I am the MLA for West Yellowhead, Martin Long, and I thank you hon. members of the commission for your service and for the opportunity to speak today.

I wish today to highlight the deep-rooted connections between the communities of Jasper, Hinton, and Grande Cache in particular. These communities are not simply geographic neighbours; they are linked by essential transportation routes, shared economic interests, service dependencies, and common cultural and historical ties. I would like to echo many other submissions that you have received which stress the importance of keeping these three communities together. The voices of residents, local leaders, and stakeholders all point to the same

conclusion. Fragmenting these communities would weaken effective representation and disrupt regional cohesion.

These communities have transportation corridors and arteries of connection like the Yellowhead highway, highway 16, that links Jasper and Hinton. It's essential to travel, commerce, health care access, education, emergency services, and MLA accessibility. In fact, Personally, I live in Woodlands county on highway 43 but, recognizing this essential corridor, my office is on highway 16 in Edson actually because this is the natural progression for folks in my riding inevitably when they need to the services in Edmonton even. Again, I recognized that right away and, hence, put my office in on that corridor.

The driving distance from Hinton to Jasper is 77 kilometres. It is the main lifeline connecting daily life, services, and economic activity. Jasper to Grande Cache is 209 kilometres via highway 40. It's the only reliable northern connection supporting resource, tourism, and social links. Highway 40 and the Yellowhead highway corridors are critical to the movement of goods, of people, and of services.

An important concern I would note is the proposed Jasper-Banff riding relies solely on highway 93 for connectivity. This highway is dangerous. It's mountainous and prone to seasonal closures. One just happened recently. I believe it was a five-day closure due to weather, and there are wildlife and avalanche risks in the winter months in particular. Closures are common, leaving Jasper isolated from Banff and other parts of Alberta.

Personally speaking, I was in southern Alberta doing some work and had to get back to an event in my own riding. It was during the fall months, and I went to use the highway 93 corridor, and inevitably it was closed. There was a traffic accident which closed lanes in both directions. So I've been privy to the issues with 93 closures personally. This reality does underscore the impracticality of grouping Jasper with Banff for electoral representation.

The communities have shared interest and shared challenges. The geographical and social cohesion: Jasper, Hinton, and Grande Cache form a distinct region oriented westward into the Rockies, geographically and socially distinct from other parts of Alberta. Residents routinely travel through Hinton for groceries, specialized medical care, and government services. Travel and service patterns confirm that these communities function as a single interdependent region. In fact, Community Futures West Yellowhead services all three of those communities and Edson as well. The housing provider Evergreens Foundation is servicing those communities also.

Jasper and Hinton: you know, tourism drives Jasper's economy, and along with CN access, obviously, Hinton supports industrial activity, including forestry. Both communities share labour pools, infrastructure, and regional services. Many folks working in the community of Jasper will choose to live in Hinton and travel. Grande Cache is historically mining based, now economically tied to regional corridors and tourism gateways. Bus services linking Grande Cache to Hinton highlight the practical interdependence of these communities.

The shared services, medical access, and remoteness of these communities sees medical and specialist care often requiring travel through Hinton. Education, social services, and emergency response similarly rely on these corridors. Jasper and Grande Cache are remote from other urban centres. Splitting them from Hinton would disrupt essential access.

There are three distinct regions along the mountains: Jasper and Hinton; Banff, Rocky Mountain House, Sundre; and Canmore, Kananaskis. Jasper and Grande Cache cannot stand alone. Their connectivity through Hinton is essential. Hinton acts as the northern gateway town to the mountains and to the national park. Natural

subregions, forest reserve areas, and transportation corridors naturally divide three areas along the mountains: Jasper, Hinton in the north; Banff, Rocky Mountain House, Sundre in the central; and Canmore, Kananaskis to the south. Holding Jasper and Hinton together with the rest of the north is critical for the effective representation of the people in all three regions of the mountains.

For historical and cultural context: shared settlement history, rail development, logging, tourism, and Indigenous heritage bind these communities. Electoral boundaries should respect historical, social, and economic cohesion, not merely geography.

The recommended position that I have would be to maintain Jasper, Hinton, and Grande Cache within the same electoral division, reflecting the shared transportation corridors and practical travel patterns; the integrated economies, tourism, resources, and services that depend on Hinton for medical, educational, and administrative access; the cultural, historical, and social communities of interest; the safety and reliability of transportation routes, avoiding dangerous reliance on highway 93. This would ensure effective representation and aligns with the principles set out in the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act.

In closing, I do thank you for your careful consideration. I commend the commission for keeping the Yellowhead corridor intact and for respecting the commercial, industrial, cultural, and historical ties with these communities. I urge you to listen to these submissions and maintain these communities together. Fragmenting them would not only ignore their interdependence but also create practical challenges for representation, safety, and access to essential services.

Thank you again for your time.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much. I really appreciate you being here, and I appreciate and respect the challenge that's presented by being an MLA for such a vast area. I guess I'm curious on a couple of things. Jasper council wrote us and said that they would prefer to be connected with Banff and Canmore because they felt that connection in the national park was really important.

I went and looked up B.C.'s most recent electoral boundaries report from 2023, I think, and they have a similar set up in the Revelstoke and then Columbia – I can't remember the exact name – where they deliberately tried to put national parks together. [interjection] Yeah, Yoho. Yeah, exactly. There are a number of them for that reason, that rationale, that one representative would be able to understand that national park kind of dynamic.

I guess I've got a couple of questions, but I'll just start there. Do you feel that Jasper – just to be clear, Hinton, Grande Cache, and Edson are currently together in West Yellowhead. We had heard that feedback and wanted to make sure that we respected that route, but drawing a line at the national park felt, notwithstanding this distance, like it made a logical connection back to Banff. I just wanted to get your perspective on that.

**Mr. Long:** Well, thank you. I would hesitate to speak for the council, obviously. That's their purview. I do know that numerous community members and organizations shared an opposite perspective. I would say that I myself believe that the more advocates you can have for the national park communities, the better it is for the appeal to the federal government.

4:10

I would also offer that, you know, in six years of representing the community, the feedback consistently has been that Jasper is not like Banff. They do share a common interest with tourism. However, if you have spent time in both communities, I will say

that I have a particular fondness for Jasper due to the fact, mainly, that it is not overly commercialized. It is a small community with a small feel and, obviously, welcomes two and a half million visitors annually, who come back because you feel like you're at home while you're on a holiday, basically. I do know that has been a sentiment that I've received numerous times from community members, that they are not striving to become another Banff. They are happy being their unique community.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. You know, undeniably, we have received various feedback, and it's fairly balanced. There's a lot of pro and a lot of con, so definitely something we're weighing.

I just want to get an understanding of how as an MLA you handle the geography that you have to serve. Presumably you do as much as you can in person, but that's just not practical to actually meet everybody all the time in person. Do you find that you're using, like, Zoom meetings and cellphone calls and things to sort of set up or just have conversations and connect and then arrange to meet at a critical time in person? I mean, how do you kind of handle all that?

**Mr. Long:** Actually, the primary activity is in person for my riding. It's rural communities. It's better received. Again, I did actually purposely put my office on the highway 16 corridor because it is so frequently used for folks who travel to Edmonton in my riding. You know, I know that the Banff area, they would travel to Calgary, for instance, right? But no, we use Edmonton, so when folks are using services in Edmonton, they have ease of access to my office through that. Primarily I get in my car and I go to those communities myself because that is how I show my respect to my constituents, meeting them in their own homes and in their own communities.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you, and thank you. I have had some experience of working with the superintendent and his research staff over the years, and I can endorse your view that they have not fully embraced tourism at the level of their colleague in Banff and that they want to maintain a much more wilderness feel for Jasper national park.

I really want to dwell on the connectivity between the town of Jasper and Hinton in terms of the economic relationships. Obviously, historically it always was true, not least because of the railway, but now, much more importantly for tourism and for economic reasons and exacerbated by the fire, people are living in Hinton, working in Jasper, and vice versa. I wonder if you could talk about that, those layers of connectivity.

**Mr. Long:** Yeah. Thank you for that. It is multilayered, obviously. You know, in all of the aftermath of the fire I had a lot on my plate advocating for this community and the people who were devastated by the disaster. And one of those things I advocated for was a regional service between Jasper and Banff for busing because so many people were going to be relying on the Hinton community for housing temporarily while maintaining their work in Jasper. That's one element.

The CN service: the hub is Jasper, obviously, and many of the employees of that service do make their home in Hinton and go back and forth between those communities. Actually, for the future of the region I'm aware that there are numerous considerations being made for tourism development further in the Hinton area, which will actually further intertie those two communities.

**Dr. Martin:** A supplemental. I take you north on 40, speaking of tourism. You've got several provincial parks. They're starting to, I think – there's a lot of tourism there. People go fishing at Switzer. I've gone fishing in Pierre Greys Lakes. Then there are these enormous wilderness parks. So there's huge potential for growth there quite apart from where it's located, Hinton or Grande Cache. I think you're sitting on high tourism potential. It's my personal view. What's yours?

**Mr. Long:** I could take your entire day boasting about my riding and not only the beauty that exists but the untapped potential. Actually, again, I've been part of so many conversations about the tourism opportunities. There's an incredible Indigenous group in Grande Cache that is working on expanding their tourism capabilities. In fact, if we want to talk a little bit of the history, the people who moved to Grande Cache were . . .

**Dr. Martin:** "Moved" is quite the verb.

**Mr. Long:** Yes. Sorry. They were forced out of Jasper Park, you know, a hundred and something years ago, the Indigenous community, so they made their way to Grande Cache and made their home there.

Yeah. The untapped potential is starting to unfold. You're right. That corridor: I mean, if you haven't been, you need to. That is one of those life-changing trips that you take, driving that highway 40 corridor north to Grande Cache. Then you have the peaks of – I don't think there's a community like it in this province or anywhere that I've lived. You are surrounded in that community by the mountains, like, on all sides. Yeah. It's an exciting future ahead, especially on that tourism development piece.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you, sir.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your time today. I appreciate your insight into this very unique area. I am interested in the Banff, Jasper connection because of the national park. Not that Jasper wants to become the next Banff, but because there must be challenges in staffing, housing, tourism, marketing, you know, wildfire prevention, all those kinds of things – like, the list goes on – would Jasper benefit by a connection into Banff in terms of a learning situation where the people of Banff or whoever it is could say, "Well, we've done this, and this really works" or "We're going to do this kind of marketing program, and this is really going to help the region to attract employees"? Would we be doing Jasper a disservice by not letting them have that opportunity to hook up to Banff?

**Mr. Long:** I would say that Jasper, because of their remoteness, is used to figuring it out Jasper's way, frankly. They do have an incredible team at Tourism Jasper, and historically they have figured it out. Again, the uniqueness of Jasper compared to Banff, where you're within driving distance to Calgary in, you know, that whole corridor – we're four hours away from Edmonton. We are very remote. I would say personally that Jasper forges ahead. That's their outlook. They are so unique compared to Banff, in particular, that I don't believe that connecting them like this would actually be a huge benefit.

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans?

**Mr. Evans:** No. No questions. Thank you very much for your submissions.

**Mr. Long:** Thank you, John.

**The Chair:** Mr. Long, I reflect back to when we first started working on our interim report, and I can tell you that – obviously, it's unanimous – I was a big fan of the Banff-Jasper proposed riding. Increasingly, maybe it's a little unfair to use the term "balkanization." I thought: well, it's basically a federal riding almost. But as we heard feedback, we heard significant feedback from what I would call alpiners in the industry. An individual in Calgary was very strongly opposed to it and explained the difficulties in dealing with the federal park. Then we heard someone from your constituency – his name escapes me – and I think he was from Hinton.

4:20

**Mr. Evans:** Scholz.

**The Chair:** Mr. Scholz? Yeah. Something like that.

He said: "Look, we want to mirror the success of Banff, Canmore. Hinton wants to be the new Canmore to Jasper." He made a fairly powerful argument for keeping that together. You've added Grande Cache. I should know my geography better, but Grande Cache is a significant factor in your existing riding. Tell me about Hinton becoming Canmore.

**Mr. Long:** Again, I would say that, similar to Jasper saying they don't want to be Banff, most Hintonites would say that they don't want to be Canmore, but they want to reach their potential.

**The Chair:** Their what?

**Mr. Long:** They want to reach their potential.

**The Chair:** Yes. Okay. Good.

**Mr. Long:** You know, historically Hinton has been well serviced by conventional industries. Like, they've had mining and forestry, and tourism is sort of starting to unleash.

**The Chair:** A different type of tourism. A wilderness tourism.

**Mr. Long:** Yeah. They don't have, I would say, some of the regulation that you would find in the national park, for instance. Like, you can do off-highway vehicle usage in the Hinton region. We have sandhills in the Hinton region and, yeah, a lot of fishing. What will be interesting is the development as some of the old coal mines, the historical lands are actually reclaimed. I often think – I've spent a lot of time going around the province, but there's a one old coal mine in the province that got turned into a golf course, actually, and it would be interesting to see if those sorts of ideas come forward in the coming years for the Hinton area.

Yeah. It'll be an interesting path forward given that a lot of the uses that, again, are restricted in certain areas of the province might not have the same barriers in that Hinton corridor.

**The Chair:** Okay. Anything else from any of the commissioners?

Okay. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Long. Much appreciated.

**Mr. Long:** Thank you so much for your time.

**The Chair:** Thanks for your flexibility with your colleagues.

We have five minutes till the scheduled appointment of Heather Sweet unless she wants to come up earlier.

Okay. Ms Sweet, please proceed and tell us what your suggested name change is, first of all.

**Ms Sweet:** Okay. Great. Thank you. My proposed changes. I'll be honest, when I received the interim report, I wasn't surprised by your recommendations. My population is quite high in my riding. My population will be substantially high in the next eight years in

my riding to the point where I believe it will be a new riding, and it will become two in eight years. I'm not saying today. I know that many of my Edmonton colleagues have been talking about the fact that we do need more seats in Edmonton, and I would agree with that. The reason that I say that is that I do think we need to be forward thinking – which I believe you have been, and thank you for your work – in the population growth.

The north side has always been the slower side when it has come to Edmonton's structural plan. They very much focused on the south side, getting out to the airport, doing all of that work. They've run out of space, so now we're on the north side.

I brought the Horse Hill area structural plan with me, which was approved in February 2025 by city council. This is just Horse Hill, so I just want to be clear that this is only on the outside of the Anthony Henday in the northeast corridor of my riding currently. It does not include the Pilot Sound growth that is already happening within McConachie and Cy Becker on the 167th piece on the west side of my riding. This is just the east.

What I can tell you is that since 2025, so in the last year, just in this one neighbourhood of Horse Hill we've already had 791 units built in one neighbourhood, which is 2,250 new people, and then in another neighbourhood I've already had 205 homes started, which is 574 people, for a total of 2,789 in just one neighbourhood of the Horse Hill piece. The McConachie side, which is my west side of my riding, is 12,172 new people, and then Ebbers, which is my little sliver around my CN Rail line, has a growth of 1,612 people, so I am growing quickly. Project Ebbers: it's just below the commercial area. There are tons of apartments and condos that are being built in that corridor right now on the rail line that don't have people in them as of yet. The projection based on this structural plan for Horse Hill alone is a projected population growth – and this makes me shake just thinking about it – of 73,882 people.

**Mr. Evans:** In Ebbers and Horse Hill?

**Ms Sweet:** In Horse Hill alone, just this part that you can see on the screen right now.

**Mr. Evans:** Seventy-three thousand.

**Ms Sweet:** It's 73,882 people is what the projected growth will be in the next eight years. That's what that area is supposed to be built into. I don't think it's going to be longer than eight, but your adjustments – I'm just validating all of your work – are 100 per cent accurate. That 167th Avenue build-out will be a brand new Edmonton riding in the next cycle if not just outside of the next cycle.

The reason I'm saying this is that this is why having another Edmonton riding on the south side is going to be so important, because the north side is going to face the exact same population crunch that the south side is facing now, my hope being that I'll be able to advocate for more structural foresight and maybe not as much congestion as the south side, but we are building outside of the ring road now.

I'm sad. I have to put it on the record. I am sad that Fraser and Kirkness will be moved into my amazing colleague's riding in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, but sustainabilitywise you just can't. My population, even with your adjustments, is still going to be 59,000, and I'm growing so quickly that even after this next election cycle I'll be over 60-whatever again. Like, we're just growing. We're building four new schools in my area because we're recognizing the population growth. My schools are full. We are bursting at the seams already.

I would, if you had any further questions – like, this structural plan has been done very, very well and I can get deeper into it. This,

which is page 32 of the structural plan, actually gives you those numbers populationwise based on high-density, low-density breakdown if you're nerdy and actually curious about it. I just saw the number and was like: oh, okay; well, that's good.

**The Chair:** Can you maybe exit out of that and put your riding back up?

**Ms Sweet:** Aaron can probably do it.

**The Chair:** Would you mind going up and taking the mic and just describing where that area is for us?

**Ms Sweet:** Actually, do you want, specifically, the Horse Hill area that you want to look at?

**The Chair:** Yeah. Just start with that for now.

**Ms Sweet:** Actually, if we can go to page 30 on the structural plan, they give us a neighbourhood breakdown, and this is probably easier to look at unless you want to see the whole riding map as well.

Oh, thanks, Aaron. That's so great. You passed it.

**Mr. Roth:** Oh, did I?

**Ms Sweet:** Yeah. Go up one more. Keep going.

**Mr. Roth:** You said 30, right?

**Ms Sweet:** Yeah. Aren't you at 34?

**Mr. Roth:** No, I'm at 25.

**Mrs. Samson:** I think that one there.

**Ms Sweet:** Oh, I'm looking at the wrong numbers. There it is. So these are the neighbourhoods that are projected right now, and I will go up because there was the one question about Quarry Ridge, which is actually going to go to Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

4:30

**The Chair:** Okay. So if we took this map and just started at my right-hand, top spot and drew a line, that would encompass your riding and then bring it down.

**Dr. Martin:** No. Only half of it.

**Ms Sweet:** No. So this is just the northeast. This right here is 153 Avenue. This is where you're talking about Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview going all the way up to, which actually splits a little bit of Quarry Ridge off.

**The Chair:** That's 167?

**Ms Sweet:** This is 167 Ave right here. So this is where Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview will be with the changes, and then you go all the way over here and down here. This is the corner of McConachie. This is the rail line.

**Mr. Evans:** That's where Ebbers is?

**Ms Sweet:** Ebbers is like, yeah, kind of down in here. This would be Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview as well. Ebbers is along here. This is the CN Rail line that goes up, so there are a ton of condos and apartment buildings being built along here as well, and then the Anthony Henday is right here. So this is all housing and, like, some industrial and this commercial area, and Costco is going in here. I shouldn't put that on

the record, but Costco is going in here. This intersection is going to be interesting. Then this all will stay the same, but with potential . . .

**The Chair:** That's 66 Street?

**Ms Sweet:** No, 66 is still like all the way over here.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Ms Sweet:** Like, this is this is all new, new. This is my prime agricultural land. That's all my farmers.

**The Chair:** Okay. Could I get you to repeat yourself saying that that area structure plan? You're projecting that area alone to be 73,000 in eight years?

**Ms Sweet:** Seventy-three thousand eight-hundred and eighty-two. That's what the structural plan projection is.

**The Chair:** And there's no one there now?

**Ms Sweet:** Oh, no. There are houses in there. It's just that they're building. So Marquis right now is actively being built up.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Ms Sweet:** They have builders in there working on all of that stuff. Quarry Ridge is primarily finished. It's all zero-lot lines now. Lots of that's going on. Neighbourhood 1 is a question because that's where Alberta Hospital is and where the agriculture university research projects are, so it's kind of weird to be listed as a neighbourhood. I think it's more that bottom piece under Quarry, which is Gorman's neighbourhood, that's already built.

So I think part of it is that it's 73,000 in total. There are houses that are built already.

**The Chair:** And are accounted for in our numbers?

**Ms Sweet:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Ms Sweet:** What I can tell you is that the ones that probably aren't are just those 2,789 that have just been counted in the last little bit that just finished off this year, 2025.

**Mr. Evans:** The ones in Ebbers?

**Ms Sweet:** No. The 2,789 are counted in Horse Hill. Those are just these last sixish months. Those houses all sold and a ton of people came in, and then Ebbers is 1,612, which is apartments, primarily high-density.

**The Chair:** Okay. I don't know if I cut you off or were you finished your presentation?

**Ms Sweet:** No. I'm going to nudge you little bit about the name change again, though.

**The Chair:** Oh. Well, sure. Yeah.

**Mr. Evans:** That's easy.

**The Chair:** That's the fun part of our job.

**Ms Sweet:** Yeah. It's really confusing for people when we have two ridings that are named exactly the same.

**The Chair:** Because the feds messed it up.

**Ms Sweet:** Yeah.

**Mr. Evans:** What do you think about every riding being called "Strathcona" something else?

**Ms Sweet:** Right?

**Mr. Evans:** Because we love Strathcona, in and out of the city.

**Ms Sweet:** No. We're north-siders. Like, you've got to be really careful about bringing up Strathcona.

**Mr. Evans:** Is there a history there?

**Dr. Martin:** Oh yeah.

**Ms Sweet:** We're north side. There's a history there.

**Mr. Evans:** Really? Like, gang signs and the whole thing?

**The Chair:** So what's your suggestion?

**Ms Sweet:** So we did a fun, like, engagement poll just to see what people would think. We did bring up Horse Hill because there was a recommendation from the panel. It didn't get a huge response. I would caution, if you were thinking about using the Horse Hill name, around the history of what Horse Hill actually means from a colonial perspective, the fact that it was primarily used to keep horses from the fort away, so there is some tension around that title and the history of the land.

**Mrs. Samson:** Keep horses away from the fort?

**Ms Sweet:** Well, they penned the horses up in that area, the settlers did, so that the Indigenous people wouldn't have access to some of the horses. There is some colonial stuff that has some negative connotation in our community around Horse Hill. It's been recommended not to use it by some folk.

Northeast Edmonton: I mean, I say I'm northeast Edmonton anyway. It's the easiest way to explain it, but the thing is that this riding is not going to be northeast for very long, I don't think, because there will be a northeast. So, I mean, Pilot Sound was floated around. As I have said, I don't particularly think it should have a name attached to it as an individual. More demographically I think it would just be nice to keep it somehow connected back to community somehow.

**Mr. Evans:** Like, go back to Strathcona?

**Ms Sweet:** No comment.

**Mr. Evans:** I guess that's a no, right?

**The Chair:** What were the results of your poll?

**Ms Sweet:** I mean, northeast won, but I don't think it will actually – I mean, we could do it. I just know that there will be another one, that I will eventually end up not being the northeast east of that.

**The Chair:** We've had some of that criticism of the whole directional naming too. Okay. Thank you.

Questions, Mr. Evans?

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah. What are your thoughts if, in order to give your riding some more breathing room, because I think it's at 59 . . .

**Ms Sweet:** Yeah. We're high already.

**Mr. Evans:** If we moved, well, where Ebbers is – instead of following the rail line, we follow Anthony Henday?

**Ms Sweet:** The Henday side of 167th?

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah, and just move that for sure to just . . .

**The Chair:** To Decore and Clareview.

**Ms Sweet:** Yeah, 167th is interesting on that side because the Anthony Henday makes it not a straight line. It's a weird, like . . .

**Mr. Evans:** And how far up could you go?

**Ms Sweet:** I mean, you could put Ebbers in. It would align with Fraser and Kirkness because it only goes up to 153rd, because north of 153rd is the Manning shopping centre, so it just takes up that big section of land.

**Mr. Evans:** What's on the other side of Anthony Henday when you get past the cloverleaf?

**Ms Sweet:** Oh. North, you mean?

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah. Northeast.

**Ms Sweet:** So that's Alberta Hospital. Well, Alberta Hospital is just below it. Henwood is there.

**Mr. Evans:** Are there developments around it? There's Evergreen.

**Ms Sweet:** Evergreen is there. The trailer park is there. That's Kuhlmann's greenhouse, primarily, like, agriculture land. That's my nursery land. That's a lot of agriculture, specifically zoned ag land. The nursery is not going anywhere. Kuhlmann's is, as far as I know, not going anywhere, and then Alberta Hospital and the University of Alberta agriculture land is all in there, so it won't be developed. That's research land. It is actually going to be a really interesting dynamic. It's going to be a little bit like the south, where we have all these houses around prime ag research.

**Mr. Evans:** One last question. Between Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview and Edmonton-Manning, which one is growing the fastest and has the most projects in place, development projects in place?

**Ms Sweet:** I know MLA Wright was talking about, like, her surplus spots for the schools. Just to clarify that, that's their school-owned land that goes back to the city. The city decides. I actually have some, too, that are turning into – I have a WIN House that's being built, so a shelter.

**Mr. Evans:** A what?

**Ms Sweet:** It's called WIN house. It's one of our service deliveries. They're building a shelter in one of my neighbourhoods, so I haven't counted that population because it's an infill for a school lot, but if we're just talking about, like, single dwelling, high density, I am outpacing Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview is more infill, regentrification, like, spotty. No offence, Pegs.

**Mr. Evans:** So similar growth. Yeah.

**Ms Sweet:** And I'm, like, big, massive neighbourhood development.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Yeah, that's helpful. Thank you very much.

4:40

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation, but I don't have any questions. Thanks.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Yes. Thank you. As it stands, even considering the area structure plan that you showed us in your spreadsheets, your handout, as it were, the area to the west of Manning freeway remains agricultural?

**Ms Sweet:** Like, outside the ring road, you mean?

**Dr. Martin:** Yes.

**Ms Sweet:** Yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** Given the area structure plan and the anticipated density, although area structure plans are often overly optimistic but it's good that you have structure plans, what would you say to not using 167 Ave but using the creek along the railway lines?

**Ms Sweet:** So that would be the top of Quarry and that would be the trailer park, mostly.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah, because you alluded to the fact that this line awkwardly divides a community.

**Ms Sweet:** It divides Quarry Ridge just at the top where the new piece is. I mean, populationwise I don't know how much of an impact it'll have because the trailer park, I mean – well, let me do quick math in my head. It's about 1,000 people, give or take.

**Dr. Martin:** We think in lumps of 1,000.

**Ms Sweet:** Yeah, I think 1,000. It sounds right. I mean, you could. It would be the trailer park. It would be just the top of Quarry Ridge that's left. But then, I mean, the problem with the creek is that they're also building Marquis, which will be on both sides of it. I think the avenue is just a clean cut, because it's easy to say to people, "Where are you The MLA?" I'm like, "167 south or 167 north," and people get that part. Then outside the ring road on the north side, on that west side, it's Edmonton's industrial park, agriculture, gurdwara. I have the federal penitentiary. I get all the fun stuff.

**Mr. Evans:** Do you count those?

**Ms Sweet:** Do I count them? Well, technically they can vote for me if they want.

**Dr. Martin:** Yes. They can.

**Ms Sweet:** I visit them sometimes.

**The Chair:** You don't have the military prison, do you?

**Ms Sweet:** No. Sorry. That's Castle Downs. I had to think about that for a sec.

**The Chair:** Okay.  
Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. This is very interesting. Ebbers is about 2,800 people. What we're saying is use highway 15, which is called highway 15. Or is it called something else?

**Dr. Martin:** Manning freeway.

**Ms Sweet:** It's okay. It just changes when you hit the city.

**Mr. Clark:** Don't ever trust Google.

Use that as our boundary all the way up to the Henday and that little wedge which is Ebbers? It looks like there's some stuff right in the southeast corner there, but that's not houses or people.

**Ms Sweet:** Actually, I think, like, what makes sense about it is that if you look, because the rail line goes really narrow, it creates that point. That's the LRT station, and then it's all high density to Ebbers with some of those smaller zero-lot lines. Manning freeway is a clean divide, and it's connected to the Hairsine community league, which is already Peg's.

**Mr. Clark:** So that would reduce you down to about 57,000 from almost 60,000, and it would take Beverly-Clareview up to 57,240.

**Ms Sweet:** Sure.

**Mr. Clark:** You don't have to tell me that you don't want Ebbers. We can be the ones to make that. We can be bad cop on this.

**Ms Sweet:** I'll be honest with you. The numbers between 57,000 and 60,000 is like ...

**Mr. Clark:** It's immaterial?

**Ms Sweet:** Yeah. We're northeast. North-siders. We spend a lot of time together. They're all going to be stuck hanging out with me whether they like it or not. I'm their neighbour.

**Mr. Evans:** Spend that time together in the penitentiary.

**Ms Sweet:** That's right. North side. You're picturing it. That's why we have prisons.

**Mr. Clark:** That's helpful. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** There's a story that not all of us know on this side of the table about your part of Edmonton, and I'm not sure we have time.

**Mr. Clark:** I want to hear the Strathcona war.

**Ms Sweet:** I'll tell you one day.

**The Chair:** Okay. According to my schedule we have one more presenter. Do we have enough energy, commissioners?

**Mr. Clark:** What a place to finish, too.

**The Chair:** Yeah. We've never heard anything from Beaumont this round.

Mr. Lundy, please come forward and have a seat. You know, you're distinguished to the extent that you are the last presenter in the history of this Electoral Boundaries Commission.

**Mr. Lundy:** The clerk just let me know that. Talk about the ultimate before-lunch conference presenter, right? Certainly happy to have that role.

I wanted to let you know that I actually just submitted a letter to the clerk on behalf of MLA McDougall. He hoped to come in person, but he submitted in writing, so I was able to walk that in to the clerk. I'm not speaking to it, but he assured me that he would be able to make sure that that would be shared with you guys. Wanted to get that clerical piece out of the way.

More than happy to chat a little bit about Leduc-Beaumont. Just want to make sure I'm on the right process. Do I just jump in?

**The Chair:** Yeah, jump in. We're curious to know: do you like the fact we cut Beaumont in half? Start with something positive.

**Mr. Lundy:** Yeah. First off, thank you for your hard work. It's an incredibly important and, I'm sure, at times challenging job. To answer the question, I think I wasn't super supportive when I saw it. To be fair, I'm sure – I've been reading some of the transcripts – that's been the majority of the feedback, that maybe that didn't quite hit the mark in terms of, you know, Beaumont always having a shared history as a community, obviously one of our francophone communities in the province, no real sort of natural history with Strathcona county, always been part of the Leduc county world. When I was talking to people from Beaumont, there was concern about splitting Beaumont, and I certainly shared those concerns.

That said, it really then begs the question of: what with Beaumont, then? Just when I was taking a look at that ...

**The Chair:** Sorry.

**Mr. Lundy:** Yeah, go ahead.

**The Chair:** Maybe tell us where you live.

**Mr. Lundy:** Oh, sure. I live in Leduc.

**The Chair:** Okay. The city?

**Mr. Lundy:** The city of Leduc, yeah. This is relevant.

When I sort of look at some of these stats, the riding of Leduc-Beaumont in terms of where the voters live, the vast majority is either in the city of Leduc or in the city of Beaumont. There is a sliver of voters in Leduc county between, and then there is a growing community just west of Beaumont in the Vistas, but right now the majority of the voters are in either those two cities proper.

I live in the city of Leduc. I love both communities. They're both great, amazing, vibrant communities, and as I'll lay out, they're both growing incredibly fast. I think that's a really key point to all of this. You know, moving on the assumption that – I would never presuppose the work of the committee, but if the decision to split Beaumont was reversed and we were to leave Beaumont as a community, I think it would actually make a lot of sense to have Beaumont in a riding with other communities in the southeast of Edmonton, and I'll lay out a couple of reasons for that.

Just talking to people from Beaumont, I would say that the majority of Beaumont people who live in Beaumont work in Edmonton, so we know there's a ton of economic integration. There's a natural transportation corridor, that being 50th Street. The reality is that geographically these communities are currently adjacent to one another right now. We also have recreation opportunities that get shared between Beaumont and Edmonton. I talk to people all the time who are living in Beaumont, go on 50th Street, and their kids are playing sports in Edmonton or they're participating in cultural or religious or worship events in Edmonton and coming from Beaumont. That's a very common occurrence and a very strong community connection between that. So I think it would actually make some sense to sort of include Beaumont into that community because they're already so integrated.

4:50

The other side to that coin was just the growth in the population. I was doing some research. This is all according to the Alberta regional dashboard. Beaumont is currently at 26,305 people; Leduc, 39,996, four people away from 40,000. You put those together, and you're at 66,265 people. That doesn't include any of Leduc county. I haven't been able to peel that. I know Leduc county has about

16,000 people in the county now. I'm guessing that at least 2,000 of those people actually are in the Leduc-Beaumont riding, just between the two communities and the Vistas.

East Vistas is a community just beside Beaumont. I was speaking to their community president. Their goal is to have 20,000 people in the East Vistas by 2035. You could argue whether that's ambitious or not. My comment to him was, "Well, that's another Beaumont beside Beaumont in very short order," right?

I don't think it's out of the realm of possibility to say that we're probably looking at 70,000 people in this riding. Certainly, it would be 70,000 by the time these new boundaries came into effect. Then you add on the population growth. The five-year population growth for Beaumont is 19.7 per cent. The five-year population growth for Leduc is 17.1 per cent. That's 6 and 4 per cent, respectively, year over year. I see no reason why those numbers would slow dramatically. The reality is that both of those communities are seen, deservedly so, as great places to live and to raise your family. To think that those numbers would slow down: I just don't see that happening. Now you're looking at a riding that would be well – well – above what we look at for the population.

I think that when you add those two things in combination, the existing integration between Beaumont and Edmonton and the population and population growth of the riding proper, that probably makes the most sense when you look at how this riding might shake out.

**The Chair:** Okay. Good. Thank you.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** You mentioned that you were possibly going to give us some suggestions on Beaumont going into Edmonton. I'm looking at the map. Edmonton-Ellerslie as proposed would be an option. Edmonton-South East as proposed would be an option.

**Mr. Lundy:** Maybe Summerside as well, perhaps.

**Mr. Evans:** I think those are the two, Edmonton-South East, Edmonton-Ellerslie. Yeah, those two for certain. Can you speak to that?

**Mr. Lundy:** Sure. Not in great detail, to be honest with you, at least from a statistical perspective, population perspective. I can speak to it in terms of, again, the integration that I see from Beaumont in terms of pursuing these recreational and cultural and religious opportunities. For demographics I haven't sort of peeled back the numbers.

**Mr. Evans:** If you're in Beaumont and you're going to drive into Edmonton for work or religious worshipping or sporting activities, what's your corridor, your pathway?

**Mr. Lundy:** The vast majority would take 50th Street.

**Mr. Evans:** So 50th would put us into Edmonton-South East.

**Mr. Lundy:** I think it's Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Mr. Evans:** Is it Edmonton-Ellerslie? Okay. Yes.  
Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Because Edmonton has some population challenges, would it be the same uproar if half of Beaumont stayed in Leduc and half went to Edmonton-Ellerslie?

**Mr. Lundy:** I mean, I can't speak to – I can just say that I think when people were talking to me, the concern was more that Beaumont was split necessarily than how it was split.

**Mrs. Samson:** Oh, I see. Okay.

**Mr. Lundy:** They really appreciated – again, with the history of the community and the size of the community, they felt that they would, you know, like to remain as a group.

**Mrs. Samson:** One other option – and I'm just throwing spitballs, I guess, because you're the last one. What about into Camrose as a whole, complete entity? Like, Camrose touches the bottom southeast corner of Beaumont. That's where the ridings touch.

**Mr. Lundy:** Okay. I thought it was Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin that touched Beaumont.

**Mrs. Samson:** Right here, 55. Yeah. Instead of Strathcona, which was more up, right below that is Camrose. It would still be contiguous. Is that something?

**Mr. Lundy:** Yeah. I mean, it's something I honestly haven't given a thought to. I would just say that in terms of – I stand to be corrected. I don't think a large portion of Beaumont would work in Camrose or travel into Camrose like they do to Edmonton. Like, almost daily they're going into Edmonton. I don't want to, you know, say that that doesn't happen between Beaumont and Camrose, but it's certainly not as prevalent, or there's not as much natural integration between Beaumont and Camrose as you would see between Beaumont and Edmonton.

**Mrs. Samson:** Who's travelling up highway 814? Is it not the people from ...

**Mr. Evans:** That's 50th Street.

**Mrs. Samson:** Yeah. But down here, when you're paralleling the electoral district of Camrose, are people from Camrose – is that how they're getting up into Edmonton if they wanted to go? Or are they going across ...

**Mr. Lundy:** I think most people take highway 21 to highway 14 and then onto Henday. I grew up near Camrose. That's how I would go.

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay. This is my last one. What if we kept Beaumont and Leduc together? Could you live with 65,000 people?

**Mr. Lundy:** Well, again, it's probably closer to 70,000. Maybe if the population growth wasn't as strong as it was. I just think that when you factor that in, you really, really would be pushing the growth, considering the growth of the population under section 14, part 2.

**Mrs. Samson:** I knew that was the answer, but I had to try.

**The Chair:** Just to refresh my memory, I think you said that the population of Beaumont is ...

**Mr. Lundy:** This is according to the Alberta regional dashboard. In 2025 Beaumont was 26,305.

**The Chair:** Okay. So let's say that it's – you said 23,000?

**Mr. Lundy:** Sorry; 26,305.



**The Chair:** So let's say that there are only 10,000 on that side or 12,000. If we bring it back in, we're at 59,000. Yeah, you're over the – okay.

**Mr. Lundy:** The Leduc county one is, again, the wild card to me. I think there are a couple thousand in that Vistas community or more. Like I said, they told me that 20,000 is their goal. That's right beside Beaumont.

**The Chair:** Okay. We heard a lot about Beaumont wanting to stay together and stay with Leduc. It may be a little bit of a stretch to say that they were all saying, "Stay with Leduc," but it's not a stretch to say: we want to stay together. Is it your view that Beaumont may be a little flexible as to where they end up but they have to end up together?

**Mr. Lundy:** Well, I certainly can't speak to – again, I think the biggest thing I heard was: stay together. Sure, you're definitely going to get two voices. If you ask Beaumont – you know, there are people who see the integration that I was talking about with Edmonton, and there are certainly people who would say: well, let's stay where we are. To be fair, I don't think – you know, people aren't doing a deep dive into these population projections and targets and such. When you look at something like a boundary commission, you're going to get different views on a lot of these things for sure.

**The Chair:** Okay. Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you, and thank you. The numbers are staggering. Congratulations to you and your colleagues in this riding.

I wanted to complexify it even further with several points. Number one is Calmar. I have driven down there. It just feels to me that west Leduc and Calmar are growing together along that highway. The notion that it – you know, in our tentative map it's kept in the other riding, but it's a bit of a tease because there really are pretty strong linkages between the two.

**Mr. Lundy:** Sure.

5:00

**Dr. Martin:** Secondly is the airport, which not only is a huge economic driver for the entire district, but its connection with all of the Nisku area is very, very strong. One presumes that there's going to be an increased rhythm of commuters out of Edmonton to go into the Nisku area. Some of them may decide to stay in the fine town of Leduc. But as for the rest of it, as the grid of roads implies, this is a pretty classic rural area for the most part. I mean, to the immediate west of the airport it's grain farming and the like. So, too, with much of the area around the city.

**Mr. Lundy:** Sure.

**Dr. Martin:** You know, personally, frankly, this footprint is too big, and I have no idea how to deal with it. We have heard, of course, a lot about keeping Beaumont together. We've heard from – gosh, was it the reeve of the county saying, "Well, give us all the stuff that's actually in the county boundaries as well"? We told her: you know, Madam Mayor, that would be 75,000 people at least. She was quite appalled. So there are some difficulties here because of the large growth that's occurring here.

I mean, the interim map marries classic rural farmland, not suburbs, classic rural guys baling hay, with a growing town and an industrial zone of huge potential growth. This is a very difficult situation to deal with. I'm not going to ask you to decide where to

draw these boundaries. That's our job. But it seems clear that something significant has to give here.

**Mr. Lundy:** Yeah. Thank you for your comments. I would humbly say that you probably just described the history of Leduc, right? I know we've been talking about Beaumont a lot. I live in Leduc. It is a split history, right? They are proud of sort of the rural roots. You go to the, you know, coffee shops in Leduc, and they are farmers from around the area. They go to the Co-op; they buy their farm supplies. There is a proud rural heritage in Leduc married up with what you were talking about in terms of also having the airport in Nisku and the economic development. I think Leduc would take pride in being able to say that they have traditionally supported and catered to those numerous aspects. Again, there is a lot of synergy between the rural areas around Leduc with the city proper of Leduc itself. I would think a lot of people in Calmar, you know, if it came down to it, would be more than happy to be in a riding with the city.

**Dr. Martin:** Which, as I say, makes things more complex.

**Mr. Lundy:** Sure. Yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** But it seems like there's a historic and, actually, growing linkage there as well.

**Mr. Lundy:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** What about Millet as well if we needed the space?

**Mr. Lundy:** It's probably a similar way. I would say that there are a lot of linkages between Millet and Leduc, again, the shared heritage, the similar demographic profile, so that would also make some sense.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you very much. A couple of things just in terms of characterizing, and I want to build a little bit on what Dr. Martin was talking about. I'm really struck by something somebody told us in Okotoks. We proposed blending Okotoks with Calgary. It's a really similar situation. Okotoks is its own sort of city. It's a place. Some would refer to it as a bedroom community. Not Okotokians, by any means. He said: "The fact that so many people commute from Okotoks to Calgary tells you we're not from Calgary. That's how you know we're not Calgary. We may work in Calgary. We may shop there occasionally. We live very directly, specifically, in Okotoks." I guess I put that to you. In your opinion, is that also true of Beaumont? Beaumont is Beaumont because it's not Edmonton, I guess, is really what I'm saying.

**Mr. Lundy:** Oh, I see. Yeah, I mean, certainly, I see a sense of pride in people from Beaumont. There's no doubt about that. You know, to your point, I guess, I've chosen to live in that community. I would just say that a lot of them, not everyone, of course, in addition to choosing to live in that community, also makes choices to access services in Edmonton or to participate in Edmonton life as a choice. I certainly couldn't speak to every person in Beaumont who has this pride in not living in Edmonton. That certainly could exist. But I do think that people really – this is maybe why there was so much angst over the split, because they are certainly proud to be from Beaumont.

**Mr. Clark:** So I looked it up. We had both Mayor Tanni Doblanko from Leduc county and Mayor Lisa Vanderkwaak from Beaumont. In particular, of Mayor Vanderkwaak I asked: where would you like to be? Both of them said: we're okay. Right now the numbers, just

so you know: 64,460 as of July 1, 2025. That's our number for everything, and I acknowledge that not just in Leduc and Beaumont lots of growth has happened. But we need to pick a moment in time, and that's the moment in time.

**The Chair:** If we put Beaumont in completely, it's 64,000?

**Mr. Clark:** It is 65,460, Leduc-Beaumont, and that's 19.2 per cent over the average, so still within the tolerance but, you know, straining, plus I absolutely agree that there's certainly going to be growth.

Just so you know, I asked both of them: would you be okay with that in terms of sticking together? And they said yes. That was their answer. I asked Mayor Vanderkwaak: if you had to not be with Leduc, would you rather be within Edmonton or somewhere else? And she said: absolutely, somewhere else. That was her answer, just for your reference. I don't know if you've talked with her or talked to the council. I mean, that was their submission to us.

**Mr. Lundy:** Okay. Yeah. I've had some brief conversations with her. You know, I certainly can't speak for her. I mean, look, I

suspect if Beaumont had their way, they'd be their own riding of 26,000 people. That would be their preferred option, right? As the commission, as I'm sure you guys are aware, sometimes we're dealing with lesser options than what maybe the dream scenario would be.

**Mr. Clark:** We need the Legislature to give us more seats than two extra.

Okay. Well, that's great. Thank you very, very much. I appreciate your time, and thanks for your patience.

**Mr. Lundy:** Sure.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Lundy.

**Mr. Lundy:** Yeah. Thanks, guys.

**The Chair:** This now concludes the MLA day section of the Alberta 2025-2026 Electoral Boundaries Commission.

[The hearing adjourned at 5:08 p.m.]







Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Public Hearings

Virtual

Wednesday, January 21, 2026  
9:02 a.m.

Transcript No. 48

## **Legislative Assembly of Alberta**

### **Electoral Boundaries Commission**

Justice Dallas K. Miller, Chair

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John D. Evans, KC

Julian Martin

Susan Samson

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## **Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Virtual**

### **Participants**

Nagwan Al-Guneid, MLA, Calgary-Glenmore  
Brooks Arcand-Paul, MLA, Edmonton-West Henday  
Diana Batten, MLA, Calgary-Acadia  
Parmeet Singh Boparai, MLA, Calgary-Falconridge  
Joe Ceci, MLA, Calgary-Buffalo  
Kathleen Ganley, MLA, Calgary-Mountain View  
Grant Hunter, MLA, Taber-Warner  
Dale Nally, MLA, Morinville-St. Albert  
Nathan Neudorf, MLA, Lethbridge-East  
Tany Yao, MLA, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo





9:02 a.m.

Wednesday, January 21, 2026

[Justice Miller in the chair]

**The Chair:** Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the third day of the second week of our public hearings in relation to our Electoral Boundaries Commission stage two. Actually, this is the last day, and it is specifically dedicated to hearing from Members of the Legislative Assembly.

I think it's important for us to get some background as to where we are as a commission, what our task is, and where we're going. First of all, as everyone knows, we are an independent commission established by the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, and we were put in place in early April of last year. You can see our nameplates before us and on the screen, and if you want to know more about our background, go to the website.

We as a commission have been tasked with dealing with two issues effectively. The first one is to deal with the redrawing of boundaries due to the fact that the Legislative Assembly is expanding for the next provincial election from 87 electoral divisions to 89. So that poses a challenge. Of course, we all know that it's the voters within the boundaries of the electoral division that elect that particular MLA to represent them in the Legislature.

The second issue that we must deal with, in addition to the addition of two seats, is the significant increase in population in Alberta. To give some perspective as to the population challenge, if we look at the last electoral division in 2017, they produced their maps based on a population of just over 4 million people. They determined the math. Based on 87 ridings, the average population for each electoral division would be 46,697. Of course, that is not the target. That is simply the average. The target for effective representation is somewhat flexible, and it ranges in the 2017 EBC context from as low as 35,000 to as high as 58,000.

Over the last nine years Alberta has grown significantly. We have gained over 800,000 people. For our calculations, for this Electoral Boundaries Commission, we are dealing with a population in Alberta of 4.8 million people. As you can see from the formula, the average, using that population base for 89 ridings, is 54,929, or effectively 55,000. Again, that is not the target. The range is minus 25 to plus 25 per cent; in other words, from 41,000 to 68,000. That is the range of population that we are using.

The task of our commission is to redraw the boundaries because of the two additional seats and because of the significant population growth such that each electoral division can be provided with effective representation.

Since our appointment we have been busy as a commission. Our first task was to determine what basis we would use for our population. We are required by the legislation to rely on the most recent decennial census. That was in 2021. Fortunately, the Alberta Treasury Board through its Office of Statistics and Information regularly updates the census results from the federal government. That resulted in a census data group that we agreed as a commission was satisfactory and the most accurate and the most consistent and up to date when we started our process. That population figure was as of July 2024.

After we initially met to go through issues like population, we reviewed hundreds of written submissions that we received from the public as to how we could best allocate the new boundaries. Then, in late May and throughout June, we travelled the province as a commission to hear from Albertans. We listened to literally hundreds of submissions all the way from Medicine Hat in the southeast to Grande Prairie and Peace River and from Fort McMurray back down to Lethbridge and points in between, of course, being Calgary and Edmonton.

After we heard from Albertans and reviewed the written submissions, we then met with officials from Elections Alberta, who are skilled at map-making and dealing with the population. We spent days with them to come up with our proposed electoral division map that we included in our interim report. The legislation provides for an interim report that is to be made public, and then we receive public feedback. That report was provided to the Speaker of the Legislature on October 27. He tabled it and provided a copy to each of the members of the Legislature at that time.

Now, in completing our interim report, we considered all the factors in the legislation: sparsity and density and rate of population growth; communities of interest; municipalities and their borders; regional and rural communities; reserves, First Nations, and Métis settlements. We considered the geographic features across the province and the availability and means of communication, transportation between various parts of the province. In considering those features and in looking at the population, it led us to the electoral divisions that we directed in our interim report to provide effective representation. Our goal was to provide understandable and clear boundaries.

After the public release of our interim report, we then opened a portal on our website to provide for Albertans to respond to our report. Between November 3 and December 19 we received over 1,100 written submissions. We now are taking our interim report, taking the input and the critiques – and we will, all five of us, be the first to say that our interim report was far from perfect. We welcomed all of the input that we received in writing, and now we are at the public and virtual meeting stage to hear from Albertans.

9:10

We started last Monday. We heard two and a half days of presentations in Calgary. Then we went online and heard from people across the province Thursday and Friday, and we heard from Edmontonians Monday and Tuesday of this week. Today is dedicated specifically for members of the Legislature because we have all said that it is most helpful to hear from those individuals who have knocked on the doors, who have driven the roads in their electoral division to get the support of Albertans, and for us to have their feedback is most appreciated.

With that brief introduction, we have a prepared list of presenters, and it is only fitting that our first presenter is the member of the Legislature from Calgary-Acadia, ED 1, Ms Diana Batten. Welcome.

**Member Batten:** Thank you so much. Good morning. Can you hear me?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Member Batten:** Perfect. Okay. Awesome.

It's so lovely to see you all again. Of course, my name is Diana Batten. I am the proud MLA for Calgary-Acadia. I want to start by thanking all of you for the tremendous work – goodness. Just listening to that description, you have put in so much work. It is so appreciated. I am very curious to learn all of the, I guess, insights you gained across Alberta, but today is about speaking to the draft map specifically. My time with you, of course, is quite brief, so I'm going to jump right in.

The draft map amends the constituency of Calgary-Acadia where north of Glenmore Trail becomes part of the new Calgary-Confluence riding, Kingsland becomes part of Calgary-Glenmore, and Lake Bonavista Downs joins the riding of Calgary-Acadia. These changes bring the estimated population of the riding to 56,000 and change, with a plus 4.9 variance.

Now, I hate to say this, but I am concerned that this draft map does create barriers to services and disconnects communities, and it does not account for the population increase that we are currently seeing inside of these communities. My solution would be that we maintain the 2017 boundaries for Calgary-Acadia with a small nonresidence change with the transfer of Highfield, Bonnybrook, so that area of Manchester, excluding Manchester and Manchester Industrial, which would stay with Calgary-Acadia, but the rest would go on to Calgary-Confluence.

The reasons, of course, are many, but keeping it focused here on communities, services, and connections together. The communities that make up the current constituency of Calgary-Acadia have organically grown together. The communities share common concerns associated with similar household incomes, age of housing, age of residents, school and catchment areas. They're moving through similar transitions where we have original owners downsizing but staying in the communities, which of course creates opportunities for densification. We have a lot of homes that were built back in about the 1960s with the large lots which are prime for infills, secondary suites, and laneways.

The heart of the current map is Macleod Trail, with an LRT line that runs parallel. This corridor is seemingly constantly under development, which brings in housing density, attracts new businesses big and small, and it allows for the creation of kind of that 15-minute city, where no car is needed and folks are able to walk or use transit to get to where they need to. The communities to the west of Macleod – Kingsland, Haysboro, Southwood, and Canyon Meadows – and to the east of Macleod – Willow Park, Maple Ridge, Acadia, and Fairview – are incredibly intertwined. They host events together, they share similar concerns, and these folks are truly engaged in their communities.

Now, the community that includes Manchester and Manchester Industrial, which is just north of Glenmore, is also closely connected to these communities. However, their connection isn't quite so obvious. It isn't directly through, like, a community association but instead through individuals. This area is home to the Dream Centre, which is, of course, a recovery centre for men, several affordable housing towers, the Mustard Seed, Parachutes for Pets, Calgary housing, Sharp Foundation, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and vintage alley, which is on 58th. These services are accessed through the riding and, of course, are supported through the constituency office of Calgary-Acadia.

When considering the draft map, the transfer of Kingsland, which has over 60 per cent rental properties, a transient population, and is strongly connected to Acadia and also to Haysboro, by transferring it over to Calgary-Glenmore, which is a more affluent riding with very few social services, I do worry that folks will be disconnected from their communities and they will be disconnected from the services they currently access. The same argument can be made for maintaining Manchester and Manchester Industrial as part of Calgary-Acadia as those folks are tightly knit with the rest of the community.

The second piece, of course, being population considerations. We had spoken a little bit about what shovels were in the ground last time we met, so I wanted to make sure that the commission considers and is aware of shovels in the ground right now that have happened since last time we spoke. Just looking at the community of Haysboro, Haysboro, of course, has that lovely connection where we've got Heritage and Macleod. On that kind of section there, we've got the old Y site finally under construction. It's supposed to open early 2027. We're looking at 200 affordable dwelling units, one to three bedrooms. Estimated residency when it's open is 700. We then have a luxury – it's called Heritage-MacLeod luxury condos. It is due to open completely by 2028. This is 501 units, one

to three bedrooms. About 1,750 residents are expected there. Then just a little bit further south from that is another set of towers that they're looking to put up. Again, the groundwork has already been started, which is looking at adding another 631 units, about 2,000 residents when it's fully up.

In addition to that, all the way through, actually, the entire riding, what we see along kind of the main drag – in this case in Haysboro, if we're talking about Elbow Drive, what we're seeing are a lot of single-family homes that are getting transferred or converted into five dwelling units plus five secondary suites, so we're looking at, like, on average about 30 additional residents there. This is, of course, in addition to some other larger single-family changes that will look up to, like, maybe 24 residents in them. Kind of the general thing inside of the community of Haysboro right now: just with the ones that, you know, I looked at yesterday, we're looking at about 4,902 residents being added to the community of Haysboro in the next three years. That alone brings the riding, whatever map we're using, up over 6,000 residents.

Now, there might be a question of: how am I figuring out how many people are actually going to live in these places? A little bit of gentle math. Basically, what I did is for every first bedroom I assumed two residents; every second bedroom or third I assume one resident. So it's a conservative estimate, but I think it captures kind of that middle ground on how many residents to expect.

I, of course, could go through every single one of the beautiful communities and tell you about all of the things they have in the ground going on right now. Another example – I'm recognizing time here – would be Acadia. When we spoke last, what is now known as the Mintoff condo development, where Blackfoot Trail trailer park used to be, is now very much under construction. When it is done, it will house about 600 units, one-to three-bedroom luxury condos, which will house about 2,100 residents.

When we're thinking about what Calgary-Acadia is going to look like even in the next two, three years, we know there is going to be an incredible population boom. When I look at the draft maps, my solution is that we keep it the same and that we maintain Manchester Industrial and Manchester, keep them connected to the rest of the constituency so they can still access those services and be connected to those communities. By all means, release the rest of what I was calling Manchester before so that – now I'm lost. Highfield and Bonnybrook: that area, as we discussed, has great potential but nothing in the ground right now.

With that, I realize I've got a handful of minutes here. I believe this also includes questions. Is that correct? I think so. So I will pause and answer whatever questions you have from what I've shared and anything you want to know about Calgary-Acadia.

9:20

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, Ms Batten.

Of course, there are many advantages of having this venue online, but one of the disadvantages is the actual map. I'm not sure if it can be brought up. If it can, Aaron is working on that.

Let's start with questions. Mr. Clark, any questions of this presenter?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you very much for joining us. Just so I'm clear, a couple of things. You're saying: keep it as it was in 2017 because there's lots of growth. Sort of the short synopsis, I think. At the very beginning you kind of rattled through quite a few – like, a pretty rapid-fire list. I wonder if you could just step me through that just sort of at about .75 speed of what you did last time. I was trying to keep up, and I'm afraid I got lost.

**Member Batten:** No, no. My apologies. I do tend to speak quickly when I know my time is limited, so my mistake.

Now you've got the map up, which is great. This is the proposed map. What I was describing when I was talking about the Macleod Trail corridor there: in the current map it starts right at the top, so Glenmore and either side of Macleod. We have Kingsland, Fairview. We move down, we go Haysboro, Acadia, Southwood, Willow Park, Maple Ridge, and Canyon Meadows. That's where the riding currently ends. Those are, of course, all the neighbourhoods who benefit from that Macleod Trail corridor there. It connects, allows for that high densification around the LRT stations and that kind of 15-minute city.

When I was referring to north of Glenmore, I refer to that whole section as Manchester, but correctly the section is actually Manchester and Manchester Industrial. It goes from the southern border, Glenmore. Then it is Macleod, 42nd Ave, to Blackfoot. It's that square just above the map we're looking at right now, and that is where the residents actually live inside of that larger space. Partially because it's so industrial, there hasn't been a lot of development there. We did discuss that a little bit in the last meeting, about the great potential that could happen there, but as of right now, to the best of my knowledge, there's no shovels in the ground per se. We're actually seeing the growth of that area is inside of Manchester.

I didn't go into the details of what we're seeing there. I absolutely can, but I want to pause to make sure that (a) I've slowed down enough and that (b) I've answered your question.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. I appreciate sort of situating us. That, you're saying, is logical to be north of Glenmore as a boundary then?

**Member Batten:** What I'm suggesting is that, actually, it would be north of 42nd because the reality is that that is where people reside, south of 42nd. What I'm suggesting is we keep Manchester and Manchester Industrial, which runs from 42nd to Blackfoot and Macleod. It's just a chunk that is currently inside the riding and is where folks are currently residing and connecting to the rest of the communities. Is that more clear?

**Mr. Clark:** Yep. That sounds good.

Then what else were you suggesting south of Glenmore?

**Member Batten:** Oh, so then Kingsland, which is currently part of the riding: I was suggesting keeping it with Calgary-Acadia. The biggest reason for that is the population that's served and their connection. Kingsland has over 60 per cent rental properties. It is seeing immense densification. I can certainly list off the different towers that are going up there. It is very distinct from the riding of Calgary-Glenmore, that is simply more affluent. They're more affluent than Calgary-Acadia, and their social services are very different than what we find inside the riding of Calgary-Acadia. My suggestion would be to keep Kingsland with Calgary-Acadia if for nothing more than they have similar concerns, the connections are already there, and geographically it still makes sense.

**Mr. Clark:** Good. All right. Then anything south – I think our current boundary now is all the way down to Canyon Meadows. Again, part of our challenge is that it's a numbers game, right? The growth in Calgary has happened in the far north and in the far south. Really, what we're trying to make sure we can do is balance out areas that are more in the middle that are a little more stable. Although not saying that you're not growing – it's growing in an absolute sense. The pace of growth relative to other parts of the city is always a question. That's part of the reason that we made the changes we did and then trying to keep it as rectilinear, I guess, as

square as we possibly can. Clear and understandable boundaries is what the act says.

**Member Batten:** Beautiful. If I could just comment, one, on the southern addition on the draft map, so the Lake Bonavista and Lake Bonavista Downs, that section: it is distinctly different from Calgary-Acadia. When I say that, I mean it is single-family homes. The household income jumps about \$50,000 when you jump over Anderson there. All of the things that I've described about the Macleod corridor and all of that: it does not apply south of Anderson there. There's kind of a chunk where Macleod becomes very – well, there's not as much density there, and it picks up again.

My concern there is that the services that they would want to access or the connections that they already have would be severed as well. That group, based on my research, is more similar to, say, Queensland and Deer Run and so on, which they're currently a part of, relative to their similarity to what's inside of Calgary-Acadia. I worry, again, about kind of the disservice that we'd be doing bringing in that. Well, they're distinctly different.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. Good. That's helpful. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much.

This is a very interesting discussion. My colleague pre-empted my query about Lake Bonavista. In general, by asking to restore, so to speak, Manchester Industrial and the like on the more northernly parts, that would, in your view, bring this set of communities into more coherent connectivity all around?

**Member Batten:** Yes.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your time this morning, Ms Batten. Really, what you're asking, if I can just paraphrase in my own mind, is that the riding is high right now, and you're looking at wanting Manchester back, and I suppose in lieu of that, it would be giving up Lake Bonavista's area. Would that be safe?

**Member Batten:** Yes, I feel that's a safe summary.

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay. Thank you very much for your time.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** No questions for me.

**The Chair:** Ms Batten, you've done a lot of the legwork, obviously, for your presentation. If we did not change these boundaries – I think you told us, but just maybe repeat it for those of us who are slow at taking notes – what's the projected population increase based on your research, say, in – what are we at? – 2028, two years from now?

**Member Batten:** Okay. Two years from now, based on what shovels are in the ground right now, if I do some quick math . . .

**The Chair:** Give me the figure that you have calculated if it's two years, four years, or whatever.

**Member Batten:** Yeah. Well, honestly, I got so in the weeds, because that's me, I don't actually have a magic number for you, but what I do have are a few that we can look at. Haysboro: the numbers I was looking at, about 4,902 addition in the next two to three years. Acadia, with the park, is looking at another 2,000. If we

move to Fairview, Fairview, of course, is where we're going to have that midtown station. It seems to have been paused a little bit, so I don't know exactly when it's going to be open. Last I heard was closer to, like, 2040 type deal. But when it's fully operational, we're looking at 10,000 people minimum. And then Kingsland: the diversity we're seeing there is towers. In the ground right now are two additional towers, and we're looking at another 2,000.

What I'm finding is that between 2,000 and 4,000 residential spaces are already in the ground per community, like, kind of on average. So with the nine communities, I mean, there's our math, right? What is that? We'll say another 18,000 on that. I believe we're just at, like, 54,000 under the current map, not the proposed map. To clarify, are you looking for the number on the proposed map or on the current map?

9:30

**The Chair:** Yeah. On the proposed map.

**Member Batten:** On the proposed map. Okay. Well, on the proposed map, if I drop Kingsland and drop Manchester, let's see.

**The Chair:** So very roughly – very roughly – you're looking at up to an 18,000 increase. When that will happen: not sure. It could take as long as six to eight years. Is that fair?

**Member Batten:** No. About 2,000 per community is what's already in the ground and anticipated to be full occupancy in the next three years, so by, like, 2029, I guess, is the next three years. But when we look at what that does, even if it's 18,000 to the 56,000, I mean, we are now very much on the far, far edge of kind of that allowed variance. Obviously, you guys know what's going on in the rest of Calgary in terms of density, but this is distinctly different than when we spoke last.

This, to me, demonstrates, like, that we have huge investments happening, especially down Macleod Trail and all of those areas. This riding is becoming kind of that inner-city, still affordable space for luxury apartments. I just really want to make sure that that is considered, obviously, with the new map.

**The Chair:** Okay. Good. Well, thank you very much. As we say to many presenters, we make no promises except that we will take this and all the other information into account in our work in the weeks ahead.

**Member Batten:** Perfect. Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** Thank you for presenting. I believe you can remain to hear the other presenters. That's correct, Mr. Roth? Yeah. Okay. Thank you very much.

**Member Batten:** Awesome. Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** Our next presenter is Mr. Joe Ceci.

**Mr. Roth:** Joe is not on yet.

**The Chair:** Oh, okay. Very well.

Mr. Nathan Neudorf is kind of floating and trying to get in an empty spot, and we have an empty spot. Mr. Neudorf, welcome.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you. Good morning.

**The Chair:** Good morning. Tell us where you're from and what you wish to comment on.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Wonderful. Thank you very much. I'm from Lethbridge-East, but I'm joining you online today from McDougall

Centre in Calgary. I just had a few quick comments. I aroused much comment from my earlier submission to your panel. Even though it was just a letter, it was in much of the media despite my intentions.

What I basically just wanted to share with you today is the significance and importance of representation by population for a democratic society. Having been elected in Lethbridge-East and serving Lethbridge-East for over six years now, it is continually a challenge to represent the third-largest city in the province of Alberta with two representatives. There are many jurisdictions throughout the province from Medicine Hat, Lloydminster, Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray, on and on I can go, that also share two representatives, but the population of Lethbridge in many cases is 45,000 to 55,000 people larger with the same number of voices.

It has been challenging in many instances. I have just two off the top of my head. During COVID there was an effort to send out rapid COVID tests at a period of time and continually through the entirety of the COVID period. The first round of whatever would go to Calgary, Edmonton, and Red Deer, and I would always inquire: "Why not Lethbridge? Lethbridge is the third largest." "Oh, you'll come out in the second round with the other mid-sized cities." Very frustrating as a centre in the south to continue to have that fight.

The example I wanted to bring forward was that at one point in time, when the rapid tests came out, Red Deer was given 72,000 rapid tests at 31 locations, and that served their community quite well. They could have used a lot more. At the very same time Lethbridge received 2,000 rapid tests at one location, and we were out of rapid tests in under 10 minutes. It was just an extreme frustration to be treated as such with a population larger than Red Deer, yet not get the sufficient resources.

More recently, as we've been dealing with challenges for immigration and immigration placement, the job openings and assignments that the government of Alberta has control over: places like Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray are receiving 230 to 250, maybe even 300 job placements through the immigration programs. Lethbridge gets 28 even though we have more than double the population of some of these other sites.

So it has been a very challenging ability to truly represent Lethbridge without a larger voice, which is why I submitted what I did for the commission earlier on, to say that the population in Lethbridge as a centre in the south on virtually every single file, be it education, health care, mental health and addiction, public safety, on and on down the list. All those communities around come to Lethbridge for service, yet we struggle to have the resources to meet those needs. I believe that having more representation and a larger voice in Edmonton to advocate for that would be beneficial, be that three, be that four. I leave it to the commission to determine how population can be represented most effectively.

One final thought, and then happy to answer questions, is that due to the nature of our city in the south, we have a very strong collaboration on every sector, whether it's manufacturing, whether it's trucking, whether it's food processing. The county and surrounding areas produce the produce and bring their trade and their service into Lethbridge, and it's a very symbiotic relationship. I think it'd be very natural to make some of those potentials work.

Those are my thoughts very quickly this morning. Thank you so much for taking the time to hear me and fitting me in quickly. Happy to answer any questions if you have any.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation this morning and taking time to talk to us. Really, the dilemma comes down to splitting urban up into hybrids, and I'm not going to open up that conversation because I think I've heard all aspects of: the city, the urbans are so different. They're talking about homeless, and you can talk about water. But, you know, Lethbridge is using the water

for municipal reasons, and the rural is using it for irrigation, so how can we generally govern?

But I hear you loud and clear, sir, that four MLAs certainly would be better than two, I would think. Yet at the same time we've heard around the province that two, in some cities where there are two, is not necessarily better; they haven't seen the benefit. I think this is something we have to grapple with as a commission, and I believe we have the information in front of us to challenge us with that decision. Thank you.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah.

Good morning, Mr. Neudorf. Thanks for your presentation. I'm wondering if you could speak to the idea of hybrid ridings and the concerns that we've heard from some individuals about the difficulties in ameliorating the needs of the various community interests in a hybrid constituency.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Sure. Appreciate that very much.

I can understand that being a challenge in other areas, but I know Lethbridge and area: we have that relationship, like I said, on nearly every file. If it's agriculture, you're growing the crops outside the city and bringing them in. If it's trucking, same thing. The maintenance and trucks are sold within the city of Lethbridge and they're utilized all around. Same with repairs, with manufacturing, with health care, with education. The Holy Spirit school division in Lethbridge has schools outside of Lethbridge and inside of Lethbridge, and they bus back and forth. For many years the Holy Spirit school division and the Lethbridge public school division shared busing routes to maximize all of these different routes and getting these children to different schools inside and outside the city.

**9:40**

Lethbridge has had for, I think, 14 years a concept called Team Lethbridge, where they bring all of these agencies together and come and advocate in Edmonton because it is so difficult often to get representatives of the government or ministers down into Lethbridge to have these vital conversations.

The polytechnic: most of the students that they bring in are from Alberta, but not necessarily Lethbridge city proper, all across rural and urban. The university is the same.

We've often for many, many years had this culture of urban and rural working together for the betterment of the city and for the surrounding areas. The former Speaker brought up water. All the water for that southern region is treated and the waste water is treated in Lethbridge, but it's shared broadly. If you don't collaborate and work together for the benefit of others, you have those many challenges in terms of growth, subdivision growth, commercial, and industrial growth. I think there is a great spirit of collaboration within Lethbridge and its city to work together. And populationwise, whether it's a city, a smaller city like Coaldale or Raymond, those relationships are there within the region.

Again, that is why I didn't try to draw maps. I believe that is the commission's challenge – and very well put by the former Speaker on how to make all those work – but that collaborative spirit exists very strongly in the south and has for many, many years.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark, questions?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you very much.

Good to see you, Minister. Thank you for being here. We've heard some feedback on Lethbridge, as I think you probably know, and it has definitely been a hot topic. You know, I compare it to Red Deer. I think you raised Red Deer. I've pulled up the government of Alberta regional dashboard that allows us to compare municipalities. I'm struck by how similar Lethbridge and Red Deer are. They're almost identical in population. Lethbridge, 113,000; Red Deer, 115,000. Much of the demographic makeup is very, very similar. So I'm just curious why you feel Lethbridge should be treated differently from Red Deer. Red Deer has two fully urban constituencies, and there really has been no call to blend Red Deer with surrounding areas. Any insights as to why that might be?

**Mr. Neudorf:** Certainly. I think the insights are that they get the funding that they request on every ministry, and Lethbridge doesn't. I'm trying sort of a last-ditch effort to say that. I do know those numbers go back and forth. Apparently right now, according to your data, Red Deer is larger. The data I had last is that Lethbridge was 114,00 and Red Deer was down to 108,000, but that's splitting hairs.

On the cath labs, both jurisdictions have been advocating and requesting funding for a cath lab for many years. Red Deer is an hour and a half to two major centres with cath labs, north and south. Lethbridge is two hours from only one centre, Calgary to the north. Red Deer got several hundred million dollars to enhance their hospital and get a cath lab to provide that service to their patients. Lethbridge so far has received \$2 million to work towards planning towards some future time to have a cath lab.

I can go through both the postsecondaries, university and college. Calgary, Red Deer, Edmonton, the north: they receive somewhere from \$26,000 to \$27,000 per student. Lethbridge Poly and University receive \$18,000 to \$19,000. Great disparity. Just ask the University of Lethbridge and the polytechnic in Lethbridge how much \$7,000 per student would make a difference in their funding. I can go through education. Similarly, we face those challenges. We talk about health care. I can talk about job training grants. When they come out through different ministries, different programs, almost always Lethbridge is given the same amount as Medicine Hat, not the same amount as Red Deer. So it is a point of contention. It is a great disparity across nearly every ministry.

The only ministry that I'm aware of in my six and a half years that's distinctly different is that Lethbridge has received a huge amount for mental health and addictions to challenge at times the single most visited consumption site in the world. I'm very glad that we were able to change that, but other than that – that would be the basis of my argument. If Red Deer is receiving everything they're asking for or close to it based on their population, why would they need to change representation? But Lethbridge is not, and that is across multiple different governments and different political regimes. Again, I think that this is another way of looking at that to see if that advocacy and population can be better represented.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. I just want to point out. I mean, we have, again, had a lot of feedback. You know, there are school divisions – the Palliser school division has suggested that the current interim alignment of two urban MLAs in Lethbridge serves their needs. There are many others who have suggested that this current alignment does better serve their interests and Lethbridge's interests. Undeniably there are those who have made the opposite case.

I just want to ask. If we do maintain two urban constituencies, there has been some discussion about perhaps tweaking that boundary between east and west. The alignment, I think, south of highway 3 should be Lethbridge-West, and then areas north of

highway 3, Lethbridge-East. If we did maintain the two urban constituencies roughly as they are, do you have a perspective on where the boundary ought to be?

**Mr. Neudorf:** If it was left the way it was, I would make minor changes to it. I don't know that highway 3 is where I would go to make that change. I think there are some communities in the north of Lethbridge-East, where the substation is – there's literally one subdivision that is part of Lethbridge-West where they have to drive across the river through Lethbridge-East to get there.

Is this the new one, the new map that you had presented as an option?

**Mr. Clark:** That's right. Yeah.

**Mr. Neudorf:** I think it was, basically, as I saw it, that northeastern quadrant was more put into Lethbridge-West, and then Lethbridge-East was expanded in the downtown area. I think I would prefer to leave it the way it was than to go to this new map. I don't see how this benefits much other than just changing a map for the sake of changing a map. If we're going to leave it as two, then leave it the way they are. But I don't have a whole lot of other thoughts on that.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. Thank you very much.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much, sir. I wanted to come back to your remarks about this being a very strong industrial and service hub, and I wanted to drill down a bit further on that, particularly about commuters in the catchment area that they come and go to. I take it that it's not merely commuters coming into the city; it's people working by going out of the city to places of employment. That immediately leads me to ask: you know, what is the range? Coaldale seems obvious; Raymond perhaps; certainly to the airport. But does it also include Picture Butte and Fort Macleod?

**Mr. Neudorf:** I would say yes. Ironically, for many years my daughter worked as a baker in Fort Macleod, lived in Lethbridge, so she would commute back and forth all the time every day for that. I know many teachers that teach in Taber and commute back and forth from Lethbridge. Raymond I would also include in that. I would say that 45 minutes is probably the largest extent of that driving to and from Lethbridge, different areas. It can be anything from agriculture, of course, to mechanic in terms of industrial growth. Southland Trailers is within Lethbridge, and they draw many employees from all over the region. I think they're the largest private employer in town.

9:50

Yeah. I just think that there's a significant amount of commuting, but those are the communities that it would reach. Very often I'm talking with people in my office from Taber or Raymond and all in that circle in between, so it can be fairly extensive, but I would say that 45 minutes is typically the extent of it.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you. One supplemental. I mean, historically the railways – of course, you've got very significant railway lines that meet and pass through Lethbridge. Does that continue to be the case, that there's a lot of traffic associated with the railway freight?

**Mr. Neudorf:** Yes. Very good point. Yes, there is a lot of railway within Lethbridge. They've done some significant reconfiguration to minimize that. Their larger siding is in Kipp, which is just beyond Coalhurst. Of course, additional commuting back and forth there. As well, the Blood Tribe and the associated work that goes on between Lethbridge as the main centre predominantly for health care, mental health and addictions, and shelter and some of those

into the Blood Tribe, reaching often all the way to Cardston. But yes, rail is a significant employer, and those two sites, Lethbridge and Kipp, work very collaboratively to manage the volume of rail going to and from and the shipping of goods.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you, sir.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mr. Neudorf, I go back to our first public hearing in Lethbridge in late May and a presentation by an individual. I'm sure you're aware of his presentation. I believe his name was Cameron Mills. He started off with the proposition – well, let me back up.

On a macro level we do not have the resources to add seats to the south, okay? We're stuck. In fact, the trend is – and your colleagues that may be on the line that are from Calgary certainly are aware of this – that we have to take seats away from what I call outside the metro areas of Calgary and Edmonton in order to make the population figures work for the big cities. So it seems to me it's not a representation issue as much as it is preserving rural seats, for lack of a better term.

The attractiveness of Mr. Mills' presentation was that I think he acknowledged: look, we're going to lose seats in the areas outside of Calgary and Edmonton. And then he said: look at the southern band as Medicine Hat having two hybrid ridings – they take care of the ranching and the oil and gas industries there – and take Lethbridge and carve it up into four hybrid ridings so we have a band of six ridings across the south that more than adequately take care of urban representation and rural. Because of the nature of the industry – the agribusiness around Lethbridge is incredible, and it's grown immensely these last 10 to 20 years. Your comment about the rail: that's why there's significant rail activity, because of the agribusiness, hay and feed going out, other stuff coming in.

It seems to me it's more of a regional approach to say: look, you realize the limitations that the commission has, and here's a way to solve it. Would you agree with that description?

**Mr. Neudorf:** Yes, I would. I think it is very essential to maintain the seats in rural and urban-rural hybrids across the province so that we don't drown out those voices. I think it's human nature to represent where you live and where you're from. All of those new seats are going to the big urbans, Calgary and Edmonton. We understand that, but to further lose seats and see that balance shift means that every committee, Treasury Board, cabinet: these things become more and more representative of the major centres in our province, and we lose those voices.

That has been a challenge. It has been my experience being elected from Lethbridge for the last six and a half years. It is very difficult to get the unique perspective of Lethbridge understood not by the electeds, necessarily, in Edmonton but definitely by the bureaucracy and the more entrenched workers there. So often I hear that Lethbridge is, oh, a mid-size city like Medicine Hat. No, actually. For most of the last decade it's been the third- or fourth-largest city in the province. We serve a large community. We serve into B.C. We serve into Saskatchewan. Yet many times in the last 30 years there has been one and one in Lethbridge, one Liberal or one NDP and one Conservative or one UCP. It was only a four-year period where both NDP were representing Lethbridge. Very difficult to get that voice heard across ministries.

Yeah. In that regional nature, to your point, yes, that is how the south works. We've had to, whether it's STARS and HALO, whether it's ambulance service – on all of those kind of things very much we work in collaboration.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Neudorf. We're going to have to stop it there. We're running a little bit behind schedule. Thank

you very much, and please feel free to remain and hear the other presenters.

Our next presenter is Mr. Joe Ceci. Mr. Ceci, sorry for being a little late.

**Member Ceci:** That's no problem at all. It's Ceci, Mr. Chair.

I'm the MLA for Calgary-Buffalo. It's good to meet you all. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this second round of consultations led by the Electoral Boundaries Commission. I'm here to support a fair and effective electoral map for Calgary, one that reflects how our city is growing, respects municipal boundaries, and ensures that residents continue to feel heard and represented as their communities change. I want to thank the commission for the work you are doing, which is reflected in the proposed electoral boundary changes. In my 26 years of elected office, 11 of those as an MLA and 15 as a city councillor, this is the fourth time I've participated in electoral district revisions. Two of those revisions happened at the city, and this is the second time as an MLA.

The draft proposal for Calgary-Buffalo is mostly understandable. However, I'm here to request a change to the 1st Street S.E. eastern boundary you've drafted. Specifically, when determining the eastern boundary of the riding, I believe the Elbow River as a readily apparent geographical feature would be more helpful for current and future constituents to understand. I'd suggest that communities west of the Elbow River – namely, East Village, Cliff Bungalow, Mission, the Beltline, Chinatown, and Downtown West – share more in common with each other than the communities east of the Elbow River. My tweak would mean that the communities of Cliff Bungalow, Mission, East Village, and all the Beltline remain in Calgary-Buffalo. The communities east of the Elbow River, namely Inglewood and Ramsay, would, as you've recommended, be folded into the new Calgary-Confluence riding.

With these changes, the population total variances for both ridings from the average would reverse. Calgary-Buffalo would now be above the average instead of 1.2 per cent below, and Calgary-Confluence would be below the average instead of 3.6 per cent above. Removing Inglewood and Ramsay's current population from Calgary-Buffalo as it exists today would be a decrease of approximately 6,500 citizens. Future residential development in Inglewood's rail yard lands plus build-out to completion of the SoBow lands at 17th Avenue and 19th Street SE together will increase the future Calgary-Confluence riding by an additional 2,000 residents.

Calgary-Buffalo will remain a diverse inner-city riding with a mix of long-established communities like Chinatown, Cliff Bungalow, Mission alongside rapidly evolving areas such as the East Village, the Beltline, and Downtown West. This diversity is a defining feature of the riding, with many, many newcomers coming first to Calgary and settling in apartments in and around the downtown before moving to other neighbourhoods. I believe that the boundary change I'm suggesting would better reflect how people live their daily lives in Calgary-Buffalo and why they locate here, from shopping to recreating to connections to the downtown for work and postsecondary education.

**10:00**

I want to thank the commission for keeping existing municipal boundaries intact in the interim report. I really appreciate that you avoided creating ridings that mix dense urban neighbourhoods with the less urban or rural areas. That kind of approach makes a big difference for fair representation. Even though this doesn't directly affect Calgary-Buffalo because it's an inner-city riding, I think it's important to look at all boundary changes as part of a bigger picture.

Calgary's growth isn't slowing down. There is a census metropolitan area report saying that up to July 2024, 100,000 new residents moved into Calgary – 100,000 new residents – and for that reason, I encourage the commission to follow through with the addition of the proposed Calgary-Confluence riding. Population growth affects everything we rely on: schools, transportation, health care, public safety, and so much more. If funding and services adjust to that growth, our representation should, too. As Alberta's largest and fastest growing city, as the CMA report tells us, Calgary needs enough seats to reflect its reality on the ground. Calgary-Buffalo is a good example of how these changes are happening. Our growth isn't coming from sprawling Calgary-Buffalo but from redevelopment and density intensity, which brings its own challenges and demands.

Lastly, I want to genuinely thank the members of the Electoral Boundaries Commission for your work and commitment. The decisions you make shape how people participate in democracy every single day. I'm grateful for the chance to share my perspective and to support a fair, future-focused map that truly reflects Calgary's ongoing growth.

Just a word about the addition of Calgary-Confluence. I think that's a wise move, particularly because of the intensification of the inner city. Splitting a piece of Calgary-Buffalo off and joining that with Calgary-Klein and Calgary-East is understandable. I used to represent Calgary-Fort before the changes in 2019, and there was a good, active group of citizens in that area which will be taken up in part by the Calgary-Confluence riding, so I really appreciate those folks getting their own representative back again so that that representative can work hard for their demands and needs.

That's the end of my presentation.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Ceci.

Questions, Dr. Martin?

**Dr. Martin:** No. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

Just in a nutshell: thanks for coming out and joining us this morning. The east boundary is the Elbow River, and you're still comfortable with 17th Avenue? I always have to paraphrase this because I'm not a Calgarian, so I'm not that familiar with the districts.

**Member Ceci:** Yeah. One small tweak to what you said: I'm recommending the Elbow River form the east boundary as opposed to 1st Street S.E. It's more understandable.

If you flip over to Calgary-Confluence, you can probably see it a little better there. You'll see the Elbow River. That would include the East Village. Yeah. Just on the western part of that and the northwest part of that proposed riding, you can see there would be the East Village, there would be the Beltline and Cliff Bungalow, Mission. I'm suggesting they would all form part of the future Calgary-Buffalo, and they currently do now. So 17th Avenue would be most of the southern boundary except for Cliff Bungalow, which goes beyond it to the Elbow River. Does that help?

**Mrs. Samson:** Yes, it does. Thank you very much for that clarification.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** Just one question. With respect to Calgary-Buffalo, with the proposed boundaries it would have, as you mentioned, a

population of 54,243. What are your thoughts on increasing that population to the maximum that the variance allows of 68,000?

**Mr. Ceci:** I don't think that's what my proposal does. It would be less than 68,000. I think roughly it's about 54,000, give or take – right? – with your proposal. Adding back in the East Village, a piece of the Beltline, and Cliff Bungalow would probably bring it up another 6,000 or 7,000. Personally, as the MLA I would be comfortable with that. I'd be comfortable with it because I think it would keep like communities together, and it would be . . .

**Mr. Evans:** Mr. Ceci.

**Mr. Ceci:** Yes?

**Mr. Evans:** My question wasn't what your proposal was. My question was: what are your thoughts about having the population in your electoral district increased to 68,000? Currently you're at 77,000-plus. That was my question. Could you answer that, please?

**Mr. Ceci:** Yes. I think it should be said that I'm currently working with great staff and being able to handle that at this point in time, but any drop in that number, from the 77,000, would be better for me, better for the future MLA as well.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you.

Mr. Ceci, good to see you. One of the interesting and challenging features – I don't need to tell you, as the representative of Calgary-Buffalo – is how dense your constituency is. We have a mapping tool here. I can draw some lines. If we added Cliff Bungalow – and let me just confirm. What you're saying is add in Cliff Bungalow south to the Elbow River, use the Elbow River, including Mission, and then loop all the way east and include East Village, but not lose any other part of what we've proposed for Calgary-Buffalo. Just to make sure I'm clear on what you're asking, is that correct?

**Mr. Ceci:** Following the Elbow River you would include Cliff Bungalow, Mission, the East Village, and all of the Beltline to the east of 1st Street S.E. Yes.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. But not move it on the west side, still continue with 14th Street?

**Mr. Ceci:** Not Ramsay and not Inglewood. Right.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. If we did that, we add 20,000 residents, so you'd be over the 68,000, which is greater than 25 per cent. I'll just give you an example.

**Mr. Ceci:** In what year, Greg?

**Mr. Clark:** July 1, 2024.

For example, if we moved the boundary on the east side from 1st Street S.E. one block to Macleod Trail: 4,500 additional residents. That's the challenge that we have, that the population of Calgary-Buffalo and downtown Calgary has grown so rapidly, and the density – I don't need to tell you – is huge. Calgary-Buffalo has grown 56 per cent since the 2017 boundary. So that's the challenge, I think, that we have, that your proposal would put us way over the 25 per cent.

What we found for MLAs is that they love their people, and I think that's great. No MLA has yet answered the question: which part of your constituency would you like to not have any more? They say: we'd love to have all of it. But the math just doesn't work on this one, just for your reference, and that's the rationale as to

why the lines are drawn the way they are. I just really wanted to make that point. I understand where you're coming from, but I think it's going to be difficult for us to do what you've suggested.

**10:10**

**Member Ceci:** Appreciate the population projections. I didn't use those. I was using the geographical boundary as a common-sense way to build this riding.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Just so you're aware, that's going to make it challenging to do much.

Also, part of it is, to borrow a phrase: skate to where the puck is going to be. You know, there's a lot of growth. In your opinion, is that growth slowing down in the centre of Calgary, staying the same, accelerating?

**Member Ceci:** It's not slowing down.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. That's part of it. We want to try to have a boundary that isn't going to be massively overpopulated in the next eight, seven years either, so a lot of balls to juggle here.

Anyway, thank you.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Ceci. It's always good to hear people who knock on the doors and walk the streets to get support, so thank you.

Our next presenter is Mr. Parmeet Boparai. Sorry, sir. We're only about 15 minutes late, 15 minutes behind schedule. Please identify yourself, identify your electoral division for the record, and tell us what you want us to know.

**Member Boparai:** Yeah. Good morning, everyone, and thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Parmeet Singh Boparai. I'm the MLA for Calgary-Falconridge. I represent a number of communities in the northeast quadrant of Calgary. I'm participating in this process because I want to ensure fair, effective, and future-minded representation for a fast-growing city, which is important to delivering the services, schools, transportation, health care, public safety, things that my constituents depend on.

I have had the privilege of engaging closely with residents from Temple, Whitehorn, Castleridge, Falconridge, Taradale, Coral Springs, and expanding communities east of Stoney Trail like Homestead along with the industrial and cultural hub of Westwinds, which is home to many small ethnocultural businesses, cultural and religious organizations. These communities are vibrant and diverse, and they deserve boundaries that reflect who they are, where they go, and how they live. I appreciate the commission's difficult task of balancing population pressures, community identity, and legislative requirements. Your work is essential in ensuring effective representation.

If I go over the background, Calgary-Falconridge was created in 2017 as part of the province's last major redistribution. It was formed by reorganizing several northeast Calgary constituencies, abolished Calgary-Greenway, and added Coral Springs and the eastern half of Taradale from that riding. Whitehorn and Temple were brought in from Calgary-Cross. Castleridge, Falconridge, and Westwinds Industrial moved from Calgary-McCall, which is now Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

From the start the riding was already 13 per cent above the provincial population average and was based on the assumption that limited new housing would be built in the area. This assumption was proved incorrect. Since 2017 Calgary-Falconridge has experienced sustained and significant growth driven by the emergence



of new communities east of Stoney Trail, including Homestead, which is the fastest growing community in Calgary, increasing densification through multigenerational family living, and some high-density housing.

Today Calgary-Falconridge remains one of the most culturally diverse ridings in the province. Punjabi, Urdu, Hindi, and Tagalog are widely spoken due to predominant South Asian and significant Filipino populations. There is a growing East African population, too. Cultural hubs such as Westwinds Industrial, home to religious and cultural institutions, Prairie Winds park, and the high concentration of ethnocultural businesses anchor the social and economic life of the constituency. These shared linguistic, cultural, and institutional ties make the communities within the riding particularly important when looking at the boundary alignments.

The proposal to bring Martindale into the riding is a logical and positive change. It shares clear demographic, cultural, and social elements with communities north of McKnight Boulevard. It's Castleridge, Falconridge, Taradale, Coral Springs, and Homestead. These neighbourhoods function as a connected ecosystem through shared schools, place of worship, cultural institutions, and family networks. The addition strengthens the identity and geographic ties of the riding in this area.

The proposal to remove Whitehorn and Temple and return them to Calgary-Cross is also positive and logical. This restores the long-established grouping of the properties Temple, Whitehorn, Rundle, and Pineridge. These communities have historically shared schools, libraries, recreation centres, and service hubs, and many residents already see themselves as belonging together. This adjustment fixes ongoing confusion since they were moved in 2017. The older, more mature communities south of McKnight share similar demographics and identity as well. Some neighbourhoods remain split – for example, Monterey Park – which is not ideal from a community of interest perspective. It appears to be a compromise driven by overall population pressures in the northeast.

The commission projects an additional 18 per cent growth in the coming years in Calgary-Falconridge. Calgary-Bhullar-McCall next to us is projected 29 per cent, reflecting the broader growth of the entire northeast corridor, which has seen some of the largest in the province. This is because of continued development east of Stoney Trail, large multigenerational household intensification, and high rates of settlement. If you look at Calgary's overall growth and representation, Calgary is growing and fast. This level of expansion places pressure on adjusted constituencies and highlights just how quickly Calgary's population growth is outpacing earlier expectations. We saw this with Calgary-Falconridge as well as many others.

Calgary's northeast quadrant continues to be one of the fastest growing regions in both the city and the province, and that growth is no longer contained within its boundaries. The Calgary-North East riding alone is projected to grow by 55 per cent even after its proposed split and the new riding of Calgary-Nose Creek. We are now seeing growth extending north to northwest Calgary, Airdrie, and the communities east of Stoney Trail from Homestead by 80th Avenue N.E. down to Huxley, Belvedere, and Twinhills near 17th Avenue. In fact, there is growth all the way to the far south end of Calgary all along the outside of Stoney Trail. The commission has taken two meaningful steps to address this, with Calgary gaining two additional seats with Calgary-Confluence and Calgary-Nose Creek.

Outside Calgary the Airdrie-Cochrane corridor also gains an additional seat, moving from two to three, with the new Airdrie-West riding in addition to Airdrie-East and Cochrane-Springbank. These changes demonstrate a strong recognition of the demographic reality Calgary is facing. However, the pace of growth in the city,

particularly outside the current Stoney Trail ring road, continues to exceed what was predicted during the previous redistribution cycle. This expansion reinforces the need to think proactively, not reactively, about representation. Without additional measures several Calgary ridings risk becoming significantly overpopulated early in the next distribution cycle.

If you look at Calgary's overall growth and representation, for this reason I encourage the commission to consider adding another Calgary seat. An example of an opportunity for these changes is the proposal for Calgary-Okotoks, a hybrid seat that is one-third Calgary and two-thirds Okotoks that was intended to relieve pressure in south Calgary. While we understand the intent behind proposing Calgary-Okotoks as a hybrid seat, the reality is that growth in the southeast quadrant of Calgary, especially outside Stoney Trail, is accelerating, mirroring the trend seen in the northeast quadrant of Calgary. A fully Calgary-based seat would account for this upcoming growth and prevent future overpopulation.

Okotoks is distinct from Calgary. Its community identity, municipal structure, and regional priorities are fundamentally different. Merging it with a major urban centre like Calgary risks reducing Okotoks' voice and diminishing its ability to have effective representation rooted in its own needs. Calgary can absorb and justify an additional fully urban seat far more easily than a hybrid seat. A Calgary-only riding would relieve pressure across the city, as we have in the north and northeast. It would improve equity and complement the work already proposed by the commission. Given Calgary's unexpected and continued upward population trajectory, this adjustment would strengthen the overall map and better position for the next decade of representation.

Again, I would like to thank the commission for their hard work. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, sir. We heard from your neighbours last week.

Any questions, starting with Mrs. Samson?

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you very much.

Thank you for your time this morning. You're in a difficult, if I could use that word, situation with the changes in Calgary-Falconridge. I realize there are communities of interest that have now moved into Calgary-Cross, but with the numbers that we're seeing and the continued growth, there's not a lot of wiggle room. You know, the recommendations you made we have heard from others, and they are concerned. We certainly will have a look at it, but it's a tough one. Thank you again for echoing those concerns.

10:20

**Member Boparai:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** No questions. Thank you for your presentation.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you.

It's a good lesson in being a little cautious in the predictions that a boundaries commission might make. I did read that as well in the last commission's suggestion on Calgary-Falconridge, that it wouldn't grow as quickly. That's a challenge. Our crystal ball is probably equally defective, but we'll try not to make the same mistakes. I don't really have any questions per se. Just so I'm clear, are you comfortable with the draft Calgary-Falconridge map as we have drawn it in the interim report?

**Member Boparai:** Yeah. I don't mind it, but for a suggestion: if the north of Monterey Park can be excluded from Calgary-Falconridge, it would be better. Otherwise, that's fine.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. That's helpful. Yeah. Again, it's a bit of a cascading challenge, but I see where that is. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** No questions.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much for your presentation.

We have kind of caught up, and we're on time now. Our next presenter I understand is wanting to present, but he's locked out of his office, so we're going to take our break a tad early, and we are going to have a break today. We will reconvene probably around 10:45 a.m. or when Mr. Arcand-Paul reaches out to Aaron. Okay. We'll break till 10:45 a.m.

[The hearing adjourned from 10:22 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.]

**The Chair:** I know I said we had adjourned until 10:45, but we have our next presenter available. We're glad to see that everybody got into their office unscathed.

I'm going to open it up for Mr. Arcand-Paul to present. Please identify yourself and tell us what electoral division you are from or representing and tell us what you want us to hear.

**Member Arcand-Paul:** Hello, commission members. Thank you for your flexibility this morning. It's lovely to see you again. For those that do not remember me, I'm Brooks Arcand-Paul. I'm the MLA for Edmonton-West Henday. I'd like to present to you on four ridings today: Edmonton-West Henday, Edmonton-West-Enoch, Banff-Jasper, and Mackenzie.

First, I'll start with my riding. I sent a presentation to Aaron just a few moments ago that hopefully he can share. There was a proposal to create a hybrid riding including Edmonton-West Henday. I would argue that you did the right thing by rejecting that proposal because the west end is rapidly growing because it's affordable and it's welcoming. It's imperative that our riding is kept within the municipal boundaries of Edmonton.

In a rural riding, which is a rural-urban riding, the voices of the young, diverse, and new constituents that I represent will risk being drowned out. This redraw is especially important given that these are the boundaries the west end will be relying on for the next two elections. This future growth cannot be understated, including for the reasons I outlined in my initial appearance before you.

While I won't recite what I have previously mentioned about West Henday, I do think the redrawn boundaries make a lot of good sense and pick up a few neighbourhoods into West Henday that fit squarely with the communities I already represent. This includes the addition of Glenwood, Summerlea, Britannia, Youngstown, and Mayfield. While I'd be remiss to not relay some concern from some of my constituents in Calder that they would no longer be in West Henday, I do understand the need to balance the population that West Henday would be composed of. However, if the option to keep Calder in West Henday is not too much to ask, I'm doing so with the understanding that the commission is in a tough bind.

I further understand and support including Rosenthal, Suder, Potter, and Breckenridge Greens into Edmonton-West-Enoch. Although splitting up the Greens does split up a community league, the Lewis Estates community league, I trust there are other community leagues across the province that function in spite of these delineations. But I digress.

Given the rapid growth that Edmonton has been seeing and will be continuing to see in the near future, I hope that the commission considers adding another seat within the boundaries of Edmonton. In the interest of time, the slide that you are seeing in front of you right now includes some growth of one part of my neighbourhood, Kinglet, Trumpeter, and Starling. On the left there's a picture from September 2017, and on the right is a picture from September 2025. Aaron, next slide, please.

This is what the growth looks like. This is the growth from Hawks Ridge, Kinglet Gardens, and Starling. As you can see, there's been some rezoning developments.

I think, Aaron, there's a next slide, too.

This is Secord. I want to really underscore September 2017, when the boundaries were redrawn, to today, September 2025. That growth is exponential in Secord.

Next slide.

And it keeps going. There are empty lots that are still being developed, and as you can see in these photos, there's continuous growth happening, new multi-unit and multi-dwelling homes being built and zoned for such.

You can end the slides, Aaron.

Second, I want to commend the commission for also taking Indigenous representation seriously by creating the riding of Edmonton-West-Enoch, the riding of Mackenzie, and including all Stoney Nakoda Nations and the O'Chiese and Suncild First Nation in the riding of Banff-Jasper. You have for the first time in the history of the province given Indigenous peoples in Alberta access to representation in the Legislature.

Edmonton-West-Enoch gives Enoch Cree Nation an opportunity to access effective representation. Enoch Cree Nation is unique because it's a highly urban First Nation. Many people from Enoch live and work in Edmonton. In the previous configuration of Drayton Valley-Devon their voices were being drowned out in a largely rural riding. Living right next door to Enoch and, in fact, in a community that used to be reserved land, Secord and Rosenthal, it just makes sense to include them in an Edmonton riding rather than a rural riding. If any of you have been out to the River Cree, it is becoming an increasingly important hub for the west end and certainly a great date spot for me and my honey. They have a massive expansion under way and are serving both the Nation members of Enoch and their neighbours in Edmonton with their services and entertainment options.

Further, in bringing together the three Stoney Nakoda nations along with the Tsuu T'ina Nation and O'Chiese and Suncild First Nations in Banff-Jasper, you have given them the opportunity to be better supported by a singular MLA and their constituency office team. It is a very large riding geographically, but it makes good sense not only to keep the mountain towns together but also bringing together First Nations that have traditionally been amidst largely rural ridings.

By creating the riding of Mackenzie, you have proposed to give Indigenous peoples from northern Alberta a distinct voice for the first time in the history of our province. In doing so, you have given the First Nations and Métis communities of interest the protection the act is meant to give under section 14 of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. You've also brought Alberta in line with Manitoba and Saskatchewan, who have northern ridings with majority Indigenous populations.

Lastly, I want to recognize that you've been getting push-back which would impact the riding of Mackenzie. For example, there have been arguments made about the long-standing and historic nature of ridings in northern Alberta. I humbly put to you that history is not always a good reason to keep things the way that they are, and we do need that recognized change.

Thank you for your consideration and for your leadership on this gargantuan task. I am open to any questions based on my presentation.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Sir, you're right. We have received some push-back on the Mackenzie issue in the north, and I have to say that we've had excellent Indigenous presentations last week during our online session from the north that really cause us to question the wisdom of what we proposed.

You made mention of—I'm somewhat familiar with Saskatchewan, but it's a completely different northern geography than northern Alberta and a completely different development. Tell me a little bit about Manitoba. That I don't know anything about. How do they deal with the north in Manitoba, if you've researched this?

**Member Arcand-Paul:** Yeah. In the north they have the specific—and the name is escaping me. I think it's Keewatinook, where they've developed the riding for the fact that they have the makeup of largely Indigenous folks in that part of the province. If I'm not mistaken, it's northwest of the province, and it contains, again, a very large number of Indigenous folks that would show up to the polls and are represented by somebody that they choose. I'm a little bit scant on the details, unfortunately, on what the representational turnout is with respect to a candidate, but I do know that they are largely represented by Indigenous folks in that community.

**The Chair:** Okay. Each province has dealt with these exceptions in different ways. Having looked at the history of Alberta and the work since the Saskatchewan reference in the early '90s, it seems to me that the Alberta legislation gives us the tool of 15(2), which can't be equalized with the way Saskatchewan does it. I think we have to do a bit more work in terms of the northern ridings to make sure that they don't lose representation. The push-back from the north to us has been, in my view, very bipartisan. Everybody is unhappy with losing one more voice in the north. So we're dealing with a combination of things. One of them is very much more appropriate Indigenous representation. That is a bit of a challenge for us. That is my only comment.

Questions, Mr. Clark?

**Mr. Clark:** No. You know, I will say just how much we appreciate the feedback on Enoch inclusion within Edmonton. I don't believe we've received any direct input from the Enoch Cree. That's always a bit of a flag, and I just want to be cautious on that. But having said that, I think your submission here today is very helpful. Just briefly, do you know specifically if Enoch Cree have any feedback on the proposal?

10:40

**Member Arcand-Paul:** I haven't had a chance to chat with their chief and council, but it has come to light from members that there was some support of including them into the urban riding of Edmonton. If we're looking at the people that do vote: yes, chief and councils also vote, but it's the membership that does have a really strong showing of their ability to go to the polls.

It would depend on the commission's ability to do so under legislation. I think that as a legislator I'm hyperconscious of perhaps changes that need to be done to legislation to include the ability to consult with First Nations. That was one of the biggest pieces of feedback that I received when I was talking about the redraw and what their interests are with the inclusion into, like, urban ridings or the inclusion into Banff-Jasper, that they were never reached out to for consultation. I think that might be a gap

from the commission's abilities and powers, but as a legislator, again, as I said, it's difficult. It's a question for us to deal with.

With respect to Enoch specifically, I can't opine as to what they've been saying, but I can tell you that there are members that do vote, that participate in provincial elections, and they are thrilled to have this as part of the changes to their riding.

**Mr. Clark:** Excellent. Well, thank you very much. Really appreciate that input. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Yes. Thank you.

Thank you for your presentation and your kind remarks about our attentiveness to the First Nations as we survey the map and maps. I wanted to ask you something more about growth in your riding. You showed us some recent photographs, and I take it those are Lewis Estates photographs, are they?

**Member Arcand-Paul:** The first set was Kinglet. That was around the Big Lake area. It includes Kinglet Gardens, Kinglet, Hawks Ridge, Starling. They're one of the newer areas with new developments happening, and the second set was Secord, which is one of the communities that I currently represent that is also fast growing.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you. I'm sorry about Calder. You're fast growing, but Mr. Eggen said: you know, it makes sense that it's here, thank you very much. So you'll have to talk to your colleague.

Again, I'm sorry that we seem to have split the community leagues and the like in the Lewis Estates area. We divided it along Webber Greens Drive, I seem to remember. In your preference, as it were, you would like to see that made whole, would you?

**Member Arcand-Paul:** I know the difficulty of using the landmarks and using the main roads as the delineator. It would be nice for that. It's a little, tiny chunk that would kind of be separated entirely from the south of 87th Ave that maybe could be added to Edmonton-West-Enoch, and it might be a weird carve-out. But I do think that separating them may create some practical difficulties for the entire community of Lewis Estates because they are all one. I know the map kind of looks like there are different Greens and they're all titled differently, but they all form one community of Lewis Estates. It would be nice to keep them as whole, but I understand the practicalities of a fast-growing riding like Edmonton-West Henday.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much, sir.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation today. Also, thank you for your comments concerning the Indigenous. Although we did have input, I felt we didn't have enough, but the stuff we did get was really good. Again, thank you for your time.

**Member Arcand-Paul:** Yeah. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah.

I just want to comment with respect to: I appreciate what you were trying to achieve by showing us those photos with the 2017 date and comparing it to 2025. I don't think that it demonstrated any sort of growth that wasn't captured in the 2024 census, but I appreciate giving us a visual. They say a picture is worth a thousand words. Yeah.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much again, Mr. Arcand-Paul. You've touched on – well, I have a question, actually. My colleagues on the commission may say it's a bit of a hobby horse of mine, hybrid ridings. We received a considerable amount of push-back, not so much from Edmonton but Calgary, against hybrid ridings. So your praise and endorsement of Edmonton-West-Enoch: that's a hybrid.

**Member Arcand-Paul:** Yes and no.

**The Chair:** I think yes.

**Member Arcand-Paul:** Okay. Fair. I mean, you have to be on the ground. I don't know if you live in that community.

**The Chair:** No, I was out there enjoying the facilities the last time around when I was in Edmonton.

**Member Arcand-Paul:** Okay. So you know what I'm talking about with the River Cree then and the growth that's happening.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Great cigar lounge.

**Member Arcand-Paul:** Just south of there, which would include Edmonton-West-Enoch, also includes the Uplands, it includes Keswick, it includes a bunch of new neighbourhoods that go and extend into, like, a rural part of, I guess, Edmonton because the city limits extend that far. It is within the city limits, and it is growing at a rapid pace. As you know, housing is at a premium, and we need more housing. Edmonton has grown quite significantly, and I think it also stresses the urge for an additional riding in the city of Edmonton because we are growing so fast. Arguably, same with Calgary.

I will take note, and sure, I will agree with you that there are some rural aspects to this riding, but with the growth of this city I don't anticipate that it's going to be rural for much longer because of how fast that area is growing. I'll admit, anecdotally, that I'm in the process of buying a house. I'm looking in those areas, and I'm quite shocked at how far the developments are going in that area, so it's only a matter of time. You know, the fact that we're going to have two elections under these ridings: I think it's very prudent to have that additional growth captured in that riding of Edmonton-West-Enoch.

**The Chair:** Okay. Good. Thank you very much for presenting.

Our next presenter – and we're actually right on schedule; ahead of schedule – is Ms Kathleen Ganley, Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Hello. Sorry. You are running ahead of schedule. That's exciting. Well, thank you very much for having me today. I appreciate the ability to comment on this. I want to first say that I appreciate that this is, like, a very challenging situation – very challenging – with people making different arguments, and I very much appreciate your willingness to sort of do the work and the map that you have drawn already. I think, overall, I would say it seems quite fair. I, of course, have a couple of quibbles, but I'd like to start with the positive.

I'll comment primarily on Calgary because that's where I'm from. I think in terms of Calgary this map is a significant move in the right direction. I would say that if I could highlight anything, it's that the jurisprudence and the act make it clear that ensuring effective representation is the sort of primary factor. There are a number of other things that ought to be taken into consideration, and I think municipal boundaries are definitely one of them, but that idea of effective representation, of keeping all the ridings as close as possible to having, you know, the median population I think is super, super important. I would say that the map kind of recognizes

that with the insertion of Calgary-Confluence and Calgary-Nose Creek. I think that those ridings are coming in in the right place.

Some of the fastest growth we have seen in Calgary is in northeast Calgary, but we're also seeing significant densification in the centre city, which is where Calgary-Mountain View is, so I'm very, very familiar with it. In fact, there are buildings going up, like, basically, constantly, right? Everywhere in my riding there are new buildings going up, so we will see that population continuing to grow in the centre city.

I might suggest that, given the tendency for ridings in Calgary to be over, it doesn't do a great job of accommodating future growth. Like, this map is going to come in and it's going to be in place for eight years. If you look at the last map and how much growth has occurred since the last map, I think that it is worth the commission considering inserting another seat into Calgary to recognize that future growth because you're dealing with a map that we will have for quite a while. I know that some folks have made arguments in the opposite direction, but I think when you're looking at ridings in Calgary like Calgary-Bhullar-McCall, for example, which is more than 10 per cent over, and then some ridings in the rural north that are 28 per cent under, I think it's worth considering whether maybe Calgary might need another seat.

**10:50**

My other big quibble with this would be the ridings of Calgary-West-Elbow Valley and Calgary-Cross. I'm a little curious in light of the fact that, again, Calgary ridings are over and they're projected to go more over into the future. I don't want to guess at what's going to happen, but, like, this is very likely. Having those hybrid ridings seems to me entirely unnecessary. In light of the fact that Calgary has plenty of population, I don't know why we would be drawing in other areas that could go into other ridings and bring them closer to the median. Like, this just doesn't seem necessary to me.

Especially, like, Calgary-Cross is near Calgary-Bhullar-McCall, for instance, which has an overpopulation, as do many of the other ridings in northeast. Calgary-Currie is over 5.8 per cent, Calgary-Fish Creek over 9.3 per cent, yet for some reason Calgary-West, which is in the southwest of Calgary, is drawing in sort of additional rural areas. It just doesn't seem necessary when you could shift things a little and make everyone closer to the median. Yeah. Those would be my quibbles, but overall I would say that it has been a good job. Yes. Could be improved by adding one more seat to Calgary.

I think what I would say in the end is that we find ourselves in a moment in history where our institutions are somewhat under attack, so I think that it is more important than usual to remain focused on ensuring that the entire population feels well represented and feels like they have that buy-in to the system. I think that seeing that populations in Calgary are over and populations in other areas are consistently under so the kind of principle of one person, one vote, that MLAs ought to equally represent constituents – yeah. I think the more we can do to get those closer to the median, the more people will have buy-in to that system and the better it is, but I think, overall, I don't have a lot of complaints with this map.

The one other thing I would point out – because I have spent a fair amount of time in Medicine Hat just working with folks there. They have one of these hybrid ridings, and I think it's frustrating to the voters there. What I've heard on the ground is that they don't always feel that their voices are fully represented, and I think that goes for both sides, right? There is a question of, you know, urban voters having a certain perspective, but rural voters also have a certain perspective, as do folks in small towns. I mean, I laid out my arguments in the last submission, so I will not reiterate them here, but I think sometimes there are conflicting interests in terms

of whether your schools and hospitals are bursting at the seams or whether you're struggling with lack of use and sort of base funding for those. I can expand on that, but since I've already done it, I will not do that here today.

I'm happy to take any questions that you have.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you, Ms Ganley.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** No. No questions for Ms Ganley.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your time today. I appreciate it. I just want to tell you that from my perspective, Calgary-Cross took in Conrich because Conrich has no services, and those people are commuting into Calgary. So we viewed that as communities of interest. The same thing occurred in Elbow Valley. Otherwise, you know, I mean, it fit nicely for us. We heard very clearly back from the suggestion of Okotoks getting tied into Calgary. The ones we heard from preferred if Okotoks would stay in Diamond Valley, again, a better connection with community of interest.

I appreciate your comments. We take everything into interest when we're making these decisions. Thanks again.

**Ms Ganley:** Yeah. Can I just say that I appreciate very much that response. I think you're absolutely correct that hybrid ridings are a tool. It shouldn't be overused. I would say that the points you make on that are very valid.

I'm glad you have recognized the difference in terms of Okotoks. I think you're correct. They feel that they have their own community of interest, and I think that's very valid.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** No questions. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you.

The grand challenge we have is balancing what may be unbalanceable in terms of substantial population growth in the cities, as you identify, in the inner cities and certainly northeast Calgary, south Calgary, south Edmonton, but also accommodating for future growth and ensuring effective representation to all Albertans, including the far north and in particular the far north and rural and remote areas as well.

Just a thought experiment. Because the cities tend to lag behind in that population growth exceeds the rest of the province, by making constituencies like Calgary-Mountain View and Calgary-Buffalo and Calgary-Confluence right around the mean at this point on the expectation that they're almost certainly going to grow quicker than the rest of the provincial average, we're creating some headroom there. We're not making them 5 or 10 per cent under because that would make it very difficult for us to have any sort of effective representation outside the cities. Does that meet your test for effective representation?

**Ms Ganley:** Yeah. I would one hundred per cent agree with that. I've got the percentages open here. I think you're right. I think we do want to take those centre city ridings closer to the median. I don't think that you're speculating. My recollection is – and I don't know if that's still the case, but you, like me, sort of live in centre city Calgary, right? You're driving around all the time, and you can see it, right? You can see it. Everywhere I go, densification is occurring, and those places get snapped up in a heartbeat. Like, sometimes

they are purchased before they're even finished being built. You know, in areas like Hillhurst, West Hillhurst, Bridgeland, all mature in my riding, you can see those buildings going up and filling very quickly. I mean, it's very, very clear that the population will continue to expand. I actually think that sort of aiming those centre city ridings for sort of right on the median, knowing that that growth will occur, is the best balance you possibly could have done. I don't envy you that particular decision.

The only other thing I would comment on is that I think that northeast Calgary is equally growing very quickly, and their ridings are already quite large. I do appreciate that the commission has already put one riding in there. It could maybe use another. Yeah. I don't want to pretend to imagine what you did in drawing this map.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much.

**Ms Ganley:** Thanks.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms Ganley. I've got a couple of comments but a quick question. Are you content with the name of your electoral division?

**Ms Ganley:** I actually do think it's potentially confusing. I say that because of having a Calgary-Mountain View and a Mountain View-Kneehill. When we're in the Legislature, we're not allowed to address one another by name. We address one another by riding. It's kind of like being the kid in the class that has to go by their last initial because some other kid has the same first name. You know what I mean? I do think that that is potentially confusing. I will tell you that, by and large, when I say to people, "I'm the MLA for Calgary-Mountain View," they assume that I am somewhere on the west edge of the city, and I have never totally understood why that is. People are always surprised that the riding is named what it is. I mean, I like the name; I've grown attached to it, but I'm happy to have it changed. I do think it is a bit potentially confusing when the Speaker calls us by riding name to have two very similar riding names.

11:00

**The Chair:** Yeah. We've heard some push-back on the name Foothills because foothills are all over. Anyways. Okay.

Let me give you a perspective. You may have heard my comments with the previous speaker, and I didn't realize you were on the line, but let me fess up to my observation that Calgarians seem to be, you know, very much opposed to hybrids and it seemed that there was a bit of a campaign. There's nothing wrong with that, but: hybrids are bad, they're evil; don't allow for them. As you know, as a lawyer, it is a legitimate choice, and you've indicated that, yeah, they shouldn't be overused, but in my view they've been underused for so long. We've had this option since the early '90s, and as someone who does not live in Calgary nor in Edmonton, you may have recalled the line – it was actually brought up to me yesterday in a presentation – that maybe it's time that Calgary and Edmonton see what the rest of the province deals with in terms of hybrid ridings.

Our approach is, I think, very modest here in both cities, and we were kind of in a quandary with Calgary south, with Calgary-Okotoks, and we heard loud and clear that that's not a great plan. I don't think you have to be concerned about that one, but there are some that fit really well. Edmonton-West-Enoch is one. Conrich: there's some good rationale for that. I may be just rambling because you're Calgarian, and I want to maybe defend some of the things that you had quibbles with. It's late in the week. We finish today.

Last week we had a presentation from an MLA who said, "You know, with the numbers in my riding, it's becoming outrageously

large,” so I posited to him: “Okay. You’ve used the term “outrageously large.” Let’s talk about Mackenzie in northern Alberta.” I am told – I haven’t verified this – that the southern boundary of Mackenzie is closer to Montana than it is to the Northwest Territories. Now, that’s outrageously large, and we took a riding out of the north for which we’ve received strong bipartisan push-back. So I guess I’m trying to build the case for more hybrids, and I think we will in our report, and I think we have to do some correcting in terms of the elimination of rural and certainly a northern seat.

With all that, I don’t think we’re obsessed with getting to the mean or average, because that limits us. We’re more obsessed with getting everybody in the range and meeting the test of effective representation. Now, I think it will always be thus, that urban ridings are higher, well above the average, and rural ridings are almost always below the average. That’s my *Reader’s Digest* version of what we’re thinking. I didn’t get the endorsement of any of the four co-commissioners to say this to you, but that’s certainly my thought process.

I think as a former Attorney General you understand, you know, the pressures that we have. It is somewhat influenced by the very limited increase of only two seats. That’s a frustration for us, and we will be recommending something along those lines, that we just didn’t have enough room. We just don’t have enough room in the two-seat expansion of the Legislature. As you know, the Court of Appeal says, “Look, you’ve got three options: add more seats to the Legislature, take more seats away from the rural areas, or use hybrids,” and that’s the conundrum we’re dealing with and we have been dealing with ever since we started this. I welcome some push-back on that, Ms Ganley, or a response.

**Ms Ganley:** And I’m happy to provide it. What I would say is that the point of representative democracy is that rather than sort of people fighting with one another directly in the streets or whatever, they elect representatives; the representatives go to the Legislature, and that is the system we use. The court system is a very similar thing. People sort of give their interests up in the interest of us all being governed by a common system. There are some things that are very, very fundamentally different right now in a very intense way. We’re seeing this, like, massive increase in what I would call separatist rhetoric, and I will tell you that the people I talk to in Calgary are horrified.

I think when you’re creating these hybrid ridings, you are putting an MLA in the position of simultaneously representing constituents who are fundamentally, morally, in their very souls Albertans and Canadians at the same time, and others who believe that Alberta should separate, and that is their kind of one-issue perspective. I can only imagine that that would be incredibly challenging, and I don’t think throwing those folks into the same riding where they’re advocating to one MLA, instead of having them in separate ridings where the MLAs can argue it out in the Legislature, is something that will support faith in the system or that supports the general aim of peaceful resolution of our disputes through the processes that we have.

I will tell you that my perspective is that it’s emotional for people. It is, and it worries me, honestly, how emotional it is for people. The idea of sort of throwing all of those people into the same riding in the hopes that they will somehow sort out those disputes or understand one another better: I think, much like when you’re dealing with school children who may have had a dispute – do you know what I mean? – I don’t know that putting together two very angry and fundamentally opposed people under the same MLA, rather than having that hashed out in the Legislature, is the right way to do it.

When I was first elected, they told us, you know, that there are two sword lengths between the two sides to avoid anyone getting into a dispute about it, and I kind of thought it was funny back then. Now it seems, I guess, less funny than it did at that time, and I just think that ensuring that those disputes are sort of going up through our representatives and into the process is the better way to do it.

I do appreciate the perspective of the colleagues from the north who are suggesting that these ridings are very large. They are very large. I would say that there’s one MP, I think, for the entire Northwest Territories, and they seem to manage somehow. With the advent of modern technology, I don’t think the size of the riding is the same kind of factor that it was once in history.

In terms of the Calgary perspective, I think you’re right when you say that Calgary has had more of a push-back against this concept of hybrid ridings, and I do understand that it is a tool that is available. I think that it is a tool that should be used as sparingly as possible, for the reasons I have just outlined, but I think Calgarians very much have a perspective, in a lot of ways, that we haven’t always been represented. There are feelings, I think, about Edmonton, as everyone is familiar with, the whole Calgary and Edmonton situation. Sometimes it feels like it mirrors Alberta and Ottawa although not, obviously, to that degree.

I think Calgarians really feel that we want to have our own voice, that we want to sort of have a seat at the table, to be represented, and to be able to send our own representatives that speak specifically for us. I think the reason you see that push-back, in my understanding from both sides, both the rural or the small urban and from the sort of main city, is because we are all very acutely aware, because of the sort of boom-bust cycle of oil that has historically resulted in, like, sudden growth in Calgary, of what those growth pressures feel like.

**11:10**

It’s just a very different perspective, right? You know, there are a lot of disputes amongst Calgary communities, particularly in the inner city, about densification, about the history of the neighbourhood versus how we have to – and, like, the entirety of Calgary, we feel that sort of growth pressure in our souls, right? Whereas rural areas feel the opposite. There are fewer and fewer people often, although in some bedroom communities that will be different. Airdrie and Okotoks are, I think, actually growing faster than Calgary. I don’t want to say that definitively because I don’t have the numbers in front of me, but my understanding is that they are. I have a lot of friends, obviously, in those cities, and they feel that their interests are different than Calgary, right?

I think growth pressure creates scarcity of resources, and that results in people having what would otherwise be a logical thought sort of more emotionally, much like I described with the sort of separatist, antiseparatist thing. I just think the result is that people feel it very viscerally. I mean, that would be my best attempt to answer the question.

**The Chair:** Okay. I don’t want to keep you, but I am watching the clock, and we have the time, so that’s why I’m engaging this repartee with you.

**Ms Ganley:** Totally fair.

**The Chair:** You raise an interesting point that, like, I guess I’d never thought of. I don’t think it’s ever been presented to us, the issue of independence, but I’m not sure the good folks of Conrich and Enoch are – those are not hotbeds of separatism necessarily, according to my understanding. You know, those are the two examples I use: one from Calgary, one from Edmonton, for the hybrids.

Counter to what you just said, we had someone – I can't remember the person or the electoral division last week – who made a very strong point that hybrids help bring people together, in exact response to your point that institutions are under attack and things like that, that hybrids help force people to look at life from a perspective that's not their own, so there's that argument as well.

**Ms Ganley:** I think what I would say in response to that argument is that it suffers from a misunderstanding of human psychology. I don't think throwing two groups of people with wildly different perspectives in a room and hoping that they will sort it out – like, the Legislature and the court systems are the processes that we have for sorting those things out peacefully. So I think you're much better off to send two representatives with those different perspectives to sort it out than to expect people within a riding to do that. I would actually say that the converse is true, that putting everyone into the same riding is likely to aggravate those differences.

**The Chair:** Ms Ganley, thank you so much. Thank you for participating in my dialogue. Much appreciated.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much for your time.

**The Chair:** I think we need to move on to the next presenter, and I'm going to call on Mr. Dale Nally. Is Dale Nally present?

**Mr. Nally:** Hi.

**The Chair:** Good morning, Mr. Nally.

**Mr. Nally:** Good morning. How are you?

**The Chair:** Good.

Please identify yourself and indicate for the record what electoral division you represent and proceed with your presentation.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you. My name is Dale Nally. I'm the MLA for Morinville-St. Albert. I'd like to thank you for allowing me to come in today and speak to you about the electoral boundaries.

I'm going to be very clear in what I'm in favour of. I am in favour of what I call the rurban riding. I know you'll hear it referred to as hybrid, but I prefer the word "rurban." I can tell you that there is a growing division in Alberta right now between urban and rural ridings, and I presume that you're going to hear from MLAs from urban ridings that don't want part of rural Alberta in their riding, and I presume you will probably hear from rural MLAs that would prefer not to have urban parts of their riding in their rural piece. So you're going to hear from all different perspectives. I think that my situation is unique because I actually represent one of those hybrid ridings.

I can tell you that when the boundary was first created, it was back in 2017-18, when the NDP were in government. This was Morinville-St. Albert. The unique riding was created. It was a third St. Albert, a third Morinville, and a third Sturgeon county, which included Legal, Redwater, Bon Accord, and Gibbons. So it is your quintessential hybrid or rurban riding. It was also the riding that I lived in. It probably wouldn't have been my first choice at the time. I would have preferred to have been door-knocking in a community that I exclusively lived in.

So this was unique, but I have to tell you that representing that riding now for six years, I've changed my opinion on the hybrid ridings. I believe that being a rurban MLA has allowed me to be a better MLA. I'm a member of cabinet. I'm a member of Treasury Board. I do not have the luxury of just wearing an urban hat or a

rural hat, but if the only people that I'm listening to are urban or rural, that's the perspective that I'm going to bring forward.

There are a couple of reasons why I believe I'm a better MLA because of the hybrid riding. One is that it provides enhanced representation. I am listening to a more diverse group of constituents. When I'm in the rural part of my riding, I hear their perspective on rural crime. I sat at a constituent's table in their kitchen, having coffee with them. They told me about a time when they were robbed on their farm. They could see the lights of the bad guys. They could hear them in the Quonset helping themselves, because they knew that they had 20 minutes before the RCMP would show up. All they could do was sit behind a locked door in their house and wait. I've got to tell you that when you hear a person and when you look them in the eye after telling you this story, it changes your perspective. Conversely, I'm also able to speak to constituents who tell me why they value the policing authorities, specifically the RCMP. They like the tradition and the history that goes along with it. It forces me to be a better representative because I'm listening to a more diverse group of constituents.

I also believe that collaborative problem solving is enhanced as well. There are a lot of decisions that we have to make in government, in the Legislature that require collaboration from both urban and rural areas. I'll give you a prime example, something that is very front of mind right now, and that is data centres. This is a huge opportunity for the province to generate billions of dollars in investment, creating thousands of jobs, generational wealth from the royalties. It's a great opportunity when you speak to many of the urban constituents that are very supportive of this because of the investment attraction and the jobs. But when you also represent a community like Redwater, that pays higher transmission costs than they do in St. Albert, you hear a different perspective. One of the things that I was able to speak to when working with the minister on the data centre strategy was the fact that if we're going to embrace this industry, we have to make sure it is not at the cost of our rural constituents paying even more in transmission charges. So just something little like knowing that in Redwater they pay higher transmission than they do in urban areas is something that I bring to the table as a hybrid MLA.

Even in more current events, you know, there's a lot of talk right now of Alberta separation. The fact is that if you are in one particular riding, you're going to hear a specific perspective predominantly, but when you have a diverse set of constituents that you represent, I literally hear from all Albertans. I hear from people that want a stronger Alberta in a united Canada. I hear from people that do want an independent Alberta. Again, as an elected representative, having a diverse set of constituents makes me a better MLA. It allows me to make better decisions as an MLA.

**11:20**

I know I've spent a lot of time talking about the hybrid nature. I hope that we go with more of these hybrid ridings. My particular riding in Morinville-St. Albert is almost perfect. The only thing that's lacking is that I don't represent any First Nation communities. I know that there's a proposal in front of you to include part of Lac Ste. Anne in Morinville-St. Albert, and I hope you consider that because having a First Nation community is probably the last piece to making my riding near perfect. I'm supportive of hybrid ridings, and I hope that you consider more of them. It will help us bridge the divide that is happening between rural and urban Alberta.

Right. I think that is probably most of my six minutes. I'll turn it over to you if you have any questions.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you, Mr. McNally.

**Mr. Nally:** Just Nally.

**The Chair:** Sorry, Mr. Nally.

It's unfortunate that we didn't have a formal debate between the two presenters.

Mr. Clark, questions?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you very much, and thanks, Minister, for being here. It's good to see you again.

You know, one of the sayings we have on the panel here is: hybrids if necessary, but not necessarily hybrids. The timing is really interesting following Ms Ganley, who I think made essentially the opposite argument, as Justice Miller alludes to. Just interesting.

What I'm really interested in, though, is that you seem to have outlined a set of conditions where a hybrid can work, and that is: in your case, I've written down that you've got St. Albert, Morinville, Redwater, Gibbons, Legal, Bon Accord. You know, sort of essentially three legs of a stool is what I see here. No one of those three really dominates, so all those different groups feel like they're part of it. For anyone to be successful electorally, you're going to need to appeal to at least two of those three groups, and that creates that kind of balance. We've got some others around Calgary, and although some would disagree, rolling in Conrich, which really faces Calgary, rolling in Elbow Valley into West, which shares infrastructure with Calgary: those seem to meet a pretty reasonable test of what an effective hybrid can be. I think where the challenge comes and others have pushed back on is saying: well, if you've got like an 80-20, one group over another, the 20 inevitably feels like they don't have a voice.

I guess my question is: your St. Albert-Sturgeon constituency as proposed sort of faces north and east, really, I guess, you know, from Edmonton. What if we flipped it around? What if we took a bite out of Edmonton and mixed St. Albert with Edmonton. How would you feel about that? Do you think that's a reasonable mix?

**Mr. Nally:** Listen. Again, I think it doesn't give you the diversity of opinion because – I'm not suggesting that what you're throwing out is necessarily a bad thing because, you know, I think the more diversity, the better. I don't think you'll get quite as much diversity as putting two municipalities together versus an urban and a rural, but you would get some diversity, and that would, of course, be a good thing.

In terms of putting St. Albert with Edmonton: listen, if that were to be one of the ridings, that's actually a unique value proposition. I hadn't thought about it, but I've got to tell you that it meets the definition of diversity. If you look at St. Albert, we actually have three MLAs. We have one MLA who exclusively represents St. Albert. If you're saying: if we put a piece of Edmonton with St. Albert, would that make her a better MLA? I've got to tell you that if I'm listening to my own arguments, then it would because she would now be listening to St. Albert as well as Edmonton. So I'd have to say yes, but I would also say don't get rid of the St. Albert-Sturgeon riding because that also gives a different set of diverse opinions.

The third MLA: Parkland has a sliver of St. Albert, and they only became a St. Albert MLA because St. Albert took over some land from the Sturgeon county so they could expand. I would suggest to give Parkland a bigger piece of St. Albert. Then you would get three true St. Albert MLAs. I think that the diversity of perspectives: Yeah. I would have to say yes, I would agree with that. That would be some great decision-making.

**Mr. Clark:** One more just really quick question. I don't know the good people of St. Albert that well. Do they feel like they're Edmontonians?

**Mr. Nally:** You know, I've never asked them that question, but as someone who has spent 25 years living in St. Albert, I think that there is some uniqueness to St. Albert. St. Albert does see themselves as a different community from Edmonton, yeah, but we had a Member of Parliament that represented St. Albert and part of Edmonton, and one thing that I never heard was any complaints. So I don't think that the folks of St. Albert would be upset if there was a part of Edmonton lumped in, but I would make the case to do it in addition to, not instead of, an urban-rural. So in other words: catch all of it. It would absolutely be a stronger representation.

At the end of the day, my grandfather used to say: if you do what you've always done, you're going to get what you've always got. Well, let me tell you what we've got. We've got a huge divide between urban and rural, and you see it amongst both caucuses under the Legislature. You create more hybrid ridings, you're going to get better decision-making, you're going to get better representation.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you, Minister Nally. I wanted to ask you about economic and traffic corridors. For example, it seems fairly clear to me that there's a connection between Redwater and the Industrial Heartland, which is to its south and southeast, but also along highway 2, Morinville, and Legal. Do you see growth of residential developments along those two corridor zones?

**Mr. Nally:** Yes, I do. Part of the strongest growth in my riding is north St. Albert, so at the back of my mind is the concern that I've got a pretty strong balance of diverse perspectives. Northern St. Albert is where the growth is coming. Much of it is in my portion of the riding, which is along that corridor of number two, which is why I would love to have a sliver of Lac Ste. Anne in Morinville-St. Albert. That's why I would love to include a First Nation, because I don't have one, and it would help offset the growth of that's coming into St. Albert for sure, and it would help protect the nature of the hybrid riding for sure.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you, sir.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your time this morning. I should say that first.

When you look at your riding as it stands as we've redrawn it, St. Albert-Sturgeon: two questions. Do you like the riding the way it is? I don't believe there was a lot of change there. And two, do you like the name?

**Mr. Nally:** Well, thank you for asking me that. You know, I think that it was good. I think it can be better. I am concerned about the growth on the north part of St. Albert because we have very strong immigration, and St. Albert is growing at a fast rate. When you drive by on highway 2 and you see the north Erin Ridge development that's happening, it is going quick.

So yes, it's good. I think we could make it better by protecting it and not waiting 10 years to address it. That's why I support one, you know, increasing the rural component into Lac Ste. Anne, and it includes the First Nation, it includes Alexander. I would love to have that in my riding, and it's not for political reasons because I think it's a demographic. I don't think that there's a ton of votes for me there, but that's not why we're doing this. This is about representation. So I think that would protect against that growth there. I would say it's a good start. I think we can do a little bit better for sure.



Now, in terms of the name, I would like to keep the name as it is. The reason for that is, first of all, St. Albert is a third of my riding, but I only represent 20 per cent of St. Albert. So having Morinville first: I represent a few more Morinville constituents. It's the largest community that I represent. I would prefer to keep the Morinville-St. Albert name intact, but I mean, at the end of the day that's not a hill to die on. It's a nice-to-have to keep the name Morinville-St. Albert, so if you could consider that, I think that would be terrific.

11:30

**Mrs. Samson:** Just in clarification, you know, based on what we're proposing as a naming policy, the name would be St. Albert-Sturgeon.

**Mr. Nally:** Yeah. Like I said, I didn't come here to argue the name. You asked me what I thought.

**Mrs. Samson:** Yes, I did.

**Mr. Nally:** Yeah. I would prefer to keep Morinville-St. Albert as the name because Morinville is the biggest community that I represent both in the current riding and in what you're proposing as well as what I'm proposing. Morinville is still the biggest riding, so I would like to keep that name first but without getting rid of the St. Albert name either. I like the name as it is, but like I said, at the end of the day, it's not a hill to die on. It's more of a nice-to-have, not a must have.

**Mrs. Samson:** Right. So if we kept the name, it would just be flipped. It would be St. Albert because that's the larger of the two, St. Albert-Morinville.

**Mr. Nally:** It's the larger of the two, but I only represent 20 per cent of it, so I would argue to leave the name. I saw what you wrote about having the larger community first. You know, I guess that makes sense, but in this case I represent 20 per cent of St. Albert. For that reason, I would prefer to keep the name Morinville-St. Albert. My second choice would be St. Albert-Morinville, and then my third choice would be St. Albert-Sturgeon.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you very much. I appreciate your thoughts.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** No questions, but thank you very much, Minister Nally.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you for your time today.

**The Chair:** Thank you, sir.

We'll go to our next presenter, Mr. Tany Yao. Please correct me if I mispronounced your name.

**Mr. Yao:** No, you have it right.

**The Chair:** Okay. Please identify yourself and tell us what electoral division you represent and what you'd like us to hear.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you so much, Justice Miller and to the electoral boundary commissioners. Thank you all so much for taking the time to listen to me. I greatly appreciate that. Yeah. I'm Tany Yao. I'm the MLA for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. However, my concerns aren't tied to my constituency. My concerns stem from my role as an advocate for the north, which is one of my drivers in being an elected official and serving in such roles as with the chair of the Northern Alberta Development Council. In that role in particular, I

recently developed a report after touring through northern communities and speaking with hundreds of stakeholders in various walks of life. There's a common theme of the perception of being undervalued and underrepresented in regard to investments by the province in such things as infrastructure and core services.

My concern today is about the proposed loss of a northern constituency. The proposed constituency lines would result in one less voice for an important but undervalued region of the province, which is the north. As you know, the land mass entails almost half the province. This area provides hundreds of billions of dollars in revenues to the provincial and federal governments. The jobs provided by this region are not reflected in population surveys as many commute, and those numbers are in the tens of thousands. Decisions made by our government can affect these citizens directly simply because of the region they work, so we just need to ensure that there are mechanisms for more or stronger voices in the Legislature that reflect the impact that the northern region has.

Also, the practical accessibility to in-person representative meetings is an important aspect for our democracy. Travel within a constituency should be reasonable and should support effective representation, so aspects like population spread for constituencies should have some reasonable assumptions for fewer constituents in a large area, and it should be a reasonable expectation that denser populations can respectfully be represented with a higher ratio in a smaller area. We need to maintain a balance of influence that not only acknowledges population but also the land area as well as the economical influence.

A third argument I have is that I also must highlight that there's a disproportionate number of Indigenous people in the north. Numbers I discovered reflect that approximately 18 per cent of the population are Indigenous in northern Alberta compared to 6.5 per cent in the rest of Alberta. So my ask is if the boundaries commission recognizes reconciliation ensuring Indigenous peoples are represented in our Legislature, maintaining a constituency in the region of Slave Lake would be a strong symbol of this, in addition to it being logical for other reasons that I mentioned earlier.

I hope you will consider my plea to maintain these numbers of the northern constituencies. I should also note that I hope that you had received a package from all the northern MLAs with our written concerns.

With that, yes, thank you so much for hearing me out on this issue.

**The Chair:** I'd like to start. Because of your involvement with the Northern Alberta Development Council, tell me, sir: what do you consider north? What's the southern boundary of the north? If you could describe it in terms of, I guess, a latitude or a parallel, that would be helpful.

**Mr. Yao:** Absolutely. Actually, we've had many discussions about that, and that was included in our fact-finding mission as we toured the north. In general we find that people really identified highway 16, which goes from Jasper all the way to Lloydminster, as that line in the sand with about a 100-kilometre boundary around Edmonton. We are arguing to try to make that the official definition of the north. Depending on which department you go to, they will have slightly different definitions. Even the Northern Alberta Development Council has a very interesting line of delineation to the north, which I can barely even explain myself.

**The Chair:** Okay. Correct me if I'm wrong. You're saying highway 16, which I don't have a map right in front of me, starting in Jasper, and it would kind of careen south to Lloydminster, and then you do a bubble around Edmonton of about 100 clicks.

**Mr. Yao:** Yes, sir.

**The Chair:** Okay. Tell me a little bit more if you can encapsulate your work of NADC, your fact-finding. Is it a legislative committee, or is it a private, nonprofit situation? Describe that for me.

**Mr. Yao:** Northern Alberta Development Council is supported by the province. It was developed by the province to ensure that the voices of the north are heard as another advocacy channel for them. To that effect, the Northern Alberta Development Council provides annual reporting on issues regarding the north, and the last report I did, which has been approved by the minister but has yet to be tabled in the Legislature, is a very encompassing report that provides all the feedback from all the northern communities about everything from our boundaries to just these concerns about not being fully supported by the province in regard to funding supports and other things for things like infrastructure. A big complaint is roads and Internet access, things like that.

**The Chair:** Okay. Good. Thank you.

Mr. Evans, any questions of Mr. Yao?

**Mr. Evans:** No, but thank you very much for the information that you provided. I'm now looking for highway 16 running east and west.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you very much. You've just added a little piece to the puzzle that I've been struggling with with that line with highway 16. When I look at the map here, I see, in fact, if you drew a straight line, it would go below Edmonton to Lloydminster. This is Jasper here, and Lloyd is here, and Edmonton is there.

**Mr. Evans:** It goes right through Spruce Grove.

**Mrs. Samson:** Yeah.

Are you saying that NADC has got agreement that on that portion above Edmonton is considered the north?

**Mr. Yao:** Yeah. The NADC line, the Northern Alberta Development Council, if you actually go on the website, is a very zigzagging line, which we were never able to get explanations as to how they chose those initial boundaries to begin with. When I was proceeding with this report for the Northern Alberta Development Council, the direction we actually received from the ministry was to use that as the boundary as to which communities we invited, that highway 16 route. Yeah, admittedly, it drifts a little bit below Lloydminster. Just so you know, even communities like Camrose and Drayton Valley and that argued that they'd be part of our NADC, and we have other communities that are currently within the existing boundaries that did not want more because there were concerns about dilution of their voices, but in general we really found a lot of support that highway 16 seemed to be a reasonable line in the sand to identify the north. You know, northern Alberta is very well developed compared to other provinces.

That's all I want to say.

11:40

**The Chair:** Good point. And not as developed as you'd like in terms of infrastructure.

I'm looking at the map that my colleague just referenced, and to me, for electoral boundary purposes and for description of the northern boundaries, could you live with a definition of the north

encompassing the southern boundaries of Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock, and Grande Prairie-Wapiti? I don't know the third one there, but it's a bit of a zigzag line. Central Peace-Notley. Could you live with a definition or a categorization of the north using those southern boundaries?

**Mr. Yao:** Yeah, I believe so. I think it's fairly close to what has been suggested previously. Again, we just chose to simplify it based on guidance from the ministry to just use highway 16 as our general boundary.

**The Chair:** And how long has NADC been operating? When was it established?

**Mr. Yao:** It's been a few decades now. I think it was started up in the '70s.

**The Chair:** Okay. So it's a long-standing group, then. Okay. Thank you.

Dr. Martin, any questions?

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much.

Thank you for being here today. You alluded to your letter, which all of your colleagues in the north are signatories to, and we take that letter very seriously. We've heard a very great deal about the northern voice in not only the submissions that we have received, over 1,100 submissions, and a very large portion were about the north in one way or another; we also have heard from at least three MLAs in the north. Indeed, yesterday evening we heard from Mr. Sinclair. All of you are on the same song sheet, which is wonderful to see, and it may very well be, in my experience, the only time we've had 10 MLAs speaking with a single voice on the importance of this very important topic of Alberta's north.

I wanted to ask you a bit about your own riding if I may. You know, just to secure the major point about transportation awkwardness, I think you face a very great set of transportation difficulties. How do you manage to deal with the northern half of your own riding?

**Mr. Yao:** Well, we're very encouraged in the north by the Premier's dedication to getting highway 686, which goes from Fort McMurray to the Peace Country. We're very encouraged by that. They've also made a point – Minister Dreeshen – of investing in highway infrastructure to twin our highways north of Fort McMurray. Again, these are attempts at trying to make things like commuting less attractive and living in Fort McMurray more attractive. For your awareness there are over 40,000 camp beds in the region and a third of them, the people that stay in these camps, live out of province. So the other provinces first need to acknowledge that our energy industry supports their provinces, and if we could do more to make the conditions more favourable, we could have a larger population not only living in Alberta but in the north.

I just want to point out one last thing. The same concerns that Alberta has with concerns to Confederation and being represented in Ottawa are the same concerns that northern Alberta has in relation to provincial politics and being represented at the Legislature in Alberta. Again, it's about just so many benefits coming from the northern region that benefit all Albertans, but the desire is just to not only be represented well but to ensure that we have the investments to ensure that these industries can continue to thrive and be well supported by Albertans and Canadians.

Thank you.

**Dr. Martin:** If I may just follow up on your remark about the shadow population. It's a persistent theme, has been for decades, well, from across all the northern ridings, come to think of it. How do we best measure them, and to whom is their primary responsibility? Is it a municipal issue? Obviously, you're in the mix to some extent. But my main point: how do we measure the shadow population in a consistent way?

**Mr. Yao:** Well, I admittedly wish our government would compel our industries to work more closely with us. That's what our ask has been, to work closely with industry to help identify this population. Industry has always been coy about telling us how many people are actually commuting. I gave you a number for 40,000 actual beds in the region. I got that number through my former colleagues at the fire hall who have to do fire prevention and fire codes inspections and that. That's how they have those numbers.

If we assume that they're hot bedding, which is people off-duty come in, we can assume that there's over 80,000 commuting back and forth to the region. It's a substantial amount, it impacts a lot of our bottom lines, and there has to be a proactive approach with all levels of government working together with industry, quite honestly, to address this situation. My understanding is that Minister Dreeshen might be doing a study on airports, which might reflect a study to be had on commuting as well.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you, sir.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you.

Mr. Yao, good to see you again. I just looked up quickly the NADC boundary, and it looks like it runs south of Grande Cache, south of Athabasca – well, Whitecourt is a little further west – Bonnyville, St. Paul, Saddle Lake, so that 16 is sort of an advocacy position that you would take, not the official NADC boundary at the moment. Is that fair to say?

**Mr. Yao:** That's correct, but when I was initiating this report that I was working on, the guidance from the ministry itself was to use 16 as the boundary.

**Mr. Clark:** As I kind of head east there, I'm curious about Smoky Lake. Now, I recognize this is your colleague's constituency, the south part of the Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche area, but I'm curious. Smoky Lake, Saddle Lake, those areas, in particular Smoky Lake: does it have a connection with Lac La Biche or the southern part of Minister Jean's constituency?

**Mr. Yao:** A little bit, and I guess it's proximity to Lac La Biche. As an example, there's a lot of overlap between those two constituencies per se, just from my own personal knowledge about the people who work and live in the area. No offence to Minister Jean and his constituency; I'm a little bit agnostic on their desire for what their definition of their boundary would be. I haven't looked too closely into it. I know that they had asked for some different boundary changes. I admit to not really looking into that too deeply.

**Mr. Clark:** Fair enough. You've got enough on your plate as it is.

I'll just echo some of the comments of my colleagues, that we did receive your letter from the northern MLAs. It was one of the very first things we received, and we've given a lot of thought to that already. We've heard a lot of advocacy and input, so rest

assured that your message has been received, and we will give it some serious, serious consideration.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you so much. I really appreciate it.

**The Chair:** Thank you for coming, sir. Your input is very helpful.

We're going to move on to our next presenter, Mr. Nagwan Al-Guneid for Calgary-Glenmore. Oh, sorry. Did I say mister? Sorry, ma'am.

**Ms Al-Guneid:** No worries. Hello.

**The Chair:** Good morning, still.

**Ms Al-Guneid:** Good morning. Yes. I realize I might be between you and lunch, so I'll do my best here. I'm Nagwan Al-Guneid. I'm the MLA for Calgary-Glenmore. For starters, I'd like to thank each one of you for doing this work. It is hard. It is complex. I've listened to some of the presentations, and it is really hard, so I do not envy you for this job. For today what I would like to do is to reiterate some of the key points from my written submission and try to paint a picture for you of Calgary-Glenmore.

11:50

For starters, it's important to keep Calgary-Glenmore's communities connected and as coherent as possible. This is a well-established urban riding that has, I would say, a mix of young families and seniors. We have three senior homes and five long-term care facilities, including one hospice. You meet a lot of first-home owners in this riding who never left. Even those who rent here: they are long-term renters. So I would say that people who move to Glenmore stay in Glenmore.

I do thank you for respecting the municipal boundaries in Calgary-Glenmore and keeping our city intact and not creating hybrid ridings because it does as well, from a selfish point of view, help us as MLAs to have effective representation.

For my second point here I would like to recognize the thoughtful work of adding an additional seat in Calgary. This is important, because I am noticing the increase of population in Calgary-Glenmore. You would have these numbers better than me, but Statistics Canada shows a big increase in Calgary's population in 2023 and 2024, and I do notice it in my interactions in the riding. I regularly meet folks who moved from Ontario to Alberta, and they cite the Alberta Is Calling campaign. This government campaign has been a resounding success, and we see the impact here in Calgary-Glenmore. I meet folks who literally bought their homes in the riding remotely from Ontario through virtual home tours, so that is interesting.

We're also noticing seniors downsizing to apartments. We're seeing young families moving and buying these homes, and some of it is actually intergenerational transfer. The young adults might have left Alberta for school and work and then decided to return here and raise their family right where they grew up in Glenmore.

My third point is on the makeup in the Calgary-Glenmore riding. Overall, I would say that this riding is homogeneous in its makeup. It is historically a very established riding. Generally speaking it is an affluent riding, with many residents working in professional settings, in professional conferences, and even in the boardrooms. We do, however, have pockets of different socioeconomic, and we also have Calgary Housing in the riding. My point here that I'm trying to drive is that Calgary-Glenmore is a microcosm of Calgary downtown, which gives a very strong urban feel to it. It is absolutely not a rural riding.

Another community of interest is the Indigenous community. Our neighbour next door is the Tsuu T'ina Nation, and many families send their kids to go to school in the Calgary-Glenmore riding. We have designated CBE schools for Indigenous families. One of the high schools here has a smudging space where Indigenous youth can have a safe, culturally appropriate space for smudging.

A third community of interest here is the Jewish community, and I would truly want to make sure their safety and interests are well represented in the new map. There's a Jewish school. There's the Paperny Family Jewish Community Centre, or the JCC. Think of the JCC as the living room. That's where many Jewish families meet, recreate, hold events. The JCC also has a culturally appropriate seniors' home. We have two synagogues in Calgary-Glenmore. The Beth Tzedec synagogue specifically has a banquet hall for signature events throughout the year. Considering the increased concern with safety and security in the Jewish community and for better representation within the community, we need to keep the connectedness of the Jewish community in mind.

The fourth community of interest is public health care workers. We have the Rockyview hospital in Calgary-Glenmore, and it is an incredibly busy hospital. Because it is a big operation, there are many health care workers and doctors and nurses living in the community.

In conclusion, I would say that while Calgary-Glenmore is monolithic in its nature, we do have communities of interest with specific needs and services that they require in the riding, so we must consider this coherence and connectedness. My goal is never to paint the riding with one brush. While the riding is historically established and wealthy in nature, we do have pockets of different socioeconomics, so we're very mindful of this dynamic. I think this draft map recognizes the fast rate of growth in our city by adding the additional seat, which will help in effective representation, especially as we have a strong urban riding here.

Thank you again for respecting the municipal boundaries in this draft map, and thank you for having me today.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much. When you said you were going to paint a picture: you're a good artist.

**Ms Al-Guneid:** Well, thank you.

**The Chair:** We do have an idea of your riding. Maybe I'm so much more impressed with it because I'm not a Calgarian, but my sister had lived in Glenmore since 1966, and she just recently sold her home. You describe a part of the demographic perfectly as I understand it.

Let me turn it over to the other commissioners. Mrs. Samson, questions of this presenter?

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation today and follow-up. The riding itself has not changed much, just a slight adjustment from Elbow to Macleod. Based on your comments, I can assume that you're pleased with the proposed new map that we showed you.

**Ms Al-Guneid:** I mean, it's about representation. I think having the rest of Lakeview from North Glenmore and Kingsland makes sense to me. I am sure there are many factors for this choice, but I think it makes sense from a riding perspective.

**Mrs. Samson:** Good. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Evans:** What kind of growth and development is taking place in terms of residential development in the Calgary-Glenmore riding?

**Ms Al-Guneid:** Yeah. There was a big project that became controversial – you probably have heard about it – in the Glenmore Landing for five high-rises. That was the biggest development that was going to happen, but then it became controversial, and it was shut down, so it's no longer happening. You see a lot of single homes here. It could be an update. Like, that's the type of development that happens here. A lot of single homes, slow apartment buildings. We're seeing a lot of opposition, I would say, for apartment buildings, and that was very evident in the Glenmore Landing development.

We're obviously like any other riding in Calgary. There's the need for housing and improving affordability in the province, in the city. But I would say the majority of the development is single homes and just changing the older bungalows or the older homes into big, single homes.

**Mr. Evans:** Your population growth has been pretty static in this particular riding.

**Ms Al-Guneid:** That's a reflection, as I mentioned, of you have people, first-home owners, who stay here forever, and then if they downsize, there's that intergenerational change that happens among families, and the seniors move into long-term or senior homes or apartments within the community.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you very much. Appreciate your presentation today.

**Ms Al-Guneid:** Thank you for having me.

**The Chair:** Okay.  
Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

I thought there was an airplane in your background. Oh, there you are. Thank you for your presentation. It was very helpful.

**Ms Al-Guneid:** Sorry. This is my system.

**Dr. Martin:** Oh, I see. I'll just speak louder, shall I?

I wanted to ask you: you've already mentioned about the neighbourhood we have added, and you're comfortable with that. What is the relationship of the community with the area north of the Glenmore reservoir? It seems on the page to be isolated from the rest of the riding.

**Ms Al-Guneid:** Kingsland, or the rest of North Glenmore?

**Mr. Clark:** It's Lakeview.

**Dr. Martin:** Lakeview.

**Ms Al-Guneid:** Lakeview. I mean, the people who move here also love the Glenmore reservoir area. Yeah. Lakeview is Lakeview. You're connected to the Glenmore reservoir. Like, we have the beautiful Glenmore pathway. People recreate. There's biking, walking. There's even cross-country skiing down the valley. That's the connection that we see. People who come here love the outdoors, and they benefit from this beautiful backyard we have here.

**12:00**

The meaning of Glenmore in Gaelic is the big valley. The settler who came here called it Glenmore for the valleys in the area. We see a lot of hiking, walking – minihikes, obviously; it's not the Rockies here – but the main connection to the area is the usage of the reservoir. There's sailing as well. There's Heritage Park, which

is very connected to the reservoir. So it makes sense to me that you're adding the rest of Lakeview to Glenmore. It was always a puzzling thing for us, why half of Lakeview is with Glenmore and the other half is with Elbow.

**Dr. Martin:** That's helpful. There's a famous golf course there as well, come to mind.

**Ms Al-Guneid:** Yes, of course.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. Thank you very much.

**Ms Al-Guneid:** Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you for coming. No questions for me, but thank you so much.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Thank you very much. Like I said, you did paint a very good picture of your electoral division.

We'll now move on to our last presenter, I believe, of the morning. Yes. Mr. Grant Hunter.

**Mr. Roth:** He's not on yet.

**The Chair:** He's not on yet. Oh, well, maybe we could talk to Nagwan more.

**Ms Al-Guneid:** Happily.

**The Chair:** Actually, I held off on a question because of timing, but you did mention the Tsuu T'ina First Nation. Now, as you probably reviewed the entire report, you did see our proposal to include Enoch in west Edmonton. Tsuu T'ina couldn't go into yours, but what do you say about it being conjoined with the electoral division north of you?

**Ms Al-Guneid:** Like Elbow or West? What were you suggesting?

**The Chair:** Well, have I got my directions wrong? South of you.

**Ms Al-Guneid:** South would be Acadia or Fish Creek.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Thank you for bringing that up.

**Mr. Clark:** It could be Glenmore.

**The Chair:** It could be Glenmore? Okay. Yeah. Well, maps clarify things. Thank you.

What do you say about possibly bringing that into your riding or a neighbouring riding?

**Ms Al-Guneid:** You know, I wouldn't want to speak on behalf of the Tsuu T'ina Nation, obviously. I'm hoping they did submit and you had the chance to ask them. It's a small community, but it's a very concentrated community. I think around 1,300 in there. I wouldn't dare, honestly, to speak on behalf of the Tsuu T'ina Nation. I was merely explaining the connection they have to Glenmore. I do a lot of community visits in Glenmore, and I'm often door-knocking homes with Indigenous communities, and they are from the Tsuu T'ina Nation, who moved or just the kids in schools. I think we should ask the nation how exactly they see their interests align.

I go back to that effective representation and how we make sure the communities are well represented: their views, their interests, their economic interests, and especially their connection to the land. Obviously, you know, Glenmore has a lot to offer, but there is that whole area that we border with, yeah, Banff-Jasper. It is still part of

Banff-Jasper in your draft map. Okay. This is all to say that I think it would be wise to have a conversation with them.

**The Chair:** Right. Okay. Can I summarize your position that, if they in fact are content and would like to join with a Calgary riding, you'd be content to receiving it in Glenmore?

**Ms Al-Guneid:** We're happy to represent and build more relationships with them. I did attend a few of their events. I got invited to the opening, obviously, next to me at Costco and that whole plaza. I'm always happy to have conversations and represent them. But it's best to ask them directly where their economic and spiritual and strong connections to the land would make sense to them.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, thank you.

Anything arising on my point? Okay.

We'll excuse you again.

Hopefully, Mr. Hunter is – he's still not in. Okay. In fairness, then . . .

**Ms Al-Guneid:** You can go to lunch, an early lunch, I think.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

**Ms Al-Guneid:** Thank you, folks. Take care.

**The Chair:** Okay. Bye-bye.

[The hearing adjourned from 12:05 p.m. to 12:13 p.m.]

**The Chair:** Mr. Hunter, good morning and welcome. Thank you for coming. You're early, which helps our schedule, so that's great. Of course, you are the MLA for Taber-Warner. Tell us – yeah. Introduce yourself, and please proceed.

**Mr. Hunter:** All right. Can you hear me now?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Hunter:** Okay. Good. All right.

Well, thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to be able to present to the commission today. I want to present from, I guess, two lenses, from an economic lens and from a political lens. Obviously, as a politician I'm going to have that political lens. I think that I want to, first of all, start out by saying that, look, I'm very much in favour of a quad hybrid boundary configuration for Lethbridge and surrounding area. I think that, as has been seen for many years, Lethbridge is a hub for economic development and economic activity in that region. You know, you do have kind of anchor cities like Lethbridge, like Medicine Hat.

One of the things that I know I've been working on over the last 11 years is working on building out that agrifood processing corridor between Lethbridge and Medicine Hat. I'm sure you're aware that we have Canada's premier food corridor between Lethbridge and Taber, so I want to just kind of talk about that because it's interesting that I've heard some present that it's important that cities have ridings that are only from the cities because of the commonalities that you have in the cities.

I was thinking about that and I thought: well, that first iteration that I saw from the commission put Coaldale in with Livingstone-Macleod. I was thinking about commonalities of Coaldale with Livingstone-Macleod and I thought: there's no commonality there. The commonality that Coaldale has is with Lethbridge and with Taber and with Lethbridge county and MD of Taber. So I guess when I hear people say that, you know, the commission needs to rethink about commonalities and cities have commonalities and

therefore they just have to be the same as what we saw with Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West, I think that maybe it works for Lethbridge, that commonality, but it doesn't work for the commonality in terms of Coaldale with, again, Livingstone-Macleod. I don't think there was any commonality there.

Even in the last iteration in 2019, when Cardston – I used to have Cardston-Taber-Warner as my riding when I first was elected in 2015. It was broken up into Cardston-Siksika, and I was thinking: well, where's the commonality in a riding from Cardston all the way up to just east of Calgary? So I think that for those who are making that argument, I would say that they're probably throwing rocks in a glass house because I don't know whether or not it actually has any validity.

I want to say that in terms of commonality for Canada's premier food corridor, I want to give you an example of a company called NewCold. They just built in Coaldale a \$222 million food logistics centre, and the reason why they put it in Coaldale, one of the reasons why, is because even a company that is, you know, from the Netherlands: they recognize the commonality of having a food logistics centre in Coaldale, which is kind of the centre area of Canada's premier food corridor. They knew that they would be servicing companies from Lethbridge, that they would be servicing companies from the MD of Taber, from Taber, and also from the farmlands in Lethbridge county. That company: one of the largest investments in that area because they recognize the commonality that is Canada's premier food corridor. So I think that it's important for the commission to recognize that.

I don't think that NewCold – if you asked them, "Well, if Coaldale was to be part of the Livingstone-Macleod riding, what kind of commonality would there be?" they would say there's no commonality. A company out of the Netherlands recognizes that, yet it seemed like the commission didn't really see that in this first iteration. So that's the first point that I wanted to make in terms of an economic perspective.

The second perspective I want to be able to present in terms of a political lens is that Lethbridge will be better served with a quad hybrid system. Here's just the simple reality. If Lethbridge was to embrace a four-ridings constituency configuration versus the current two-riding configuration, right now, as it sits, Lethbridge would have three ministers representing Lethbridge's interests in cabinet versus just one right now. That's substantial because you have 300 per cent increase in voices around the cabinet table. And for those who say, "Well, there's little value to that," I don't think they've ever been in cabinet, and I don't think that they have recognized the value of that.

12:20

I've heard it said, and you've probably also heard it said, in describing the south that they often call it the forgotten south. How do you fix that? How do you fix that political problem? One of the ways you do that is, especially for Lethbridge, that you rectify that by allowing more opportunities for more cabinet members to be around the cabinet table. I think that that is a way of being able to make sure that the interests of Lethbridge and surrounding area are heard at that cabinet table.

With that, I just wanted to be pretty brief in my presentation and talk to you about those kind of two lenses that I have on this. I can take questions now.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Hunter. I'm going to jump in here first. Currently there are eight ridings in the south, if you follow me – I'm just looking at the old map – Livingstone-Macleod, Cardston-Siksika, Taber-Warner is three, Brooks-Medicine Hat, Cypress-Medicine Hat is five, and two Lethbridge. I guess that's

seven – right? – currently. Now, the first we heard of this – and I like the terminology, the quad hybrid; I think that's a useful term for us – quad hybrid, I believe, was the evening we sat in Lethbridge back in late May, where Cameron Mills put forward the proposal. He said that if you look at the south, look at Cypress-Medicine Hat and Brooks-Medicine Hat as taking care of the southeastern – his proposal was four more ridings, this quad hybrid that you proposed. If we were to go to that route, first of all, you're losing an electoral division in the south.

**Mr. Hunter:** I don't think so. I've heard you say that in the past. I don't believe that's the case. First of all, if you're taking the south, you're considering south of Calgary. In reality, it's the eastern slopes that I think probably should be broken up into maybe two ridings, so I don't think that you have to see it in terms of losing another riding. You can keep that configuration of having the same number of ridings in the south. But, again, I'm only speaking specifically to the issue of, you know, how Lethbridge should look, and I'm showing it to you from a political lens and an economic lens. What the commission decides to do in the eastern slopes: that's up to you. I mean, you guys can figure that. I don't think we need to lose and I don't think we should lose another riding in the south. That's not something that I'm advocating for at all.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well then, to me, that was one of the advantages because we have to worry about the whole province, and there's this constant pressure to take out – constant. I'm not exaggerating. It is a constant drive to remove rural representation. If you look at appendix D, you look at the pressures we have. So to me, the quad hybrid advantage was to say: okay; we can square this circle, give strong representation to this agrifood corridor, and give up a riding outside the major metropolitan areas and kill two birds with one stone. Maybe it's a perspective issue, but I see the advantage of the quad hybrid as giving us a riding somewhere else. Respond to that. You kind of have already. Yeah. Get back to me.

**Mr. Hunter:** Look, I think that the idea of losing another rural riding – I'm not in favour of that at all. I don't think that that is good representation. So no, I'm not advocating for that.

I do recognize that there are pressures in cities. But remember that in cities, look, you can sometimes walk from one side of your riding to another side of the riding. In my riding I have 13 communities that I've got to go to right now, whether it's the graduations or parades or councils and speaking with councils. So it is very different what a rural riding is required to do.

With the quad idea that actually makes it so that it's a little less onerous on those rural ridings. You know, again, if you broke Lethbridge up into four ridings, you've got 25,000 in a very, very small area, and then you would need to have another 25,000 outside of that to be able to make up the rest of that riding, which is far more reasonable, far more workable, in my opinion. I do like that hybrid approach. Really, we've been doing it in Alberta for a long time. I mean, Cypress-Medicine Hat, Brooks-Medicine Hat is working fine, and those ridings are a hybrid model. I don't see any reason why a hybrid model can't work. For those who say that it can't work, I think that they have some self-interest, to tell you the truth.

**The Chair:** As they would say about hybrid promoters, too, in fairness.

Let me pose one more scenario to you. Then I'll turn it over to the commission. My dear sainted mother used to say: learn to walk before you run. What do you say about only doing half of a quad hybrid this go-round and doing the full quad hybrid eight, 10 years from now because it's a radical change in Lethbridge?

**Mr. Hunter:** When you say “radical change,” like, let’s talk about radical change. In 2019 we lost Little Bow. We lost three rural ridings. I would say that most Albertans would say that that’s radical change. You lose three rural ridings to the cities, that’s radical change. I mean, again, this is not about – the idea that this is a radical change: well, if it’s so radical, how come it’s working so well in Brooks-Medicine Hat, Cypress-Medicine Hat? It is happening. When you say it’s radical, I don’t see that. I don’t see it as radical.

There are some people, I would say, in Lethbridge who would say: no, no, we can’t do that. Well, they would probably say that because they certainly want to be able to keep the status quo. Maybe Lethbridge-West wants to keep the status quo. That’s their prerogative. But to say that it’s a radical approach: again, we’re doing that in other jurisdictions.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Hunter.  
I’ll start with Mr. Clark. Any questions?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you.

I think, you know, part of the things we struggle with is the feedback we have gotten. There’s been feedback on both sides, but it’s been 2 or 3 to 1 opposed. The core point they make is that while areas are integrated, those who live in Lethbridge do so because they don’t live outside of Lethbridge, and those who live outside of Lethbridge, in Coalhurst, Coaldale, do so because they don’t live in Lethbridge. They very specifically say: “I’ve chosen to live where I live. I may shop or cross the boundary. It’s not a brick wall. But you know what? This is our community, and we want to be represented by somebody who’s from our community.” I’m sure you do. I know you do a good job in representing your constituents.

I want to pick up on a point you made, and Minister Neudorf made a point earlier today of a similar vein. I find it interesting that there’s a sense that the south is not the “forgotten south,” I think is the word you used. But under any proposal you’re not going to have any more MLAs. I’m just curious what would change. You still have the same number of MLAs advocating for the same people. I’m not sure I understand how that connects.

**Mr. Hunter:** Sure. I will restate what I said in my opening remarks. Currently if you had a quad model in Lethbridge right now the way that it sits, Minister Neudorf, myself, and Minister Schow would be three of the four MLAs representing that riding, three of the four sitting in cabinet, at the cabinet table, helping to be able to forward decisions that need to be made for that area. That’s a 300 per cent increase in terms of influence at the cabinet table. For those people who, again, don’t see that as a value, I think that they’re fooling themselves when they’ve never been on cabinet.

12:30

**Mr. Clark:** Do you not advocate for Lethbridge today?

**Mr. Hunter:** I advocate for Taber-Wamer. Taber-Wamer is not Lethbridge, so as a representative of Taber-Wamer, I represent Taber-Wamer. Now, I used to be the parliamentary secretary for agrifood development. In that role I did actually represent and advocate for that whole corridor between Lethbridge and Medicine Hat, and I often did that.

Again, Mr. Clark, I know that you were in caucus, I know that you were an MLA, but I know that you were not a cabinet minister. I will say that there is a big difference. That is something that needs to be recognized, that when you have people who are on cabinet, they are at different tables and they have the ability to build the influence in a different way.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you, and I would call your two-pronged approach economic and representative. I don’t think it’s necessarily political. I think what you’re saying is representation, but anyways.  
Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you, and thank you, Minister. I wanted to pick up on a theme that I explored with your colleague Minister Neudorf this morning because in the conversation a few days ago with Mr. Cameron Mills, he suggested that there’s a very large amount of commuter traffic not merely into Lethbridge but out of it, which struck me as really interesting and speaks to the dynamic nature, particularly along highway 3, perhaps as you’ve alluded to. It’s my growing impression now from those conversations that Lethbridge will attract commuters from Fort Macleod, Picture Butte, Raymond, obviously the Lethbridge airport area, as well as Coaldale and, indeed, Taber. Is that a fair representation of the commuter traffic?

**Mr. Hunter:** Yes. They’re very integrated, and that is very much what we’re seeing not just now, but it will be so much more of what happens in the future as well. Economic corridors is the way we need to look at things. The stringent approach of seeing cities or towns: I don’t think that is the way that we should be looking at this anymore, and I just don’t see that as the future.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your time just before lunch. I appreciate that.

**The Chair:** Speaking of food corridors.

**Mrs. Samson:** Speaking of food corridors. Exactly.

I want to share with you where my conflict comes from, and that is that we had some excellent presentations from the rural area around Lethbridge that talk about the successes that you have, they have had, with the agrifood corridor and the industry and the things they’ve built up around the food in southern Alberta and, you know, other projects like the waste water, the water, and all of those things. I’m not from your area, but it sounds to me when I listen to it: what a success story.

Then, on the other hand, my role is to gather the input and listen, and I hear from many, many residents of the city of Lethbridge who don’t want to be joined in as a hybrid. So I am torn because I say that what you have right now, today, in 2025, is working, and it’s working really well. You have a good story to tell, and in the next round of the commission, Lethbridge will have grown to the point where it cannot be equally divided. This is my conflict. If it’s working well with clear, distinct boundaries that everybody understands, why change it if it’s not broken?

**Mr. Hunter:** Well, I don’t see that it isn’t broken. To say that it’s working great now for those who are concerned about this, I think that those fears: really, I don’t know where they’re coming from. It’s almost like saying that there’s nothing in common from a person living in Lethbridge versus someone living in Warner or in Taber. That’s ridiculous. The reality is that we have a lot in common.

For those who are saying, “Keep it the same right now because that just works perfectly,” it’s just not the way that it works. Like, we are integrated. A quad configuration just represents that integration that you see in the city of Lethbridge and surrounding areas. Because of that integration: that’s why it works, because we integrate in so many ways. We just seem to have made arbitrary

lines on a map that says Lethbridge-East, Lethbridge-West, Cardston-Siksika, Taber-Warner are political lines. But the integration: if you want the economics and the integration that we are seeing already to be able to be presented, then make sure that you show that also in those boundaries. I think that that's the reality of what we're seeing in that area. I don't see that. I certainly see that some people don't want to see it, but I think that they also probably have some vested interest and self interest in that way.

**Mrs. Samson:** I just want to follow up with a small comment along those lines of your last thought, and that is: when I think about the electoral boundaries as an overlay into the region and what ends up with the electoral boundaries, it is not a brick wall. It is not stopping the integration of the city into the economic interests of the surrounding area. I guess that's my point. I just don't see it as a blockade. I see it as communities of interest who are saying, "I want to be with these guys," but that doesn't mean all the things that you want so badly are not going to happen because of where the boundary line is drawn. That's my thought.

**Mr. Hunter:** Let's say that you're right. Let's say that you keep the boundaries Lethbridge-East, Lethbridge-West, and that that's important to the commission. Okay; that's fine. But how is it that you can also use that same rationale to put Coaldale in with Livingstone-Macleod? Where is the commonality in that? As I gave you the example with NewCold, Coaldale has more in common with Lethbridge than it does with Claresholm.

Look, no matter how you guys decide to draw those lines, it's going to be difficult to be able to find a perfect commonality, but I can tell you that putting Coaldale in with Claresholm: there is no commonality in that. So when you make that argument that Lethbridge should feel good about, you know, Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West staying the same because there's commonality there, you also are now saying that there's no commonality between Coaldale and Claresholm, yet you put those in the same riding. I think the commission has to take that into consideration, not just what's best for a city but also best for all of the ridings and all of the communities.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you. You make a good point, sir.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah.

You make a very good point with respect to Coaldale. What I'm interested in knowing, Minister Hunter, is: where would you put Coaldale if you had the quad hybrid? Would you break up that city, or would you keep it together?

12:40

**Mr. Hunter:** Coaldale should be in its own, should be not broken up. In terms of, "Where would I put it," I mean, now you're asking me a question. I actually think that Lethbridge being broken up into, again, like, four regions and then having a rural component to it – I think that Coaldale, Taber have a lot in common. The MD of Taber, Lethbridge county, Warner county: they have a lot in common just because of that agrifood processing corridor that's there. But, again, there are lots of ways of being able to draw that map. My argument

is more about being able to show that there is already integration that happens in those communities in and outside of that region.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Yeah, I'm going to ask it. I still would call this radical surgery, Minister Hunter. In that regard, I don't see any chamber of commerce, any city of Lethbridge, any town of Coaldale submissions saying: "You know what? We have really kind of come along and we think this quad hybrid idea is great." We don't have that, what I would call, you know, intervening organization support or endorsement of this concept. What do you say to that?

**Mr. Hunter:** I mean, I won't speak for other people. I have spoken with the mayor of Lethbridge. I talked to him about the value proposition, the idea that he could have three ministers at the cabinet table. He thought that was fantastic. I talked to him about the reality of the integration, Canada's premier food corridor. He understood that. He recognized that, and he thought that was absolutely correct. Why they have not submitted: I mean, I don't know. The town of Coaldale: I think that they actually did make a submission the first time, if I'm correct, saying that they are certainly against them being in the Livingstone-Macleod riding. I'm pretty sure that they've already stated that. Why haven't they done it? I don't know. Have they argued in favour of keeping the status quo? I don't know.

**The Chair:** No. I don't think so.

**Mr. Hunter:** Okay.

Again, I really want to finish with this. That is that, look, when you say that there is a radical change, again, Brooks-Medicine Hat and Cypress-Medicine Hat are working fine. This is really quite similar to what you see with those communities as well, that the hybrid approach does work in that there is commonality. For those people who are in the city of Medicine Hat, I'm sure that they also recognize that there's commonality with people who are outside of Medicine Hat. They shop in the same places. They go to the same arenas for hockey and for curling. There is lots of integration, so I really just don't buy that this is radical in the way that you're presenting that. I just don't see it.

**The Chair:** Okay. That's fair. Well, thank you, Minister Hunter. You've ruined our day in a sense.

**Mr. Hunter:** It's my pleasure.

**The Chair:** You've given us a lot more to think about, and we've got only days and weeks ahead to resolve this issue. Thank you very much for coming.

**Mr. Hunter:** All right. Have a good week, guys.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thanks.

Are we packing up?

**The Chair:** Yeah. I'll adjourn the morning session. Continue at just after 1:30 this afternoon.

[The hearing adjourned at 12:45 p.m.]









