



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Public Hearings

Edmonton

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9:02 a.m.

Transcript No. 3

## **Legislative Assembly of Alberta**

### **Electoral Boundaries Commission**

Justice Dallas K. Miller, Chair

Greg Clark

John D. Evans, KC

Julian Martin

Susan Samson

### **Support Staff**

Shannon Dean, KC

Philip Massolin

Aaron Roth

Rhonda Sorensen

Christina Steenberg

Amanda LeBlanc

Clerk

Clerk Assistant and Executive Director of  
Parliamentary Services

Administrator

Manager of Corporate Communications

Supervisor of Communications Services

Managing Editor of *Alberta Hansard*

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

### **Public Participants**

Jasvir Deol, MLA, Edmonton-Meadows

Neal Gray

Jennifer Klimek

Cori Longo

Dale Todd Sikorski

Searle Turton, MLA, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain



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[Justice Miller in the chair]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

9:10

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Mr. Gray:** A bit of both.

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

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

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

**9:20**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Mr. Gray:** That is correct.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Mr. Gray:** Okay.

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

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

**The Chair:** No.

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

**Dr. Martin:** There is census.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Gray.

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

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

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

9:30

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

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

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

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

**Dr. Martin:** Any other factors.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Mr. Clark:** On the east side?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Mr. Gray:** No worries.

**The Chair:** But I have one question.

**Mr. Gray:** Sure.

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

**Mr. Gray:** What do you mean by that?

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

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



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

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

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

**Mr. Gray:** I will.

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

**Ms Longo:** Yeah. Hi.

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

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

**The Chair:** Okay. Please come forward.

**Ms Longo:** Okay. Good morning.

**The Chair:** Good morning.

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

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

**Ms Longo:** No. He won't.

**The Chair:** Okay.

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

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

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

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

9:40

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

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

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

Thank you.

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

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

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

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

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you.

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

**Ms Longo:** Okay.

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

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

**Ms Longo:** Yeah. Okay. Thank you.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

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

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

**Ms Longo:** Right.

**The Chair:** So watch for our report.

**Ms Longo:** It is what it is. Yeah.

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

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

**Ms Longo:** Right. That makes sense to me.

**Mrs. Samson:** That's just a comment.  
Thank you for your time.

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

**Mrs. Samson:** Yes. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms Longo.

**Ms Longo:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Appreciate it.

**Ms Longo:** My pleasure.

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

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

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

**The Chair:** Okay.

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

**The Chair:** Not at all.

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

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

9:50

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Mr. Turton:** Sure. Go ahead.

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

**Mr. Turton:** They are.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**The Chair:** Could you?

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

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

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

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

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

10:00

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

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

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

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

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

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

**The Chair:** Okay.  
Susan.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**The Chair:** Any other questions?

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

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

**The Chair:** Jennifer Klimek. Good morning and welcome.

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

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

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

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

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

**The Chair:** Sorry. Who's they?

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

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

**10:10**

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

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

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

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

That's all I have to say to you.

**The Chair:** Julian.

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

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

**Ms Klimek:** Yeah.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**The Chair:** What electoral district is your family in?

**Ms Klimek:** They're in the Lloydminster area.

**The Chair:** Oh, okay.

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

**The Chair:** Any other questions?

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

**Ms Klimek:** Oh, good.

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

Thank you.

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

**Ms Klimek:** Well, thank you for the opportunity.

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

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

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

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

**Mr. Sikorski:** Yes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**The Chair:** It's okay. Yep.

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

Thank you.

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

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

**Mr. Roth:** Do you want the whole city?

**The Chair:** Yeah.

Any questions? Starting on Greg, then Julian.

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

10:55

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Mr. Sikorski:** English Lake District. Like Windermere.

**Dr. Martin:** That's right.

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

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

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

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

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

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Let me ask you what seemingly might be an irrelevant question. Do you own a vehicle?

**Mr. Sikorski:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. Is it fair to say that some people in your electoral division may not? I'm just guessing based on the fact that you said that you're within walking distance of all your services.

**Mr. Sikorski:** Yeah. That worked out very nicely, that I can walk if I need to. I know that we do have a little bit of transit. Because we're very far out, I know that some sections are not well served by transit. There are sections that are very nice and walkable, and people can get to a transit station relatively easy, I think, but, yes, because it's also very long and we have Terwilliger Drive, that extends out, there's a lot of traffic there as well. There are a lot of people who commute to different parts of the city, and I know some people who work in the north end and even people who work south in Devon as well, so outside of Edmonton.

**The Chair:** To your knowledge, are there people, residents in your community, Keswick, that can survive without vehicles, households without vehicles? That's fine. If you don't know of any, that's fine.

**Mr. Sikorski:** Perhaps.

**The Chair:** My second very random question. It's obvious that something has to be done with Edmonton-South West. It's patently obvious. In 2016 the population was 46,000; in 2024, 76,000, so it's increased by 30,000. It is one of the faster growing areas.

Do you have any suggestions for a name? We can't call it Edmonton-South and Edmonton-West and divide the name that way. Any suggestion for a name for one or two of the ridings that will come out of that?

**Mr. Sikorski:** You know, I'm not sure. That's a good question I haven't even thought about.

**The Chair:** We have names, so that's why I'm asking. If you can think of some, don't hesitate to send them in.

**Mr. Sikorski:** I know that some of the names – like, I see Edmonton-McClung. Presumably that's named, you know, after Nellie McClung. I'm not sure if there is any precedent to naming after significant people who have made a contribution.

**The Chair:** I don't think we can name it Edmonton-Sikorski.

**Mr. Sikorski:** No. I'm not advocating for that, but that's very kind of you.

Yeah, perhaps something like that. I'm not sure.

**The Chair:** But that's a challenge we have, so think about that.

**Mr. Sikorski:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Susan, do you have any questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** Yeah, just a comment. There might be a play when renaming electoral districts to stay away from individuals, historic individuals. The previous presenter said it well in that it should be identifiable to the people who live there. You can appreciate as a newcomer: who are those people, Rutherford and such, you know?

**Mr. Sikorski:** Right. That's a very good point, and you know what? I think you're absolutely right. To build that connection between the citizens and their constituencies, I think it's really important that it's readily identifiable, so I would be in support of that.

**Mrs. Samson:** Right. You know, the other thing: living in a very large urban centre, how often in, let's say, the last year did you physically see your MLA?

**Mr. Sikorski:** A few times, actually. I did have to go see him for a notary. I had a legal document, so he provided notary services. I did see him – oh, and last year was my parents' 60th wedding anniversary, so I got a certificate.

**Mrs. Samson:** Nice.

**Mr. Sikorski:** Yeah, that was very nice.

And then I think I've seen him at a couple of events as well in the community.

**Mrs. Samson:** Right. Do you find him or her easily accessible at the constituency office even to get through those kinds of things?

**Mr. Sikorski:** Yeah. His name is Nathan Ip. He's a very good representative, a very nice fellow, and I really appreciated, you know, being able to access the services his office provides.

**Mrs. Samson:** Right. Thank you very much for your time today.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you for your presentation. I wanted to ask. You spoke warmly about the local access to a bunch of services. Now, is that along Windermere at that whole area just south of the Henday, which is a big shopping area?

**Mr. Sikorski:** A little further south there is – do you know Ellerslie Road?

**Dr. Martin:** Yes.

**Mr. Sikorski:** On Ellerslie Road: that's where my doctor and my vet are located. Just before it changes to Hiller, though, there's a



small commercial section there, and my dentist is just two blocks further south.

**Dr. Martin:** Well, the reason I ask is just because I'm curious about, you know, the build-out of commercial and professional services in there. Do you think it has grown adequately to support the mushrooming population, or do you find yourself still driving into Edmonton-Whitemud somewhere?

**Mr. Sikorski:** Like I said, I'm very happy I have a family doctor that is in walking distance. I could not believe my luck when we moved here. I know there are other people who have to travel further for family doctors. Dentists: not as much of an issue. That's fine. Rec centre: I'm very lucky. The Terwillegar rec centre is only about a 15, 20-minute drive maybe from my house, and it is a great service for me and my husband. Banking: very close by. Grocery stores: lots of services there. The businesses that are opening up: I'm very much in support. I am very grateful. We have a variety of restaurants as well.

11:05

Edmonton-South West is a wonderful community to live in because it just is, like I said, kind of like a small city. We don't have to travel very far outside. Specialist appointments and hospitals are the time when we would have to travel longer distances.

**Dr. Martin:** If I may just follow up, this then adds colour to your earlier remark about finding a community feel, just as you had when you were in Camrose.

**Mr. Sikorski:** Yes.

**Dr. Martin:** Do you find – I mean, it's obviously a barrier, and you mentioned the river in that respect. Do you ever find yourself connecting with, as it were, the northern half of your electoral district?

**Mr. Sikorski:** I have been there sometimes for coffee, meeting friends, so it's not a barrier unless the traffic sometimes on the Henday gets very busy. Because I'm retired, I don't have to travel during rush hour, so usually when I get together, it's not really an issue very much.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We have time, so I'm wanting to continue the conversation. My mental picture – you mentioned Terwillegar – is that this electoral district is a mix of older, established neighbourhoods, and there must be a lot of new development itself. Is that right?

**Mr. Sikorski:** Yes. The area I live in, that's where there's a lot of development. The north . . .

**The Chair:** And you live south of the river, right?

**Mr. Sikorski:** Yes. South of the river. Closer to the river those homes have been a bit more established, like Windermere. As we've built out further south, those are where the newer communities are. When you go north of the river, there are some communities like Jamieson Place, I think, that have been there a little bit longer, probably since the 1990s or so, but now as they start moving further west, River's Edge, Edgemont, those places are very new, and they are growing very quickly. There's a lot of development going out that way.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, thank you.

Any more comments or questions?

Well, Mr. Sikorski, thank you very much for coming and for participating. You're welcome to stay and hear other presentations as the morning goes by.

**Mr. Sikorski:** Yeah. I think I will stick around for a bit. Thank you. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** To our next presenter, Mr. Jasvir Deol.

**Mr. Deol:** Yes, sir.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for coming. As you probably were notified, we had a time limit for presentations, but we're not enforcing that so strictly because we have time, so please take your time and identify yourself and tell us what you want us to hear.

**Mr. Deol:** Sure. Excellent. Thank you. Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I think I should actually introduce myself.

**The Chair:** Please. Please.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you. Jasvir Deol. You said it right. I'm the MLA for Edmonton-Meadows.

**The Chair:** Oh, okay. Welcome.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you once again for the opportunity to speak today. Before I offer my comments, I want to sincerely thank you. I thank the Alberta boundary commission for undertaking this important task and for the opportunity where voices from across the province can participate and provide feedback.

Electoral boundary redistribution is the cornerstone of a healthy democracy. It ensures that representation keeps pace with population growth and that every voice, regardless of community, background, or geography, is effectively heard, respected, and valued. It's essential that this process be fair, transparent, and accountable to Albertans. No Albertan should feel their voice has been lost or diluted due to boundary changes.

Communities, whether urban, rural, or ethnic, must not be merged in ways that erode their distinct identities or shared interests. That's why this commission's work must go beyond numbers and take into account the cultural, linguistic, and social ties that bind communities together. The redrawing of electoral maps must reflect where people actually live and where the province has seen the most rapid growth.

I don't know if you are recording this conversation, but I can submit my written submission as well.

**The Chair:** Please do. Please check with Mr. Roth, here.

**Mr. Deol:** Then you don't have to take all the notes. Thank you.

Municipal boundaries, communities of interest, and natural geographical features should all be considered carefully to ensure effective and equitable representation. Community identities matter. That includes existing municipal boundaries, community organizations, First Nation reserves, Métis settlements, and city neighbourhoods, particularly in Edmonton and Calgary. These boundaries help define who we are and how we connect with our neighbours. It is important that they remain intact, wherever possible, so that residents feel their voices are generally reflected in their elected representation.

Geographical features, existing road systems, and the practicality of maintaining understandable and coherent boundaries are also key. The commission should prioritize grouping communities with

shared values and challenges – cultural, economic, and geographic – so that the resulting ridings are representative and effective.

I want to draw a little bit of your attention specifically to the riding of Edmonton-Meadows, which I have had the privilege of representing for the past six years. Since the last boundary review south Edmonton has experienced significant growth. New neighbourhoods and community leagues have emerged, and the area's population has surged. Today Edmonton-Meadows includes 11 neighbourhoods: Aster, Bisset, Daly Grove, Jackson Heights, Kiniski Gardens, Larkspur, Maple, Minchau, Silver Berry, Tamarack, and Wild Rose. These are supported by five community leagues: Burnewood, Ridgewood, Edmonton Southwood, the Meadows, and Fulton Meadows. The community of Laurel is part of Edmonton-Meadows in the municipal area but not the riding.

Those communities share deep cultural ties, family networks, and social cohesion. It is crucial that these bonds are preserved and not fragmented by boundary changes. When I ran in 2019, Edmonton-Meadows was already one of the most densely populated and multicultural ridings. Since then it has grown around 20, 25 per cent of the average population for the riding. The average age is just 36, and a large percentage of residents, almost 20 per cent, are between the ages of five and 17. More than half of the population speaks a language other than English at home.

To serve this diverse population, my office employs multilingual staff and uses ethnic media to engage the community. We have taken a unique approach to budgeting and outreach to ensure we can meet our residents where they are culturally and linguistically.

The needs in this riding are significant and distinct. Educational infrastructure is urgently needed, especially new schools and early learning programs tailored to the young, diverse population. Health care access must include culturally appropriate and multilingual services. Immigration support is a major issue, and our office acts as a vital bridge for newcomers navigating challenges in their own language.

Small businesses are booming. When I was elected, there were a few commercial spaces in the area. Today new strip malls have emerged across the riding, symbolizing vibrant local economic growth. These entrepreneurs deserve continued and appropriate representation.

I would just like to note that when I came into office, my predecessor was living outside the boundary, like, not in the riding, because there was no choice. Now, you can see, choice has been immense.

I would like to conclude. In summary, I ask the commission to ensure that Edmonton-Meadows remains wholly intact and fairly represented. The community has grown not just in numbers but in identity, cohesion, and vibrancy. Fragmented it would diminish the collective voice of thousands of Albertans who have built their lives there. Once again, thank you for your time, your service, and your commitment to a process that truly reflects democratic values of this province.

Thank you.

11:15

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

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation. Most interesting. When I look at the map – it is the map that is up there – you've got lots of room for growth. Am I seeing that right? The part to the east...

**Mr. Deol:** East.

**Mrs. Samson:** Is there an outlying structure plan in there yet? What are they proposing in that area?

**Mr. Deol:** There is still, like, a lot of room, not as much as we had in the last six years. But there is room, you see, to the far east, east of 17th and closer to the Anthony Henday side. You know, the [inaudible] is quite a bit developed already. Tamarack Common is there now. You can probably see on the map, like, north of there. There is still room, but it won't be probably as much as it has grown in the last six years.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Our numbers show that in 2017 the population of your constituency was just under 52,000, 51,776, and according to the population figures we're using from 2024, it's up to almost 68,000, so 67,736. You're okay with those numbers?

**Mr. Deol:** Yeah, this is all right. It's close to 70,000.

**The Chair:** Okay. I'm not sure you've checked the numbers, but I'd be curious to know: if we took 17th Avenue – and don't take anything from what I suggest; this is a scenario – and we made that the eastern boundary, what would be lopped off in terms of – I think I'm reading that as 17th Avenue. Is that right?

**Mr. Deol:** Seventeenth Street.

**The Chair:** Seventeenth Street. Okay. If we use that continuously as the eastern boundary, do you know what population would be lopped off?

**Mr. Deol:** Basically, you know, the multicultural fabrics of this riding will be compromised big time...

**The Chair:** With that boundary.

**Mr. Deol:** ... with that boundary. There's more of, if you are looking at it in that way – I have the older neighbourhoods to the west of my riding that have a bit of a unique, different identity compared to the riding east of 34th Street all the way to the Anthony Henday and part of Laurel, even now. They share very similar values and similar challenges and requirements when it comes to issues like immigration and newcomer communities settling.

**The Chair:** You mentioned languages other than English. What's the predominant two or three languages?

**Mr. Deol:** Predominant is Punjabi, and there's Hindi, Urdu, Tagalog, and Mandarin.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** I am curious on just a slightly different angle. You mentioned MLA budgets and, I guess, building on what Justice Miller was talking about in terms of a variety of different languages. One of the things, though, that we've heard is that if we're going to bridge the large geographic areas of rural Alberta with the need for perhaps multiple constituency offices to enhance access to those constituents – this is outside the scope of our work, but I guess I'm just curious – from your perspective as an MLA do you feel like there's a need to enhance rural MLA budgets to accommodate for the vast geography they have versus the relatively small geographic areas in the cities? Or is there another consideration?

**Mr. Deol:** I can speak, actually, for my riding. It's not about the geographical area only. Like, it's about the people who live – the population and the numbers, and, as I spoke, identity is important. We have multiple ethnic media outlets, right? This is a unique need in this riding, in the city and province. I had two challenges when I got in the office. The area was newly built. The real estate was very high. So compared to some of the other ridings, we have to work with a budget. The second is that we do outreach our communities, right? The large geographical area probably wouldn't have that. That could be maybe five, 10 times larger in area but might not have the same challenges. I've got to make sure my part-timers speak, you know, are multilingual, full-time is multilingual. We reach to all the ethnic media outlets. We are in the community of every, you know, language-speaking background or culture.

One of the examples: you know, I'm from a Punjabi background. When the Filipino community was struggling to see – like, they wanted to see where they are reflected in the city's cultural fabric, where they are and where they can see themselves. My office was the one – I started not in my riding, but it is in my community. I started writing that campaign and I guided them, and eventually two years after they had their own part like that that reflects the community as part of, you know, our society I think.

**Mrs. Samson:** Excellent.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much for your presentation. I, like everyone in this part of the province, have been watching the growth of this district with excitement and a little bit of anxiety, and I'm sure that the work in your constituency office is never slow.

I want to ask you a really hard question, because you have argued that we should respect community interests and boundaries. Fair point, but the population is such that it attracts our attention for another reason as well, so you put us between a rock and a hard place. I'm going to throw it back to you. If we had to do some nip and tuck on where the boundaries are, how could you possibly do it?

**The Chair:** And feel free to go to the map and show us, too.

**Mr. Deol:** Let me see. The two things I could probably, you know, think about it: my neighbour riding Mill Woods probably is not growing as fast as my riding has grown, right?

**Dr. Martin:** Well, that's true.

**The Chair:** Sorry. Which one?

**Mr. Deol:** Mill Woods.

**The Chair:** Oh. Yeah. I thought I heard you say Ellerslie, and I'm thinking...

**Mr. Deol:** Ellerslie is also next to my riding.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Yeah. Okay.

**Mr. Deol:** I don't exactly know the statistics and the numbers, but in case they end up expanding, the only place they have to expand is to Edmonton east. I also have, you know, a different community identity when you see – I don't know what those areas are called. It's above 23rd, it's west of 34th Street, and it's between 34 and 50th Street, near some area. That can be looked at, but if we leave the east part of the riding intact, it will not affect the identity and

cultural identity of the riding and the shared values of the people in the riding.

**Dr. Martin:** Now, I'm going to press you on the point. The area you pointed to is, like, just east of the hospital – right? – but what about 23rd Avenue? I mean, it just seems like a strange little thing that was done mathematically. Obviously, it's going to mess with a community of interest no matter what we do in Mill Woods generally, so I'm asking a very difficult question. This area down here.

**Mr. Deol:** Yeah. Definitely, you know, that can be looked at, but I don't know what's going to happen with Laurel. You know, I also sometimes see that boundary there. Laurel just was taken out in this part. I also live there, just by...

**Mrs. Samson:** You can't take that off, then.

**Mr. Deol:** But you know, if we wanted to look at the riding's identity and their challenges and their need, their voices can be effectively added, definitely. That is something we looked at.

11:25

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. I suggest it's a very hard case, but you've argued for communities of interest...

**Mr. Deol:** The other thing that has happened...

**Dr. Martin:**... that are densely connected in terms of footprint. Something has to give.

**Mr. Deol:** Yeah. I know. The interesting thing that has been happening for the past two, three years – I have two gurdwaras, you know, around this area. One is in the north, and one is south of 23rd. A lot of new population is settling around these places. Still, like, you have to look at something when you look at how to divide the population growth equally into the riding, I think. Yeah.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**Mr. Deol:** If you go to the east side to create the boundary of 17th Street, that wouldn't work at all. Definitely, you have to look at something...

**The Chair:** So your preference would be to his suggestion rather than mine.

**Mr. Clark:** You used to use 23rd Avenue as sort of a cut-off.

**Mr. Deol:** You can.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Okay.

**Dr. Martin:** These guys are from southern Alberta.

**The Chair:** Susan, anything else?

**Mrs. Samson:** Did you say you lived in that – did I understand you?

**Mr. Deol:** I live in Valleyview.

**Mrs. Samson:** Well, I just don't see that as possible, gentlemen.

**Mr. Clark:** We apologize in advance.

**Mr. Deol:** No. The constituents who elect us have the preference.

**The Chair:** If we have any real estate agents presenting later today, we'll be sure to pass their information on to you.

Well, thank you very much, Mr. Deol. This is very helpful. While all presenters are equal, we do really value presentations by the members of the Legislature because you deal with this on the ground and you give a perspective that we value very much. Thank you for coming and your presentation, and we'll look forward to the written version of that. Make sure that Aaron gets that.

**Mr. Deol:** Thanks a lot.

**The Chair:** Please remain for the rest of the morning if you can.  
I'm not sure if we have any other presenters.

[The commission deliberated]

[The hearing adjourned at 11:41 a.m.]







