



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Edmonton

Monday, June 2, 2025
6:33 p.m.

Transcript No. 5

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

Justice Dallas K. Miller, Chair

Greg Clark

John D. Evans, KC

Julian Martin

Susan Samson

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

Charlayne Bozak
Jodi Calahoo Stonehouse, MLA, Edmonton-Rutherford
Harpreet Grewal
Robert Jarman
Leigh Makarewicz
Lloyd Osler
Bob Paterson
Rakhi Pancholi, MLA, Edmonton-Whitemud
Stephen Raitz
Karen Stix
Elizabeth Strange

6:33 p.m.

Monday, June 2, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Well, good evening, everyone, and welcome to this evening's Electoral Boundaries Commission meeting.

My name is Justice Dallas Miller. I am the chairman of the commission, and I also serve as a justice of the Court of King's Bench in southern Alberta. Before you tonight we don't have a full commission. John Evans is unavoidably absent. He will be joining us for tomorrow morning's session, which will be at the Edmonton Inn on the other side of town.

Our commission consists of, in addition to our absent John Evans, Susan Samson, a long-time resident of Sylvan Lake, an experienced municipal councillor and former mayor of Sylvan Lake. She was named citizen of the year several years ago of Sylvan Lake and also received the Queen Elizabeth II medal for volunteer service back in 2012. Susan is a very dedicated volunteer in the Sylvan Lake area, especially in the area focusing on public health care.

To my immediate right is Dr. Julian Martin, a retired professor from the University of Alberta. By the way, you can see all the full bios on the website, so I'm just being very cryptic or brief in the introduction. Julian has volunteered on many committees in the Sherwood Park area and served on provincial tribunals such as the Surface Rights Board and the Land Compensation Board.

At the end of the table is Greg Clark, an entrepreneur and consultant and someone that is involved in the information and knowledge management areas. Greg has served one term as a member of the Legislature of Alberta, representing Calgary-Elbow, where he resides. Greg is also recipient of the Queen Elizabeth platinum jubilee medal and serves as chair of the Balancing Pool. Greg holds an MBA and an institute of corporate directors certificate as well.

We are your Electoral Boundaries Commission. We are looking forward to this evening. We served all day today, heard a lot of really good submissions and presentations, and we've learned a lot about Edmonton so far, especially those of us who are not from the capital region. Julian probably didn't learn as much today as the rest of us did, but it was a very good, long day.

A couple of pointers. Can you please silence your cellphones, you know, turn them off, just silence them for this evening? If you have a written submission that you want us to keep, just provide it to Aaron Roth here, who is standing up. He's the clerk of our committee and he helps the trains run on time, so to speak, for us.

Before I open it up for presentations, I want to take a moment and just remind you that we are an independent commission, established by the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, and we have a couple of tasks this year in our job as Electoral Boundaries Commission. First of all, we have been instructed through the legislation to provide boundaries for 89 electoral districts, not 87. The province is enlarging the Legislative Assembly from 87 members to 89.

In terms of giving you some background for our timeline, the committee was announced and appointed in late March, and once we're appointed, we're on a bit of a timeline, a legislative timeline. We met a couple of times throughout April, as a commission of five members, with staff from Elections Alberta and the Legislative Assembly Office, and starting last week through to the end of June we're meeting across the province and hearing submissions. For the rest of the week we have one more day in Edmonton tomorrow, and then we go to Westlock and St. Paul. So we try to cover as much of the province as we can.

We will end our public hearings at the end of June. We will deliberate, and then we are tasked with providing a report to the Speaker of the Legislature no later than October 28. That report has been termed an "interim report" and will be released to the public. There will be an opportunity for public response and input to that interim report, and we will conduct further public hearings based on that report. The dates are not clear yet but probably late November throughout December and January and February. Then we must submit a final report to the Speaker of the Legislature by late March 2026.

When we do our report, we're guided by several factors. As I said, we're going to be moving from 87 districts to 89, and population is also a big factor. Population changes have taken place in Alberta, and that's not new to anyone in this room, I'm sure. But to give you some perspective, the population estimated back in the 2017 Electoral Boundaries Commission report was just over 4 million people. In fact, it was 4,082,609 people in Alberta, and that's population, not voters. The formula that was used by the last commission, of course, was that population divided by 87; it left a target or a median amount of population for each electoral district of 46,697, with a target range ranging from those figures that you see on the slide, from 35,000 approximately to 58,000. That was 2017, and again that was based on just over 4 million people.

6:40

If you look at the numbers we're using for this commission, we are using a figure of 4.88 million people. If we take 89 electoral districts and divide the population by that number, the mean number is 54,929, with a range, as you can see, from just over 41,000 to as high as almost 69,000 for the targeted range. Of course, that population isn't distributed evenly across the province, so we have to deal with how we're going to apportion the ridings based on that population increase.

The task of our commission is not to carve the province up into 89 perfect districts with the exact same number, but we are to provide electoral boundaries that provide what's come to be known in the Canadian parlance as effective representation. When we do that, we consider several factors: first, the relative density and sparsity of population in the region; common community interests and organizations, and we've heard a lot about that in Edmonton today; geographic features, which is a factor in the cities, but it's also a factor in the country, more of a factor in the rural areas. Communication lines and transportation lines across the province are also factors. These are all factors mentioned in the legislation. We're also mandated and required to come up with understandable and clear boundaries – that can be a challenge at times, we're learning – and there's a catch-all provision in the legislation that provides for other appropriate factors that we glean either from public hearings or from the data and submissions that we have gained over the course of our hearings.

Now at this stage is the time that we want to hear from you as participants who have signed up for the presentations. We do have maps, if you want to refer to maps, anybody who's presenting. I can't control that. They don't let the chairman of the commission in charge of that sensitive data. Somebody else will have to bring those maps up.

Given those comments we've got a fairly full list tonight. Not all the presenters are here, but I believe the first two presenters are here. Elizabeth Strange? In the communication that you've received from the commission, you probably were told that we are limiting presentations to seven minutes with about three minutes of question and answer.

Ms Strange: Yes.

The Chair: You can be assured that we're not strictly enforcing that timeline, so we're not going to cut you off right at the seven-minute mark.

Please start. Tell us your name and what riding or constituency you're from.

Ms Strange: My name is Elizabeth Strange. I currently live in the Edmonton-Glenora riding, but I was born and raised in Medicine Hat, so part of my presentation is going to be about Medicine Hat, getting a little bit of a preview for your future appearance in Medicine Hat.

Just by way of background, I currently work as a lawyer. I have a bachelor of arts in human rights and gender studies with minors in anthropology and sociology, a bachelor of law, and a master of law. After my university degrees I moved back to Medicine Hat as an adult to work in refugee resettlement for two years.

I'm going to touch on three themes. One is the number of seats, which I know you cannot change that it's 89, but I'd like the record to reflect my interest in there being more seats; seat distribution; and seat boundaries, specifically about Medicine Hat.

Addressing the number of seats: while, again, I recognize this body can't add additional seats, it's an important issue that should be addressed. Bill 31 in 2024 increased the seat count from 87 to 89. The last seat count increase was in 2012, from 83 to 87. Since 2012 the Alberta population has increased by 1 million. One million more Albertans but only two more seats. From 1986 to 2012, when the seat count went from 83 to 87, the population increased by 1.5 million. When you distribute that out into Albertans per MLA, the new seat count will have approximately 56,000 Albertans per MLA. In 2012 that was 44,500. In 1986 it was 28,000 Albertans per MLA. So we have many Albertans who are being underrepresented or unrepresented simply because of the number of MLAs. In future legislation there needs to be an increase in seats to reflect the population growth.

Now, turning to seat distribution, new seats must be added where population has grown. The statistics show that that is in south Edmonton and north Calgary. I'd also like to say that people vote, not land, so while I'm sure that in many of the rural areas you'll hear that the seats are too large geographically, the reality is that that is the way that rural Alberta is, and it's important to ensure that the seat distribution reflects where people live, not where there is land.

While I have the utmost respect for the MLAs who represent the rural ridings and the difficult challenges that they face with a riding that spans four, five hours from border to border, we also must recognize that MLAs 100 years ago represented large rural areas. The Peace River riding is essentially the same as it's been since Alberta was created, but now we have the benefit of modern technology to allow the MLAs to better represent those rural areas. I would like to see the commission not be pressured to make the rural ones smaller simply because it's inconvenient for an MLA to do that travel work. We need to ensure that the MLAs are representing the people.

Now, finally, turning to my hometown of Medicine Hat, in the last seat redraw Medicine Hat got the short end of the stick in many, many ways. As you can see in the map, Medicine Hat is divided by the South Saskatchewan River. The last commission redrew the line dividing what was an urban Medicine Hat riding and then a rural Cypress-Medicine Hat riding into two urban-rural ridings. The boundary is not the river, though. The current boundary is three blocks south of the river and then this weird triangle. The map I've provided for you is from the city of Medicine Hat and shows you

the neighbourhoods. The current line divides some of the neighbourhoods. The downtown and Herald neighbourhoods are divided in half.

I volunteered in the last two elections, and the number of voters who were confused why they'd always voted in the Cypress-Medicine Hat riding and now they're part of Brooks-Medicine Hat or they were part of Medicine Hat and now they're part of Cypress-Medicine Hat, just the confusion. I would like to see Medicine Hat stuck together as one urban riding again. Given the number you provided at the start, the population of Medicine Hat is approximately 63,000, so it's in range for the entirety of the urban centre to be one riding.

If the commission needs to divide Medicine Hat, I would propose that it simply be by the river. That is a very clear geographical landmark in the city. Medicine Hat does the north-south, east-west on addresses way better than Edmonton does. If you're north of the river, your address is a north address. If you're south of the river, your address is a south address.

If you have to get a little bit of, like, fiddling to get some neighbourhoods to add up to the right number, I would recommend River Ridge and Riverside being with the south side riding. River Ridge is essentially a retirement community. It doesn't have a huge population; I think it's approximately 700. And Riverside is one of the oldest neighbourhoods in the city, oldest alongside downtown, Herald, and River Flats, so historically it makes sense for Riverside to be with the south side. Also, there is a thick line on the map that divides Riverside from northwest Crescent Heights. That is a very steep hill that is, again, geographically significant in the city.

I don't think I have anything else to say.

The Chair: Did you do any checking of the population in River Ridge and Riverside?

Ms Strange: Yes. River Ridge, from the statistics I could find, has a population of 476 – it's very small – and Riverside is 1,950, so if you did north of the river, it would be a total of 16,570 in the city. Obviously, you've got Redcliff nearby and, depending on how far the riding goes, you end up including Suffield, potentially Brooks. South of the river, just the neighbourhoods that are in Medicine Hat south of the river, is 46,430. If you were to do south of the river plus River Ridge and Riverside, the riding would be 48,856.

6:50

The Chair: Okay. So you're suggesting the municipal boundaries of the city of Medicine Hat be one constituency. Get rid of Brooks and get rid of the Cypress part and let . . .

Ms Strange: Let that be a rural riding that encompasses those areas.

I should also note – sorry – the areas of the city that have the most growth are the south side, so the areas that are noted as future development: it's mostly the south side. I'm sure when you get down to Medicine Hat, they'll tell you the joke about Burnside. It's been flagged for development for 100 years, and it can't actually be developed as residential, so all of the development is going to be on the south side. The south side will continue to grow whereas the north side has very limited growth potential.

The Chair: Okay.

Any questions?

Dr. Martin: I'm curious about the what you might call a sister town that's immediately on your flank, namely Redcliff. Now, what in your mind distinguishes that sufficiently that it should be excluded from your scenario?

Ms Strange: One is, obviously, the municipal boundaries. People know if they live in Medicine Hat or if they live in Redcliff. I can tell you, by way of background, I used to be the curator of the Redcliff Museum, and it is culturally significantly different. The fact that I was a Hatter that was the curator of the Redcliff Museum was not the most positively received. Redcliff has definitely got a distinct culture, a distinct history.

I think the other thing is simply that, looking at the numbers of what these ridings are going to be, the city of Medicine Hat is kind of perfectly in range to just be a riding. We don't need to mess around with adding Redcliff, don't need to mess around with adding Veinerville, which is right nearby as well, or Dunmore. Let's just leave the city as the city.

The Chair: Greg?

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much. I appreciate it. You've preempted my question by asking if we needed to put something together. I guess I don't really understand Cypress county, and that's part of the feedback that we've received from some of the written submissions, sort of what logically belongs with other places. I've got a list of a couple of other spots here, Redcliff being one of them, you know, some of those other more outlying areas.

Maybe I'll just ask a general question, then. Why do you feel it's important to have – like, what's distinct about Medicine Hat as a city from its surrounding areas? I mean, a lot of the people who live around the edges or outside of Medicine Hat, even quite a distance away, I imagine would come into Medicine Hat for shopping and maybe work and, you know, recreation or whatever it may be and perhaps vice versa a little bit as well. Maybe you can just speak to why you feel like Medicine Hat as a city or a portion thereof should be its own constituency.

Ms Strange: Okay. Part of it is, like I said, just the ease of having the city boundaries as pre-existing, that people understand. People know if they live in Medicine Hat or they don't live in Medicine Hat. It's something that can clearly be articulated to the voters that they will understand. Being someone that was born and raised in Medicine Hat, I can tell you that there is a distinction between being an urban Hatter versus being from the rural.

There is a degree of an affinity. Like, you go to the hospital if you're from rural. But the people in the rural region: they feel like they're separate. I would say that's more of what it is, that the rural area surrounding Medicine Hat: they feel like they have more of a unique identity that the urban people in Medicine Hat would not understand and don't have the same concerns, interests. There's, obviously, a bleed over of commonality, especially when you're talking about the fact that the nearest big city is three hours away. People are coming into Medicine Hat for those services. But equally, I mean, Medicine Hat is so close to the Saskatchewan border that arguably people that are in Cypress county have way more in common with people across the Saskatchewan border than they do with people within the city limits of Medicine Hat.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: Just a comment. Our data from census Canada for 2024 shows the city of Medicine Hat having a population of 67,909, so almost 68,000, and you know that our number is 55,000 plus or minus a 25 per cent variance. I think that we have been leaning towards, based on past reports, not to be as high as 25 per cent. I guess that's just a red flag. Like, I understand what you're saying, but we do have that one red flag. I don't know if anybody else at the table wants to comment on that with that number.

Ms Strange: That is why I said that if you're going to draw a line, let it be the river or let it be River Ridge and Riverside with the south.

The Chair: Okay. So if we don't recommend the complete city as a riding, are you content with Brooks being part of the north part of the city? That's what I understand it is now – it was as a result of the 2017 commission – and what's below the river or under the river is basically Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Ms Strange: What I would prefer to see is that south of the river, the city limits, that would be the population to get you a riding and then Cypress-Medicine Hat to encompass the north part of the river. Like, what it essentially used to be was that the city was Medicine Hat and then south of highway 1 was Cypress-Medicine Hat, but Cypress-Medicine Hat looped around and included I think as far as Bassano but not as far as Brooks. I think that would be more appropriate because Brooks is, again, its own city. It's not as big, so it has to be in with something, but it's an hour and a half away with a very different culture and very different entities.

The Chair: Yeah. You did highlight the confusion, which I know. I have family in Medicine Hat. They talk about the confusion of the boundaries, for sure.

Julian.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. I wanted to pick up a point you had just made, actually, and I want you to tell me about CFB Suffield.

Ms Strange: Okay.

Dr. Martin: Those people presumably, when they're allowed off base, actually come to the Hat to shop and to play and stuff like that. Do you find that a beneficial relationship with the businesses in town, to have the base there?

Ms Strange: Interesting question. I basically grew up on base. My father was a defence scientist, and I worked on the base for many years. Yes. The people that are on base actually tend to live in Medicine Hat. The Canadian soldiers, if they're stationed there, tend to actually live in Medicine Hat. There's not very much British there anymore, but they do stop in Medicine Hat. There is a beneficial relationship. The Medicine Hat economy is very much based on that military base.

Did I answer your question?

Dr. Martin: Yeah. I think you answered it more fulsomely than I had expected. You know, it raises more questions, really, because if Medicine Hat is an economic engine and magnet, so to speak, for people who are on the base, then we have to consider that as a factor in favour of you having a rural hinterland, as it were. But by the same token, you don't want it with respect to Redcliff?

Ms Strange: Well, the thing is that Redcliff actually has not a huge population, but it's got thousands of people whereas CFB Suffield does not. If you're going to stretch the riding to encompass CFB Suffield and the town of Suffield and the town of Ralston, that would be fine, but you're not really adding that many people into that riding by doing that whereas including Redcliff into the Medicine Hat riding: that is increasing the number quite significantly.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much, Ms Strange. Thank you for your loyalty to your hometown.

Ms Strange: Thank you so much.

7:00

The Chair: Karen Stix.

Mrs. Stix: Good evening. My name is Karen Stix. I'm a CPA of some length, and I am a constituency member of Edmonton-South. I also live in Magrath, which is the very northern tip of Edmonton-South. Now, like my predecessor here, I believe in the boundaries as being defined by rivers, major roadways such as the Anthony Henday, ravines because it just seems to draw an appropriate boundary and how the community has been developed.

Now, I do understand that Edmonton-South is possibly up for division or reallocation because it is one of the fastest growing areas in the province. While I have my opportunity, I would like to express that Magrath and Mactaggart belong north of the Anthony Henday based on longevity in the city, based on the community amenities that exist north of the Henday as opposed to south of the Henday. I just think they're a much better mix with either Edmonton-Whitemud or Edmonton-Rutherford.

That's the simple presentation I have. It's not complicated. I just wanted to bring that to your attention. I myself did some – I ran in the last election as a candidate in Edmonton-South. I wasn't the successful candidate, but I myself, when I was door-knocking, noticed the real difference in the communities, so I make that suggestion to you.

The Chair: Just before I open up for questions, I just want to give you the figures that we have. The 2017 report for Edmonton-South relied on a population base of 45,801, almost 46,000. The population that we'll be using for our report is 81,077. So that is a huge – it's another riding pretty well. The regions or areas that you suggest that we take out of Edmonton-South: did you do a verification as to how many people were in those areas?

Mrs. Stix: I have a pretty good sense. I know Magrath – well, no, I don't have specific numbers to share with you.

The Chair: Okay. But those regions are Magrath . . .

Mrs. Stix: And Mactaggart. If you look on the map there, you can see that they jut up above the Anthony Henday.

The Chair: Oh, yeah. Okay. So everything above the Anthony Henday in Edmonton-South.

Mrs. Stix: Yeah. You could easily cut out, and it would fit quite easier with one of the other constituency associations that exist.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Clark: Have you got more? Sorry. I'm being a little cheeky. I guess what I mean is . . .

Mrs. Stix: You want more numbers than that.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. I say that, and I apologize if I came off as flippant. I certainly didn't mean it that way. It's only about . . .

Mrs. Stix: Well, how . . .

Mr. Clark: Sorry. Yes. I've just done a little magic on my machine here. That top left little slice there is about 9,000 people or so.

Mrs. Stix: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Clark: As Justice Miller said, we're quite a ways over. We're aiming for about 5,500, 5,600, somewhere in there.

Mrs. Stix: I can give you another roadway such as Calgary Trail. That's a pretty key roadway. You could take that group of people, the Summerside people, and put them further east.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Is Ellerslie Road sort of a natural boundary south of Henday as well?

Mrs. Stix: It's a soft natural boundary, but yes. I mean, it could be used, but it's not as significant as the Anthony Henday. Those people there do belong in Edmonton-South. I wouldn't necessarily group them up above, but you could if you really wanted to.

You've got Blackmud Creek. They would serve well up above, too. I think that's reasonable, what you're suggesting.

So the Calgary Trail, the Ellerslie Road, noting the Anthony Henday as being another significant boundary. You can see the Whitemud Creek and the ravines as well demarking the areas. There's been significant growth south of the Ellerslie Road. That's also where you're seeing your significant numbers, so that's why I suggest the Calgary Trail as your demarcation as well. That would maybe cut out some of those. And 41st Avenue used to be city boundaries. Now, of course, it's highway 19. There's significant growth past 41st Avenue.

Mainly, I think you've covered it if you try to add up – what are you looking for for numbers? You're looking for about 30,000?

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Well, and then planning for future growth. This is also the challenge.

Mrs. Stix: Maybe 40,000.

Mr. Clark: Again, I used this earlier today, but as a Calgarian one of my favourite Edmontonian quotes is: skate to where the puck is going to be as opposed to where it is. You know, looking at Edmonton-South and Edmonton-South West, there's obviously a lot of growth and has just as much since. We would, if we can, like to accommodate for that as well. Just any thoughts as to what belongs with what is really what we're interested in.

Mrs. Stix: Yeah. I think just really watching for the roadways and the ravines and the rivers. As was previously mentioned, we've covered off on Ellerslie Road. We've covered up on Calgary Trail. We know Magrath and Mactaggart just don't belong. That's my main consideration right now because that's where I live. I'm most concerned about that. Okay.

Mr. Clark: That's helpful.

The Chair: What about the name? We had an interesting discussion this afternoon about the name, and somebody said that Edmonton-South West, Edmonton-South are boring. We need to liven the name up.

Mrs. Stix: Yeah. Well, it's tough because if you call it Edmonton-South, that sort of encompasses the whole thing. I haven't given that any significant thought. What have you come up with for some ideas?

The Chair: Somebody suggested Edmonton-Heritage Valley for the south.

Mrs. Stix: Oh, Heritage Valley for the south. Okay. Well, that, then, is one of the neighbourhoods, so it's a little bit unfair that way. But you could maybe take a couple of the neighbourhoods and hyphenate it, something like that. I don't have great ideas on that.

The Chair: Okay.

Mrs. Stix: Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much. Please stay for the rest because sometimes we have time at the end that we like to have a fulsome conversation.

Jerry Gill. No?

Bob Paterson.

Mr. Paterson: Yeah.

The Chair: Please have a seat.

Mr. Paterson: Hi. My name is Bob Paterson, and I am a volunteer and board member with the Edmonton-McClung UCP Constituency Association. I've been on that board for three or four years. I hold a number of positions.

I want to thank the electoral board commission for this opportunity, and I wanted to give a shout-out. I've spent a career in media statistics and presentations, and I just wanted to give kudos to the team that built that website because it is a very, very useful tool for people just like us. I am referring to the numbers almost directly out of that website when I'm presenting these numbers to you and after consultation with your administrator to confirm how we are using the population numbers and how we're arriving at that.

This is a pretty simple exercise, and we're here to address one of the main concerns that you've already addressed here two or three times, the rapid growth of the city of Edmonton to Edmonton-South and Edmonton-South West. Edmonton-McClung is positioned, for the most part, on the northern tip of Edmonton-South and Edmonton-South West, and our two key, main boundaries are the Edmonton Whitemud freeway, and to our north we have a couple of pieces of just immediately north of Edmonton-Whitemud.

7:10

There's a map there that will benefit you for the existing riding constituency, and that number of 49,227 is directly off the AEBC website, and it's consistent with how we're extrapolating the StatsCan numbers. That number is about 10 per cent below the target ratio posted of 55,000 per riding, so this is a very simple exercise of dealing with a very mature part of the city; that is, Edmonton-McClung. We're a very mature neighbourhood, and we are looking to add some of the more mature neighbourhoods out of Edmonton-South and Edmonton-South West. I've listed those communities there with the exact numbers.

Our recommendation is to, for the most part, take almost directly out of Edmonton-South and Edmonton-South West with a goal of getting to approximately 63,000 for Edmonton-McClung. That would include us moving the small neighbourhood of West Meadowlark, which is in the northeastern tip of our current riding map. Our recommendation is to move that to Edmonton-Riverview. Edmonton-Riverview's current number is around 50,000, so if we put 3,500 into Edmonton-Riverview, it gets close to the average of 55,000.

Edmonton-South is at 81,000. Edmonton-South West is at 76,000. Our proposal is to take about 17,000 all told out of there.

The Chair: Combined?

Mr. Paterson: Combined. Yeah.

I've given you a spreadsheet of how we've broken those numbers down, and if you look at the new proposed map, it's pretty simple. We're using the – my esteemed colleague before was talking about the transportation boundary of the Anthony Henday and the Whitemud. The Anthony Handy: two communities that touch on the south side are Jamieson Place and Cameron Heights. Both those

communities are now quite mature, and they fall within Edmonton-South West. Our recommendation is that we move them into Edmonton-McClung because all the shopping facilities are there, the community rinks, the school zones, et cetera, et cetera. The same for Glastonbury and Granville, which are on the new west side of the map that I've drawn.

This, essentially, is, like, a small, centre-driven riding. Take from the south, take a little bit from the southwest, bump us up to around 63,000. I realize that that's about 15 per cent over the median average, but considering how the city is going to grow, this isn't about the next electoral map. What does this look like three elections from now, right? Yeah, we would be slightly above the 55,000 threshold, but our recommendation is that it's all tightly in one spot. Easy for an MLA to effectively represent that community, all the members in that community, all of the suggested new communities. We all use the same facilities, we shop in the same place, we go to the same schools, we use the same recreation facilities. It's pretty simple.

Mrs. Samson: Nicely laid out. I appreciate the diagram. It's pretty clear.

Mr. Paterson: Yeah.

The Chair: Yeah. Especially for us Edmontonians.

Mr. Paterson: I realize that this is a municipal issue and is not to be of concern for this committee necessarily, but that red X, that big red X area, is what we refer to as West Meadowlark. There's about 3,300 people in that community, and they're all dealing with the same thing, which is the extension of the LRT to west Edmonton. People immediately east of that community are dealing with that, so everyone in Edmonton-Riverview is dealing with the issue of extension of the LRT to west Edmonton. I believe that if we moved that West Meadowlark community, it would have – even though it is a municipal issue, there's provincial funding, there's federal funding for that, and it ends up on an MLA's plate and will for the next several years. If you've ever tried to drive by there with the current LRT construction, it's a nightmare.

That's our proposal.

The Chair: Okay. Any questions from the commission? Yeah. Julian.

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much. Excellent to see a proposal laid out with options and the like, and having done this you will appreciate the kind of difficulties the commission goes through with every scenario that comes before us.

I had a couple of specific questions for you because in some of your options, you talk about bringing in or not bringing in Patricia Heights, Rio Terrace.

Mr. Paterson: I apologize. I realize that Patricia Heights is on the outer edge of my map, and I didn't do a very good job of including that inside of my map.

Dr. Martin: I read the footnote. It's okay.

Mr. Paterson: Our recommendation would be to bring in Patricia Heights specifically because the school zones between Patricia Heights and Westmount and Wolf Willow, the kids go back and forth for school there.

Dr. Martin: Sure they do.

But that brings me to my second question, which is that there's no road across the ravine . . .

Mr. Paterson: That's correct.

Dr. Martin: . . . so you've got to go out on Whitemud and then scoot back in again.

You're comfortable with that scenario vis-à-vis this, you know, but your district is heavily impacted by the Whitemud freeway.

Mr. Paterson: It is.

Dr. Martin: Yet you are comfortable to take in Aldergrove and so on and the Misericordia out there in east Meadowlark and the like. Do you see a commonality with those neighbourhoods north of the freeway?

Mr. Paterson: That's a fair question. We were looking at this as sort of the boundary of using 178th Street, which is on the east side of West Edmonton Mall. I should state that I've lived in this riding for 35 years. I'm right in the heart of this riding, and I've been dealing with all of the relative construction that's happened for the last 35 years.

This was logistically about making the math work for the commission, to make this easy for you. Technically, looking at this: yeah, it would make sense to jettison Belmead, Aldergrove to the north, and possibly pick up stuff from the south, but immediately this would be a minor change to those ridings, to those constituents west of 178th Street or on the west side of West Edmonton Mall. We go north and south there. It's part of our life. Someone who lives in that area, for example, they would be going to Callingwood Shopping Centre, the rec centre, you know, and possibly even the Oscar Romero high school that's right there. Those people on the north side of the Whitemud freeway still use that community infrastructure that's on 178th Street in the Callingwood area.

Dr. Martin: If I may, I'd just like to follow on. You suggest Jamieson Place and Wedgewood Heights and also Cameron Heights. Now, that's a sticky one because just like Rio Terrace, Cameron Heights can only be accessed from outside your riding. So, I mean, I get it. There's a certain community of interest for the people who live there because you're overlooking the river. It's all lovely, so what's the difference? But the only roadway is the Henday.

Mr. Paterson: Well, yeah, but whether you go north or whether you go south or whether you go west, you know, there's more affinity because there's as many people coming out of Cameron Heights using the shopping area of Hawkstone, which is on Lessard Road, right? It's so easy to get out of Cameron Heights to Hawkstone. It would be less than a 10-minute drive.

Dr. Martin: Okay. That's an excellent answer.

7:20

Mr. Paterson: I didn't list all of those types of things inside of this presentation because I figured we would probably speak to the logistical aspects of why, and there's also a fairly significant professional building inside of that Hawkstone community centre as well. Like, there are dentists and doctors and massage therapists, et cetera, et cetera, that would be used not only by Cameron Heights and, obviously, Jamieson Place but Glastonbury and Granville as well on the west side of the Henday.

Dr. Martin: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Anything else?

Mr. Clark: Just, I guess – and, again, thank you so much for going to the trouble of doing all the data and details. It really is helpful.

I'm curious. I mean, 63,000 is quite a bit over, as you say, and with growth it may sort of normalize over time. But if we needed to aim just a little lower, if we were to say: let's just reduce that number by, say, 3,000 to 5000, give or take, where . . .

Mr. Paterson: We could keep Patricia Heights where it is currently, and now that number would be 61,000, which is closer to 60,000 than not.

Mr. Clark: Sorry. Just so I'm following along, Patricia Heights is currently . . .

Mr. Paterson: It's currently on the northeast edge of my map, that I didn't do a very good job of including because the current boundary goes almost directly through it. It's a small community. If we left it where it was, we would be down to 61,000.

Mr. Clark: And that's currently Edmonton-Riverview.

Mr. Paterson: Correct.

Mr. Clark: And, again, I'm also interested partly in the mathematics or the arithmetic of it but also just kind of the neighbourhoods that sort of belong together, you know, partly what Dr. Martin said.

Mr. Paterson: Well, I should mention that I have a couple of volunteers off our board that are here with me as well, our CA president Margaret Vernick and my colleague Danny Heikkinen. We literally had a calculator out, and we were adding, and then we put this into a spreadsheet and said: okay; what do we think makes sense for Edmonton-McClung 10, 15, 20 years out? Knowing that, we know that the average quotient is 55,000. That's your target range. But you're already 45 per cent over in Edmonton-South West and you're 50 per cent over in Edmonton-South, so to whittle those down, you're going to have to take some significant numbers out. This calculation should help you with that.

Dr. Martin: I mean, I take it that the last commission faced the problem up there of, believe it or not, not having enough people in Edmonton-South West. Now we're faced with the consequence of time affecting this. You know, it seems intuitively right that all the stuff in the lower part of Lessard Road would come back into your riding.

Mr. Paterson: I didn't want to talk history because what happened before didn't really matter.

Dr. Martin: I'm a historian, so I'm not sure . . .

The Chair: Don't get him started.

Mr. Paterson: I didn't go back in time, but in 2010 Cameron Heights and Jamieson Place were part of this riding.

Dr. Martin: Well, yeah. I think it was just taken to make the numbers work, and now we're in a situation where we can re-examine that decision.

Mr. Paterson: And here I am helping you make the numbers work.

Dr. Martin: That's right.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

Mr. Paterson: Thank you for your time.

Mr. Clark: We appreciate it.

The Chair: And thank you for the visual aid. You don't know how valuable that is after we hear our . . .

Mr. Paterson: Well, just kudos to the team because I stole these maps directly – I'm not sure if I should be saying this, but I plagiarized your website and used your data.

Mr. Clark: That's what it's for.

The Chair: Thank you. We will pass on your commendation to those who designed the website. None of us here had any role in that, so don't . . .

Mr. Paterson: Thank you for your time.

The Chair: Thank you.

Jodi. It's not your last name; it's the handwriting of Mr. Roth that I'm having trouble with. Please introduce yourself.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Good evening. I'm Jodi Calahoo Stonehouse. I'm the MLA for Edmonton-Rutherford.

The Chair: Welcome.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Lovely to meet all of you. You've got some work on your hands for the next little while, so thank you for taking this on.

Edmonton-Rutherford: you know, as I was listening, I was thinking that I would be willing to surrender the name because Rutherford actually isn't in my constituency. They're in Edmonton-South West. So you could just take my name, and we could go with one of the lovely Indigenous names in my constituency such as Sweet Grass or Blue Quill. I would like to brag. I think I have the loveliest constituency. In fact, I think I have the most postsecondary degrees in all of Alberta in my constituency. And our boundaries are a little less. I think we're about a few numbers less than most. Gateway, Anthony Henday, the creek is one of the natural boundaries, so you can see there's lovely, older neighbourhoods in my community, in my constituency.

I'm not opposed to us growing because that's part of life; things shift and change. In fact, I'm quite pleased to see that we're going to be doing some shifting. This is important. I would urge the commission to keep the rural and urban spaces distinct, as we have found infrastructure needs and transportation needs are very different.

For me, though, if I can bring a message, one of the most problematic situations that I've overcome while travelling across Alberta is, for example, in Maskwacis, the First Nation there, they have four different polls that those communities go to. And so, when we think about the truth and reconciliation calls to action and we think about democracy as something we want to invite people to, we know that on First Nations 90 per cent is the unemployment rate, which means people don't have a lot of income. So to do such subtle things like go voting means you're going to call someone more than likely: can you give me a ride; can I catch a ride; are you going to town? If that community is divided by four places to vote, that puts a lot of people who don't have access to actual voting.

So I would urge this commission to look closely at also the Métis settlements and the First Nations, that we are keeping them together is, more often than not, the needs of those communities will be better represented and reflected with one representative in the Legislature rather than being divided.

That's really all I wanted to bring to you today. My constituency is older, the infrastructure is older, but we're a smaller constituency so I'm okay with growing. Although I do door-knock, just to give you a heads-up; don't make it too big. Thank you for your work. If you have any questions, happy to answer.

The Chair: Could you just identify that other constituency that you . . .

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: So Maskwacis gets divided into . . .

The Chair: And where . . .

Dr. Martin: South.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Wetaskiwin, and Drayton Valley is also part of it. Alexis Nakota Sioux First Nation is also divided into three different areas. We're talking about a really small community that gets divided into three voting spaces, which makes it, you know, complex for families and daughters and sons, when you all are intermarried and live in the same community. So I would urge you to really look at that critically, please.

Mr. Clark: I just got Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin up here, and it looks like it goes all the way south of Leduc, south of Strathcona county, not quite to Camrose, and it has Ermineskin Nation, Montana, Louis Bull, all that is all part of it. Then over in Pigeon Lake, also that's included.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Yeah.

Mr. Clark: So that's the Pigeon Lake, Ma-Me-O Beach area. Those are the groups that I see that are on my map as Indigenous communities. Are there others you feel we should add to that? I just want to make sure I understand where the break is, and they're voting in different places.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Alexis as well. Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation. I believe they're divided into Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, and then Sturgeon and maybe Drayton Valley.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. I think that's right. They're mostly in the Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland riding.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: But it's a very small community.

Dr. Martin: Yeah.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: And so that means dividing people up in a community.

Dr. Martin: If I may, I think this is a really interesting theme. You know, the commission is heading east for the back end of this week. We're going to, I hope, meet a lot of people out of the Métis settlements on the eastern flank of the province, because this is an important thing to understand.

I mean, this is a very interesting logistical point. How do you get to a poll station? Do we have a mobile poll? You know, those kinds of questions might interest Elections Alberta as much as – because they could actually do something about it. But maybe we need to make recommendations around those sorts of things.

7:30

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: I would implore you to do so, please.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. Thank you for that.

I wanted to just say, in defense of history, that Rutherford was the first Premier.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: I know.

Dr. Martin: So I can see why they decided to give him a name.

Mr. Clark: It doesn't have to be that same spot, though.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Yes. But there's also Rutherford below me, which is confusing for both.

Dr. Martin: Some developer did that.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Yes. I didn't do it.
Thank you. I appreciate it very much.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you for coming.

Aaron, there's some demon in your computer that makes the print so small.

Yadvinder Bhardwaj? No. Okay.

Nicole Hughes?

Mr. Break? Oh, that's our break time. Okay. Our break is to be at 8 o'clock, so we're a little early. Is there someone – maybe we can move somebody up.

Robert Jarman? He's scheduled to come at 8:20.

Stephen Raitz?

Charlayne Bozak? Okay.

Anybody else here scheduled to present? We can hear you before the break.

Well, maybe we'll break. Okay. We'll be back at 7:50.

[The hearing adjourned from 7:32 p.m. to 8:02 p.m.]

The Chair: Okay. Good evening again. We're just returning after our break. I understand we have a scheduled presenter that just arrived.

Ms Charlayne Bozak, you're scheduled to present at 8:40, but we're prepared to have you heard now. You may have seen some requirements that you're restricted to a seven-minute presentation.

Ms Bozak: I have less than that.

The Chair: We'll be flexible and let you go longer.

Ms Bozak: Hello.

The Chair: Good evening.

Ms Bozak: Good evening. My name is Charlayne Bozak, and I have been a resident in the riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood for nearly 10 years. The riding in which I live is a diverse area that supports people from many cultural, socioeconomic, and ethnic backgrounds. Our neighbourhoods are tree lined; what some people might call a mature neighbourhood. The communities within the Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood riding share resources and celebrations. From the Kaleido and Deep Freeze Festival in and around Alberta Avenue, the Highlandia Festival in Highlands, the dog park in Eastwood, to pub nights in Parkdale, we celebrate the arts and culture of our friends and neighbours, and you will find many of us at various communities. In supporting tax clinics, cooking and art classes, and other social events, we overlap and supplement each other in many ways.

When searching for a new home in 2016, my husband and I specifically selected the area because we love the trees, value the commitment to community, and want to contribute to the revitalization of a vibrant area. While suburban areas offer newer

homes and other amenities, mature neighbourhoods and ridings like ours have their own personalities.

With this in mind, I encourage the commission to maintain ridings like Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood and other mature neighbourhoods as they currently exist. Our populations remain relatively stable, and we share commonality in our municipal, provincial, and federal funding needs, and we have demographic and geographic similarities.

Additionally, as a long-time resident of the city of Edmonton I understand our city is growing and a new riding is needed to support the growing communities in the southern part of our city. I encourage the commission to continue the tradition of respecting municipal boundaries when creating a new riding for our city or any municipality. Our city limits may be inching ever closer to our surrounding neighbourhoods, like Leduc, Nisku, St. Albert, and Sherwood Park, but every municipality has a unique set of needs that is best addressed as a whole or shared with like neighbours in size, agricultural, industrial, or commercial demographics.

Keeping Edmonton's and Calgary's ridings within their municipal boundaries respects the unique requirements of our city and also, importantly, of its neighbours like Leduc-Beaumont and Drayton Valley-Devon. Recognizing and respecting municipal boundaries allows our cities and towns to be empowered to negotiate in the best interests of their residents as it ensures our areas have representation specific to our needs.

I thank the commission for its time and efforts in this important democratic process. Your hard work and dedication ensure all Albertans have fair and equitable representation. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have for me.

The Chair: Thank you very much.
Susan?

Mrs. Samson: No. I'm good. Thanks.

The Chair: I have a question before I forget it. So I just wanted to jump in. I appreciate your description of your electoral district. The Blue Chair isn't in your riding, is it?

Ms Bozak: It's in Riverdale. I think it's a little further south than us.

The Chair: The way you described, it reminds me of that, and I'm not from Edmonton.

When you describe it as a mature riding – I'm looking at the population statistics. In 2017's Electoral Boundaries Commission the population was 43,850 – yeah; so those are right there – but it's jumped almost over 11,000. So in a mature riding – first of all, do those numbers make sense to you?

Ms Bozak: They do and they don't. We do have some infill. Part of the revitalization of our area is that there are infill projects that are being encouraged in the neighbourhood.

The Chair: Like fourplexes?

Ms Bozak: We see mostly duplexes, but there are some fourplexes. It depends on the area. Like, where we are, closer to the stadium, it's mostly duplexes. I think part of it, too, is that a lot of our former residents are aging out and being replaced by larger families. We bought our house from a widower who was single. He had, at one point, a family of four, including himself, his wife, and his two children, and they bought the house from his father. We have one of those little postwar bungalows. We bought it from the son of the original owner.

We're seeing a lot of our older neighbours either passing away or moving to extended care or something like that, and thankfully we are seeing a lot of younger people move into our neighbourhood, younger families, or double-income-no-kids people, like me and my husband, that are taking over those houses. I think 11,000 might be a little much.

The Chair: It seems a little high.

Ms Bozak: Yeah. You know, we see a lot of flux. We are close to and part of the more diverse communities of, like, Boyle Street and McCauley. We're adjacent to them. I hesitate to use the word "transient," but there is a bit of a transient population as far as rentals go, that come and go. So I think there is kind of an ebb and flow to the population in our area.

When I speak to mature, it's, like, the age of our houses are average, between Victorian era and postwar era, some mid-century modern houses, and things like that. Generally, you know, if you sit at the top of the stadium and you look over our neighbourhood, you don't see roofs; you see the tops of trees. So there is that mature aspect to it.

The Chair: It's a good word picture. Thank you.
Julian?

Dr. Martin: Oh, thank you. I just wanted to say that I really like the Parkdale curling club.

Ms Bozak: Yeah. It's a beautiful neighbourhood.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. So it's precisely that that makes me want to hear more about the different neighbourhoods because, obviously, the whole area south of the Kinnaird ravine – I think that's what it's called, right? – and the old downtown Boyle-McCauley area is very, very different than what we see on the east side of Wayne Gretzky Drive, on the one hand, and in the northeastern part of the riding. I mean, all of, you know, those areas, the northeast part is sort of classic old Edmonton; lots of small bungalows and the like. Do you see a lot of infill and reno going on there?

8:10

Ms Bozak: We're seeing more of it, for sure. It depends on the area. Like, if you get closer to Ada Boulevard and closer to the island, there's less duplexing and more splitting of larger lots into two skinny homes. If you're in our area, we typically see duplexes. Sometimes we see the odd duplex with a legal basement suite being as, like, a possibility but not necessarily at the fourplex.

We are starting to see – and I find this quite interesting – a lot of the older houses being torn down to build larger single-family dwellings, like more modern, as opposed to a duplex. I think it's because it's one of the last affordable, walkable, beautiful neighbourhoods in the city. Like, the average price of a single-family home is still around \$250,000 to \$300,000.

I think we're also seeing that the younger generation, the zennials, millennials, they want more walkability, they want more community, so we're seeing an influx of – like, my metric is kind of: when we first moved into the neighbourhood 10 years ago, we saw a lot of average cars like my car. I have a Ford Escape. And now we're starting to see more high-end vehicles. We're seeing Land Rovers, we're seeing Mercedes, and things like that. People want to be closer to the core. They don't necessarily want to be out in the suburbs, so I think there's a greater interest in our community. Also, the festivals draw people, and Alberta Ave is known particularly for its community league, and that draws a lot of people as well.

Dr. Martin: I have a follow-up question.

Ms Bozak: Yes.

Dr. Martin: There's a very large pod of underdeveloped land next to the, you know, exhibition centre, where the old Northlands race track area was. There were lots of little bungalows in there – I bought one of my favourite trucks from a guy in there – and now it's gone. The whole neighbourhood right there is gone. Do you hear any conversation about development, residential development, on that chunk of land?

Ms Bozak: I think the city's first priority is the Coliseum and that old site. To your note, my dad was born and raised in Beverly when it was still its own town. The history of the area is definitely more single-family housing. We do have some apartments. If you get north of 118th Ave closer to the Yellowhead, you'll see more walk-up and more multifamily dwelling development there. Where we live on the south side of 118 Ave, like, we're a few blocks from the stadium. It's still primarily single-family dwellings. When houses used to sell, we'd see them sell and then we'd see for-rent signs go up quite quickly afterwards, and now we're seeing the opposite. They'll sell, and we're seeing more owner-occupied properties.

Part of the reason we bought the house in the area was because there is a very strong sense of community there. The revitalization planned by the city and by the communities involved was specifically intended to not avoid gentrification but try to mitigate it and keep the community accessible to everyone that currently lives within it. That was a draw for us as well. I think that's part of the reason why a lot of younger families are drawn to the area now, because that sense of community and inclusiveness is very important to the younger generations.

I think it's beautiful, because it's kind of a circle; the older people are aging out of their homes and these younger families are coming in and creating not a new but a new and improved area.

We're in Parkdale. We're right on the line between Alberta Ave and Parkdale and Eastwood. The sense of community is – like, we love our neighbourhood more and more every day that we're there. It just grows and grows stronger and stronger and stronger, and a lot of that has to do with – like, we belong to Parkdale, but we volunteer at the low-income tax clinic at Alberta Avenue. Sometimes you'll see people from the Highlands Community League volunteering in other areas. It's very reciprocal and very much a shared – like, I think, in a rough or cerebral sense, we know our boundaries. We stray outside of them, obviously. Uncle Ed's is on the other side of the street, and they make really good perogies.

I think that because of the hardships that the community went through over the last 25, 30 years, it really wanted a lot of people, and it instilled in them that need to build a strong, sustainable community. You need to make sure that everybody is included in the decision-making process that are within our borders, from the most vulnerable to the most affluent. We see people from Ada Boulevard, you know, donating things. I can't remember the family that owns Northline Construction. They donated their mansion to Concordia University for historic reasons. That kind of community exists within the whole community, regardless of your socioeconomic background. Yeah.

Mr. Clark: I'll just add that Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is almost exactly on average, which is not to say that it is an average constituency by any other measure. But numerically it tracks almost exactly the average.

Ms Bozak: Yeah.

Mr. Clark: We always struggle with where to start drawing these maps. But, you know, what I'm hearing and just looking and observing the lines, it certainly appears to have some fairly natural boundaries north and south, in particular, but even east and west and kind of communitywise.

Ms Bozak: Yeah.

Mr. Clark: Okay. That's helpful. Thank you.

Ms Bozak: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: The message you want us to hear is: don't touch your boundaries.

Ms Bozak: Yeah.

The Chair: The population is in the right zone.

Ms Bozak: Yes.

The Chair: And even if it weren't, don't touch your boundaries.

Ms Bozak: I mean, if we were to see suddenly more of our houses going from, you know, single-owner-occupied, retiree-occupied to, like, four people or whatever and we were suddenly at the peak of the postwar era, where it was the veterans coming home with their wives and their newborn kids and every house has, like, a husband and wife – or two partners, I should say – and their 2.5 children and we doubled in size, absolutely, then it's time to take a look at that. But I'd say that between now and maybe the next election or the next need for a boundary expansion, there's really no need to consider that. Yeah.

The Chair: Yeah. Thank you very much for your presentation.

Ms Bozak: Thank you for your time.

The Chair: We appreciate it.
Next presenter. Robert Jarman.

Mr. Jarman: That would be me.

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Jarman, just have a seat.

Mr. Jarman: Whenever my time commences.

The Chair: It can commence now. We have probably told you that you're limited to seven minutes, but we're somewhat flexible, and we'll let you go further if need be. Introduce yourself, tell us what constituency you're from, and go ahead.

Mr. Jarman: Edmonton-South, which I believe that Aaron here is getting on the screen, which I might point to with my dad's laser pointer for cats from time to time. I'm just shy of 25 years old. I graduated from J. Percy Page high school and went to MacEwan University and University of Alberta for about a year. Any other details required for the introduction?

The Chair: No, that's fine. Please proceed.

Mr. Jarman: On this map here you can see that there is a part of the riding that's north of the freeway. That would be quite irritating for anyone who has limited access to transportation other than cars to get across, especially given that – I'm in the demographic that, while I personally have regular access to motor vehicles, a lot of

people don't. My younger sister is actually ineligible to get one even though she's old enough, so that's a bit of a problem.

8:20

Also, having parts of a riding or a campaign that need to go over a road like this, like a river that most of the bridges are freeways like this, (a) that can back up really badly due to traffic or to construction or both, obviously. I imagine that Commissioner Clark here remembers the pain that happens when you try to campaign across these sorts of things in the way that volunteers have to go across them at weird hours of the day. I was personally campaigning for the NDP in my riding in Edmonton-South West in 2023, and I often had to go across the Henday. I don't know where any of you live in order to be familiar with the Henday here, but where I personally live, the most obvious way to get on that freeway is the right in, right out, so I can't go west on that road without a big detour that can be quite subjected to congestion. During campaign season, where every day can count in a short period of a month, that's not ideal to have.

As well, I was asked by some other volunteers working with the NDP 10 days ago maybe – yeah; that sounds about right – to point out that it's not a good thing to break up communities that might have ties to national origin or ethnicity or age, senior citizens, younger citizens, people who go to the same school. If possible, these sorts of links that people already have built in the social network that people get via these communities of interest can be the basis of campaigning or coming up with ideas, petitions for whatever may be relevant.

That Citizen Initiative Act: I read the thing last week, all of it. It mentions that there are some requirements to take these sorts of things across the individual ridings, getting a certain fraction in certain ridings, two-thirds of ridings. Having the ability to have these networks in the riding that's not broken up is really useful for people to be able to use these sorts of rights that they may have.

I think that Commissioner Miller has a question.

The Chair: No, no. Well, yeah, I probably do, but I don't want to interrupt you.

Mr. Jarman: Oh, okay.

What else was I going to say? Oh, the city of Edmonton as well as other cities, St. Albert in particular, are getting aggressive on this. I guess that "negotiations" is not the right word. They want to increase transportation availability and safety for people who are using nonmotorized means like bicycles, their own two feet. So looking at which roads here have safe means to get parallel with them and on them is useful.

Oh, one other thing that I just remembered I was going to mention is that when you put a riding boundary on a big road like this, on one side of the road you'll have probably signs or candidates from one riding, and on the opposite side, probably when you're going down the same road the other way when you're getting back home or wherever a few hours later, you're probably seeing a different candidate of either of the same party. The colours, the party, and the symbols probably help, but it can be a bit confusing for some people, especially those who don't particularly pay attention to politics too much.

Maybe try to go for rivers or the biggest roads that no one can put a sign next to, anywhere like the Henday or other freeways. Maybe Fox Drive, for instance, in Edmonton or Shaganappi Trail in Calgary perhaps. Yeah.

I believe that's seven minutes or something like that.

The Chair: Okay. Let me stop you there. Just remain at the seat.
Any questions, Mr. Clark?

Mr. Clark: I hesitate to pre-empt your potential question, but one of the discussion points has been naming. Edmonton-South is specific but also very general. Any thoughts on, if we were to come up with a different name for Edmonton-South, what might make some sense?

Mr. Jarman: Edmonton-Blackmud might be a good name for this riding. Alternatively, Blackmud-Whitemud might be an option given it's easier to disambiguate these areas. This is pretty much the only riding where it would be obvious that those two ravines interact with each other.

Alternatively, Edmonton-Heritage Valley might be another option or Heritage Valley. [laughter] Oh, you . . .

The Chair: Somebody else suggested that earlier today, so that's why I laughed.

Mr. Jarman: Okay. Sure.

The Chair: That may have some potential.

Mr. Jarman: Edmonton-South Henday might be another option, but that could be confused with Edmonton-Ellerslie. Edmonton-Ellerslie is an annoying term given that that's the riding I live in, and the one immediately to the west also has Ellerslie Road in it, so that might be named to not conflict too much if you can avoid it.

Maybe Edmonton-Airport possibly, but that's a bit of a stretch.

Does that answer that question, Mr. Clark?

Mr. Clark: It does. Thank you.

The Chair: Julian, any questions?

Dr. Martin: No. I just wanted to say that I agree with you about the whole area that's north of the Henday. I don't know for a fact, but it sure looks to me like that was done in order to make up the numbers. It's hard to conceive of it, but 10 years ago Edmonton-South was too small, and it's just a function of what has changed and changed so fast. I can't speak for my other commissioners, but that area north of the Henday has got to be a target puzzle for us to solve. I appreciate your remarks about the transportation awkwardnesses that it generates.

I also was interested in your remarks about transportation corridors more generally. Do you feel that south of the Henday there are adequate transportation corridors for people who are on foot?

Mr. Jarman: On this map here that area on Ellerslie Road is to the west of where that right in, right out comes in on the freeway over to the bus barn over there, the eco station as well. That does not actually have a shared use path or similar kinds of paths, so if you want to go that way on pedal or foot, you're walking on the left side of the road where, like, you would in Three Hills, where my mother did as a kid, which she can tell you is not a good idea.

Dr. Martin: Can I push you even further and say: how would you get to the east part of this current riding on foot?

Mr. Jarman: Across QE II?

Dr. Martin: Yeah.

Mr. Jarman: There are some concrete walks that do go that way. My father has tried cycling from our house in Blackmud Creek at the time to the area by that Costco on – what? – 91st Street; close enough to be accurate for this. There are some ways to get that way, but he was a confident guy of, at the time, like 45. It's not something

that you would probably do if you were to volunteer for a party at maybe, like, 15.

Dr. Martin: So, really, the only way to get here is on Ellerslie Road, right? Yeah. Okay. Thanks.

Mr. Jarman: Yeah, basically. The only other way that you can really do that would be to go way onto 41st Avenue.

Dr. Martin: Yeah, and you have to take the overpass.

Mr. Jarman: Yeah.

Dr. Martin: I did that this morning, so I know that. Thank you.

Mr. Jarman: Also, something with these transportation links: I realized that in the Traffic Safety Act regulations apparently it's not illegal to have your doors open on a minivan while you're driving. That was actually quite a useful way to put signs out.

8:30

Mr. Clark: Safety first.

Mr. Jarman: However, I did that at times of day, like 6 a.m. It was May back then, so light out at that hour, so I wouldn't have any traffic issues, and usually on the collector roads, which are usually not busy anyway.

Also, I remember you and the committee commented about the last time that this district was zoned, like in 2017. It was a bit too small. I definitely remember being about 16 years old at that time, and I remember that this area where Heritage Valley is: that was where my parents parked their camping trailer around where that Real Canadian Superstore is now, at 41st Avenue.

Anything else?

Mrs. Samson: I just wanted to say, Robert, I really enjoyed your comments on transportation and how that affects the average person living in that riding. You brought up points I hadn't considered, so thank you for that.

Mr. Jarman: Yeah. I've actually been to the Netherlands, where I've personally ridden around Amsterdam central station at 1 a.m., and it was perfectly safe, and I don't just mean from robberies, also the traffic. I've had quite a geeky interest in this sort of thing for the last 12 years by now, almost. Even once spoke in front of the city council at another hearing in a similar way, wearing my bike helmet at the time.

Mrs. Samson: Good on you. Thank you.

The Chair: Well, Robert, thank you very much. I did have some questions, but my colleagues asked them before I could, and you've answered them. Thank you very much.

Mr. Jarman: All right.

The Chair: Please remain for the rest of the presentations. Thanks for coming.

Mr. Jarman: All right. Thank you.

Ms Grewal: Excuse me. Before you start, this is just regarding Edmonton-South, so I don't interrupt you. That particular area, where it's empty right now: there's so much construction happening just between 127th and 141st, where there is a site for a hospital that the city has been planning, well, the province has been

planning, but it hasn't happened yet. There's an LRT coming down to that area as well. I expect it to get even more dense than it is right now.

The Chair: Like right here?

Ms Grewal: Yes. There's construction happening. Roads are being built. It's crazy, because I live right there.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Okay, sir. Please introduce yourself.

Mr. Raitz: Yes. My name is Stephen Raitz. I'm a resident of Edmonton. I live closer to the core. I'm also an urban planner, and I'm an articling student just about to become a lawyer. The reason I wanted to join today is back in 2019 to 2020 I was part of the city of Edmonton's ward boundary commission, so I thought it'd be helpful to share some of the lessons learned from that regarding Edmonton and also provide a couple of suggestions moving forward. The big points I'd want to make are just the lessons learned around balancing population growth and then the two broader suggestions around a clear line of communications between local to provincial jurisdictions and also finding ways to respect exurban or rural representation.

For my first point around lessons learned, and this is I think common across all ward boundary commissions: you're striving to find ways to balance areas of really high growth with more stable growth. This is something we really try to do because if you have a pocket that's only high growth where you created an electoral district, by the end of the 10 years or so you have MLAs representing thousands more people than other MLAs, so it's an access to governance and engagement and democracy sort of issue that you can nip in the bud by trying to balance that high growth with stable growth. That was something we really strove to do by kind of making almost like swimming pool lane districts or wards locally, balancing older parts of the city with newer parts of the city, so that's the lesson learned.

The two latter points I have are related to the change in the legislation that the government introduced, kind of taking away the restriction on you folks from creating districts that reach from inside the city of Edmonton to outside of the city of Edmonton. I'm not here to quibble with that legislative change. I think it's a recognition that the government respects the commission's discretion and your decision-making abilities. I would just suggest that, if you are going to investigate making electoral districts from inside of Edmonton to outside of Edmonton, that you really put thoughtful consideration into that first. The two sort of considerations that I'd posit for you folks today are those clear lines of communication and then also respecting rural or exurban representation.

For that first one I think that's a really common one that will come up, that if you have districts that stretch across fewer municipalities or stick within one municipality, it's easier for residents, voters, MLAs to understand what each other are talking about because they're all kind of located within one jurisdiction. There's that broader jurisdictional reason to strive for this kind of coherence. You know, prime examples provincially of jurisdiction are, like, schools and hospitals, so, especially in cities, the schools and the hospitals you're going to are the ones within your community, your city and not necessarily outside of them. It's just easier for MLAs, I think, when they have a voter or resident coming in the door, to know if that residence is within their electoral district. They know where that concern is coming from more clearly, and in a time of limited attention spans, constant news, and also, like, weak

understanding of jurisdiction overall, you know, that coherence that comes from provincial boundaries respecting local boundaries is something that shouldn't be frittered away too easily.

For my last point just around protecting rural or exurban representation, making districts that are going to stretch from those really explosively growing suburban communities on the edge of Edmonton or Calgary's boundaries and balancing those really explosive areas with more stable growth that's occurring in rural areas is going to erode rural voices over time. This goes back to my first point around how you want to balance those stable with high growth to ensure that over the 10 years you have less of that variance across electoral districts. The issue with doing that across the city boundary is that, you know, at the start of the process, you might have 25,000 residents within the city boundary and 25,000 residents within the rural areas, but by the end of the 10 years, just based on how demographic and migratory patterns are working right now, you're going to have a district that might have 50,000 within the city and 30,000 within the rural area, so it erodes the rural representation over time.

I can think even personally of my experience growing up in Leduc. Like, the kids who grew up in the county, like got bused in from farms and acreages to go to school with me, having grown up in the city, went to schools in Leduc. They didn't go to schools in Edmonton. So I think it's easier to balance that rural area with some of the smaller suburban communities around because that's where you have those communities of interest.

And to bring the law into this just at the last minute, that's really what the big takeaway from the Supreme Court case regarding this within Canada is, that referenced Saskatchewan electoral boundaries decisions from the early '90s. It's not trying to strive for perfectly equal ridings with equal numbers of people. It's to start with the focus on communities of interest, those local boundaries, focus on that geography, and then try to strive for population balance over time, trying to balance high and stable growth.

I think there are good examples that you folks can look to federally. Edmonton Gateway and Edmonton Riverbend are, I think, really good examples of balancing that more stable part of the city with the higher growth of the city but not extended beyond the city. Locally, and this is kind of shouting out our commission's work, Ipiihkoohkanipiaohsi or Karhiio are more examples, or Nakota Isga on the west end of the city. I'm missing south end examples, but the west end Nakota Isga is another good example of stretch from the core of the city out and you'll have, I think, better balance over time.

Just two final notes to plug. I really encourage the commission to be really transparent with its data and its reasoning. I think recent reports did that well, and the city's report did that, too, so that's just good from an accountability perspective and lessons learned for next time.

I'll just wrap up by concluding and thanking the staff for helping facilitate this event and also thanking you folks for your work. I kind of did it at a local level, and I know it's a lot of work for you folks, but I appreciate the public service that you're doing.

I'll open it up to any questions that you have.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation, and it's good to know that you know what we're going through on a smaller scale.

Mr. Raitz: Yeah. All the power to you.

8:40

The Chair: Quick question. How many wards in Edmonton?

Mr. Raitz: How many wards? I think it's 20 – like, within municipal?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Raitz: There are 12.

The Chair: Twelve. Okay.

Mr. Raitz: So it's not a good, like – there's 20 to 25 provincially, but even, you know, in that, it's an almost even, like, doubling of the wards, where you have twice as many provincial than you do municipal, so looking into splitting some of those in some ways might be good.

The Chair: Julian?

Dr. Martin: Yeah. I was going to say I'm envious of only having 12 plots this time.

Mr. Raitz: Yeah. You guys got 89.

Dr. Martin: Yeah, but similar issues.

I wanted to probe you further on the concept which you've deployed, really, about high-growth areas balancing out with stable areas. That's a lovely way to think about some of these areas. I almost said "district," but that's a different concept. In each of your three examples you said the same thing. You said: if you're talking about this topic, then balance stable with high growth. So that seems to work for you and your colleagues in most cases, let's say. Now, what to you constitutes stable growth? Less than 5 per cent over an interval of time? I mean, how do you determine that?

Mr. Raitz: I think it's all kind of relative in a way. Like, the more stable growth – I guess, like, compared with the edges of the city, where it's just completely new communities growing there, the growth might be upwards of 50 to 100 per cent within particular quarter sections or that kind of thing. Like, 1,000 per cent, even, if you're looking at that scale. But, yeah, I think maybe less focused – you probably have the data to see how you might see it evolve – on the metrics and more about, like, the circumstances.

It's those built-out areas of the city that, you know, might not be near transit corridors, like mass transit corridors like the LRT lines, where the city is trying to target additional growth. Those stable areas are going to be the existing built-out areas that aren't along some of those targeted growth corridors that follow transit lines and that kind of thing. The local planning around this, like at the city level, like the city's municipal development plan, will help kind of define to look at that right area of the city where there's less growth overall, because it's not the suburbs, and then you'll be able to kind of cleave off. Okay; if this along a transit line, then the growth is actually going to be probably a bit higher than average there because the city is trying to target growth there, whereas the areas outside of those transit corridors would probably be that stable growth that you're looking to balance into it.

Hopefully, that's clear. I can't give you a number, though. I'm sorry.

Dr. Martin: No, no. That's perfectly fine. Thank you.

The Chair: Greg? Any questions?

Mr. Clark: No. I think that's really helpful. Again, just to echo Dr. Martin, sort of the framing of the fast but slow is a helpful way.

Mr. Raitz: Yeah.

I know you're not asking me a question, but I realized I just should communicate one last point. Like, from an order of operations perspective I think it is really important to start with

communities and geography and then use that mathematical approach of balancing the high and low growth at the end. I think if you focus on the numbers first, then you miss some of those community considerations that you really want to drive this work. I'm glad I communicated the message of "balance high and stable," but start with communities of interest and local boundaries and then work here, and then try to balance it later on. Yeah. Sorry to slip that in at the end, but hopefully, that's clear.

The Chair: No, that's very helpful. Thank you very much.

Mr. Raitz: Awesome. Thank you.

The Chair: Leigh Makarewicz. Good evening. Please have a seat and introduce yourself.

Ms Makarewicz: My name is Leigh Makarewicz. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to be heard this evening. You're going very late this evening. Good for you. Just for a bit of perspective on where my mindset comes from, I'm a born and bred Edmontonian who grew up in Mill Woods. I got married in Mill Woods. We raised our daughter in Mill Woods. She's now a homeowner with her husband in Mill Woods. You sense a theme here.

Over the decades I've served in many volunteer capacities in the area, including the Greenview Parent Advisory Council, the North Millbourne Community League, the Mill Woods Cultural and Recreational Facility Association, and I'm currently the chair of the Jackie Parker park sensory playground community and a senator with the University of Alberta.

I served at the pleasure of the Member of Parliament for Edmonton-Mill Woods from 2015 to 2019, and I'm deeply connected to many of the cultural organizations, not-for-profits, and charities that serve the area. It is my lifelong relationship with this community that brings me here today. I hope that the commission has an opportunity to hear from someone like me from every part of the province, but if not, the principles will translate to other areas, and I would respectfully ask the commission that they make sure to seek out these kinds of community nuances before drawing lines on a map.

In the last federal boundary redistribution a decision was made to cut the northwest portion of Mill Woods off into Edmonton Gateway and away from Edmonton Southeast. This small change has disenfranchised the neighbourhoods of North Millbourne, Leefield, and Lakewood from the remainder of the Mill Woods area. What difference does that make? Well, when it comes to governmental representation, it makes a big difference. The common community interests that make areas unique in Edmonton are based on a number of factors such as individual neighbourhood and community leagues as well as groupings into community league districts and associations such as the South East Edmonton Seniors Association and the Mill Woods Presidents' Council. These groups work to develop relationships with the elected representatives in their area and often struggle to be heard if there is a perceived overlap or gap.

An ill-conceived boundary, as was established in the last federal redistribution, impacts the clarity needed for residents to understand where and how they should access their government. I can tell you from experience that the first question constituency offices ask people reaching out to them is "What is your address?" and most who have reached out to the wrong office are adamant that they should be in the riding because that is where they believe they belong. Most often that sense of belonging comes from a feeling of distinct association with the area that they perceive as

being a part of their neighbourhood based on common needs and services.

South Edmonton is growing by leaps and bounds not only through sprawl development but a dedicated push by the municipality for infill development. Mill Woods was built on a vision of mixed-usage housing being thoroughly integrated within every neighbourhood. We have large amounts of green space that have been identified to fill the need to increase density where services already exist, and that combination is propelling growth. In fact, the growth of south Edmonton has been a major factor in both the municipal redistribution of wards for the 2021 election and the federal redistribution that was in effect for the last election.

The population projections must be top of mind for this commission as they make their recommendations for the two additional electoral districts. We also must be mindful of previous attempts to balance the numeric considerations of population with the geographic realities of the urban centres and rural expanses. In another federal redistribution in 2004 Edmonton-Beaumont was created, completely overlooking the significance of Mill Woods that held the bulk of the population that was to be represented. It was then renamed to include Mill Woods in the name as of 2006, but the diversity of the riding meant nobody in the area was properly represented because of the vast differences and competing interests of Mill Woods, Beaumont, and even a portion of Elk Island. They were solely aligned by overview geography but not language, need, or demographic. These federal examples are ones that brought me out today because this kind of incongruity has even worse outcomes for the citizens of this type of compromise if this type of compromise was ever made on a provincial level.

I hope that I've given you a better community-based understanding of the Mill Woods area today and the focus on relevant considerations I think are needed for requirements for effective representation as per the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. The work that you will do here will have a lasting impact on Albertans, and they rely on their representation to speak for them.

I thank you again for your time and your consideration. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have to the best of my ability.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mill Woods has got good representation here today.

Ms Makarewicz: It's kind of an ongoing frustration, we'll call it.

The Chair: Okay. Questions. Julian?

8:50

Dr. Martin: No, I don't, other than to reiterate the notion that the sense of belonging, as you nicely put it, is something, a theme we've heard all day, so I think this is particularly strong in Mill Woods as opposed to other places, and I commend you and others in the community for constructing and maintaining that.

Ms Makarewicz: There was a period of time where if Mill Woods had separated from Edmonton, it would have been the third-largest city in the province. Now, that was many years ago. I'm getting a little old. But still that itself, and the province – when a previous government wanted to shut down the Grey Nuns, we had tens of thousands of people coming out to support the need for that kind of growth in Mill Woods, that spirit.

Dr. Martin: I was talking to a gentleman briefly a few weeks back who said: hey, there are more of us Singhs here than in Brampton. Right? So this sense of...

Ms Makarewicz: I think I know every single one of them.

Dr. Martin: ... belonging extends to newer people coming into this area as well as the folks who have been here for 40 years.

Ms Makarewicz: Absolutely. We have ethnic groups that have been around for those 40 years and have just grown and built and have a need for those services and those examples to be a continual part. Like I say, that cut off of North Millbourne and Leefield actually affected our Muslim and our Somali population greatly.

The Chair: Greg?

Mr. Clark: Maybe if you wouldn't mind just reiterating your comments on some of the federal examples, not even specifically Mill Woods. I think you've mentioned Elk Island and some of those. I guess I'm interested in your perspective on: what does that community of interest mean in terms of different parts of...

Ms Makarewicz: I think it's just like...

Mr. Clark: Is it just geography, or is there more to it?

Ms Makarewicz: ... the gentleman was saying before, when you talk about sort of trying to find those percentages, if you do sort of a hub-and-spoke model that takes, you know, a large central, whether it's Edmonton or Calgary or Fort McMurray, and kind of go, "Oh, we'll just kind of jig-jog off of it, and that's how we'll get the numbers to work," it actually does a disservice to both urban and rural. I mean, at the time that it was Mill Woods and Beaumont, that aspect – Beaumont is a French language hub, and Mill Woods is not, and here David Kilgour and Mike Lake were trying to represent those areas in a way that they, you know, had competing interests – right? – and could not be as effective as if they spoke loudly and clearly for one or the other.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: I want to thank you for using and reflecting on the federal boundary changes and how that affects the people on the ground at the provincial level. I think it really drills back home how we have to be so sensitive on so many fronts and, again, to remind us that of all the overlays we look at, population will probably be the last. Like, it might be the first trigger that makes us look at Edmonton-Mill Woods, but it's the last overlay to make sure we got it right.

Ms Makarewicz: It really is.

I mean, serving with the Mill Woods Presidents' Council, and that basically is the council of all of the community leagues of Mill Woods, and that organization has been around, again, for approximately 40 years, working together to speak in unison and then all of a sudden, you know, some get cut off but they're still trying to speak in unison over here – even just the simple things, like you have a small organization that wants to invite their representation. Well, what happens? One representative is like, "Oh, I'm busy; you go instead," and they don't get that fulsome coverage and understanding from their representative when two or three are overlapped in the same area. It makes it easier for them; don't get me wrong.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah.

The Chair: Well, speaking of population, the numbers we're looking at – and we don't have the Mill Woods map up there, but 2017's boundary commission relied on a population of 50,265. This

time around we're relying on a population of 58,725, so it's in that target range, and you're asking, "Look, don't touch our boundaries; leave them where they are," realizing we have to move some borders around.

Ms Makarewicz: Yeah. There's just some jiggy-pokery that needs to be done, for sure. Those outlying areas – I mean, we now talk about Mill Woods and Meadows, right? Ellerslie usually falls, you know, to the south, and that's a bit different. But Mill Woods and Meadows and those newer areas – I consider them to be new, but I also consider anything south of 23rd Avenue to be new. Those newer areas are busting with new growth and development, but in those older areas the infill programs that have come to surplus school sites and these initiatives through the city and also a real promotion of private development.

For example, in North Millbourne we have two surplus school sites bringing an additional 250 homes into the area. Plus now there is a private development that's going to be bringing in a four- to six-storey apartment building, which is going to bring in another 250 to 300 units, never mind people but units, into, I mean, just a neighbourhood community within a one-intersection area, all kitty-corner to each other because we have huge amounts of green space, and then a commercial development. You know, times change. So it's not just the growth out; it's that growth up as well.

The Chair: Contrast is the gateway to clarity, and what you've done is you've shown us: don't make the mistake the city made.

Ms Makarewicz: Please. I'm begging.

The Chair: Thank you.

Lloyd Osler.

Mr. Osler: Good evening. Let me just say thank you for having the opportunity to present to you this evening. For us seniors it's almost past our bedtime, so you know how serious we are about this.

Just listening to the former presenter, we did not co-ordinate our thoughts at all, but there are some similarities.

I'd like to share with you the perspective as a long-time Mill Woods resident. My wife and I moved here in 1981, raised our family in this vibrant community. After selling our home to our children and spending 12 years in a condo elsewhere, we returned to the Knottwood area in 2019, drawn back by the sense of community we'd known and loved.

Today we are part of three generations living here. We have built the first garage suite in the community as part of the infill kinds of things that are happening out there, and we both serve as senior representatives on a community board. I personally have been involved in the community all the years we were there and in many, many nonprofit organizations for political and nonpolitical. So I've really been involved in the community for a long time.

Our story illustrates the deep roots that bind communities together. Let me share a concrete example of how those bonds create positive change. Recently the Knottwood Community League, made up of Ekota, Menisa, and Satoo neighbourhoods, worked diligently to build the Knottwood Community Centre. It wasn't just another building project; it represented the power of united community. Through local board efforts and support from all three levels of government, who genuinely understood our needs, we created a facility that now is booked through the summer of '26 for weddings and events. It has become a model for community leagues across Edmonton.

The significance of that is the whole issue of various diverse groups. Mill Woods is made up of so many different groups. Our home was known as the United Nations when our kids were

growing up because we never knew who, or from what kind of ethnic background, was going to show up at the door, but they were all welcome, and I think that's a community spirit that really stands strong in this particular community.

This success story brings me to the core concerns about the proposed electoral boundary changes. First, population growth demands attention, and we've heard that. New seats should reflect current and projected growth, particularly in the south Edmonton area, Mill Woods, and in the adjacent areas in north of Calgary as well. Recent data shows that Mill Woods maintained consistent representation at about a 7 per cent level in 2017 – I think you were referring to that just a few minutes ago – and remains at 6.9 today, which is within the average growth, I think, throughout the province. So there's not big population blow-up here or elsewhere.

9:00

Second, municipality integrity matters. Cities and towns should remain whole within ridings. Each municipality faces unique challenges requiring dedicated representation. Breaking them apart would lose their voice and effectiveness. The previous speaker mentioned that as well. The issue is that you need, even from the point of view of those that are representing as an MLA – how do you represent a constituency that is so different on this end of it than over here? That doesn't make a lot of sense. There is the issue of: what the kind of general community and needs of the group are and trying to keep those within the context of boundaries. I know you're going to have to move something – we all know that; that's the reality of what we're faced with – but just to keep that in mind.

Third and most critically, we must preserve what are called like communities, and that's what I was referring to, areas sharing culture, economic, and geographic bonds. The recent removal of restrictions on maintaining municipality boundaries raises serious concerns. Expanding urban ridings to include rural areas risks diluting the social, cultural, and historical identity that makes communities like Mill Woods unique and effective, and I think that applies across the province. Again, it's a challenge. You are already having debates.

Considering our community centre project is successful, it relied on representatives who understood our local context, our shared services, our cultural makeup, and our history. Kudos to all levels of government: municipal, provincial, and federal governments. This understanding doesn't happen by chance. It comes from maintaining coherence, community boundaries that represent natural connection. The previous speaker spoke to that as well, but I can't underscore that enough, how important that is. Our community strength lies in a shared identity, its diverse population, and its collective spirit. These aren't just words; they're the foundation of real achievements like our community centre. Arbitrary boundaries changes that ignore these connections risk more than just lines on a map; they risk the very essence of effective community representation.

Finally, the issue of transparency. Never before in our history as a country and as a province has the need of transparency been greater. We live in a time when populist politicians, when not getting the outcome desired, create conspiracies and spread misinformation to undermine our very democratic processes. The committee and its work must be transparent and, to the best of its ability, consider fair and equitable boundary outcomes that leave us with a sense of what is right and fair rather than expedient or, worse yet, gerrymandered. I know that comes up in these kinds of things all the time. I do not envy your task. I do believe that you're going to do the best you possibly can. I just want to make it, you know, clear as a long-term resident of this particular community and

others' ones where we have these kinds of mixes. There are overriding issues that we need to consider, possibly first and foremost.

Thanks very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Osler.
Any questions?

Mrs. Samson: Well, you know, we've got that problem with the population over the baseline of 55,000. What we heard tonight over the span of many speakers is how tight Mill Woods is and geographically, like with the curved roads and the tight community leagues. I really see a challenge here to get that electoral division within a number after we have the other considerations.

Mr. Osler: As I said, I don't envy your challenges, for sure.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Any other questions? Julian?

Dr. Martin: No, sir.

The Chair: Thanks very much. You have placed an exclamation mark on the Mill Woods submissions today, so thank you.

Mr. Osler: Thank you.

The Chair: I believe that leaves us with one more, Rakhi Pancholi. Good evening.

Ms Pancholi: Good evening. Way to put a politician between you and the end of your night. I do know that . . .

The Chair: That's why you're familiar. Sorry.

Ms Pancholi: Yeah. That's all right.

I know it's been a long day for all of you, so I thank you so much for your time and your commitment and your dedication to listening to all the presenters. While I only managed to capture listening to a few of the presenters before me, I'm certain you've had some very passionate, articulate, dedicated people speaking today. Thank you for your work.

It's a little warm in here, too. You guys are staying awake all night. Good for you. Okay. I'm not even a senior, and it's close to my bedtime.

Good evening everyone. My name is Rakhi Pancholi. I'm proud to serve as the MLA for the constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud. I've had the honour of representing the over 45,000 people of Edmonton-Whitemud for six years now. Today I want to present to you three principles that I believe the commission needs to consider as you undertake your important work.

As you know, the provincial government recently passed legislation establishing that two new provincial ridings will be created in Alberta, increasing the number of seats from 87 to 89. This increase doesn't accurately reflect the significant increase in population that Alberta has experienced in the last two years alone, leave alone since the last time the number of ridings has changed. However, given that two new ridings will be created, the first principle that I would like the commission to consider is that these two new constituencies should be added where current and future population growth demands it. That is in south Edmonton and north Calgary.

As the MLA for a riding in south Edmonton I can tell you that there has been a significant population increase in this area of the city in the last five years. I'm sure you've heard a lot about that, and

you have the numbers to prove that as well. Now, if you look at a map of my constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud, you will see that the riding has some natural and man-made boundaries that make it quite discreet. The north and west side of the riding are marked by the North Saskatchewan River valley, the beautiful river valley; the east side is marked by Whitemud Creek; and the south is marked out primarily by Anthony Henday Drive.

Edmonton-Whitemud itself has not actually increased in population, because, quite frankly, there isn't much land for developers to build new housing on in the riding. If you look at within the boundaries, we don't actually have a lot of industrial or commercial land. It's almost all zoned residential, and it's quite dense in it's residential, so 45,000 constituents in a pretty small geographic riding. However, the people of Edmonton-Whitemud have absolutely felt the effects of significant population increase in the areas of south Edmonton all around us.

Three of the 10 Edmonton public schools that have to go to a lottery for enrolment in the 2025-26 school year are in Edmonton-Whitemud. Going to a lottery means that the schools are so over capacity that there isn't enough space for all the students who live in that school's attendance area. It means that families, some of whom could see the school from their front doors, had to wait to see if their child's name was randomly drawn to attend the neighbourhood school. I heard from many of them when their child's name wasn't selected and they now have to bus over an hour to another school. Along with Edmonton-Whitemud, these schools serve students living in neighbouring ridings, like Edmonton-South West or Edmonton-South, where the number of schools has not kept pace with the unbelievable population growth.

Similarly, my constituents have to travel further and wait longer for access to hospital and emergency services as the city grows more and more dense to the south, and there's only one hospital, the Grey Nuns, to serve it. Transportation congestion and challenges, whether by car, public transit, or biking, are also faced by my constituents as more and more Edmontonians in the south of the city are travelling north for work or for school every single day. There is no doubt in my mind that the extraordinary population growth in south Edmonton should be a key consideration when determining where new ridings should be established.

Now, the second principle I'd like the commission to consider when redrawing electoral boundaries is that provincial boundaries should align with municipal boundaries. This is very important for a number of reasons, but I'll focus on just one today. Actually, I'd like to give credit right now to the presenters before me who often spoke very articulately on a number of various reasons about why you want to keep electoral boundaries consistent with the community and understanding of their neighbourhoods.

The communities inside of Edmonton have different needs than smaller communities outside of Edmonton. You heard a little bit of that discussed today. In my role as an MLA I've had the chance to travel to many different parts of the province. I like to say I've knocked doors on more than half of the constituencies in this province. I've been to communities like Leduc, Beaumont, and Wetaskiwin. These communities are beautiful and thriving, but smaller communities have their own needs, challenges, and culture.

As an MLA, I can tell you that the possibility of representing part of the city of Edmonton and also representing a small town or smaller city would be a significant challenge, one which could place my constituents at odds with each other. In particular, infrastructure needs can be very different, and the different municipalities can often be asking the province for two different outcomes on the same issues such as land annexation, infrastructure projects, transportation priorities, et cetera.

It makes more sense to link towns of similar sizes together. I think Beaumont, Leduc, and Devon would find they have more synergies with each other than any of them would have with parts of Edmonton. I think that's also true for Morinville and Gibbons on the north end of the city and Spruce Grove and Stony Plain to the west.

9:10

It's not surprising that when you look at how municipalities across our province have chosen to organize themselves for advocacy purposes, they often choose to do so based on the size of the municipalities that they represent. For example, mid-size cities have often found that they have more in common with each other, regardless of where they're located across the province, than with larger cities like Edmonton and Calgary. Smaller municipalities like Leduc, Beaumont, Spruce Grove, Morinville all deserve to have their own representation in the Legislature, to not have their voices diluted by being grouped together with parts of Edmonton. Communities in Edmonton also deserve to have representation that reflects their day-to-day priorities as part of a major urban municipality.

The third principle that I would like the commission to consider is that communities need to be kept together. What I mean by that is that if there is a neighbourhood that has the same community league or cultural community, that visits the same local temple or gurdwara or church, these communities should be kept intact and not split up across ridings. We just heard some great presentations from many individuals from Mill Woods who spoke specifically about this. I'm asking you as commissioners, when you are creating the new boundary map – I urge you to not just look at hard boundaries like roads and rivers but to also look at the way that people live their lives. What services do they use? Where do they travel to for work? Where do they recreate? Where do they do their community work or volunteering? Or where do they find the support that they need? What community organizations or school boards serve that community?

The work in front of you is no small task. The integrity of our democracy relies on how this map is drawn. Albertans are counting on you, and I thank you for your work and your service on behalf of them. I'd also like to thank all the staff – and I know it's been a long day – as well who are helping out on the commission.

I'd be happy to take any questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.
Any questions?

Mrs. Samson: That's a lot of pressure. I'm done.

Ms Pancholi: No pressure. I'm between you and the end of the day.

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

Thank you for taking the time to come out because I know you're busy, too.

The Chair: Yeah.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Do we have an Edmonton-Whitemud map we can put up? I've got it in front of me. Sorry.

Ms Pancholi: Of course.

Mr. Clark: Thank you for that submission. We do appreciate you making time to join us. One of the previous presenters – and as you note, tremendous growth south of Edmonton-Whitemud.

Whitemud itself is quite a stable community. One of the things we've heard just recently is perhaps considering blending some of those or putting together high-growth and more stable-growth areas. You're right. We note that Edmonton-Whitemud is slightly below the averages that Justice Miller said we're targeting, the 54,900. Edmonton-Whitemud is about 50,000. It's trending to not grow quite as quickly as the other areas. In that context, I guess, I just wanted to sound you out on if you had an opinion on sort of additions and subtractions, if you will. One of the ideas is – I should have got this right here. My apologies.

Ms Pancholi: I feel like I want to anticipate what you're going to say, but I'll let you say it first because I have a feeling.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. I just want to make sure I've got this right before I decide. Essentially, let's just go north of Ellerslie Road. Is that what you were thinking I was going to say? There's sort of a big bump up that goes along the ravine, that kind of bites into Edmonton-Whitemud. Is that sort of logically connected or not? Or what are your thoughts?

Ms Pancholi: There certainly was in the last electoral boundary review a portion of Edmonton-Whitemud that was carved out to become part of Edmonton-South. Yeah. The neighbourhoods would be known as Magrath and Mactaggart. Certainly, it feels logical. I would say that those would be areas that would – perhaps if we're looking to reach a number of about 55,000 per riding. I don't know what the exact population number for those two additional areas would be, but they seem to be a more natural fit while also keeping communities together.

As I mentioned, there are a lot of these natural boundaries around Edmonton-Whitemud, so to add further to the west or to the east or to the north, frankly, means that you'd be skipping over into very different geographic parts of the city just simply by where the river valley and the Whitemud Creek go. While I don't want to presuppose where the commission will go in terms of growth, I certainly have anticipated the possibility that those areas in those neighbourhoods used to be part of Edmonton-Whitemud, and . . .

The Chair: You'd be happy to take them back.

Ms Pancholi: Well, they're lovely people. I'd take them all even if they weren't, but they are lovely people.

The Chair: Because you've been, you know, around the province and you're familiar with other consistencies, a constant thing that I'm hearing as a southern representative on the commission is absolutely no to a blended or hybrid riding in the Edmonton region – okay? – but would you acknowledge that in some parts of the province people actually like them or don't mind them, and we have to use them, have to utilize that option?

Ms Pancholi: Oh, well, I'm not going to dispute that it might be challenging as a commission with only two new ridings. I think the challenge is that south Edmonton has grown to such an extent that, frankly, it doesn't require blending with other communities outside of the municipality of Edmonton in order to have appropriate representation. To me, I think that given the population growth particularly in southern Edmonton and when I look at north Calgary, you could create or adapt the boundaries of those ridings to make it more fairly represent population and demographics and communities without having to add in the additional challenge of them bringing in other municipalities.

Certainly, we know there are many constituencies across the province that do have these splits between sort of an urban – I think

of Medicine Hat, the two ridings there. Now, I've spent a fair bit of time in Medicine Hat, and I can tell you I think there is that tension that exists, and it becomes a bit of a battle between the constituents who live in the city proper versus those who are in the outside communities, outside the city communities, who do have very different needs. I'm sure you'll be hearing from lots of them if you haven't already about: some will like it and some won't.

The Chair: Next Friday, in the morning.

Ms Pancholi: I'm sure.

You know, I don't necessarily think it's a bad thing for all of us as representatives to be considering the interests of communities that don't look exactly like ours, but the challenge is always as elected officials that we're there to represent our constituents and their interests. While we don't expect unanimity from them in terms of how they view things, you don't certainly want them to be at odds with each other simply because of where they live. They're going to have different views no matter what – right? – within your constituencies. I'm not saying everybody will agree on everything, but if it's simply because of where they're located and it's, for example, competing for transportation priorities or infrastructure priorities, I certainly don't think it serves good representation to have your elected official having to manage those diverse outcomes.

I do want to mention – several of the other presenters added it, and

I do think it's worth noting. You know, Edmonton and certainly Calgary as well – Calgary is the third-most diverse city in the country; Edmonton is the fourth-most diverse city in the country and in terms of visible minority representation. That makes a difference. I look at my constituency, and 46 per cent of my constituents identify as a visible minority. It's a very different makeup than some of the smaller communities. Not good, not bad; just is – right? – just different. And those interests might serve differently as well.

I think we want to have the most effective representation, especially as we are increasing, potentially, the number of constituents that we're all representing. Let's not build in more opportunities for divergent needs based on location rather than on the needs of the citizens.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much for closing out our day today. Thank you.

Ms Pancholi: Wonderful. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Appreciate it.

Thank you, everyone, for your presentations. We're going to adjourn till tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

[The hearing adjourned at 9:19 p.m.]

