



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Edmonton

Tuesday, June 3, 2025
9:20 a.m.

Transcript No. 6

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Electoral Boundaries Commission

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Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Edmonton

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9:20 a.m.

Tuesday, June 3, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Okay. Good morning, everyone, and welcome to our second day of the Electoral Boundaries Commission hearings in Edmonton.

I usually have a lengthy introduction. I think I'm going to shorten it a little bit because the chairs don't need to hear me and I think the people that are going to be presenting know full well what the process is like, but I do want to introduce our commission. First of all, just to remind you, we are an independent body, independent commission established by the Legislature of Alberta. I'm Justice Dallas Miller. I'm privileged to be the chairman of the commission. I serve in a capacity as a trial judge normally, in my normal day job.

The other commissioners. To my immediate left is Susan Samson, a long-time resident of Sylvan Lake, an experienced municipal politician who has served two terms as mayor. She has been recognized for her extensive volunteer experience by way of receiving a citizen of the year award for Sylvan Lake and is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II diamond jubilee medal.

Next to Susan is Mr. John Evans, a lawyer with a province-wide practice of litigation with a firm with the name of Stringam. He works predominantly out of their Lethbridge office, and he conducts trials across the province. His legal ability has been recognized by receiving the King's Counsel award, or KC designation, and he volunteers on the Alberta Judicial Nominating Committee as well.

Right next to me to my right is Dr. Julian Martin, a retired history professor from the University of Alberta. Julian volunteers on many committees in the Sherwood Park area, where he lives, and has served on provincial tribunals, the Surface Rights Board and the Land Compensation Board.

At the end of the table: Mr. Greg Clark, an entrepreneur and consultant in the area of information and knowledge management. Greg also is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II platinum jubilee medal for his volunteer service in the community. Greg has served one term as an MLA representing Calgary-Elbow, so his experience on the commission is very valued. He consults widely with organizations in the area of proper governance.

We are your Electoral Boundaries Commission. For a more fulsome description of everyone's bios you can certainly go to our website and read more about us.

There are a couple of things that have been put on our agenda as an Electoral Boundaries Commission. First of all, the Legislature has passed a law expanding the size of the Legislative Assembly from 87 seats to 89, so that's a task we have to ensure is taken care of, adding two seats. Whether that's enough, we don't know, but we will make some recommendations in that regard.

We have a timeline which we have to follow. First of all, the commission was announced by the Speaker in late March, and the clock starts ticking at that point. That means that we have a certain limited number of months to do what has now been come to be known as an interim report. An interim report must be filed with the Speaker of the Legislature by late October. Before we get there, we met as a commission on a couple of occasions in April, and then we planned out the public hearing schedule, which started last week and will end on June 23. We take all that input, and the guidance of the legislation along with the input leads us to develop the interim report, which we will file with the Speaker in October. It will be public. It'll be printed in the *Alberta Gazette*.

Then that brings us to a second round, and then the public and people, like that are presenting today, will have something substantive to chew on and respond to the commission and give us

feedback in that regard. Then, 12 months after our appointment, we are obligated to file a final report, and then members of the Legislature will deal with that and determine what use that report will be, if it'll be adopted in the 89 ridings as we recommend, or the Legislature is free to make changes.

Of course, each electoral district has one member of the Legislative Assembly. I will often use "electoral district," but "riding" or "constituency" is more vernacular terminology.

The second big component in the task before us, after increasing the seat count from 87 to 89, is dealing with the significant population growth that this province has experienced. If we go back to the 2017 Electoral Boundaries Commission, that commission based its report on a population of just over 4 million people, just slightly over. I'll give you the exact figure in the next slide. Our situation is such that we're relying on the data from the 2021 Canadian census, which is regularly updated. We don't want to use just 2021 numbers, so we're using numbers that have been validated and verified up until July of 2024. The precise number that the EBC from 2017 used was the 4,062,609 population. When that is divided by 87 seats, the mean average is 46,697. The target population range for effective representation is that range that you see in the slide, 35,023 to 58,371.

Now we go to the task before this commission. The population figure that we are using, and I want to make this clear, that 4,888,723 figure, is the figure that's frozen as of July 2024. As I said, the act requires us to look at the most recent census, which is 2021, and the act also gives us flexibility to rely on other Alberta-based data, so we have been advised by the Office of Information and Statistics of the Alberta Treasury Board that a safe number that can be verified as of last July is that figure there. When we do the math, the average is 54,929, and the range, as you can see, varies from 41,000 to almost 69,000. Now, of course, the population growth is not spread evenly across the province, and that's part of our task right now as we go through the public hearing. We're hearing from communities across the province in terms of growth in their areas.

The task of our commission is not to come up with a plan based on a one person, one vote formula. That is an American-based formula. Canada doesn't operate on that. Alberta and other provinces have operated on the principle of effective representation, and effective representation, to a large extent, is determined by the legislative criteria and by the case law going back several years.

The factors that we're going to be considering are the relative population density and sparsity, common community interests and organizations. Yesterday we heard a lot about community organizations, community leagues in Edmonton. It was an eye-opener for us as a commission, that's for sure. We received lots of helpful information from presenters yesterday in that category. To some extent in the cities we're concerned about geographical features, and we could take that into account, but more importantly, that's a factor that operates in the more rural context outside of Edmonton and Calgary. Communication lines and transportation routes are also a factor in the legislation that we can consider. Our task is to make sure that we have understandable and clear boundaries, and that's where you as presenters, I'm sure, will provide us with assistance and input. Finally, there's a catch-all phrase in the legislation that allows us to take into consideration other appropriate factors in coming up with our recommendation.

9:30

We now move to the point in time where we want to hear from you as presenters. That gives you a bit of a thumbnail sketch as to how we got here, how we advertised and publicized the meetings.

Now, today and in the weeks ahead, we want to hear from Albertans.

My understanding is that the first scheduled presenter isn't here, but David Shepherd is here. David, would you come forward? As you probably saw in the material that you were provided with, there is a bit of a time limit on presentations, seven minutes, but I've been known to be flexible in that area and let people go on a little further, especially when we're not banked up with a presenter. Mr. Shepherd, tell us a little bit about yourself and where you are speaking from, what electoral district.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you very much. Yes, I am David Shepherd, and I have the honour of having served for the last 10 years as the MLA for Edmonton-City Centre. I've been a resident of the constituency since about 2008. No problem with the clock; given my position I'm used to making timed remarks on the floor of the Legislature. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with all of you today and thank you for giving your time for this service on behalf of Albertans.

I'd like to just start out by sharing a little bit about what makes Edmonton-City Centre unique. As you're probably aware, the population of Edmonton-City Centre as of the 2021 census was about 48,685, so above that provincial average that you had noted there. That's in part because our neighbourhoods have a very high level of density, about 10,570 inhabitants per square kilometre. That makes Wihkwêntôwin, my own home neighbourhood, one of the densest neighbourhoods in Edmonton, and the western half of the community is the densest in Alberta.

At the same time we have a very low level of single-family housing, about 98 per cent of our residents living in condos, apartments, towers, or walk-ups. That's a general trend across Edmonton-City Centre. In four of the seven communities in it more than 90 per cent of the residences are condos and apartments. We only have two communities that have more than 50 per cent living in single-family homes. You may hear from rural representatives about the challenges they face with how spread out their communities are; we have a unique challenge for representatives in Edmonton-City Centre in that is very difficult for any prospective candidate where we want you as a representative to contact a lot of the people who live in the constituency simply because you cannot knock on their doors outside of an election period. So it creates a bit of a unique situation.

With the exception of one community we're above the city average for couples with no children, ranging from about 48 per cent to 76 per cent of residents. Since 2017 we've seen significant new residential development. We've got hundreds of new units that have gone up in residential towers in downtown and Wihkwêntôwin, strong growth in multiplex infilling in Queen Mary Park, Spruce Avenue, and Westwood, so we've added a lot of new residents to our constituency. Across our communities we have a strong representation from racialized communities, primarily of African and Asian descent. We have a strong population of seniors, with Wihkwêntôwin being above the city average. We've added a number of seniors' residences. We have a wide representation of incomes ranging from individuals who rely on very limited social support programs to high-end professions.

There's certainly diversity in our communities, but there's also a strong consistency in terms of their needs and their interests. I'd say that our communities share a common interest in safety and vibrancy in our communities; maintaining local access to services and amenities; a strong, vibrant local economy; and ensuring a strong system of public services to ensure we're supporting everyone that's part of our communities. A large number of our residents have also made a deliberate choice to live centrally to

facilitate easier access to services, transit, things like the river valley or our arts district, also to reduce the need to commute. That's why I'm here. I loathe traffic. Affordability and housing is also a big issue for a lot of folks that choose to live in some of the communities that are here.

Given all of that and considering the growth in population and the density, it would be my recommendation that the current boundaries of Edmonton-City Centre be kept intact. I think it's essential when we're looking at adjusting our boundaries that we maintain a map that is fair for all communities. I think that with the growth in our constituency's population over the last eight years, the increasing pace of residential growth in our communities, because it is continuing to grow at a steady rate, already some of the densest in the city, I'd suggest it might not be a good balance to add additional neighbourhoods and residents and further dilute representation.

Similarly, I think the most effective and fair electoral map is one that groups communities of like interests and needs together. As I've noted, the communities within our current boundaries, while we, again, are home to a diversity of residents, hold a lot of interests and needs in common.

We have a hard boundary, I'd suggest, both physically and in terms of our demographics with the river to the south, the Yellowhead to the north, and our current western and eastern boundaries follow the contours of the existing community. I think it's also important that racialized communities who hold common interests in terms of their needs and interests in representation are supported to be able to exercise their vote effectively. The communities currently represented in our boundaries are inclusive of some not insignificant communities, as I noted, of African and Asian descent.

Again, it'd be my strong recommendation that we keep the boundaries of Edmonton-City Centre, in fact, and to facilitate that, I'd make a few suggestions, I guess, regarding your consideration of the boundaries of some of the other constituencies in and around Edmonton. Of course, as we adjust one, there's the ripple effect that affects others.

I do recognize, as you noted, there has been some significant growth in Edmonton's population over the last two years with the most significant growth, as I understand it, in the south of the city. I understand there's some conversation around potentially taking some of those most suburban communities, connecting them with other towns, cities, or communities on the periphery of our city.

Personally, I would argue against that. It's my concern that if we start fracturing our city boundaries, we're not only going to compromise the commonality of interest within those constituencies, creating more work for their representatives and potentially weakening their representation, but that doing so could create a ripple effect that would affect constituencies like Edmonton-City Centre by creating inward pressure in the adjustment of boundaries in the weighting of the population.

Much of the communities in my constituency have more common interests and needs than those outside our core and those in the suburbs. Those communities in turn, I think, have more common interests and needs together than those outside our city boundary. I'd particularly note that because of the current boundaries of my constituency, because they're inclusive of a lot of like communities, it's empowered me to build some very effective relationships with local municipal representatives that's allowed for some very strong advocacy on issues that, frankly, require close collaboration across orders of government, something that's a lot more difficult to achieve if we begin to combine Edmonton communities with those from other municipal jurisdictions.

I think those municipalities around Edmonton have their own needs. They have their challenges. They have their own cultures, their infrastructure needs. In Edmonton they can often be asking the province for two different outcomes on the same issues, things like land annexation, infrastructure projects, et cetera. I think it makes more sense to look at how we can link towns of similar sizes together like Beaumont, Leduc, and Devon, for example, or as we've seen with Spruce Avenue, Spruce apartments, Spruce Grove, and Stony Plain.

In summary, it's my suggestion that I think we could best reflect the significant population growth in Edmonton and serve the needs and interests of effective representation and democracy by keeping Edmonton-City Centre relatively intact to what it is now, and then looking at one of the two new constituencies, creating one here in Edmonton, perhaps, with the growth that's happening.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Shepherd. I'm sure there are going to be some questions from the commission, but I want to clarify something at the outset. I thought I heard you cite some statistics at the beginning. Can you just repeat what you said?

Mr. Shepherd: Certainly. Just in regard to the density?

The Chair: Yeah.

Mr. Shepherd: Certainly. Yeah. The current level of density, at least as of the last census, that we're looking at is about 10,570 inhabitants per square kilometre in the neighbourhood of Wilkhewntown. That's the densest community in Edmonton, and the western half is densest in Alberta.

The Chair: Okay. I thought you'd talked about an increase. What I want to make clear is that according to the data we have, the 2017 commission had a population for this electoral district of 47,715.

Mr. Shepherd: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. Then moving forward, the 2024 figures that I talked about put you at 60,544.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. Thank you. Those are numbers beyond what I had. So there's significant growth.

The Chair: Yeah. That puts you clearly in the target zone but on the higher end, so I just wanted to make sure you were understanding where we were coming from.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you. I appreciate you sharing that.

The Chair: Okay.

Questions? Greg, any questions?

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Exactly in building on that, you've mentioned the tall towers, and obviously as Justice Miller indicated, we've got you at about, I want to say, 10 per cent over, roughly, of our target of 54,300, give or take. One, what do you anticipate the growth to be? As I look at the graph, it looks like it's grown, you know, reasonably significantly since the last commission. Well, I think, actually, it's interesting. I'm looking at the growth of Edmonton-City Centre, and it, in essence, has been approximately 10 per cent above all the way along. Do you feel like it's about to – are people moving in, are people moving out, or are there a lot of big, empty spaces that are going to become tall towers with hundreds of people in them? How would you characterize the growth?

9:40

Mr. Shepherd: I would characterize that we are expecting to see significant continuing growth. There are a number of new towers that are under construction. There is conversation around further conversion of office towers to residential. There is a significant push, I think, from all stakeholders in the community for more residents in our downtown. That's how we create safety. That's how we're going to create more local economic vibrancy. I know the city of Edmonton as part of their CRL is, I think, looking at how they can incentivize further residential.

I would add to that, you know, we are looking at redevelopment plans in the Rosedale area that may lead to further residents there, and within the neighbourhoods where there is more single-family housing, as I'd noted, we're seeing quite a bit. Especially with the new, more open zoning bylaws in Edmonton a lot of single-family homes are being replaced with, you know, duplexes, fourplexes, eightplexes. So I would say yes, we're on track for, I think, significant continued growth.

Mr. Clark: Okay, so at worst you're likely to see a continuation of roughly the past trend.

Mr. Shepherd: At least.

Mr. Clark: At least. So you're not feeling like it's hollowing out.

Mr. Shepherd: No.

Mr. Clark: It's more likely that you actually would see, if some of the policies you talked about on the municipal level sort of land, a little bit more growth. So should we create a little headroom for that growth within Edmonton-City Centre, or do you feel like it's likely the next seven to 10 years is going to be roughly tracking the past seven?

Mr. Shepherd: I find the constituency as it stands as a local representative is manageable. Certainly, with continued growth, I guess I would ask you to weight that against what you're seeing in other parts. You know, I think if we keep relatively consistent ratios to what we have now, I think that's reasonable. If you wanted to consider, I guess, creating more headroom and sort of shrinking the boundaries, I mean, in the 2017 commission they did add two neighbourhoods, Westwood and Spruce Avenue, sort of on the north end of the constituency. There is the opportunity, I suppose, to connect one of those two neighbourhoods, perhaps Westwood at the northernmost. If you were looking to create that headroom, that might be the opportunity to connect that then perhaps with Edmonton-Glenora or one of the other adjoining, but it's tricky because, again, like I said, we've got the Yellowhead right there. That's a hard boundary on the north.

Mr. Clark: Got it. Thank you.

The Chair: Good. Okay.
Julian.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Shepherd. I'm very interested in your remarks about the housing stock. As you may or may not recall, I am on the board of governors of MacEwan University, so obviously housing for students is a perennial issue. I wanted to ask if you felt that in your riding we are replacing older apartment stock with newer, upgraded stock. There are very little unoccupied building pods except right next to the river, so if you anticipate more growth, as I think you rightly should, how's it going

to happen? The conversion of offices into apartments has been a perennial conversation for a generation. It just doesn't happen.

Mr. Shepherd: It's been slow moving, yeah. What I would suggest is that we still have quite a few surface-level parking lots downtown, and those are, I think, primary locations where we expect to see further expansion of housing. Certainly, we know that just to the east of Rogers Place and moving north from there, from Ice District, there are plans there, and that is within the CRL as well, to provide some incentives for a significant injection of housing on that site. There is still a reasonable amount of vacant land within the downtown core, but you are correct, I think. We point to when, in some of the other areas where there's less of that, we are seeing, you know, three, four-storey walk-ups being taken down and replaced with larger towers, so there's that growth there.

Dr. Martin: All right. Thank you.

The Chair: Susan, a question?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. My question was answered earlier, so thank you.

What I am pleased to hear and understand from you is that there is expected continued growth in your riding, and that's important because we often see downtown communities hollowed out, and that is not the case here. But I do believe, Mr. Shepherd, because the growth has continued and has proven to be so, we will possibly look at those two north communities of Westwood and Spruce View and certainly contemplate taking them off to get the numbers down because, honestly, the next time a commission meets will be eight years from now and things will have changed significantly.

Mr. Shepherd: That's true.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you very much for your time today. I enjoyed that.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Susan.

The Chair: John, any questions?

Mr. Evans: No. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Shepherd, the takeaway from what you're saying – first of all, would you mind providing a copy of your submission?

Mr. Shepherd: Certainly. No problem. Yeah.

The Chair: I'm mostly interested in the single-family dwelling.

Mr. Shepherd: Yeah. Absolutely. Some of those statistics.

The Chair: Yeah.

Is it fair to say that the takeaway you want us to have is keep the boundaries?

Mr. Shepherd: Mm-hmm.

The Chair: You recognize that other boundaries in the city have to be changed because of strong population growth, but if we have to take away a little bit, it's Westwood and Spruce View.

Mr. Shepherd: Yes. Spruce Avenue.

The Chair: Were those communities given to Edmonton-City Centre in 2017?

Mr. Shepherd: That's correct. Yeah, they were taken from what was Edmonton-Calder.

The Chair: Okay. Good. Well, thank you very much for a very clear and concise presentation.

Mr. Shepherd: Thanks very much. I appreciate it.

The Chair: We appreciate that people are flexible. I know you may have been given a time.

Oh, well, we're right on time for Hans Smits. Mr. Smits, you're scheduled for 9:50, and we've worked out the schedule perfectly to fit you in.

Dr. Smits: Well, good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to present this morning. I'm a resident of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. It's right next to Mr. Shepherd's riding of Edmonton-City Centre. You know, without repeating a lot of things that Mr. Shepherd said, I would say I agree particularly with the latter part of his presentation on retention of borders. My presentation today is really to focus on Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, a very unique riding in Edmonton and, indeed, in the province. I've been living in the riding since about 1977 and I've always voted in every provincial election since then, so I identify really strongly not just as a citizen of the province and the city of Edmonton but this particular neighbourhood, which is part of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

I'm advocating today to retain and honour the boundaries of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, that presently constitute it, for several reasons. First of all, geographically Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is unique and interesting in that it borders the North Saskatchewan River on the south and encompasses a good part of what we now consider the inner city of Edmonton, butting Beverly to the east and 97 Street to the west, and includes some newer neighbourhoods to the north.

Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has a long history as a part of Edmonton. For example, I live in Virginia Park, and the house in which I reside was partly built in 1930. Much of the housing in other parts of the riding date back to the early 1900s. There are many public schools that date back in time such as Norwood, Virginia Park, Highlands, Crestwood, St. Clare, to name only a few. That means that several generations have grown up in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Many who descended from graduates of the school still call Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood home or at least identify with the neighbourhood in which they grew up.

I grew up just north of the railway yards in Calder, which offered employment to many people who lived in that area. Socially and culturally the riding is very diverse in terms of occupations, social and economic status, ethnicity, and other forms of identification.

9:50

You might say that Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, as a unique part of Edmonton, has welcomed immigrants from around the world: in the early 20th century from European countries such as Italy and Portugal, and they still have a presence in the riding, as you might know; in more recent history from Asia and Africa; and we have a large population in the riding of people from Indigenous origins as well.

Economically, while much of our riding falls on the lower end of the socioeconomic scale and there is poverty and homelessness and other issues that beset inner city neighbourhoods, there's also much to celebrate and hope for. Neighbourhoods in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood such as Alberta Avenue, McCauley are experiencing a renaissance, with new housing and businesses and a rising sense of hope and pride. There are annual festivals which

draw people from across the city. Beautiful parks such as Borden park now also host festivals such as last week's Ukrainian Festival and, in the summer, heritage days and K Days. Along beautiful Ada Boulevard, we take pride in the expanding Concordia University.

All of this is to say that Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is a collection of neighbourhoods providing homes to a diverse and thriving population with ongoing urban renewal based on a strong identity that deserves to be represented provincially in our Legislature. Democracy is more robust when people feel connected to a sense of stable place and connected to representatives who understand and can articulate the needs and aspirations of the people in the riding. Given that Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood already has the requisite population required for equitable redistribution, we see no need for alternatives to the existing boundaries.

I just want to add that unlike perhaps Edmonton-City Centre, I would say that the majority of housing is still single-family housing, you know, ranging all the way from, as I said, early 1900s to wartime housing to more affluent housing in the older neighbourhoods like Highlands, Norwood. The population growth there will likely not occur in terms of the kinds of high-rises we see in Edmonton-City Centre. However, with changes in zoning laws, we are starting to see already an increase in terms of density by more duplexes and triplexes and so on. For example, in Highlands many lots are large properties. You know, they're 60 foot lots by 150, and already we see quite a few replacements of those single-family houses with housing that can hold multiple residents.

The other unknown factor, really, in terms of a possible population increase is the future of the Exhibition lands. Right now those lands are sitting empty. It's been announced that the old – where the Oilers used to play is going to be demolished, and there are plans to build housing in that area starting around Borden park, but that seems to be like a long-term project, and I'm not sure how much housing will be built in that area, say, in the next eight years before the next hearing.

Really, I'm not sure exactly what the population is right now. I think we're around 50,000. So I think we're kind of in that range that you're looking at in terms of an equitable distribution.

The Chair: Actually, the numbers we're looking at are well over 54,000, almost 55,000.

Dr. Smits: Okay. I didn't have the latest numbers.

The Chair: You're almost bang on the average.

Dr. Smits: I don't see, you know, where population could be increased in terms of the current riding other than the possibilities of expansion into the Exhibition lands, which are currently part of our riding.

Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you. If you can just stay there for questions. Mr. Evans, any questions?

Mr. Evans: Yes. I took down a note. Thank you for your presentation, but I took down a note that you mentioned at the very beginning that there was something unique and interesting about the Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood electoral district. I wanted to know, turning to the legislation, if there are any sort of unique or interesting or identifiable community interests or community groups within this electoral district that you could identify for me.

Dr. Smits: Sure.

Mr. Evans: And then maybe fill me in on some of the background.

Dr. Smits: I think we're a very strong community league. Not sure if any of our community leagues will be presented here or not. For example, I'm a member of Bellevue Community League – Virginia Park is a part of that – and a very active community league, Highlands Community League. The folks that live in Alberta Avenue have done tremendous work over the past few years trying to revive that area. For example, they have an annual winter festival, Kaleido, and there's a summer festival. It's starting to address, you know, some of the admittedly negative features of, not sugar-coating it, real challenges in the riding economically, in terms of housing, for example, a large houseless population in that area. The fentanyl crisis of course has hit our neighbourhoods hard. But what's hopeful is that there are really dedicated groups of people in that area who are really trying to build up those communities.

Mr. Evans: So Bellevue and Highlands communities, are they within this?

Dr. Smits: Yes.

Mr. Evans: Okay.

The Chair: Susan?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. Thank you for your presentation. I'm interested. Since we've come to Edmonton, we've heard a lot of discussion on community leagues. I do believe – I'll check back with you when I'm done – but I do believe the community league strength in Edmonton is unique to this city . . .

Dr. Smits: Yes.

Mrs. Samson: . . . and that is a critical component to keeping the boundaries together because of the work they do on a volunteer basis. It's a lot of heavy lifting. I'm glad that you focused and brought that again to our attention.

When we talk about the Exhibition lands for an area for growth, I agree with you that that is the unknown but it certainly may not happen in the time that we're at. And because you are sitting at 54,768 – my gosh, we've got 87 ridings to look at. If there are some that are perfect, in my opinion, my opinion is to leave them alone.

Thank you.

Dr. Smits: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. Julian, any question, comments?

Dr. Martin: Yes. Thank you for your presentation. I was particularly taken by your remark about the new city bylaw changes that encourage densification by allowing you to move from single residency, with the classic bungalows in the area, to densify those. I rather suspect you're going to see growth in population because of that rather than from developing the old Exhibition grounds. That land is too expensive, it's got too much weird stuff under the dirt, and it'll take a long time to build out, I suspect. I take your point that you will see some growth but it's going to be on the pre-existing residential footprint, which is grand, I think.

You also suggested that there's a very distinctive character. You've lived there virtually all your life, and so I want to be mischievous. You know, as the present boundary to the east stops at – what is it, 50th?

Dr. Smits: Yes.

Dr. Martin: So it doesn't go on further to the east, but it seems to me – and am I right? – that those neighbourhoods that are currently in Beverly have exactly the same character as the ones to the west side of 50th street. Is my impression correct? I'm not suggesting that, you know, we push them all into your riding . . .

Dr. Smits: No, no, I understand your question.

Dr. Martin: . . . but I want to understand the character of how this whole area developed.

Dr. Smits: Right. I mean, as you go east of 50th Street, very similar neighbourhoods, but further east of there there is more density. Starting around 34th Street there are, like, multiple row housing units, and there's been recently some new rental, not high-rises but eight-storey units built near the Yellowhead. That makes it a bit more distinct from our neighbourhood where we just haven't seen that form of densification.

The Chair: All right. Well, thank you.
Greg?

10:00

Mr. Clark: Yeah. I don't really have much to add. I mean, I think one of the interesting, unique aspects of this job is that all 87, and now 89, of our constituencies are like our children. We love them all equally. Some of them, however . . .

Dr. Smits: We're a problem child.

Mr. Clark: Or may just happen to fit very nicely within a particular – well, we'll just let the numbers take us where they will take us. I'll just thank you very much for your presentation. Appreciate it very much.

The Chair: Mr. Smits, you'll be pleased to know that yesterday you had another cheerleader from Highlands who said basically many of the same things. One of the side effects of hearing all this as a non-Edmontonian is I want to come visit some of these ridings when this is all over. This Alberta street sounds fascinating.

But I just want to ask a bit of a historic question because of the long nature of your connection with the constituency. In the 2017 commission did they change your boundary at all?

Dr. Smits: I don't know that for sure.

The Chair: It doesn't stand out.

Dr. Smits: No, it doesn't stand out.

The Chair: Okay. If they haven't, then this is really . . .

Dr. Smits: I don't think they have.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much. I appreciate your insight and your presentation.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

Dr. Smits: Thanks a lot.

The Chair: Okay. That takes us to our 10 o'clock, Priya Usman. Thank you. Please identify yourself, and correct me if I mispronounced your name.

Miss Usman: No. You got it right.

The Chair: Okay. Good. Thank you.

Miss Usman: Good morning, everyone. My name is Priya Usman. I'm a 19-year-old university student. I was born and raised here in Edmonton, amiskwaciwâskahikan, and I've attended school here my whole life. I remember in grade 6 social studies we learned about democracy. From the ancient Greeks to the Haudenosaunee confederacy to our proud Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, we were taught the value of strong democratic systems. It was those powerful values of democracy that were instilled in me at a young age. My time in the Alberta education system has made me a proud citizen of our democratic society, a society I hope that continues to display these values for the next generation of students and children.

In my own childhood I spent a lot of time driving around Alberta. Whether it was for a dance competition, my brother's soccer, or simply a family trip through our beautiful province, I was able to experience many corners of this province I call home. From Alberta Beach to Valleyview to Lethbridge, I was able to appreciate the uniqueness of the many different communities in Alberta. It is because of these experiences that I'm here before you today. Albertans in every corner of this province deserve a strong democracy. Both Albertans living in a major city or a small community deserve fair and proper representation.

I'm an Edmontonian. I love my city. In order for me, my friends, my family, my students, my colleagues, and my community to have access to democracy and fair representation, it is absolutely essential that the electoral boundaries of the new constituencies respect city limits. While we share common values and a vision for a strong province, the needs of Edmontonians in the city are not those of Albertans living in Sturgeon county or even Strathcona county.

And it goes both ways. My friend living in Beaumont does not have the same needs as someone living in Summerside, in the south side of Edmonton. My friend living in Parkland county does not have the same needs as someone living in Aldergrove, five minutes away from West Edmonton Mall. My friends and their communities shouldn't have to compete against major cities in order to be recognized, seen, and heard by potential elected representatives. They don't deserve that, and neither do the Albertans living in Edmonton or other major metropolitan areas. No one deserves to have the needs, the voices, and the concerns of their community dismissed, diluted, or diminished because of a map, especially a poorly drawn map that disadvantages Albertans across the province.

This issue goes beyond major municipalities and their surrounding areas. We are all treaty people, and Indigenous people living in rural Alberta on-reserve deserve to be represented and have their voices heard in the Legislature.

Ainsi, les francophones de l'Alberta méritent la représentation. Additionally, francophone Albertans deserve representation.

Each of these communities, every single Albertan: we all deserve fair and democratic representation. It would not be reasonable for an elected representative to juggle the unique needs of so many diverse communities both within and outside city limits. MLAs already have a lot of complex roles and responsibilities. Why make their job any more challenging than it already is? Albertans deserve to have an elected official who can accurately represent them, their family, their friends, and their community. Albertans deserve to have an elected representative who doesn't have to choose whether they will prioritize and advocate for the needs of their urban constituents or their rural constituents. We don't deserve a sprawled-out, messy, pinwheel electoral map that helps no one and renders our representative democracy inefficient. It is crucial that the electoral boundaries map is drawn in a fair, just, and

democratic way. This means, first and foremost, respecting city limit boundaries.

In conclusion, as an Albertan inspired by my education and experiences in the beautifully diverse corners of this province, I am proud to sit before you today to uphold and partake in our democracy. I urge the commission to respect city limits when redrawing the electoral boundaries. This will allow for the promotion of fair, equitable, and democratic representation in our province. This will ensure we maintain a strong representative democracy for future elections and future generations.

Thank you. Hay-hay. Merci.

The Chair: Thank you, Priya.

Any questions or comments?

Mr. Clark: Just briefly, first off, thank you very much for your presentation and joining us. In addition, as Justice Miller said, it's a great privilege and pleasure travelling the province and just seeing all sorts of different places but also hearing from a wide range and broad diversity of people with different views and perspectives, ages, educational backgrounds. It's just a real privilege, so thank you very much for sharing your perspective on that.

As an Edmontonian, I guess I'm curious – and I'm not, unfortunately, an Edmontonian. I'm just curious what your constituency is, and is there anything specific you wanted to share about that constituency, any particular communities of interest? Or if there are other communities within Edmonton that you feel like it's important that they are together, maybe talk about why that would be.

Miss Usman: I live in Edmonton-Decore, which is in the north of Edmonton, and I guess that I would say, reiterating the main point of my presentation, that I would like to stay within Edmonton. I don't want to be pulled out into Morinville, St. Albert, Fort Saskatchewan, Sturgeon county. I'm an Edmontonian, and while I love visiting other corners of the province near to Edmonton and around the province, I'm not interested in having my constituency outside of Edmonton.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

Miss Usman: Thank you.

The Chair: Julian?

Dr. Martin: No. Although I do hope that you leave us a copy of your presentation. We might use it as a preamble or something. Thank you.

The Chair: Any questions, comments?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you, and thank you for the presentation. I'm interested in something that I would like you to expand upon, and that is that you are the first Indigenous person to present to us.

Miss Usman: I'm not Indigenous.

Mrs. Samson: You're not? Okay. Well, then my question is not a good one. Sorry for that mistake.

Miss Usman: That's okay.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for the presentation. It was most informative.

Miss Usman: Thank you.

Mr. Evans: Good morning. You talked about the differences between the rural and the urban and used the example of Beaumont, or just most recently you referenced St. Albert. I appreciate that I might be putting you on the spot. Could you give me three differences that come to your mind that would distinguish what you're considering an Edmontonian urban riding versus the rural, say, Beaumont or St. Albert?

Miss Usman: Okay. I can try and touch on the Beaumont one specifically because I have a friend who lives in Beaumont and we've discussed this.

What I would say is that, for example, my friend in Beaumont would have to drive, like, an hour every day to come to school, because we went to school together. If she had to access a lot of services for school or university or for personal matters, that was difficult, you know, a significant distance compared to, for example, someone like me who lives in Edmonton-Decore. It's a 10 minute drive to go to the doctor's office for me, which I recognize is a privilege. It's again a 10-minute drive to go to the grocery store, where I can get groceries for me and my family.

I think those are some differences. Yeah. That's off the top of my head what I can speak to.

10:10

Mr. Evans: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Priya, thank you very much. I echo one of my colleague's comments. If you can, leave a copy of your presentation.

I'm curious. Are you studying these days? Are you in university?

Miss Usman: Yes, I am in university.

The Chair: What are you taking?

Miss Usman: I'm taking political science and sociology at Campus Saint-Jean.

The Chair: Great. I'm sure Alberta will see more of you.

Miss Usman: I think so.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Miss Usman: Thank you.

The Chair: We are just only slightly behind time. Our next presenter is Ms Sarah Hoffman. Good morning.

Ms Hoffman: Good morning, Justice Miller. I think Priya is studying pre-Prime Minister probably.

The Chair: Pardon me?

Ms Hoffman: Priya might say she's in poli-sci, but I think it's pre-Prime Minister.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah. I'm really excited to be here to present today. I don't have a script, but I have some key points that I want to touch on with each of you and have an opportunity to have a bit of a dialogue.

I'll start by talking about my experience living in this province. It's been my home my whole life. I grew up in small town rural Alberta, a number of different communities: Altario, Castor, and Kinuso, all communities of 1,000 or fewer. Then I moved to Edmonton for university, and Edmonton has become my home.

After university I worked at the university, and I also eventually ran for the Edmonton public school board.

I brought maps of where the schools are within Edmonton public and Edmonton Catholic as a bit of a guide, because the first time I went through electoral boundaries as an elected official was when I was on the Edmonton public school board. There was a proposal at that time to consider . . .

The Chair: Sorry. Can I interrupt you – and I just did. Tell me what riding you represent.

Ms Hoffman: Oh. Edmonton-Glenora, where we are right now.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah. This is the east side of Edmonton-Glenora.

Maybe I'll take this moment to back up a little bit and say that growing up mostly in Kinuso in the middle of Lesser Slave Lake constituency, I knew our representative Pearl Calahasen quite well because she was able to attend events in the riding on a somewhat regular basis. When she'd run into me at the Save-On-Foods near my home, she'd ask me the last time I was home to visit my parents and if I needed a ride home next Thursday, because she was driving home on constituency break.

I think one of the advantages of having like communities together is that you get to know your representative in a meaningful way because you have consistent events and relationships and demographics. I found the same thing when I moved to Edmonton. Some of the issues I'd advocate for when meeting with Pearl were mostly around emergency preparedness. It seemed like every three or four years we had a flood that prevented buses from getting to the school, so either making sure that we addressed flood mitigation or found other routes to be able to ensure that my classmates who lived outside of town could get to school was a priority. Some of the things that I advocate for now as an urban MLA are quite different. Overcrowding of schools would be one of the key issues that we're dealing with.

I did bring these maps here to be able to talk a little bit about electoral boundaries as they relate to other elected representatives, specifically school divisions. I didn't draw on the boundary maps. But the key thing that I wanted us to reflect on with these maps is the way that families engage in their community is often with a school as the hub. The school as the hub when your children are young is usually in your neighbourhood, within, you know, a 10- to 15-minute walk of your neighbourhood if you choose the neighbourhood school, which more than half of Edmontonians in Edmonton public do choose.

Even with programs of choice, which I'm very proud of having here in Edmonton, there are schools that feed in. There's a natural pattern of how people move from elementary school to junior high to high school, and typically there's a goal with choice programs to have them in the same geographic quadrant of the city. One of the benefits is that you have the same trustee whether your child is in elementary, junior high, or high school or if they're in a Spanish bilingual program, for example.

At one point we did discuss, when we were redoing the boundaries for Edmonton public, potentially cutting it into a wagon wheel so that everyone would have some of the suburbs and everyone would have some of the core. We decided against that, and I want to give you some of the key reasons why. One of the big ones was being able to develop and maintain long-lasting relationships with people in the same sector of the city and being able to make our decisions with the values of the electorate top of mind so that I wasn't pitting the priorities around building new schools outside of the Henday against the priorities of maintaining

schools in the core of the city. I could focus on the folks that I was there to represent, who had generally comparable, consistent priorities, and people who represented other areas could also keep that voice consolidated and intact.

We very, very rarely have anyone who lives outside of the city attending schools in the city. It's partially now because our schools are so full, but also because people choose the school as a hub, crossing those boundaries is not something that happens on a regular basis. Also, with the fact that schools are so full, we just don't have the space to accommodate people who live out of division. That's partially why I wanted to bring these, and I know that for Calgary public it's the same. Calgary public schools are only within the bounds of the city of Calgary, and their electoral map also is only within the bounds of the city of Calgary. Calgary Catholic is different. They've reached out into the suburbs, so there are some pressures there when it comes to their board prioritizing school projects around those initiatives.

Then I wanted to touch a little bit on my riding because I know you're going to ask. Edmonton-Glenora is beautiful and very dynamic. If you look at the data, we're pretty much smack in the middle when it comes to things like income, education. We have all extremes. We have people who are brand new to Alberta, and we have many First Nations folks who live here. In terms of Edmonton we're one of the higher Indigenous population ridings. We also have a mix of new development, including Blatchford right next door to us here; a ton of infill, where corner lots that were single-family homes are now four- or eightplexes; and then a number of seniors' residences that have been built since the last redraw of the boundaries. Two of them are Christenson at Westmount and Glenora Park also in the Glenora/Westmount area. These have added hundreds of new electors and constituents in general.

But the main thing I want to say again is that, like Priya, keeping like communities together and respecting municipal boundaries I think is one of the ways that we can make the work of MLAs most effective and that piece of: the things I was advocating for when I'd go meet with Pearl Calahasen are not the same things that the people are advocating for when they come to meet with me, even, you know, young and very politically-engaged folks.

Yeah. Those are sort of the key messages I wanted to leave, and I would like to have as much time for questions as possible.

The Chair: You'll see on the map the population levels both last time and then with this commission.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah. Oh, I should probably also say that I know you're allowed to add two new – or you are tasked with adding two new constituencies. I shouldn't say allowed.

The Chair: Yes.

Ms Hoffman: I believe that the vast majority of the growth has happened in the two largest cities in our province, so my proposal would be that they be added one to Edmonton and one to Calgary.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

Mr. Evans: Yeah. I just got introduced to a new concept here in Edmonton, the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues. How many community leagues do you have in the electoral district of Edmonton-Glenora?

Ms Hoffman: Yeah. I think it's 21. Yes. Not all of them have buildings. They all have representatives who are elected to help do programming for that area. For example, Blatchford doesn't have a

building where they meet at, but there are a number of individuals that get together and put on block parties and other fun activities and advocate to the city as well. They have civics representatives to advocate around development issues.

10:20

Mr. Evans: So it would be 21 geographic community leagues with a member that would sit on the board?

Ms Hoffman: EFCL allows people to represent for a region, so each of those individual community areas has representatives, president, vice-president, and so on, to make decisions for that specific neighbourhood. Then I believe it's Edmonton west that can represent somebody to sit as a director for EFCL at large. There is a director from the 21 combined, basically one representative democracy.

Mr. Evans: And that's considered Edmonton west? Is that what that is?

Ms Hoffman: I believe that's the name now, but they've changed the names a few times, so I could be off. I work mostly with the individual community leagues for each of the neighbourhoods.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for presenting the school board information. We hadn't been tasked with looking at that overlay yet, so that will raise some interesting conversations with us. Thank you for that. I have no questions.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you.

The Chair: Julian?

Dr. Martin: Thank you again. The information about schools is instructive because it is a canary in the coal mine about where neighbourhoods need infrastructure. Of course, it's the perennial difficulty of your cities growing like wildfire for school construction to keep up. I take seriously your point about schools, particularly elementary and junior, as being a hub for communities. I mean, high school students tend to range further afield, but nonetheless these are useful maps in spotting how Edmonton public and Catholic are trying to catch up, as it were, with their building programs.

I have a couple of very specific thoughts about Glenora when it comes to building. We asked Mr. Shepherd, as you may recall, about where the growth pods may be in his district. I'm going to ask you the same question. Where we're sitting right now, there's a growth pod happening on the airport land. I can't think of anywhere else in your riding where it could happen. You know, I'm looking at the map – and you'll get a kick out of this – and I look at Stony Plain Road, and the map is Google, and the map has a big sort of stop red light thing on Stony Plain Road . . .

Ms Hoffman: Because of construction.

Dr. Martin: . . . and the construction goes on forever, right? I don't want to belabour that point, but it just brings to mind that your riding has not grown its population at a rate we see in other parts of the metro and other than on the airport lands, I don't think you have any growth pod at all.

Ms Hoffman: Oh. May I come and touch the map and talk about that a little bit?

Dr. Martin: You may indeed.

Ms Hoffman: Okay. Good. One of the largest towers that was constructed in Edmonton was over here on 149th and Stony Plain Road just north in this area here. They're really focused on transit-oriented development in the city of Edmonton right now, so 149th and Stony Plain Road is an area where there's going to be a transit station.

Dr. Martin: Is that Jasper Place?

Ms Hoffman: No. This is Glenora. It's technically in Glenora still, just east of 149th. Or it might be 142nd, actually, 142nd and Stony Plain Road. My apologies. There's one massive tower that was built recently. I think they have about 400 units in it, and then there's a bunch of commercial on the main floor. There's also been, as I mentioned, two large seniors' buildings that came in since the last redraw, Christensen's in Westmount right by the Dairy Queen, if you feel like swinging by Dairy Queen on your way home. I often see a lot of my constituents from the seniors' building there.

Then the other one is Stony Plain Road and just off 124 Street there's one, and then this area on the east of 124th Street, Westmount east and Inglewood east. There are a number of areas where there were four-storey walk-ups that are being replaced with eight or higher towers. Those are the highest-density construction areas, but throughout the riding, especially, I would say, in the east half of the riding there, you can't drive through a neighbourhood without seeing at least four or five places where there was a single family and now there are either four or eight units being built on that same lot. Often the ones with eight or even nine look like traditional townhouses, but each has a basement apartment as well. Then there's a garage suite above the four-car garage.

So there's a mix of high-density construction as well as infill, up to three storeys, I would say with that.

Also, along 111th Avenue, the city has been purchasing some of the lots and so have prospectors around land where density is going to be happening. There's a ton of brownfields right now where there used to be single families, or gas stations, or other types of small commercial available.

The population has risen by 8,000 since the last redraw, so maybe not as significant as southwest Edmonton, but definitely more than we've seen historically in Edmonton in this part of the city.

Dr. Martin: Well, thank you for that. That's very helpful. What I draw from it is that there is imminent and tangible construction activity for residential as we speak. Thank you.

Ms Hoffman: You're welcome.

The Chair: Greg?

Mr. Clark: Yeah, thank you. Building on those questions, and just looking at my trends, the population trend for Glenora has been pretty stable and pretty much tracks the same population trend as the rest of the province. Glenora was slightly under in terms of percentage growth. I'm looking here. Right now we've got 52,496, which is about 4.5 per cent below provincial average.

What I'm curious about is, given the growth you're talking about, do you anticipate that picking up? I guess I've seen, you know, Blatchford is right here. Those are almost ready to occupy by the looks of it, but what's the scale of that? What's the timing? We're looking here for the next 7 to 10 years. Is the population growth likely to track the next 7 to 10 the same as the last 7 to 10, or is it likely taking a bit of a pick up?

Ms Hoffman: In the last provincial election I believe I had conversations with a hundred residents, a little over two years ago,

who lived in Blatchford already. While there is a lot of construction happening currently, some people have been living there for six years, I think, already because it's just being phased out by individual developers who buy up small parcels.

I don't want to try to anticipate how quickly they'll go. Obviously, it depends on the economy, it depends on building permits, but when you look on realtor.ca, which I do often, things are moving in there incredibly quickly; like, they don't stay listed more than 48 hours, even things that are significantly more than houses, six blocks to the west. I think it's a very desirable community. A lot of people like that it's going to be a lower carbon footprint. There's a transit station that's already built there that isn't operational yet until they have enough demand. I think for the supply and demand piece: as fast as the supply goes, the demand is going to keep up.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Ms Hoffman. I said this yesterday: all presenters are equal, but we do appreciate when a member of the Legislature comes and gives a presentation because we know the travel, the foot traffic you do through your constituency and you know your riding better than anybody else, probably. We do appreciate your presentation very much.

The theme that, as a non-Edmontonian, I'm learning from that inner urban core is consistent and I appreciate it, but we have work to do in the south and how we deal with that.

Your comments are helpful, so thank you very much.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you.

The Chair: Now is the time where – we're 10 minutes late, but we're going to have a break now for 10 minutes, so we'll be back at about 10:41.

[The hearing adjourned from 10:29 a.m. to 10:40 a.m.]

The Chair: The break is over. Let's get back to work.

Our next presenter is Mr. Nathan Ip. Please come forward.

Mr. Ip: Good morning, commission members. Thank you so much for the opportunity to be here and to provide input on the important work that all of you are embarking on. I especially want to recognize the staff, as well, who are supporting this work. My name is Nathan Ip. I am the MLA for Edmonton-South West.

The riding of Edmonton-South West, as many of you know who've been there, is vibrant, fast growing. It's often described as an oblong shape and was once described by the *Edmonton Journal* as having "the vague appearance of an abstract cockatoo looking over its shoulder," something that I like to mention to folks when I describe Edmonton-South West. My roots in the riding run deep on both sides of the river. I'm a long-time resident of Glastonbury, which is a neighbourhood in the riding. Previous to my current role I also served as the Edmonton public school board trustee for a good portion of the riding, specifically in the communities of greater Windermere in the southern part of the riding. I've witnessed first-hand the growth of the area of the city.

When I was first elected to the Edmonton public school board in 2013, the Glenriding and Keswick neighbourhoods in greater Windermere were still mostly farmland, and now it boasts a diverse community of young families and thriving businesses. It also has one of the larger concentrations in the city of folks from an ethnic and culturally diverse community, including Albertans from Chinese, Filipino, and South Asian background. It also has one of

the youngest average ages in the city with an average age of just 34 years. I have seen and experienced the unprecedented growth in population and the dire need for investment in community infrastructure such as libraries, schools, and hospitals, all of which are still lacking, and I've been part of many of those community efforts to advocate for schools and playgrounds and otherwise support community building. I have a vested interest to see the riding of Edmonton-South West be fairly represented.

Electoral divisions shouldn't just be a collection of disconnected communities and arbitrary boundaries to make numbers work. They should reflect and respect how people live and move, how they connect, their affinities and identities, and where they find community. I would strongly advocate to the commission to consider the following principles when undertaking their review with the goal of encouraging meaningful, democratic participation and representation.

First, we need a map that is fair to all communities. The first principle is that like communities along cultural, economic, and geographic communities should be respected. That why it's imperative that city boundaries be respected. One way to approach and to think about this principle is to ask the question: how do folks participate in community? This will tell you where their affinity may lie when it comes to the geographic community. I'll give you an example. Folks in Devon, despite their proximity to the southwestern edge of the riding, will rarely – and I don't think I've ever actually met a person from Devon participate in Glastonbury movie nights or the Summerfest that happens every year in the west end part of the city, but folks from neighbouring communities such as the Hamptons or Edgemont often will. I think this tells you how folks identify with their community and where they gather.

It is also important to note that cultural and racialized communities should remain intact. An example of this is that the western part of the riding has a sizable Filipino-Albertan population, and their needs and perspectives will be very different from those that might live in Stony Plain or those outside of the city.

The second principle I'd like to highlight and advocate for is that it's important to consider how people live and move. Edmonton-South West, because of its shape and size, is really bifurcated by the river. Folks in Windermere, which is in the southern eastern part of the riding, will access amenities such as the Terwillegar rec centre, shops and businesses, and schools north of the Anthony Henday. Many students are actually designated to attend high school north of the Anthony Henday, and this reflects a much more natural travelling and gathering pattern. Fewer folks will necessarily move from east to west of the riding.

Almost always, without fail, when I speak to residents in Windermere, which is in the southern part of the riding, they're often very surprised to hear that they're part of the same riding at the northern tip, which is Granville by the River Cree casino. They don't see themselves necessarily as part of the same area of the city, and vice versa. I mean, that's just within a riding that is intact within the city of Edmonton, so I can only imagine the kind of confusion that might cause if we consider a rural-urban riding.

Similarly, when we talk about these natural patterns, there's a greater sort of likeness between neighbourhoods in the western part of the riding with neighbourhoods further east. For example, folks in the Glastonbury neighbourhood will often shop and gather minutes away at Callingwood MarketPlace even though it's sort of not within the riding.

The third principle that I'd like to submit to the panel is that there needs to be fair representation by population. I think every member is perhaps aware that Edmonton-South West is often double the size and population of the average of many ridings across the province,

so that certainly needs to be addressed, but again, I would emphasize that like communities and city boundaries are respected.

For Edmontonians – and I think Edmontonians in this room would probably agree, whether you're from Edgemont or Cameron Heights or Windermere – we take pride in our community. We don't necessarily see ourselves as part of folk in a municipality outside of city boundaries such as Devon. I would say, if I use Devon as an example, that residents of Devon similarly take pride in their town. I've spoken to city councillors and residents, and they certainly don't see themselves as an extension of Edmonton. Devon and Edmonton are different not only in geography but in perspective and identity.

In summary, like communities as well as municipal boundaries should be respected, and I would also encourage the commission to really consider what I refer to as identity and affinity, which is often harder to grasp. It's really this concept of where folks see themselves. Where do they see themselves as being a part of? I think that if we create boundaries that are ill considered, there is the risk of fragmenting communities, which would cause greater confusion and ultimately disengage voters.

Thank you very much for your time and for your consideration. Happy to answer any questions if there are any.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ip.

We'll start with Greg.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Boy. Gosh. Edmonton-South West and the whole south Edmonton is a huge kind of tough nut to crack as it relates to how we reshuffle things. It's really undeniable that something has to change. Just legally, Edmonton-South West or Edmonton-South can't be as big as they are. I guess I'll ask – I guess I'm developing a bit of a theme here. Clearly, there's growth in Edmonton-South West. That's undeniable. Where is it happening? How present tense is it, if you will? What sort of hard evidence do you have around a forecast for what the next seven to 10 years might look like? I guess what I'm really asking, to quote a great Edmontonian, is if we can skate to where the puck is going to be on some of these things, you know, looking at what the growth is.

Again, this one, I think, was set – let me just look at my magic data. It was set pretty much exactly at the average in 2016-17, and it's now 39 per cent over, right? So is that growth likely to continue in a linear fashion? Is it going to go more, or have we sort of peaked and it's sort of levelling out? I guess I appreciate your comments on that.

10:50

Mr. Ip: Well, when I was an Edmonton public school board trustee, I was chair of the infrastructure committee, and at one point in time I had stats readily available. I don't know if these stats are still completely accurate, but I'm going to use them sort of for illustration purposes and just as an anecdote for our discussion.

Back in 2021, I believe, in the communities of Windermere, for example, that community was only about 50 per cent built out. If you're using sort of census data from 2021, the build out at that particular point in time was only about 50 per cent. If you drive down there, you'll see the differences. I mean, for me who lives in the riding and is there every single day, I am surprised at how many new houses pop up by the week, and anybody who sort of will take a drive along new and fast growing neighbourhoods in the city will see that. I think the trajectory will continue to rise quite quickly as we have seen in the last 10 years.

I do have a suggestion. In my school board days planners would often sort of address the risk of growth, because we don't really know how much the growth will be. We can certainly anticipate.

They will often make the boundary smaller, attendance area boundaries, rather, if we're using that as an example. They will make the attendance area boundaries smaller rather than larger because of that anticipated growth. Even with that kind of prudence, the Edmonton public school board was not able to fully accommodate all of the students that ultimately came into those neighbourhoods, even with a smaller attendance area boundary that they had drawn. I think if we use that as an example and we liken it to electoral boundaries, I would say that growth in those new neighbourhoods continues to be fast paced, and if we're to mitigate some of those risks, probably a smaller boundary, a smaller area would make more sense.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

The Chair: Any other questions? A quick question?

Dr. Martin: Yes. Thank you very much for your presentation, and yes, it is quite obvious this district has grown and keeps growing very rapidly. You know, it only takes a brief look at a map to see that the area that was on the inside of the Henday when your riding was small and cuddly probably has to be given back, because you're now so large and sprawling that other accommodations are going to be made, I think. I think that's pretty obvious.

The other thing that strikes me here is the river. I mean, obviously we have a long-standing tradition of straddling the river with respect to Edmonton-Riverview, but ordinarily we try to avoid that sort of thing. You know, the growth in your current riding is so massive, I mean, we're a bit bewildered, but, you know, the whole area to the southwest of the current riding immediately west of Windermere, that's growing rapidly as well. I'm looking at a Google map here. There's a very large area on 23rd Avenue. The ground is being scraped out. There's no doubt that this is being developed for residents.

Mr. Ip: That's correct. West and north of Windermere you'll find that there's – I think you're probably referring to the River's Edge community. That is a newer community that is there.

I should note that when the city approved the area structure plan for Windermere and the surrounding areas, at one point it was the largest area structure plan in the city. That'll give you a sense of how much anticipated growth there will be.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. We have time for one more very direct question. We're pressed for time.

Mrs. Samson: I'm good.

Mr. Evans: Very structured plan, specifically 077 on the map, so trending south: I'm not from Edmonton, so I'm not exactly sure where Windermere is, but I want to know about what area structure plans you're aware of or the development moving south. I think that's south.

Mr. Ip: Yeah. Sometimes I wish I was still on the school board. I would know this information. I'm not currently aware of any area structure plans right now south of kind of the city boundaries. Essentially all of the farmland that can be acquired has been acquired, and it would have been included in the Windermere restructure plan. But I could be wrong. You may have new information.

Mr. Evans: Is everything moving south all farmland?

Mr. Ip: Yeah. It is essentially farmland, all of that. There's a good chunk right before the city boundary that is farmland.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: No supplementary. Sorry.

Mr. Ip: Thank you, sir.

The Chair: Thank you so much for coming in. As I said before, we do really appreciate when members of the Legislature come and present, so thank you so much.

Mr. Ip: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Our next presenter is Ben Acquaye. Sir, tell me if my pronunciation is close.

Mr. Acquaye: I'm a teacher, and I'm in a very gracious mood today. I'll give you 97 per cent.

The Chair: Okay. Okay. Thank you. Can you tell me how I get a hundred per cent and introduce yourself.

Mr. Acquaye: My name is Ben Acquaye. I'm a voter from Edmonton-South West constituency, and my family and I have lived in the riding since 2012, when we moved to Canada from the U.K. I have been following the work of the Electoral Boundaries Commission, and I have a strong interest in the outcome here. I want to express my gratitude to you, the commissioners, for your dedication to this task. Redrawing boundaries is complex and it demands careful consideration, and you have the opportunity to do that. Unlike the last one, in your case you actually have a luxury of two new ridings, so there's room to work.

I am a parent of three young people, and we are active in the community through church, through hockey, and a few other engagements. Now, as you alluded to in the last presentation, Edmonton-South West has really grown, is growing, and will continue to grow. Through a number of volunteer opportunities I've had, I've seen, you know, a growth in this community in terms of diverse communities growing. That's one thing about a lot of racialized communities; their growth is fast, it's quick, it happens, and it's sustained. I have seen lots of pockets of racialized communities.

Just connecting with a question from the last presentation: is there room for growth? Absolutely. Racialized communities grow big and quickly. As you've seen across the province, especially in that middle section of that map, it is definitely growing and growing fast. When I've been there to speak to kids about hockey, about public speaking, and other things I'm involved in, you see lots of new families moving in, and that trend will continue.

11:00

There are a lot of neighbourhoods which make up Edmonton-South West at the moment: Glenridding, Keswick, Glastonbury, Windermere, the Hamptons, the Uplands, Edgemont, Ambleside, Stillwater, Glenridding Heights and Glenridding Ravine, Cameron Heights, Riverview, Wedgewood Heights, River's Edge, Jamieson Place, the Grange, Woodbend Estates, river valley. Uplands, Edgemont, Riverview area: those areas are mostly around the river; they are growing so fast. Because a lot of these are minorities, ethnic minorities, I expect that growth to be even quicker than it has been.

Now, one of the biggest reasons why it's such a community is because of the diversity in there and our connection to the city. Our kids go to the same schools and have done since we moved here. These kids play on the same sports teams and, therefore, that brings parents together. Edmonton Whitemud hockey club pulls from this area. Then when you grow and you are a bit better, or very good,

you go play at CAC. This is CAC's catchment area, and as you know, CAC stands for the Canadian Athletic Club. It's one of the most treasured hockey clubs in Alberta and perhaps in the country. It's over 100 years old, or nearly. My kid plays at CAC with kids who have grown up from this area. You are looking at a group of kids throughout this area who have grown up together, done similar things together, and will grow into adulthood together, and we want to keep that the way it is. That is my plea to you. I think that given how fast and how much it's growing, it may even be better to split this into two so that we would have a dedicated Edmonton-northwest riding to accommodate this growth.

We've talked about population growth, and we also need to talk about the people who make up Edmonton-South West. When it comes to economic activity the activity according to the stats from the Alberta government, it's quite spread out, you know: some retail, some professional services, educational services. It's a good mix of people and a good mix of levels of education as well. A lot of, again, young people would have grown up with people similar to their circumstances, all connected to the city of Edmonton. That makes this quite a nice area to live in.

I would say that I expect that the growth will continue. It's a young population, and you want to give people the chance to grow together to be able to share those memories as they grow older, and especially to connect with their politicians and the city, talking about the challenges and hopes and aspirations that they have as they grow up.

Essentially, I think the case for Edmonton-South West to perhaps end up as Edmonton-northwest and Edmonton-South West would be a good one.

This is essentially my presentation to you. I admire your work, and I wish you nothing but the very best. Thank you most kindly.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir. I'm sure we're going to have questions, so I'm going to start with Mr. Evans on this side, and we'll go across. Any questions?

Mr. Evans: Yes. Thank for your presentation. You mentioned first racialized communities.

Mr. Acquaye: Yes.

Mr. Evans: Can you tell me what you mean by that, and then can you identify any identifiable groups.

Mr. Acquaye: I mean communities that are not White. There's a strong Filipino, Chinese, Black, from so many different backgrounds that are growing and thriving in Edmonton-South West. A lot of people have moved out of province and even within province to Edmonton-South West. It is an amazing community to visit and that is what I mean. At this rate it wouldn't surprise me if in the next 10 years the racialized communities are at par. We're getting quite close now, and that trend continues. We could easily be at par with the nonracialized community. But the beautiful thing is that we work together, we live together, pray together. We do everything together. And our kids are growing up together. The challenge is that the hopes, the aspirations they face will be similar. Our connection to Edmonton is the one universal thing, and we would like to keep it that way.

Mr. Evans: I'd like to ask you about communities of interest.

Mr. Acquaye: Yes.

Mr. Evans: In terms of the racialized communities that you talked about, would you identify them as communities of interest, and where would they be located, in the central or north of...

Mr. Acquaye: The beautiful thing is – thank you very much, Commissioner Evans – that it's not just like we are all in one little pocket. In every community I mentioned, there's a strong racial presence, neighbours left and right to you. This is just a beautiful mix. You see it in the schools as well, when the kids go to school. You see it in the sports they play. It's a beautiful mix, and that will continue to grow. That is the point that I'm trying to make.

Mr. Evans: One last question. Do you know the number of community leagues within your electoral district?

Mr. Acquaye: Because this is a new area, it's taking a while. The more established ones like Glastonbury and Edgemont have a community league. But, believe it or not, we don't even have buildings for our community leagues because it's such a new area. We expect way more growth to happen. I'm excited that kids in this area will see the Canada that we all see: a diverse, respectful, collaborative community living, growing, and thriving together.

Mr. Evans: Thank you.

Mr. Acquaye: Thank you, Mr. Evans.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you, Mr. Acquaye, for the definition and expansion on racialized communities. I found that very informative. Thank you.

Mr. Acquaye: You're most welcome.

The Chair: Julian, questions?

Dr. Martin: I just want to follow up on a couple of points in your characterization of these new communities. You suggest that they are younger populations, not just the children but the adults as well. That sort of makes sense. Since they're new, there aren't, you know, people my age already there. I think you're quite right to point to team sports for youth as an indicative measure of the growth of these communities.

Now, earlier MLA Hoffman gave us these quite useful maps of the schools, and I noticed there really aren't any in your district, so you better get on to your school trustee.

Mr. Acquaye: Absolutely. You know, to that point, for me, it's about the children. They growing up, they're making good memories, and they represent the Canada that we all enjoy. They are growing together. They are playing sports together. They are all connected to the city. For those of you who are outside the city of Edmonton, look up the Canadian Athletic Club's storied history of hockey. These kids grow up, play – you know, up until you're a teenager, you play for Whitemud. The dream is to play for CAC because this is their catchment area. You want to make CAC, and you want to get there with your friends. The beautiful thing is that I as an immigrant who came here – my kids are playing with kids whose parents played together. I can imagine the possibilities for these kids into the future. That is something I would want them to have as well.

Dr. Martin: Great.

Mr. Clark: I cannot possibly top that as a closer, so I will just leave that. Thank you very, very, very much. That was incredible.

Thank you.

The Chair: Sir, one thing I haven't mentioned today is that one of the tasks of the commission is to name the new electoral district. I thought I understood you to say that if we divide the current

Edmonton-South West into two constituencies – did I hear you say that they should be named Edmonton-North West and Edmonton-South West?

Mr. Acquaye: Yes.

11:10

The Chair: Okay. Would you be content with Edmonton-West and Edmonton-South West?

Mr. Acquaye: I would be, but you know . . .

The Chair: It's not really north.

Mr. Acquaye: Well, true, but the key thing is, well, most postal codes in Edmonton say northwest, even though when you look at where they are in the city, it's not really northwest. So we do take some liberties with our geographical placement in Edmonton here, but I would like the riding to be contiguous. Yes, Edmonton-West, Edmonton-North West; so long as we retain our connections to Edmonton and these kids do. So for the sake of the children, please keep us within Edmonton.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, sir. Appreciate it.

Mr. Acquaye: Thank you most kindly. Have a wonderful rest of the day.

The Chair: Thank you.

We're going to move on now. We're running about 20 minutes late, so if questions can be shorter and briefer and the answers equally so, we'll make it through by noon.

Kyle Kasawski.

Mr. Kasawski: It seems like you all have an image of the riding.

Thank you for having me. We'll get this set up. I'm Kyle Kasawski, the MLA for Sherwood Park. As I like to tell everybody in the Assembly: all roads lead to Sherwood Park. But as the MLA for Edmonton-Glenora would also say: all roads also lead out of Sherwood Park.

I grew up in Sherwood Park. I lived there from the age of 4 to 24. I've lived in Edmonton, and Calgary, and B.C. My family has been in Sherwood Park since 1978. My brother actually bought the home from my parents, so that family home has been in the family for almost 50 years.

Within my role I'm also the Municipal Affairs critic and shadow minister for the opposition, so I have a chance to visit and communicate with people from rural municipalities and villages all across the province.

Within Sherwood Park, I'd like to point out, probably the boundaries commission in 2017, I think, got it quite right, so if you're looking for an advocate for change, that won't be me. I feel there's some history and experience with other boundary commissions, with the federal commissions. A couple of times we've had past experiences where there was a riding of Edmonton-Sherwood Park. There was also an attempt, this last boundaries commission federally, to have a riding of Sherwood Park-Beaumont which received quite strong protest from the municipal leaders in Sherwood Park, and they retracted that change in the drawing.

The county, which you see on the map here, I'll bring reference to, but I'll finish through a couple of details that I want to make sure I highlight. In terms of services like utilities, for Sherwood Park we have Arrow Utilities; Edmonton has EPCOR. For electricity we have Fortis; Edmonton has EPCOR. For police we have the RCMP, and fun fact: they surveyed Sherwood Park; 87 per cent of

Sherwood Park loves the RCMP. They asked residents at the University of Alberta in Lister hall if they would like free beer: 86 per cent said they would like free beer, so the RCMP are more popular in Sherwood Park than free beer.

The food banks: you know, we have our own Strathcona county food bank. We have our own housing foundation, the Heartland Housing Foundation, versus, let's say, Edmonton, which has Civida. We have a really amazing organization for people with disabilities called Robin Hood Association, and I know that people move to Sherwood Park because of the services provided by Robin Hood. Our service clubs like Rotary Club are independent. We have strong retail. We have our own Costco, but also the Go Auto group started a new retail group called L'oca, and they brought their flagship to Sherwood Park.

We have our own sports clubs, minor sports clubs, arts and recreation clubs. We have our own museum which is documenting our history. Sherwood Park is only as old as 1955. It was a community that was built as a place to have residences for Imperial Oil. We have the Strathcona Industrial Association. If you look on the map, within my riding you will see a very empty area that is full of energy refineries. Keyara is there. Imperial Oil is there. Suncor Energy is there. Gibson has tank farms there. Pembina Pipeline has their head office in Sherwood Park, and Enbridge has a large presence in my riding.

In fact, on the map you'll see a road that kind of goes from the urban parts of Sherwood Park into the industrial parts. It's called Petroleum Way. It goes under the Anthony Henday. When they built that road, they made sure we had a direct connection for workers from Sherwood Park to get into the industrial area for their shifts.

Strathcona county has a population that is about 75 per cent urban. There are roughly 100,000 people living in this area. It's 25 per cent rural. The electoral districts 1 to 8 are largely – we have 62. Five of eight are urban, and then we have the rural present as well.

I noticed what the questions were getting into from some of the other presenters. On the website you've noted that our riding is about 8 per cent off the provincial average, so we're about 8 per cent below, but we have a lot of urban growth happening.

If I can just put the map up here. Within this area here we have a neighbourhood called Cambrian, which when I got elected two years ago had no houses. It now is well on its way to a thousand homes. It can add 12,000 people to the riding. North of it, there's Hearthstone, which is a Mattamy development. Another probably 12,000 people will be inside that part of the riding. Deep down here in the contours of 3, there's a high-density area called Salisbury Village. We'll have about 1,200 people that will be living in it. So we have quite a lot of urban growth happening within the area.

I would also just like to acknowledge and look at something that you have to look at for Strathcona-Sherwood Park or some other ridings here, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville actually borders right here into Strathcona county, which is an interesting delineation. Bremner is a planned community. It'll be starting its first subdivision this year. Ground work has started. Within Mr. Clark's question about the next seven to 10 years, for sure they'll have about 12,000 people within the next seven to 10 years. It's a planned community of 70,000 to equal the population of Sherwood Park. It's been quite a large thing to be considered.

Ardrossan. The developers call it the kingdom of Ardrossan. It's planned to be an urban centre of about 15,000 people. That's within the borders of Strathcona Park right now. Bremner right now: I think this would be one of your more interesting questions to answer, where should this be? It currently is within Fort

Saskatchewan-Vegreville, but again just keep in mind where that is going into the future.

I think I've covered off the developments. I've covered off the federal boundaries commission's errors and praised this commission, your predecessors, for their great work.

I'll just, lastly, mention about Sherwood Park. I'm quite proud of the electoral history there. It's always number one or two in terms of voter participation in provincial elections, or voter turnout. It's had four parties represent the urban riding of Sherwood Park since 1986, when the boundary was formed. I would say that from a Sherwood Park perspective we feel quite independent and really love the identity of being the riding of Sherwood Park. It is a place we're quite proud of. We are still the world's largest hamlet, and we will continue to be that, hopefully, going on into the future.

I'm happy to take questions from you and have discussions about whatever's on your mind.

The Chair: Greg, starting with you.

Mr. Clark: You are an excellent listener, so you've pre-empted my question about where things are. That's exactly what I was curious about and to sort of quantify it. And just to make sure I heard correctly: Bremner within the next five-ish years is 10,000 to 12,000. Is that sort of the working plan?

11:20

Mr. Kasawski: Yeah. Like, the whole plan is for 70,000 in that area that's identified there. Like, it will be a community very similar to the population of Sherwood Park. The groundwork is just starting, so me just thinking like a – I'm falling on that a little bit. I'm looking at Cambrian, which is, on that map, where number 4 is, which is in my riding. It's expected to be 12,000. That's their I think it's called an area structure plan. I saw that was 12,500, their plan. So now they're starting the first, I guess, division within Bremner. This is a Qualico development, so I'm just going to say about 12,000 is what they'll probably have before the next boundary commission.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

Dr. Martin: Thank you for your presentation, and go mighty hamlet. I live in Sherwood Park, and I have read the area structure plans because I'm a geek for that kind of thing.

Mr. Kasawski: You gotta be.

Dr. Martin: So I have – no, they're actually very well written. There's better prose there than most of them. But I wanted to press a little further on your identification of these growth pods. I mean, you're absolutely right, but Bremner: if they're cutting ground this summer, you know, that's very good. Cambrian has already started. Ardrossan: no, not yet, right?

Mr. Kasawski: Ardrossan?

Dr. Martin: Yeah.

Mr. Kasawski: They're selling lots and building homes in Ardrossan.

Dr. Martin: Okay. That's good. We've been having a discussion among ourselves about what counts as new growth. You know how people go on. A developer buys a parcel and then maybe doesn't develop it for donkey's years. You have identified parcels that are tangible and imminent growth zones, and that's what we like to hear, so I thank you for that. As you point out, Bremner's not in

your electoral district, but it's so adjacent that it is worth bringing to our attention.

Mr. Kasawski: Yeah.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Susan?

Mrs. Samson: No. Good presentation. Thank you.

The Chair: John, any comments, questions?

Mr. Evans: No. Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, sir. As I said, we do appreciate your presentation, and I look forward to the rest of the morning. Thank you.

Mr. Kasawski: All right. Thanks for your work on this.

The Chair: That now brings us to Laura Paquette. We're only 25 minutes late from what they told you, but please proceed.

Ms Paquette: I'll try to keep it short. Good morning. My name is Laura Paquette. I am born and raised in Edmonton, and I would like to speak about Sherwood Park as well but also Edmonton-Meadows.

I've travelled to about 25 countries, so you can say I love maps. I'm familiar with them. I have some thoughts on the naming of the ridings as well, but I have a deep appreciation for both how communities function and how they're represented. I was a teacher for 15 years, in Edmonton Catholic schools for 12 of them, and I also own some rural property in Tofield, which is at the far end, basically, just off the boundary of Strathcona county down highway 14.

I want to talk about the importance of keeping Sherwood Park intact as a riding largely unchanged with a few tweaks perhaps to take into consideration the new areas. Also, Edmonton-Meadows is another growing area. If you're familiar with the map that Kyle had up, just imagine it's still there. Good.

Sherwood Park, actually, Strathcona county came up with their own map, and I ripped this one off a stack of them at the town hall. One side has Strathcona county, the expansive area all the way up to Elk Island national park, and then on the other side – very interesting – they've decided what to focus on in terms of the urban map, and I like what they did with that. I'd like that to be the riding of Sherwood Park because it really has a sense of identity of the urban population in Sherwood Park.

As I said, I have some rural property near Tofield. Lived there on that acreage for three years, and now I've moved back to Edmonton-Meadows, where I've spent most of my adult life, but I work in Sherwood Park, so I commute back and forth all the time.

There is Sherwood Park. A lot of these ridings look like jigsaw puzzle pieces, and I do love a good jigsaw puzzle, but I think it can be a bit confusing for people when you try to explain that there are two MLAs for Sherwood Park and there are two ridings both called Sherwood Park. One is Strathcona-Sherwood Park, not to be confused with Edmonton-Strathcona. We get that quite a bit, too.

It's divided down Clover Bar Road, and I would advocate for moving that over to highway 21 because certainly it's a weird place to divide it, where even the county itself identifies the urban catchment of Sherwood Park, the hamlet itself, as being more of a square shape. I would love just a nice cube of Sherwood Park and to take into consideration one other new development that Kyle didn't mention, Hillshire. That is just south of Wye Road. There are

houses being built and bought and sold there right now, including some higher density homes that look like single-family homes, but they've built in a legal basement suite. They're thinking with higher density in mind, so you have these legal basement suites already part of the plan. I believe that the riding of Sherwood Park should include that Hillshire as well because the routes that people travel and get to school and work are all along Wye Road.

I'll skip over what Kyle has already talked about. He's a great advocate for Sherwood Park.

On a personal note, my daughter attends a francophone school in Sherwood Park. We speak French and English at home. Her francophone school board is a public school board, the Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord, that covers all of Sherwood Park, and it goes up to Fort Saskatchewan, all the way out to Tofield. Really, a great school because I could live anywhere in that whole zone and she would stay in the same school. They are growing so fast. They're building a brand new building, and it's opening in September in Sherwood Park, and that is along Regency Drive, so just outside of what the boundary is now because of the dividing line being Clover Bar Road. It's another example of how Sherwood Park has kind of this unique identity, that everyone at this school might live all around but all the birthday parties and all the events, everything is in Sherwood Park, the bowling alley and Millenium Place rec centre. The schools, the services, the community programming all reflect a cohesive urban identity. Sherwood Park residents vote together, learn together, and live their lives together, so they should be represented together by one representative.

As the community grows, we want to take into account Cambrian, as Kyle said, north of highway 16; Hillshire, which is south of Wye Road; as well as Salisbury Village. All the neighbourhoods are identified on this map as well, so I could leave it here. They're beginning to have community associations. Some of them are more well established, so a lot like the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues. Sherwood Park has some community associations as well.

Right now the boundaries confuse voters in Sherwood Park, and a lot of people don't understand why the county map is very different from the electoral map provincially.

Because I want to keep it quick, I want to switch over to Edmonton-Meadows. It's thematically very similar, but it's an odd puzzle piece that could be a square. I love the simplicity of very natural boundaries. I believe Edmonton-Meadows includes a lot of new growth as well. My son is starting high school in Edmonton-Meadows. They have a brand new high school – it's been open one year already – called Elder Dr. Francis Whiskeyjack. It is right beside the Edmonton-Meadows rec centre and along 17th Street there. There we go. It's an interesting shape. We've got a by-election happening in Edmonton-Ellerslie, which is south of 23rd Avenue, but I do believe Edmonton-Meadows should extend all the way to 50th Street and follow the Anthony Henday and the Whitemud although the sense of identity as being part of the Meadows really starts at 34th Street. East of 34th Street people consider themselves more in the Meadows. There's even a sign that says "welcome to Mill Woods," and that's the west side of 34th Street. So Meadows is unique.

11:30

All along that bottom chunk there looks like Florida maybe, the panhandle. It is Aster. All of that is serving the new high school. Brand new developments there as well and a lot of high-density apartments and things, too. That population is going to go up. Other than that weird blip at the bottom, it could go over to 50th Street. I think it's great the way it is, so that cut-out should probably be part of Edmonton-Meadows.

The Chair: Would you mind going to the map?

Ms Paquette: Sure.

The Chair: I have two disabilities: I'm not from Edmonton, and I can't read the street names. Would you mind pointing those out?

Ms Paquette: I live here, and 17th Street is right here. There is the Anthony Henday Drive freeway here, and just going up here is all new neighbourhoods there. The new high school and the rec centre are right in here.

The Chair: But you suggested cutting off at 34th.

Ms Paquette: Right now 34th Street is here. East of 34th Street people identify as being part of the Meadows, and things are called the Meadows. They have community leagues as well. Laurel and the Meadows are two different community leagues. Really, this whole area, the natural boundary for it would be 50th Street. Right now part of this is Mill Woods, and part of it is Ellerslie, so it's a bit of a hodgepodge, a bit of a pinwheel thing going on there. I do think that Edmonton-Meadows could just be a nice, simple square from 50th Street to the Henday and Whitemud at the northern boundary of it.

The Chair: That's going to put us at a really high population level, though. You're at the max right now.

Ms Paquette: Yeah. Ellerslie is quite big, so we needed to reduce some of Ellerslie, and that's what I would lose. You know, there's some give and take there of the growing city. Certainly, it's great the way it is, but it's worth taking into consideration the growth happening east of 17th Street.

The Chair: Okay. Good.

Mr. Clark: South of 23rd Avenue logically belongs as well.

Ms Paquette: Yes. This is the Laurel neighbourhood, and they've got their own community league as well, but that certainly is a weird cut-out to belong to the rest of Ellerslie, which is south of the Anthony Henday.

The Chair: You did indicate you were going to talk about names.

Ms Paquette: I do think there should only be one Sherwood Park.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Paquette: Edmonton-Meadows is just fine the way it is.

Ardrossan and Bremner are two great names. Strathcona county, Ardrossan, and Bremner are real hubs for that second Sherwood Park riding. Tofield probably more closely identifies with Strathcona county as well. That's another community that could be ...

The Chair: So Strathcona county, Ardrossan, and Bremner.

Ms Paquette: Yeah. And Sherwood Park is unique and distinct as its own hamlet identity.

The Chair: Perfect. Okay.

Ms Paquette: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. I'm pushing a little bit on time. Where do we start? Mr. Evans, a very quick question?

Mr. Evans: No question.

The Chair: Susan?

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

Dr. Martin: Just one. Strathcona county straddles three electoral districts and has done so for a long time. If people are confused, have they been confused for a very long time?

Ms Paquette: Probably. It really is because of the word "Sherwood Park" being in both and the proliferation of googling everything. I think when they look up "Sherwood Park MLA" or "Sherwood Park, who do I vote for?" or "Where do I vote?", that confusion happens.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Greg?

Mr. Clark: No, I'm fine.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much. Do you want to just pass that up so we can take it along?

Ms Paquette: Strathcona county on one side, and the little neighbourhood names are all over the map.

Mrs. Samson: Great. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Victoria Pearson.

Ms Pearson: Good morning, panel. I imagine it's been a very long few days for you so far. My name is Victoria Pearson. I am a lifelong Edmontonian, and I come before this panel as a community volunteer and advocate that has spent the past decade poring over electoral maps to connect communities with their elected representatives. I recently moved to Edmonton-Gold Bar, which is where I am raising my family, but I previously lived in Edmonton-Riverview, and I still do work there. I'm going to be talking about both of those ridings.

I believe that a fair and inclusive electoral map needs three things. It needs to be easy to understand and navigate, it needs to be a reasonable size to effectively represent the communities, and it needs to respect existing boundaries like municipal borders. Specifically talking about the third point there, rural representation versus urban representation, I think those communities have very different needs. They really have, in Alberta, specific differences between rural and urban but also between large urban centres like Edmonton and smaller urban centres like Leduc or Sherwood Park.

The recent legislation changes state that the boundary commission may consider municipal boundaries when drawing the map, but I believe it's imperative that these borders are respected. This will ensure elected representatives can focus on specific issues that impact their communities and better advocate for their constituents.

A pertinent example that has been brought up a couple times here: Edmonton-Gold Bar extends from the Mill Creek ravine in Edmonton all the way out to the edge of the city, where it buffers up against Sherwood Park. So the industrial area between Edmonton and Sherwood Park forms a really natural barrier between the two regions, and if we don't respect the municipal boundaries, a potential riding could encompass the two municipalities. It's simply illogical to have a riding that represents the edge of Edmonton and the edge of Sherwood Park but is separated by large swaths of industrial land and highways. The

populations may look the same on the surface level, with many families, a high likelihood that people work in Edmonton and are commuting by car, but the barrier of the industrial area would make it very difficult for an MLA to effectively engage both sides of the riding.

Further on that, to consider rural-urban, or urban ridings would result in MLAs needing to triage the concerns of constituents and would dilute their ability to effectively advocate for their communities. Different concerns could get ignored entirely depending on the makeup of the riding, if it has a higher proportion of rural or urban constituents, and their corresponding concerns.

Another pertinent example would be the federal boundary commission, because they just completed their work. They did a really effective redistribution, in my mind, where they changed the previous Banff-Airdrie electoral district into the Yellowhead riding, where Banff is now encompassed with the other areas in the national park and then Airdrie-Cochrane. I think that just really helps emphasize the more appropriate representation that constituents will receive, with people in Banff, Canmore, and Jasper being represented by the same MP since they have similar interests and challenges with being a tourist hot spot and existing in a national park. And then the MP for Airdrie-Cochrane can focus on issues that smaller urban centres may be facing and rural areas as well, like industry and development.

Next, I want to talk about population growth because Edmonton has seen a very significant increase in population growth and density. The new ridings that we're talking about – the commission is preparing on adding two new ridings – I believe should be placed in areas with increased population growth. The federal boundary commission split the two south Edmonton ridings into three, where they're adjusted to respect the Whitemud as a natural northern barrier. They also added a riding in northeast Calgary and the above-mentioned Airdrie-Cochrane.

A key factor when considering population growth, particularly in Edmonton, is recent densification. The central ridings of Edmonton-Gold Bar, Edmonton-Strathcona, Edmonton-Riverview, and then Edmonton-Glenora and Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood all have increased housing density because of the new zoning rules that the Edmonton city council has put in place. They allow for multiple units on one lot anywhere essentially in the city, and it's up to eight units. We are seeing in Edmonton-Riverview, in particular, a drastic increase in these four- to eight-unit lot developments, which means that the population and density is going to be increasing significantly but not in the same way that it is increasing in the south. In the south you're seeing a lot more, like, single-family dwellings, and there's a lot of newcomer populations that are coming into the south, but then in Edmonton-Riverview you're looking at just an increased density. So I really don't think that the central ridings in particular, Edmonton-Riverview specifically, should change significantly at all because their populations are still going to be representative of what is the current makeup, but I do think you would want to consider that densification when looking at the boundaries in the city here.

11:40

Lastly, I want to talk about use of navigation. I think it's important how residents conceptualize their immediate area for any electoral map. Residents within Edmonton would be more likely to feel closely connected to the city rather than connected to nearby communities like Sherwood Park or Leduc. If we again look at Edmonton-Gold Bar and Edmonton-Riverview as examples, residents in Edmonton-Riverview are separated by the river but connected by the Whitemud for vehicle travel and the river valley path network for biking and walking. Their daily habits frequently

take them from one side of the river to the other for work, school, or errands, but in contrast the residents in Edmonton-Gold Bar do not frequently travel to Sherwood Park and more often are travelling toward Edmonton's downtown or toward the University of Alberta. My trips to Sherwood Park are for specialty stores and visiting family mostly whereas – it's a specific trip rather than something that I do daily.

Overall, that is my presentation. Thank you for taking my perspective into consideration. I look forward to seeing the proposed map in the future.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Pearson.

Questions? Starting with Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: No. But thank you for your presentation.

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

Dr. Martin: Well, to be consistent, we have asked several other presenters, and perhaps you've heard us ask the question about growth pods. I very much appreciate the remark about the zoning bylaw having changed so you can densify pre-existing lots. I think we heard a presentation this morning about Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, and I think we are going to see that bylaw as a significant driver of population growth there.

Now, Gold Bar itself doesn't really have any more space to put in more ground-level residences. Do you, off the top of your head, know of any imminent and tangible construction of residential units in Gold Bar?

Ms Pearson: Well, my home neighbourhood is Bonnie Doon, and a fair amount of the buildings there that used to be small, single-family houses that were built from the '50s and '60s are now being turned into a duplex or even a fourplex. I specifically live in a duplex that was built 10 years ago, and as I was wandering around the neighbourhood, there was a particularly remarkable development a few blocks away where it was eight units on one corner lot within Bonnie Doon. They were like quite large. It wasn't just two or four in one house and a couple of garage suites. It was, like, two townhome rows on a corner. There are these significant developments that are happening within our mature communities. We're seeing the real estate turnover to be pretty quick, and the lots are not just sitting. They're either being developed or new families are moving in.

Dr. Martin: I would ask a similar question about Riverview.

Ms Pearson: Riverview is similar.

Dr. Martin: Particularly west of 149th Street.

Ms Pearson: That's exactly where I was thinking. Yeah. If you're looking in the areas around where the new LRT is being built, 87th Avenue and 156th Street, there are a lot of developments that are coming up on the fourplex kind of build with four basement suites. We're seeing them along 95th Avenue. Not so much on 87th Avenue, because there are more apartments, but in that kind of Sherwood, Jasper Place, Meadowlark area.

Dr. Martin: Okay. Good. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Pearson. Appreciate it.

Ms Pearson: Would like a copy of my remarks?

The Chair: Please. Leave it with Aaron.

Okay. We've got three presenters before noon. Ben Kroeker.

Mr. Kroeker: Well, good morning, everybody. Let me just first off say that I just want to acknowledge that you guys have difficult decisions to make as a commission, and I recognize that populations shift and move and change, and so Albertans need appropriate and equal representation. It's important, obviously. I also have to beg the commission's pardon. It's the first time that I have done this, and so I have to apologize for my inexperience. I'm not bringing with me a lot of stats or political theory, but just some observations as someone in the community.

My name is Ben Kroeker. I am a pastor. I serve at Steele Heights Baptist Church in the Edmonton-Manning riding. I also live in the neighbourhood of McConachie, which is about seven minutes north of Steele Heights Baptist Church in the McLeod-Steele Heights area.

I didn't become a pastor for power and prestige. In fact, I feel like a little part of my soul dies a little bit each time someone addresses me as pastor. I became a pastor to serve the congregants that are in our midst and also our community as well, which is why I'm here today. One of the things that encourages me as I speak to MLAs and MPs and councillors and candidates is that, oftentimes, what I hear from them is that they are in their position to serve their communities as well. I'm thankful that I see that a lot of the times.

I find that it is easier to serve a community in an area when there is cohesion and history. One of the pastors that I work with, the lead pastor at our church, Darren Platt, often talks about community or Edmonton being built up around community leagues, community associations, and neighbourhoods. Edmonton is a federation of those aspects. So there's a cohesion to being identified together. As you serve each other as neighbours, live together, as your children go to schools together and play sports together, there's a cohesion that comes from being in a neighbourhood. There's also a cohesion that comes when you're interfacing with representation as well. In our area, it's MLA Heather Sweet. I think that makes it easier when neighbourhoods can identify together and bring their concerns together as well.

It also makes it easier to serve out of history. The church I work at and serve at celebrated 50 years in that location in 2021. I've been able to serve there for eight years, and you definitely get a sense of the history and that they have been there for so long. Oftentimes we talk about, starting that church, there was a field, and then houses grew up around that church. When you have a history together, you build an identity together as well. So it doesn't help when, at a representation level, an identity gets split as well when history builds up connection with each other.

Breaking up a community makes it harder to interface in a cohesive manner and also build a collective history together. So my encouragement to the commission would be to consider bringing whole communities and neighbourhoods into new boundary lines if that's what's necessary to balance out population growth, which is definitely something that we're experienced in in that far northeast of Edmonton, and divide that by clear distinctions and separation by things like major roads.

That, I suppose, is my encouragement as someone who serves in the community and lives in the community as well. So thank you for indulging this inexperienced representation.

11:50

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Kroeker. Appreciate it.

Questions, Mr. Clark?

Mr. Clark: Yeah. We have Edmonton-Manning, as you can see from our population. Gold Bar, which is a fabulous place as well, is

over quite a bit, about 21, 22 per cent over. I'm curious if you have some thoughts on where we can shift things around. You know, I do take your point and find it very compelling about communities of interest, with, like: what are those sort of magnets? It's sort of question one, but also: where's the growth? We know south Edmonton is growing a lot. We were chatting earlier about Edmonton-Manning. I'm kind of curious what the status and state of that growth is. Where is it happening, and what do you think belongs with what?

Mr. Kroeker: Do you want me to head to the map?

Mr. Clark: Sure, if you can. We'll send you the microphone so our friends at *Hansard* can grab your comment.

Mr. Kroeker: Oh, walked right past it. That's great. Yeah, definitely.

My house didn't exist six years ago. The neighbourhood isn't built around that, and we're seeing that just in this corner up in here, where I live. The church that I serve at is on 149th. That is in here, right around here. Definitely growth is coming up over here, and there's still – we walk around the neighbourhood and there are houses being developed and growing, single-home dwellings as well as apartment buildings as well. Also, the Gorman area around here is also scheduled to be developed, and then the Horse Hill community up in this direction is kind of up and coming as well.

I don't know if I have any major suggestions as to kind of where that representation should be distributed, you know, other than to kind of really encourage, like, keeping distinct communities together. One suggestion might be in terms of kind of, like, dividing it by major thoroughfares or roads, might be to kind of redistribute this section right there. Again . . .

Mr. Clark: Sorry. I was playing with my map when you did that. Is that Manning Drive?

Mr. Kroeker: Yeah, so Manning kind of around to the Henday. It looks kind of funny, but . . .

Mr. Clark: Sorry. Everything west of Manning kind of belongs together, and everything east of Manning belongs together?

Mr. Kroeker: Maybe even just this kind of triangle might be a suggestion, and there would definitely be some community distinctions within those as well.

Those are some of the things that we're observing, the church, and then just as someone who lives in the community.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

The Chair: Great.

Unless there's a burning question, I think we need to conserve time.

Mr. Kroeker: Absolutely.

The Chair: Take no offence that we only let you answer one question, sir.

Mr. Kroeker: I don't, and I thank you for listening to the ramblings of an inexperienced . . .

The Chair: Yes. Thank you very much for your presentation. They weren't rambling.

Okay. That takes us to Stephen Smith.

Mr. Smith: Hello, everyone. Thank you for having me here. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this commission. My name is Stephen Smith, and I am from west Edmonton, specifically the riding of Edmonton-West Henday. If we can get that on the map there, I would appreciate it. I had originally intended to make this submission just a text-based one, so if your takeaway is that this could have been an e-mail, I agree with you. I just ran out of time. Fortunately, that means that I won't take up too much of your time.

I wanted to, you know – just a little background about myself. I grew up in Edmonton-West Henday, sort of in this west Edmonton area, for my entire life, went away to school, came back and now live here again. I'm currently seeking a house in this constituency as well.

I wanted to speak to the commission today to just reflect on one concern that I had about the redistricting, which is the possibility of breaking apart parts of cities. I think it's very important to keep cities together as a piece of effective representation for the people who live in those constituencies, and I think that would also track with the way in which communities have developed here in this constituency. What I mean by that is – having grown up in this neighbourhood, I wanted to discuss what may look like a natural boundary but is in fact not.

If I can go to the map. Is it working? All right. One of the previous folks did this, and it looked like fun. Here on the Anthony Henday Drive this may look like it would be a natural place to put a boundary. I think one of the previous presenters suggested that, you know, using major arterial roads. But I wanted to just emphasize that there is a substantial amount of community that sort of goes overlapping from these neighbourhoods through to these neighbourhoods, right? Over here in this west Henday area you have local grocery stores, local community areas, gathering spaces, libraries, even a golf course that is consistently and repeatedly used by people who live in this neighbourhood, which is where I am, but also kind of all the way north up in this area northwest of the constituency.

Anticipating some of the questions that I've seen you discussing so far: in terms of where the growth is, in the next seven years it will be almost entirely in the northwest section of this constituency. That is, as I've emphasized, somewhere that does have a deep tie to Edmonton. Those are areas where you have new development that is occurring already as well as new development that is scheduled to go. You can see that they've plotted out areas for both new homes and new homes that will include basement suites.

Yeah. I just wanted to emphasize that all of that is, in fact, a natural part of Edmonton, a place where there is quite a bit of overlap with the folks further to the west. I would strongly suggest to the commission that it continue to hold those places in the constituency and indeed connect them with Edmonton rather than – I believe the next riding to the west would be Drayton Valley-Devon. I don't think there would be a substantial community overlap among folks in Drayton Valley and folks in Edmonton, if that makes sense to everyone.

The other thing that I wanted to ensure that the commission was discussing: I understand that you have the opportunity to put in two additional seats. I wanted to make at least a strong suggestion that one of those seats would be in Edmonton because that is where we're seeing a substantial amount of growth, as you've heard both in this presentation and in previous ones.

Questions, please.

The Chair: Well, actually – oh, sorry. Go ahead.

Mrs. Samson: I'll take one quick one. Thank you for your presentation. I'm just looking at the population. It's over, as you

know. You're sitting next to Edmonton-Glenora. You have expressed your opinion of respecting the city boundaries. Do you see a natural cut-off in that area, which is the top of your riding? It would be the northeast portion of your riding, to move it over into Edmonton-Glenora.

Mr. Smith: I think that would make quite a bit of sense. There's a large industrial area between the population centres. In the southwest area of the constituency and in the northwest area of the constituency is where the bulk of the houses are, and then that industrial area makes sense as sort of a boundary. If you were to cleave off the area sort of north of Yellowhead and connect that with Edmonton-Glenora, I think that would certainly make sense. Then that would allow, I would assume, for those west areas to continue to be in the same constituency that they are now.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Evans: Just one question. You would say that north of the Yellowhead would be the dividing line?

Mr. Smith: I think that would be – that's one reasonable suggestion.

Mr. Evans: And your significant growth that you were talking about: isn't it, really, north and west of the Anthony Henday?

Mr. Smith: Allow me to clarify. North and west of the Anthony Henday is where that significant growth would be. On the east side of the constituency, north of the Yellowhead, is where I would merge with a different riding. Again, that was the one suggestion there I wouldn't object to.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you.

12:00

The Chair: Thank you.
Julian?

Dr. Martin: I have one question, in that we are charged with thinking about names. Do you like the name of your electoral district? Is it distinctive or directive enough?

Mr. Smith: Well, the current name is Edmonton-West Henday. I like that. As someone who lives adjacent to the Henday, it feels like home to me. But if you were to, you know, come up with an Edmonton-West – I don't know. I think I've always described myself as from west Edmonton, so that seems reasonable to me.

Dr. Martin: I can't wrap my head around the fact that Calder, which is not west by anybody's stretch, is part of a riding called Edmonton-West Henday, and a large part of your riding is not west of the Henday. I find it confusing, personally.

Mr. Smith: Yeah, I think that's reasonable. Having spoken to many people in that area, I think they also are sort of surprised to discover that they're in the same constituency as Lewis Estates and some of the other neighbourhoods there.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay.
Greg?

Mr. Clark: No. That's fine. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Smith.

Mr. Smith: Thank you.

The Chair: I believe our last presenter now is Audrey Johnson-McGillis.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: Should I curtsy?

The Chair: Good morning.

Mr. Clark: Definitely not.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: All right.

Anyway, I appreciate you giving me some time to give my suggestions. It's been quite confusing for me because I don't usually sit around looking at maps and wondering about boundaries. Not usually. I think about personal boundary space, usually.

You know, when we talk about renaming, I've been hearing a lot of the discussion here about how confusing it is to have these names with electoral districts. In the spirit of reconciliation I suggest that these names be changed to Indigenous names. South of the border would be Blackfoot Nation. Historically that is the nation that existed here long before Edmonton was Edmonton. North of the North Saskatchewan River is all Nehiyaw, the Cree nation. I would suggest that names all be changed to that to accommodate the true history of Edmonton, or amiskwaciwâskahikan, as it used to be called. I would love to see it go back to that name because that is the original name. A lot of people don't understand that history.

I also don't think districts should be racially motivated. I don't think that anything should be put in place along the lines of where communities are built with just Blacks living with Blacks, Whites living with Whites, Chinese living with Chinese. We're supposed to be a multicultural city, multicultural province, multicultural Canada. That's what we spout all over the world, you know. As treaty holders we agreed to that. I just wrote a few notes on things I've heard people saying. You know, that's the pride of Canada, this multicultural expression, so I think it's important that that continues, where people learn to immerse into the Canadian culture versus bringing other cultures here and expecting us all to be accommodating to other cultures.

You know, we as Indigenous people have accommodated many, many other cultures without any licence and any consultation and no permission given, right? I really think it's time that we sit at the table with some of these things. People are not asking us what needs to be done. You know, I asked to sit on the commission because I really believe there needs to be Indigenous representation. I wasn't invited to sit on your commission. So I think we need to move forward in that area somewhat.

We all know that every culture has its own beliefs and values. What is Canadian culture? That's been a big, huge question lately. What is the culture of Alberta? I don't believe we're just oil rig pigs. I don't believe that at all. I believe we're more than that. We used to be great for beef. We used to be great for wheat. We used to be great for other things and well known for that throughout the world in economy. I think that we need to get back to understanding that this multiculturalism – people need to immerse in schools. I work part-time at a school right now, and instead of just teaching the Indigenous students that I'm there supporting, I am inclusive of all the other nations that come because I know some children are traumatized from other lands. I want them to have a sense of belonging to Canada. I bring them into my teachings, into my classroom that I have every now and then, and I explain things to

them, how things are done in Canada, which are different than their country.

You know, we need to express that throughout the school system. We need to express that throughout the electoral systems, and we need to not create this division. I know that in India they have a concept of higher and lower – I can't remember what that's called off the top of my head. Class system?

Mr. Evans: Caste.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: Caste system.

I do believe that if we continue this road of separatism, creating little small pockets of communities that are separate from each other, we will create that here in Canada, and we need to not do that.

You know, in our culture there's no such thing, and I think Indigenous values and beliefs need to be taken into consideration in all of these talks and all of these meetings because our values are quite inclusive. They are quite inclusive. We've had to learn the English language. We've had to learn Canadian values. We've had to learn non-Indigenous beliefs and ways of being, so if people want to be Canadian and want to live in Edmonton, Alberta, then they need to know these values as well.

I strongly recommend that you do not – do not – create according to race. You're going to hurt the children. They're not going to learn how to be productive in a business world that is more inclusive. They're not going to learn how to be productive in high schools that will not be able to just be formed according to race. Universities are not according to race. So you're limiting. I know that personally as an Indigenous person because we had to immerse to get education, and we've benefited from that. You see me here talking? I'm one of the benefits.

Please take this all in consideration, and I ask that you please consider creating Indigenous names for the electoral districts.

Also, the other point, there was an electoral district that was put in place across the street from Enoch. When the construction was taking place, they didn't pay due diligence for research, and now there sits a graveyard that was once part of Enoch reserve in the middle of a community. That shouldn't happen. There should be some research done on all these electoral places prior to anything being changed so that there's nothing destroyed that has spiritual, historical significance for our people.

That's all I have to say.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Can I zone in on your naming suggestion? Do you have a particular electoral district that should be renamed? If you said it, I missed it.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: Well, what I said was that historically – a lot of people when they do the welcome to Treaty 6 territory, which we're on right now, they are inclusive of all the nations that live here presently. They don't take in the historical accuracy, which is: south of the border, Blackfoot; north of the border, Nehiyaw.

The Chair: Okay. Which border?

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: Pardon me. The river is the border; that's how we looked at the border.

The Chair: Okay. Good. Yeah.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: I'm sorry. South of the river, Blackfoot; north of the river would be the Nehiyaw.

The Chair: So south of the river, all Blackfoot names.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: Yes. That would definitely demonstrate an act of reconciliation but also demonstrate an act of true historical accuracy.

The Chair: Can I ask you to do some homework? There are several ridings south of the river. There are several ridings north of the river.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: Uh-huh. Are you going to pay me?

The Chair: I'll pay you what I get paid from this.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: Absolutely. You pay me; I'll do all the research you want me to do. I can do that.

Mr. Evans: He doesn't get paid.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: What did you want, though? You're not going to have me forever. What kind of research are you looking for?

The Chair: I didn't ask for research; I just asked for suggested names for ridings.

12:10

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: Oh, suggested names.

The Chair: For the riding. Yeah.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: Oh, all right. I can give you that. I'm an elder in the community. I can do the ones for – and know I have friends who are south of the river.

The Chair: Because maybe you're part of our past.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: Okay.

The Chair: Okay?

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: All right.

The Chair: Good.
Any other questions?

Dr. Martin: Thank you for your presentation. I wanted to pick up on your remark about the graveyard. Is that immediately east of Winterburn Road?

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: Yes. It's actually between Anthony Henday and the Winterburn Road, and it's right in the middle of a community. When the Indigenous people – and I went there and did ceremony before they broke ground for construction, because nobody did their due diligence for research. The people that asked me to come and help with ceremony, they said: you know, our ancestors are buried here; how can they do this? I said: you need to address this before they even go to permit.

But how do you address it if you don't know that people are doing things? Like, we're not accustomed to meeting people and discussing things, and I think there needs to be more of that, right?

There are grounds – like, I mean, maybe if you look in the south side, we have the one just before the bridge. They built that after everything was done. You know, moving forward, we can start taking care of these things rather than having to have a battle or protests and rallies happening. There's a way of preventative measures, if you will, but also respectful measures, right?

The Chair: Greg?

Mr. Clark: Just to thank you so much. We genuinely appreciate and honour you coming and talking with us today. Thank you.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: I truly appreciate you listening and not looking at me with incredulous views, like, soft looks or whatever. I appreciate that, you know. It makes me feel good, just like Jell-O.

Mrs. Samson: I just wanted to make the same comment as the rest of us up here, in that I really appreciate the fact that you came out today and shared with us a part of your history, heritage, and culture. We haven't had a lot of input like that, and we've been seeking that input to no success, successful today, so thank you.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: I'm an elder of the community at large, right? I've travelled throughout the land everywhere and did all kinds of things. I hold a pipe. You know, what they should have maybe asked me to do was be an elder who travelled and be part of the committee meetings because that makes it more comfortable for Indigenous people, plus I get the word out.

Mrs. Samson: Yes.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: Right? And then people are comfortable coming to talk because then they know they can talk their way. There's a fear of doing things properly. Like, the pastor coming, he was afraid; well, multiply that 100 times. Indigenous people just don't feel like they'll ever be heard.

Mrs. Samson: I'll make a note of your comments. Thank you.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: Yeah. You can reach me any time. If you want me to come to other meetings and just be present, I'm willing to do that. I think our voices are important.

The Chair: Please leave your information with Aaron, your contact person.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: I will. Thank you. [Remarks in Cree]

The Chair: Mr. Evans, anything?

Mr. Evans: No, thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We appreciate it.
Okay. That closes out our morning now. I think we'll adjourn and reconvene for 1 o'clock if we can get lunch in the meantime.

[The hearing adjourned at 12:13 p.m.]

