



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Public Hearings

Virtual

Monday, June 23, 2025  
9:03 a.m.

Transcript No. 27

## **Legislative Assembly of Alberta**

### **Electoral Boundaries Commission**

Justice Dallas K. Miller, Chair

Greg Clark

John D. Evans, KC

Julian Martin

Susan Samson

### **Support Staff**

Shannon Dean, KC

Philip Massolin

Aaron Roth

Rhonda Sorensen

Christina Steenberg

Amanda LeBlanc

Clerk

Clerk Assistant and Executive Director of  
Parliamentary Services

Administrator

Manager of Corporate Communications

Supervisor of Communications Services

Managing Editor of *Alberta Hansard*

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

### **Public Participants**

Diana Batten, MLA, Calgary-Acadia

Chris Dovey

Linda Ensley

Leona Esau, Intergovernmental Liaison, City of Airdrie

Andrew Knack, Councillor, City of Edmonton

Danielle Larivee

Barry Morishita

Al Olsen

Christopher Spearman

Megan Stewart, Grant Writer and Intergovernmental Affairs, City of Airdrie

Patricia Williams

Justin Wright, MLA, Cypress-Medicine Hat



9:03 a.m.

Monday, June 23, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

**The Chair:** Well, good morning, everyone. I want to welcome all of you to our very last day of public hearings, in the first round, for the Electoral Boundaries Commission. By way of introduction, my name is Justice Dallas Miller. I'm the chairman of the commission, and I will very briefly introduce my co-commissioners. If you want any biographical information on us as a commission, you can find that on the EBC website.

Susan Samson from Sylvan Lake is to my left, and to the far left is John Evans, KC, of Lethbridge. To my immediate right is Dr. Julian Martin, and to his right is Mr. Greg Clark. Julian Martin is from Sherwood Park, and Mr. Clark is from Calgary.

By way of background – I hope you'll be able to see the PowerPoint here shortly. We are an independent commission appointed by the Speaker of the Legislature for the express purpose of taking a look at Alberta's electoral boundaries and refashioning and redesigning a new set of boundaries for the next . . .

**Mr. Wright:** Sorry to interrupt, folks, but I think we've lost you. Judging by some of the reactions of the other cameras that are on, they too are not hearing anyone.

**The Chair:** Okay. Is everyone in the lobby, Mr. Roth? Yeah. Okay.

By way of background, this commission was appointed by the Speaker of the Legislature in late March of this year. Once we receive our appointment, the clock starts running in terms of the timeline for the commission. In April we met briefly as a commission to discuss process and schedule, and in late May we started our first round of public hearings throughout the province. We started in Pincher Creek in the southwest corner, and we've criss-crossed across the province. We're concluding our public tour with this day of virtual hearings, and we have a full morning and a full evening of presentations.

Our task is to do two things as part of redrawing the boundaries. The Legislature has expanded the Legislature through its most recent act from 87 seats to 89 seats. Of course, in each electoral district, the voters in that district elect the MLA. This is the first time there's been an expansion of the Legislature in some time. The reason the Legislature has expanded the number of seats is largely due to the explosive – I'm not exaggerating – population growth in this province over the last eight years.

It's helpful to get some perspective on our task. If we look at the last Electoral Boundaries Commission, in 2017 that commission issued its report on 87 boundaries, and they dealt with a population of slightly over 4 million people. The formula that that commission used was to take the population of, I believe, 4,062,000 and some and divide it by the number of ridings, 87. That gave them a mean average of about 43,000 and some persons in each riding – can we have that screen? Yeah, 46,697 individuals in each electoral division. Of course, that is not the target number for each electoral district; rather, we have a range under our system in Canada of as low as minus 25 per cent to as high as plus 25 per cent. You can see the targeted range for the ridings as a result of the 2017 Electoral Boundaries Commission, from 35,000 to just over 58,000.

Our task and our population for this commission is a significantly larger population, 4,888,723. The mean average of 89 ridings is therefore 54,929. The target range is thereby 41,000 at the low end and almost 69,000 at the top end. That's the targeted range for the electoral divisions that we must fit each electoral division in.

Alberta's growth has not been consistent across the province. It's been largely concentrated in the two larger cities. We will obviously

look at that, but we will also be guided by certain principles in the legislation. That includes dealing with the relative sparsity and density of the population in order to arrive at effective representation. So we will be looking at sparsity and density of population.

9:10

We'll also be looking at common community interests. Those are important factors in urban areas and in rural areas, but that is certainly a factor we will be considering. We'll also be looking at geographic features, which predominantly will be features for us to look at and consider in a rural context. Communication lines and transportation routes will also be a factor in designing the boundaries.

And, finally, our task as a commission is to come up with understandable and clear electoral boundaries so that Albertans understand the electoral division that they reside in, where they vote in, and who their MLA for that division is.

The legislation also gives us the catch-all of other appropriate factors to consider in drawing the boundaries. And that heading covers the type of information we will hear and we have heard in the public hearings. So that's a basic summary of our work.

We've been on the road now, this would be our fifth week, I guess. After we've completed today's hearings, we will commence our deliberations this week and start to put pen to paper. Our task and our deadline is to come up with an interim electoral boundaries report by late October. That will be filed with the Speaker of the Legislature and will be made public, and there will be opportunity to comment and address our interim report throughout November and December. Then in January we will have a further round of public hearings, with a view to complete our final report and have that filed and registered with the Speaker of the Legislature by late March of 2026.

That's the background information, which I hope is helpful to those of you who are in the lobby and were present for it. We will start right on time for 9:15 for our first presenter, Mr. Justin Wright, MLA. Sorry; one thing I should have said is that we have 10 minutes for presentation, and we will allow five minutes for question and dialogue from the commission.

**Mr. Wright:** Well, thank you, folks. I don't think I'm going to be anywhere close to the 10-minute mark, but I will do what I can to present in a concise way my thoughts on the Cypress-Medicine Hat and Brooks-Medicine Hat riding boundaries. Thank you so much for your time on this important work.

It is important to ensure that your work is being focused on the undertaking to represent Albertans in the best way possible. I have submitted a report that strongly supports maintaining the current electoral boundaries for Cypress-Medicine Hat and Brooks-Medicine Hat constituencies. In this submission it reflects not only a practical argument but a principled one that representation should be reflecting of real regional cohesion and not just population numbers on a map.

Medicine Hat and its surrounding communities have become increasingly integrated across economic, educational, cultural, and service lines. The current what I call rurban, which is a combination of rural and urban, is not only functional but foundational on how to best represent and deliver the expectations of this region.

In the rurban representation, blended ridings such as Cypress-Medicine Hat and Brooks-Medicine Hat are more than just geographical compromises; they are a means to represent in a robust way for the regional economy. As an MLA representing both urban and rural communities, and in enriching my understanding of what the needs are down here, it ensures that the legislative process, that

I walk through on a daily basis, is that of a diverse view, meeting the needs and understanding the balance of urban centres as well as rural economic growth.

While urban centres often drive economic growth, our rural areas supply the resources and cultural backbone. Together they form a cohesive constituency that is greater than the sum of its parts. This blend ensures better governance where urban priorities such as infrastructure, health care, and innovation are harmonized with rural concerns such as agriculture, transportation, and land use. It also produces more versatile grounded regulators.

I feel in this area two MLAs are a necessity and a luxury. In a time where regional voices are at a risk of being diluted, maintaining two constituencies that are blended, anchored both in urban and rural, is not just a luxury; it's a necessity. It ensures double the advocacy in the Legislature, better accessibility for constituents, and more resilience in pushing for local priorities. Considering that the challenges of our region are actively managing urgent care investments, postsecondary innovations, major infrastructure upgrades, school expansion, and energy diversification, these files are complex, demanding more than a single MLA delivering a voice of rural needs and can reasonably manage across a vast and diverse region.

The next point I'd like to point out is that Medicine Hat, due to its isolation and distance away from major shopping centres and major living centres, has become the anchor of southeastern Alberta. With Medicine Hat, it is the only major economic service hub between Regina and Calgary. With its services and cultural institutions, it provides critical infrastructure and leadership to a large geographical area. When we look at health care, our regional hospital services the lion's share of southern Alberta, specifically from the southeast and north-southeast perspective as well as with our newly announced urgent care centre and specialists that are servicing much of southern Alberta for health care needs.

In education the Medicine Hat College provides an in-depth, comprehensive community college approach to postsecondary with its satellite campus in Brooks. It plays a key regional role in postsecondary access with folks coming from Saskatchewan, northern Alberta, southern Alberta, southern British Columbia, and even as far away as Manitoba and our international students as well.

On the economic leadership with the transformation of the Medicine Hat chamber of commerce to the Southeast Alberta Chamber of Commerce, Medicine Hat's reach goes well beyond its corporate borders and up into areas such as special areas, into the Oyen area, as well as all the way to the U.S. border. Even the business community recognizes that regional interests must be the approach for a holistic take on representation rather than just rigid geographic or political lines. One of our major community foundations is also representing a large area very similar to the Medicine Hat chamber of commerce, that being the Community Foundation of Southeastern Alberta. These alignments reinforce the need to maintaining constituencies that reflect these evolving economic and institutional realities and not sever them arbitrarily.

Medicine Hat also has a large crossregional service integration. The Palliser Economic Partnership is a prime example of the need for regional blended constituencies. It services a larger corridor from Oyen to the north to the U.S. border to the south and the Saskatchewan border to the east and the Forty Mile border to the west. This is precisely the footprint encompassed by Cypress-Medicine Hat and Brooks-Medicine Hat currently. Splitting these ridings would weaken the alignment with economic development efforts and fracture collaborative movement that's happening down here.

Similarly, if we look at the education side of things, the Prairie Rose school division serves nearly the entirety of the territory of both constituencies and stretches into others even. Education is one of the more pressing issues constituents face, and redrawing these lines would result in confusing representation, policy fragmentation, and less efficient local advocacy.

Finally, let's address the question of representational fairness. Medicine Hat currently enjoys more direct representation per capita than other cities like Red Deer, Lethbridge, Airdrie, Grande Prairie, but it is proportionate to the complexity and breadth of what our regional anchor needs.

9:20

Medicine Hat serves as a regional capital responsible for supporting dozens of surrounding municipalities, counties, and even, if we take a look into Saskatchewan, First Nations. This is not just about city interest; it's about urban and rural residents who rely on Medicine Hat for education, medical treatment, commerce, and community. Reducing or changing up the split of representation down here would result in what I feel to be undue harm to rural and urban Alberta representation, the very people who feel that they could potentially lose a familiar voice in Edmonton.

In conclusion, I don't feel that this boundary redraw is necessarily a political issue. It's a matter of effective and equitable representation. Blended ridings serve our communities well because our communities themselves are blended in practice. Medicine Hat must continue, in my opinion, to be represented by two blended MLAs who together reflect the full character of diversity and ambition of southeastern Alberta. On behalf of all those who rely on cohesive, regional, accessible governance, I respectfully urge that you do not change the boundaries of Cypress-Medicine Hat or Brooks-Medicine Hat.

Thank you for your service and consideration.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Wright. It's always helpful to get someone who drives the roads and knocks on the doors present. A quick question for clarification, and then I'm going to turn it over to the rest of the commission. Does your riding currently include the county of Forty Mile?

**Mr. Wright:** No, it does not.

**The Chair:** Okay. There is a fair bit of feedback about the confusion of the boundary within the city. Wouldn't you agree that that needs some adjustment or clarity? It doesn't really follow great roads or streets necessarily, from what we've heard.

**Mr. Wright:** Well, it follows, actually, two of our very major networks. It follows highway 1 and highway 3. When we look at the map of Medicine Hat, Brooks-Medicine Hat and Cypress-Medicine Hat: the easy way to explain the division is the river, but the actual division is the river, highway 1, and highway 3. The river comes into the west of town to highway 1, and then highway 1 comes down to highway 3, and highway 3 you follow all the way downtown, and then it connects to the river again. So there is a very simple way to look at it, and that's the division of highway 1 and highway 3. Highway 3 also becomes known as Gershaw Drive.

I know when I was at the meetings in Medicine Hat that you fine folks put together there that had great folks turning out, highway 3 was already a divisional request that was made, and while those folks seemed to misunderstand that Gershaw Drive is highway 3, it's got a pretty clear division. I think the big challenge we've got is that so often people just look at it as the easy way. The easiest way is to say the division is the river, but down here the problems with Medicine Hat don't stop at the river. They're something where

each constituency works really hard to represent in an appropriate way.

**The Chair:** Okay. So you're content with the way it's divided, then?

**Mr. Wright:** Yeah. If we were cutting down side streets in a very confusing way, I would wholeheartedly agree. But given the fact that you're following very major arteries in the community, I am inclined to disagree with their take on that.

**The Chair:** Okay. Let me turn it over to the rest of the commission. We've got about five minutes. Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** Just: what do you think about the name?

**Mr. Wright:** I think it represents exactly what it's supposed to be doing. If we take a look at my riding of Cypress-Medicine Hat, we're representing the historical Cypress county as well as the Cypress Hills in that name but also representing Medicine Hat. When we take a look at Brooks-Medicine Hat, I think it represents the two main economic and regional anchors in that space. As I mentioned, the Medicine Hat College has its Brooks location, that is playing vital roles in postsecondary spaces. I think including Brooks-Medicine Hat and Cypress-Medicine Hat as is represents the important features of each of the ridings.

**Mr. Evans:** What about Medicine Hat-Cypress, Medicine Hat-Brooks?

**Mr. Wright:** I would disagree. Just when I structure out names and look at different pieces, I like to try to do it alphabetically. I find it sounds more professional when it's alphabetical, but that's just my personal take on it.

**The Chair:** Okay. Susan, any questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation, MLA Wright. I did read your submission, so it's good to be refreshed on that. What I did hear when I was in Medicine Hat was that people were not sure about Brooks being in the riding as a community of interest. Could you speak to that?

**Mr. Wright:** Yeah. You know, often we joke in rural or remote Alberta that home is where the nearest Costco is, or at least that's the joke. When we take a look, Medicine Hat has a got a draw that goes beyond its corporate borders into surrounding areas. I come with a business background where we would regularly have business or customer interactions with as far out as Cluny to the north and west as far out to Burdett on the south and east and then, obviously, into Saskatchewan. It would be not uncommon to pull folks from there.

Why I bring this up is that it's incredibly relevant to know where your pool is in regard to folks that are impacted by what happens in Medicine Hat. With the Brooks campus of the Medicine Hat College being located in Brooks as well as it being one of our major destinations in which we pull folks for commerce – we have organizations in town, a great number of organizations that I have not gotten to talking about that represent folks, you know, new-to-Canada individuals as well as people that are coming for health care, whether it's specialist appointments, heck, even doctor's appointments. We regularly get folks from Brooks into Medicine Hat as part of their day-to-day life.

**The Chair:** Mr. Wright, I'm going to have to slow you down there. We're kind of cautious of time here. I need time for two more questions.

Dr. Martin, any questions of Mr. Wright?

**Dr. Martin:** Yes. Thank you very much, and thank you for your presentation, both your submission and your synopsis today. I want to go back to your remarks about – I think I can quote it – better and more grounded regulators. Could you put some meat on that phrase? You are offering it as a benefit to the current configuration?

**Mr. Wright:** Yeah. Perhaps when we take a look at the breakdown that we see right now in a one-side-or-the-other voice, having a blended riding gives us a better understanding of the needs that are faced by both urban and rural constituents. The main balance that I hear often from a number of my colleagues on either side of the aisle is that they only hear one side of the voice. Alberta has got a long-standing history of both representing our main cultural and historical rural needs as well as the economics of that but also balancing the needs with the ongoing urbanization that we are seeing. It's just simply to call out the fact that as things are changing, there are a number of things that stay the same. Being able to have your finger on the pulse of what's going on in rural and urban gives you a better understanding of how to represent those diverse voices.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Wright.

Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** I'll try to be quick here. I know you're Cypress-Medicine Hat, but I would like to ask a little bit about Brooks-Medicine Hat. Around Brooks, places like Vauxhall, Bassano, that are not currently part of that constituency, perhaps points east down highway 555: is that part of, would you say, the Brooks catchment? Do those folks tend to go north-south, east-west? Like, what does that sort of catchment look like?

**Mr. Wright:** To be honest, I wouldn't be able to speak to Bassano or Vauxhall. I can say from my prepolitical life that getting folks from Bassano and Vauxhall was not uncommon down this way, again, being the only major shopping centre between Regina and Calgary. Outside of that, I couldn't begin to expand on Vauxhall and/or Bassano to help you out. Sorry.

9:30

**Mr. Clark:** Would you say then that that maybe counts as having quite a bit of a difference between those communities if you're not that familiar with their patterns?

**Mr. Wright:** If I go back to my high school days, we used to help out with the Vauxhall rodeo as part of our teambuilding for football. Medicine Hat's impact on Vauxhall: I would say what's good for the goose is good for the gander. When it comes to Bassano, you know, Bassano is certainly more tied in with Brooks, going back to your first portion of that question.

But truth be told, the reason why I say this is that I personally have my focus on my riding as well as what sandboxes key stakeholders from my riding play in. As an example: with the Medicine Hat College that I've talked about, the Medicine Hat regional hospital as I've talked about, a number of specialists in there have patients or students or facilities that are in those areas and add to the tapestry. That would be what I'd be able to offer you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Wright. Thank you for your presentation and for coming. I'm told that when I excuse the presenter from this format, if you want to listen to the rest of the morning's presenters, go to our website's YouTube channel and you can hear the rest of the morning. That's just a suggestion if you wish to stay and hear what's being said. By the way, everything that's being presented here is being recorded, and the audio will be up on our website eventually, and written transcripts via *Hansard* will also be on our website.

Thank you again, Mr. Wright.

**Mr. Wright:** No worries.

**The Chair:** We now move to Chris Dovey. Mr. Chris Dovey, can we hear you by unmuting possibly?

**Mr. Dovey:** Hang on. Sorry. Can you hear me now?

**The Chair:** Yeah, we can.

**Mr. Dovey:** Oh, great. Sorry. Thanks.

Thank you, commissioners, for giving me the opportunity to participate. My name is Christopher Dovey. I have lived in the neighbourhood of Forest Heights in Calgary-East for over 25 years. Over this time I have endeavoured to help my community wherever possible. I have sat on the parent councils of Holy Family elementary, Bishop Kidd junior high, and Father Lacombe high school. I have also sat on the citizens' land-use committee for the David D. Oughton site, the board of the Albert Park-Radisson Heights Community Association, and the Forest Lawn ethnocultural association.

I want to speak to the commission today about Calgary-East. First, Calgary-East has a unique composition. Its boundaries need to be aligned with Calgary's municipal boundaries and should not include parts of neighbouring rural communities. The complexion of Calgary-East is visibly and demonstrably different from bedroom communities like Chestermere. Calgary-East is practically an inner city community with visible minorities and a high proportion of technical, skilled, trade, and blue-collar workers. Calgary-East has a high population of low-income Calgarians, ESL Calgarians, as well as a high percentage of renters.

Contrast this with a community like Chestermere and the difference is vivid. I have rarely if ever interacted with citizens of Chestermere, nor have I ever met anyone from there in my various community engagements over the years.

According to the 2021 census approximately half of the residents of Calgary-East identify as a visible minority. Within this there are 18.9 per cent who identify as Black, 28.6 per cent as Filipino, and 21 per cent as Southeast Asian. Further, Calgary-East has the highest percentage of female sole-parent households in Calgary. From a newly constructed major roadway, which includes a dedicated express transit route to downtown, the continued vibrancy of International Avenue, a fully renovated Forest Lawn library, and, finally, the development of the David D. Oughton site, Calgary-East has worked hard to connect better with the city of Calgary as a whole and provide better services to its constituents.

Growth in Calgary-East is evident from the continued development of new home builds and mixed-use builds popping up throughout the community. These homes provide much-needed inventory for people looking to get into the housing market in a more affordable way than other communities in Calgary.

Some issues that affect Calgary-East and not hybrid Calgary-East/rural/Chestermere: families dependent on breakfast and lunch programs in schools; affordable housing; rent controls; caps on insurance; living wage, not a minimum wage; many of the

constituents are working multiple minimum wage part-time jobs; many families are relying on the food banks to feed their families; little to no support for English language learners; no extra funds to support extracurricular activities for youth; an increasing unhoused population; and different demographics, which are paramount, causing inequities in schools and education. The Greater Forest Lawn area was designated as high needs in the early 1990s, with special funding for schools. If the boundaries of Calgary-East are opened up to include neighbouring rural communities, the working-class, racialized voters in this riding will be underserved. Their voices will be diluted.

Second, the area north of Calgary has seen rapid growth since the last commission was struck. This demands another seat. The voters in the north would be better served if another seat was added to address the significant increase in population that the area has seen.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for that presentation. I believe that you may have been the first person to speak specifically to Calgary-East.

I'm going to start with Mr. Clark for any questions or comments.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you very much. I'm just looking at my data here. I just wonder if you could maybe comment specifically on the growth patterns in Calgary-East. We look at a map there. I think what you say seems to resonate in terms of there is quite a, you know, sort of a physical gap, I guess, between Calgary-East – there it is, if you can see that, just the words "Calgary-East" and the population numbers there – east of Stoney Trail. Can you tell us where the development is happening and again maybe just speak a little bit to the sort of connectedness of Calgary-East and perhaps in particular, I understand – is that Forest Lawn there, just on the on the left there, 17th Avenue SE and 36th Street? Is that Forest Lawn part of Calgary-East? So two questions: where's the development and just confirming where the communities are.

**Mr. Dovey:** Yeah. You're quite correct about communities and the dividing lines. I see a lot of development occurring in my area, which is Radisson Heights, and surrounding on 36th Street SE going towards 17th Avenue, so from Marlborough Mall to 17th Avenue there are seven new builds, multihousing units being built around there. There are a few others happening in Southview, and there are a couple of larger scale mixed-use facilities which are happening or have happened on our portion of 17th Avenue, International Avenue, before you get to that dividing line. So those would be kind of the major ones.

I'm not entirely certain since I'm no longer involved in what's happening with the David D. Oughton site, but it is being remediated. It's all plowed down. As far as I understand, it's going to be a combination of a large affordable housing, multifamily, and mixed-use development area. So those would be kind of the major projects that I've noticed. In the last couple of years I've certainly noticed a lot more, you know, single-family homes, new homes being built and things like that as I kind of bike and walk around the community.

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

**Mr. Dovey:** You're welcome. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you for your presentation, sir. I wanted to come back to – the map stimulated me to ask: do you have thoughts about



development within the existing boundaries on the eastern side of the orbital freeway?

**Mr. Dovey:** Can you sort of clarify for me where specifically you're talking about there?

9:40

**Dr. Martin:** To the east of Stoney Trail.

**Mr. Dovey:** I'll be honest. That's not an area I'm terribly familiar with, so I'm not really certain what . . .

**Dr. Martin:** Well, the thrust of your concern was about somehow blending things up with Chestermere, but you've got a huge block of territory existing within the existing electoral district footprint. Do you anticipate growth in that area?

**Mr. Dovey:** Sorry. I understand what you mean. I certainly do. I certainly see that there's no possibility that growth won't occur there. My concern right now would be that, you know, growth there is pretty minor and, probably by the time the next Electoral Boundaries Commission is struck, we might be having a very different conversation. At the moment, though, I think my focus is more on the complexion of Calgary-East as it currently stands, as I outlined in my presentation, the various demographic issues that affect that. I'm a very good example. I'm someone who lives there and works downtown, and if I take transit, you know, I'm downtown in 12 minutes. As you go further along and further out, you know, that becomes a little more different.

The other thing to me and, I think, to a lot of my colleagues that's a concern is this idea of coupling us up specifically with Chestermere, which is a very, very different community, more of a bedroom community, much higher income, very, very different complexion. It will cause incredible dilution of the demographic complexion of Calgary-East.

**The Chair:** Ms Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation. I don't have any questions at this time.

**The Chair:** Doctor.

**Mr. Evans:** Good morning. Thank you for your presentation. I've got a question on: are you in ward 9 or ward 10 of the city?

**Mr. Dovey:** Ward 10.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. The city boundary jogs along towards Chestermere on the south side of highway 1, correct?

**Mr. Dovey:** Yes.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. So it would appear to me that there's significant growth in that Elliston Lake area and farther south of there as well. Also, on the east side of Stoney Trail, on the south side of 17 Avenue: you'd agree with me there's significant growth there and on the south of 17 Avenue as well?

**Mr. Dovey:** Yeah, there is. So, I mean, my concern there would be that perhaps we're looking at the creation of another riding in the future, which, as I said, could be something the next time an electoral boundaries committee is struck. It might have a riding that might include a little bit of that and make that a kind of – I don't know – Chestermere-East kind of thing, but right now for the foreseeable future, again, I think that the demographics and the

distribution of income and the distribution of population doesn't make sense.

**Mr. Evans:** Is there more growth beyond that Good Shepherd area? That would be just north of 17 Avenue, right up around 100 Street SE.

**Mr. Dovey:** Yeah. Again, I'm not terribly familiar, so I couldn't speak to that.

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

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much for your presentation and for attending. As I said, I think you can switch back. If you want to hear the rest of the presentations, go to the YouTube channel on our website. You're excused, Mr. Dovey.

**Mr. Dovey:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Our 9:45 presenter, Christopher Spearman.

**Mr. Spearman:** Good morning.

**The Chair:** Good morning.

**Mr. Spearman:** Can you hear me?

**The Chair:** Yes, we can hear you.

**Mr. Spearman:** Okay. Thank you very much for the opportunity to present today. My name is Chris Spearman. I had the honour of serving as the mayor of Lethbridge for eight years, from 2013 to 2021. I'm here today because I heard that there might be a proposal to split up representation in Lethbridge into four hybrid ridings, basically partially rural and partially urban, and I'd like to speak against that proposal.

I think that type of proposal is one that doesn't really serve the city of Lethbridge well. Lethbridge is alternately either the third-largest or the fourth-largest city in Alberta. It has unique interests as the hub of southwest Alberta, and the regional interests, whether they be economic or otherwise, are best served by other organizations. There are multiple regional organizations, like southgrow regional initiative and the Economic Development Lethbridge, others which address economic development issues and which collaborate. They work with the cities.

When I was the mayor of Lethbridge, I would host a meeting every month, every Friday. Basically, it was the mayors and reeves of southwest Alberta, where we collaborated on multiple issues. I think it's important to maintain political representation for the city of Lethbridge that fully understands the complexity of the issues that a city like Lethbridge faces.

The challenge that I always had when I was the mayor was that I was able to work with our local MLAs, but we had a city that basically was facing big-city challenges but was only a small city and didn't receive the same resources that big cities got. For example, dealing with poverty. The cities of Edmonton and Calgary received subsidies so that the people who were living in poverty could access transportation. Lethbridge and Red Deer and other mid-size cities didn't get that same type of funding even though we faced those challenges. I think dividing up the city and having a rural-urban representation doesn't provide the necessary understanding to focus on similar issues like that which face mid-size cities.

I think it's important that the representation for Lethbridge not be diminished, that the MLAs representing the city be focused on what's important to Lethbridge and leave the regional issues to the

local politicians and the local organizations that are already set up to deal with that. We work effectively with Economic Development Lethbridge. We work effectively with the Chamber of Commerce, with all the other organizations that represent a variety of interests.

It's important not to undermine the role of municipally elected officials either and not to confuse them with the responsibilities of elected MLAs. I don't see any advantage – in fact, I see significant disadvantages – to having blended hybrid MLAs representing the city. There are some challenges. There are some differences between what urban municipal MLAs have to deal with and what rural MLAs have to deal with, and I wouldn't want to put MLAs in those positions. I think municipal elected representatives need to deal with MLAs who share the same concerns and the same issues and can focus their advocacy in Edmonton on the cities and the residents that they represent.

There are specific issues which are unique to urban areas – they're dealing with population growth; they're dealing with urban transportation – that are unique to cities and which MLAs need to focus on. There are also, I'm sure – I live in a rural area now – areas in rural areas which rural MLAs should focus on, and I don't think hybrid representation will serve either very well.

That's largely the essence of my presentation. I think it's important to recognize that, in terms of democracy, we can look at how representation in the city has changed over the years. Back in the '80s we had Progressive Conservative representatives. In 2015 they completely flipped to NDP. Both ridings represented NDP. Right now we have one NDP representative and one UCP representative. It's healthy when representation changes. I think that's what you get with the city of Lethbridge and urban areas. There's generally less change in the rural areas, and I would not want to move to a situation or a representation process which consistently elected one party and not the other.

That's the essence of my presentation today. I'm open to any questions you might have.

9:50

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much, sir.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comments of this presenter?

**Mr. Evans:** Good morning, Mr. Spearman. Thank you for your presentation. If I understood what I heard, your concern is mostly as it relates to the electoral outcome of one party versus another in terms of changing the boundaries. Is that right?

**Mr. Spearman:** No, not exclusively. I think I talked to the effectiveness of representation for the city as well: the uniqueness of the issues in an urban environment versus a rural environment. I'm not confident that a blended riding would make that any better. I think we need to have the city of Lethbridge, like the cities of Edmonton and Calgary, have representatives that are focused on urban issues . . .

**Mr. Evans:** Mr. Spearman, if I might interrupt for just a second so I can ask you a further question. You'll agree with me that the factors that you're talking about in terms of – and I'll just list some of the responsibilities listed under the MGA for the municipalities: safety, health, welfare, activities of people, nuisance, transportation and transportation systems, business and business activities, public utilities. As a former mayor you'd agree those are responsibilities of the municipality and don't fall within the direct mandate of an MLA. Can you explain to me what would be unique in terms of those municipal responsibilities vis-à-vis a councillor in the city of Lethbridge versus a councillor and a reeve in the county of Lethbridge or county of Cardston or county of Warner?

**Mr. Spearman:** Yes. For example, transportation was one of the issues you listed, and I gave an example of how the cities of Edmonton and Calgary lobbied successfully with their MLAs to receive a benefit for those people who live in poverty, a transportation grant from the provincial government. You know, we need to be able to have our MLAs lobby for those types of things as well even though those are municipal responsibilities. When we feel that our municipality is not receiving the same benefits, we need to have our MLAs working with our municipal elected representatives as well to advocate for our citizens and their needs.

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

**The Chair:** Susan, any questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation, Mayor Spearman. I have a question. We heard a presentation when we were in Lethbridge regarding the need for the hybrid riding, and I understood that it was important because of the economic development and investment in the rural that we needed to band together the city and those four regions surrounding it. Could you comment on that?

**Mr. Spearman:** I don't believe that at all. I was employed in the agrifood sector before I was mayor. I worked in the industrial sector in the city of Lethbridge. I was a founding member of Economic Development Lethbridge back in 2003, and when I was mayor, I was the vice chair for eight years of Economic Development Lethbridge.

The county of Lethbridge has a representation. The board has 25 members. I led an economic development trip to China and Japan in 2017. We had representatives from southgrow regional initiative that economic development tour. We collaborated together with economic development and the communities around us. Economic development is one aspect of what municipalities do. Smaller municipalities rely on those regional organizations like southgrow to do a lot of their economic development work, and that's work that's separate and apart.

We work together with our MLAs and with the provincial government and with the federal government to support economic development attraction as it is, and I don't believe that creating hybrid ridings is going to enhance that in any way. In certain investments within the city of Lethbridge, because we're one of the few, like, that have – we supply water and waste-water services on a regional basis. That needs to be managed. We need to collaborate with our communities. For example . . .

**The Chair:** Mr. Spearman, I'm going to ask you to maybe cut it short because we have a couple more questions and I'm under a time limit here. I'll move on to Dr. Martin. Sorry about that.

**Mr. Spearman:** Okay.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you, Mayor. I just want to say that I understand exactly the argument you're making, and thank you for making it so clearly. I am puzzled, however, about the notion that having – I mean, let's say we have a thought experiment. Let's think of some hybrid ridings. You've got additional MLA advocacy, not less. We've heard from an earlier speaker today, as a matter of fact, that that enriches their advocacy, to have several points of view, and every politician I know is able to advocate for several things simultaneously. So where's the problem?

**Mr. Spearman:** That hasn't been entirely my experience. When I've dealt with rural MLAs, I think they do a reasonable job, but the

rural perspective is unique from the urban perspective. I think people who are specifically from the city, you know – as I've said, I think Lethbridge deserves what Calgary and Edmonton already have, and that is MLAs that are focused on fully understanding the needs of an urban centre.

**Mr. Clark:** Great. Thank you. I'm wondering. In your time as mayor, either before that time or since, has there ever been any consideration of annexing Coalhurst, Broxburn, maybe as far away as Coaldale? If so or even if not, would you agree that that proposal would not be embraced very warmly by those communities because of their significant distinctions from the city of Lethbridge?

**Mr. Spearman:** I think that's true. I think municipalities have to respect what each are doing. Each are specialized in what they are. There have been some efforts to deal with regional municipalities. We have considered in the past: should we be regionalized with the county of Lethbridge – the county of Lethbridge is one of the poorer rural counties in Alberta – and would they benefit from being part of the city of Lethbridge? The challenge is always going to be levels of taxation. Urban centres generally have higher levels of taxation because they provide more services, and rural areas and rural municipalities are more reluctant to join with larger urban areas because they don't want to inherit some of those costs.

A few years ago we regionalized our police force with the town of Coaldale, and very quickly they were unhappy with the cost structure. They subsequently asked to get out of that agreement, and we agreed they could, and they decided to go pursue the RCMP. I think it's an example of how rural needs are different from urban needs. We need to provide those level of services in the city that rural areas don't necessarily need to have or want to have and don't want to pay the cost of.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Spearman.

I'm going to take this opportunity maybe just to comment. Our responsibility as a commission is to ensure effective representation for Albertans, and a not so recent court challenge to Alberta's boundaries, a few decades ago, painted the picture in very simplistic terms. Effective representation in Alberta can be achieved by either increasing the number of MLAs or, secondly, eliminating the number of more rural MLAs or, thirdly, come up with hybrid ridings. Those are the only three possibilities for us to keep effective representation for Albertans. The reality is that two new ridings are probably insufficient given Alberta's population growth. You made the comment about Lethbridge being the same as Calgary and Edmonton. I'm sorry; it isn't. It can't be now because of the huge population growth that both Edmonton and Calgary have experienced. It's not been quite as significant in the other cities.

**10:00**

I hope you appreciate the mandate that we have. We have to adhere to effective representation, which is grounded in section 3 of the Charter of Rights, and we have very few options in terms of redrawing the map. I probably should put that in my introductory comments.

Thank you very much, Mr. Spearman, for presenting, and thank you for helping us stay on time as well.

I'm going to move to our next presenter, Leona Esau.

**Ms Esau:** Good morning. We actually have a presentation. I'm just going to share it on the screen. Myself and my colleague Megan Stewart will be delivering the presentation. I just want to make sure that you can see our presentation.

**The Chair:** Yes, we can. Thank you.

**Ms Esau:** Thank you. Again, we are Leona Esau and Megan Stewart in the government relations and grants department at the city of Airdrie. Thank you for this opportunity to provide input to the 2025 Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission review. As a fast-growing municipality, we believe our unique population and development trends should be considered as new provincial electoral boundaries are redrawn. It should be noted that our presentation today is based on our submission from May.

I hope that switched over. Sorry; I cannot see my presentation. Does the presentation have current representation challenge at the top of it?

**The Chair:** No, it doesn't.

**Ms Esau:** Okay. Hang on. Sorry.

**The Chair:** We can't apparently help you because we don't have it. You're going to have to work on moving the slide on your own there.

**Ms Esau:** Yes, that's what I'm – yeah, there's something not working. Is it back up again?

**The Chair:** Are you able to send it to info? Please send the slide deck to [info@abebc.ca](mailto:info@abebc.ca), and then we may be able to help, take control.

**Ms Esau:** Sorry about that.

**The Chair:** Yeah, feel free to – one of you present, and we'll try and get it up as soon as you're able to send it to Aaron.

**Ms Esau:** Sure. The city of Airdrie is Alberta's fastest growing city and is currently underrepresented in the Legislature as our two existing electoral divisions exceed the provincial average by 37.6 per cent and 23.8 per cent respectively. Today we'd like to share three redistribution scenarios for consideration, that would create more equitable electoral boundaries while accounting for our exceptional growth trajectory, which is projected to reach 135,792 residents by 2034. Our proposals would help create electoral divisions that maintain balanced population levels during the next electoral cycle, ensuring sustainable and fair representation.

Airdrie is currently divided between two electoral divisions, Airdrie-Cochrane and Airdrie-East. According to the commission's own data these divisions significantly exceed the provincial average population: Airdrie-Cochrane, with almost 76,000 residents, and Airdrie-East, with approximately 68,000 residents. This substantial deviation from the provincial average of 55,000 residents per electoral division means that citizens in our community have less proportional representation than those in many other Alberta constituencies, and the significant growth anticipated for the community in the next 10 years is not accounted for.

Did you receive the presentation by any chance? We do have a map on this next one. I can speak to it. The map just divides Airdrie into four quadrants and shows the significant population in each one of our quadrants. Although our 2025 census numbers have not been released yet – these are based on our 2024 data – we do know that we will be over 90,000 people when our census information is released here in a couple of weeks.

Our next slide just shows some growth with our planned areas. Then if the presentation is there, it's Airdrie's exceptional growth. In our fast-growing province many people are choosing to call the Airdrie-Cochrane area home. From 2016 to 2021, when the provincial growth rate was 4.8 per cent, Airdrie's population

increased by nearly 20 per cent. Our population is projected to reach nearly 109,000 by 2028 and 136,000 in less than a decade.

**The Chair:** We have it now.

**Ms Esau:** Oh, thank you. There we are. It's that one there.

This exceptional growth is demonstrated by our recent development activity: 15 residential communities currently under construction, almost 30,000 occupied dwellings, and 1,428 housing permits issued last year alone, accounting for 42 per cent of Alberta's housing starts outside of Calgary and Edmonton. This is unprecedented growth that demands boundary redistribution consideration. We appreciate consideration for boundaries that can accommodate our current population disparities and anticipated future growth, ensuring fair and effective representation for our residents over the coming decade.

On to the next slide, and I'm just going to turn it over to Megan for the scenarios.

**Ms Stewart:** Thank you, Leona.

Here's just a quick look at our three proposed redistribution scenarios. Just move to the next slide, please. We recognize – in this chart you'll see the numbers here – that several of our scenarios may start out slightly below the average, but they'll quickly grow to appropriate levels, and we'll likely exceed the average again before a future review begins. The population data we've used is based on our 2024 municipal census data and population estimates from our newly occupied dwellings. Estimates of current and future population reflect population growth within the city of Airdrie municipal boundaries, but in this chart here we've reflected a conservative estimate for the rural areas.

If you just want to go to the next one, it's just kind of a series of maps that we'll move through fairly quickly. Our first scenario is a north-south division. This was the map similar to when Leona's slides were just getting pulled up. It's a north-south division using Yankee Valley Boulevard, one of our major thoroughfares, to divide the community. This scenario includes the community of Crossfield to the north, and it doesn't add in any rural residents. This is just city of Airdrie population data and the town of Crossfield data but doesn't include rural, which would obviously increase the numbers.

The next slide will show the future population estimates, and, again, just represents what we know for our own Airdrie population growth. They don't account for any growth within the town of Crossfield and obviously no growth for the rural areas.

If you move to the next slide, it shows some potential north riding boundaries, which could include all areas north of Yankee Valley, including the town of Crossfield and rural route 772 to the west, township 290 potentially to the north, and rural route 791 to the east. The southern riding would go to the Calgary city limits, which is consistent with where the Airdrie ridings exist today.

To the next slide; we're showing one proposed east-west scenario. This one doesn't include the town of Crossfield, and it would divide Airdrie basically along the CPKC rail line for the most part between an east-west division.

In the next slide we see the change to the future growth with population increases in our NSP areas. Again, this map and these numbers do not include any rural population.

**10:10**

The next one, our final scenario, is again an east-west division, just like the one we looked at before, but this one does include the town of Crossfield. It uses primarily the CPKC rail line. The numbers here just include city of Airdrie numbers currently and town of Crossfield numbers currently. The next map shows the

future increases. So the two options here are pretty well balanced, with the population numbers fairly consistent.

The last map shows some potential geographic boundaries along the same, similar lines: rural route 772 in the east, rural route 791 to the west, then township 290 at the north, and the city of Calgary boundaries along the south. We believe that these scenarios, especially the one you're seeing here on the screen, offer multiple benefits, more equitable representation for Airdrie residents, recognition of our significant population growth to date, a combination of our projected future growth and use of readily identifiable geographic features like our major roadways and the rail line as boundaries.

Next slide, please. We recognize that changes to our Airdrie ridings will have a ripple effect on those around us. We've also tried to consider, in our proposal, to support regional boundary challenges, not just Airdrie's. You notice that several of our proposed scenarios include the town of Crossfield within our proposed electoral boundaries. This recommendation is based on the concentrated growth along the QE II corridor. Crossfield residents identify closely with our urban voters in Airdrie, sharing similar concerns, service needs, and community interests.

This change would also facilitate other beneficial boundary adjustments further north along the QE II, potentially allowing the town of Bowden to be moved into Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. Modifications like this would also help accommodate growth in the Sylvan Lake, Red Deer county region and maintain minimal deviations in multiple ridings without creating undue disruption to community representation.

In the rural areas, in addition to our own city boundaries of Airdrie and the town of Crossfield, our proposed scenarios could incorporate some rural voting stations in the areas surrounding Airdrie. These rural districts could add approximately 2,500 to 3,000 residents to the electoral division populations that we were seeing on the slides, in the maps. These areas have significant social and economic connections to Airdrie, residents regularly commuting to the city for work, shopping, recreation, and other services.

Finally, while our submission focuses – oh, sorry; just one more note on that other side. While our submission focuses primarily on Airdrie's electoral boundaries, we would support the creation of a dedicated Cochrane electoral division that would include the Bearspaw area, which would have strong community ties to Cochrane.

**Ms Esau:** Next slide, please. It should be noted that the town of Cochrane is the second fastest growing municipality here in Alberta. The city of Airdrie appreciates the complex task before the commission in balancing population equity, equality with community interests across Alberta. Our proposed scenarios address both immediate and long-term representation needs for one of Alberta's fastest growing communities. Our proposals create community-focused ridings that reflect natural boundaries, travel patterns, and shared interests. The inclusion of Crossfield and surrounding rural areas in specific scenarios strengthens regional cohesion while facilitating beneficial adjustments to neighbouring electoral divisions.

We welcome any questions or requests for additional information that would assist the commission in its important work. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms Esau and Ms Stewart, for this very timely – let me assure you that we have wrestled already with Airdrie, and we have seen maps and we've had presentations. I don't want to say that great minds think alike, but maybe they do. Very quickly, I wish we had more time with you. I'm going to limit

it to one question per commissioner, very succinct. And please stay around. If we have time at the end, maybe we'll try to bring in more time.

Mr. Clark, a question?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you. Great to see you. We also received a submission from Crossfield which aligns with your suggestion, so that was sort of a question answered. I'm curious if there has been any consideration given to creating sort of one completely urban Airdrie constituency and then one hybrid, a little bit like how Grande Prairie is right now. If you've looked at the map, there's a purely urban Grande Prairie, and then there's a Grande Prairie-Wapiti with the surrounding area. Had you given any thought to that? Even if not, do you think there would be any value in doing something like that?

**Ms Esau:** We had run some numbers that did have one primarily urban riding and then a hybrid riding, including the town of Crossfield. With the development that's occurring in Airdrie – one of the slides in the very beginning just showed our projected population based on our neighbourhood structure plans that have been approved – very quickly we would outgrow that urban riding. We just could not find a boundary that would allow a riding to be to be within and not outgrow by population over the 10-year period until the next electoral boundaries redistribution commission. So we really struggled – we really struggled – with that one.

**Mr. Clark:** That's great. Thank you.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much. It's always wonderful to meet people who, like the commission, are map and demographically obsessed. We are familiar with what you're talking about, we totally get it, and we congratulate you on doing the hard labour of putting together those scenarios.

My question is specifically about the growth projections. Everybody talks about growth projections, but I really am interested in what is imminent and tangible. In your case I suspect that's the number of development permits. For obvious reasons we would like to hear about growth, high probabilities of population growth within the next five years. I wonder if you could speak to that on the basis of the permitting evidence and any other evidence that you have to hand.

**Ms Esau:** Sure. Last year, as I noted, Airdrie permitted 1,428 doors in our community, which was 42 per cent of all of the homes permitted outside of Calgary and Edmonton, so 42 per cent of all the doors built or permitted were done here in Airdrie and the rest of the province. What we know is that we have slowed slightly this year, but we are seeing more multifamily and townhouse units come on the market as affordability continues to be a challenge for Albertans. We expect that our numbers will continue to grow like we saw last year. Airdrie really is a community of choice. For example, I drove across our community from the far northwest to the far southeast this morning in 10 minutes. There is a real desire for especially families to come live here. Even in speaking with our development community, we do not see that growth slowing beyond, I guess, what the population of the whole province would.

The 20 per cent growth rate that we had, that we referenced early in the presentation: we're expecting that again. Even our own growth estimates: we have surpassed that and now require a major waste-water upgrade to accommodate future growth. We can get you the numbers. We can send those separately to you if you'd like.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation. I know that you didn't dwell at all on the fact that Cochrane is within your riding, but can you speak to how it is, the lay of the land, on-the-ground reality, having two major centres, two large urban municipalities, Cochrane and yourself, in the same riding when we look to understand representation?

**Ms Esau:** Sure. As you know, right now we have the Airdrie-Cochrane riding, and then we have Airdrie-East. For us our Airdrie-East MLA does live within our riding. The Airdrie-Cochrane representative lives in Cochrane. Cochrane is growing, and so is the surrounding area. If you look at Harmony and Bearspaw, all the way along the 1A is continuing to grow. When you look at the numbers between our two municipalities, we're already over that threshold.

**10:20**

I think it has been difficult for the MLA for Airdrie-Cochrane to effectively represent both communities. Although we're similar in terms of the infrastructure that's required to support growth, our communities are significantly different from one another. Where we have experienced some challenges is that although we have two MLAs, I don't think we've always had two MLAs that were focused on Airdrie. If we do continue to grow with the numbers that we presented here, we will – I don't even know what the word is I'm looking for. If we continue to grow the way we are and south of Airdrie continues to grow along the QE II, we will very quickly – very quickly – be some of the largest ridings outside of Calgary and Edmonton again.

I think for us, and even the Premier speaks about this, the QE II corridor really is the area for concentrated growth to occur between Calgary and Edmonton. We're seeing that when you drive from Calgary now to Airdrie, it's only going to [inaudible], and development will be on both sides of the road. It will almost feel like one urban centre rather than going from Calgary to rural Rocky View county and into Airdrie, so we are just going to continue to grow both residential and nonresidential.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** John, questions?

**Mr. Evans:** I want you to speak to the growth and juxtapose the growth on the south side of QE II, so the southwest and the southeast. It seems to me that there is a choking point or a bottleneck on the southeast, but the southwest will continue to grow. Is that also true with respect to the northwest of Airdrie, so the west side of the QE II going north?

**Ms Esau:** Sorry. We're just looking for our map here. Most of our development, really, is concentrated in that southeast, and you are correct. We're up against our boundaries there. There are a couple of quarter sections still to be developed out. There are still some to be developed out there. We're primarily seeing our construction in that southwest and in the northwest, and even in the northwest it's along the hill up and over to the old Centre Street and range road 11, 13 – I think it's 13. Range road 13.

**Mr. Evans:** Is the growth faster on the south versus the northwest?

**Ms Esau:** Yes.

**Mr. Evans:** And is there a larger area to develop and easier develop on the southwest as opposed to the northwest?

**Ms Esau:** Yes.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. That's what I needed to know. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you so much. I know all of us probably have more questions, but time, our mortal enemy, is marching on here, so I have to cut this presentation short. As I said, you can follow the rest of the audio on our YouTube channel. We'll see if there are any no-shows, and if you want to continue more, we might be able to do that. Thank you so much for presenting.

**Ms Esau:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Our next presenter and our last presenter before our morning break is Patricia Williams.

**Ms Williams:** Good morning.

**The Chair:** Good morning.

**Ms Williams:** Can everyone hear me?

**The Chair:** Yes. You're 10 minutes late in starting.

**Ms Williams:** My name is Patricia Williams. I'm here to present my comments on Lethbridge. I wasn't aware that Chris Spearman was going to present ahead of me, but some of the things I'll say will be similar. Some of them will be different.

I live in Lethbridge-West, and I've been here for 35 years. I've never been a politician. I've never been elected to anything. I'm a retired respiratory therapist, and the last 12 years of my career I worked in a position for AHS that provided service to several rural communities in the surrounding area, including Fort Macleod, Picture Butte, Taber, and Milk River. My thoughts and ideas come from my position as a health care worker interacting with these rural communities and the people that I saw there.

I've read the transcript of the May 29 meeting and note the statements of several community members who cite some good reasons for maintaining the status quo and keeping the constituency boundaries for Lethbridge-West and Lethbridge-East consistent with municipal boundaries. I've also read the presentation that is distinctly different in proposing to divide the two constituencies into four, which we previously discussed. This looks nice and well organized in theory, but I have some concerns about how it would work in reality.

Calgary and Edmonton – and I have lived in both – tend to look at everything outside themselves as rural. I do not consider myself to be living in a rural community. Lethbridge currently has a population of about 111,000 people, a university, a polytechnic institute, a symphony, a full-service hospital with an intensive care unit and specialists, a full-time professional fire and ambulance service. This is a city.

There is no precedent in Alberta in a community of Lethbridge's size to be divided into four ridings. The presenter of this model compares Lethbridge with the two ridings in Medicine Hat, which incorporate large rural areas from Brooks, east to the Saskatchewan border, and south to the Montana border. Medicine Hat has a population of about 67,000, which is a bit large for one riding but not big enough for two. In addition, there is a large area of rural population that isn't terribly large, and the combined rural-urban ridings serve a purpose in that area. Applying this model to Lethbridge would have no advantages for the city at all. In fact, dividing a city of 111,000 people that hasn't even adopted a municipal ward system into four quarters would make no sense at all.

There are some parallels between this model of electoral boundaries and the rural job I worked at. Lethbridge was, in theory,

my home base, but after one of AHS's reorganizations I did not have a home base here any longer. I was tasked with Milk River on Tuesday and Taber on Wednesday and Fort Macleod on Thursday and so forth. If the weather was bad and it was not safe to travel, I had a problem. Working from home was not an option in those days.

One of the first things I learned in this job was that each community was different from Lethbridge and different from each other. Communities varied in size and the health care resources they had, but on paper they were all the same. It solved a problem for management to be able to say that those places had an RT assigned to them one day a week, but they weren't the same. Taber had 10 doctors while Milk River struggles to keep one or two.

The next thing I learned was that I was dealing with people with health care issues, not just sites and equipment. Some of these people had values and needs quite different than mine. My goal might be to get a test done as soon as possible to make the doctor happy. Well, Joe maybe couldn't care less about his test because he was in the middle of harvest, and he wasn't going to do his test until harvest was done. Mary's child might be referred for an asthma appointment, but Mary wasn't able to take time off from work to bring the child to the appointment because she worked in another town. The fact that I came to the community one day a week and had little flexibility in that didn't really help.

All I'm saying is that there are differences that are significant between rural and urban folks. After years of working in those communities, I never did fit into most of them very well. I was still a therapist that was sent out from Lethbridge. The rural-urban model for electoral boundaries might produce the same kind of dysfunction if, for example, Lethbridge-West had an MLA living in Crowsnest Pass or Cardston.

One of the participants on the May 29 meeting stated that having rural areas included in the Lethbridge ridings dilutes the democratic legitimacy of Lethbridge voters. I went back looking at what we've elected over the past 30 years in both Lethbridge-West and Lethbridge-East. They've elected a mix of parties: NDP, UCP, Liberals, PCs. This is distinctly different from the surrounding rural areas, which are consistently conservative. You know, whether conservative with a small "c," whether it was labelled UCP or Wildrose or PC or whatever, they vote consistently conservative. For us to be included in that really dilutes what we're voting for.

Belinda Crowson, who is our local historian, noted that Lethbridge has had no rural elements in its electoral boundaries since 1909 and that the two-riding system we have today came into existence in 1969. This model works for Lethbridge, and I would respectfully ask that you please don't try to fix what isn't broken.

Thank you for your time.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much, Ms Williams.

Very succinct, one-line questions from the commissioners.

**10:30**

**Mr. Clark:** Maybe more just a comment – and I'm cognizant of the time here – but the thing you've said here that struck me the most is that even when you've worked a long time in one rural area with a group of folks, you were still from Lethbridge. I guess maybe if you, in 60 seconds or less, can just expand on that a bit.

**Ms Williams:** Part of the problem with my job that made it so dysfunctional is that I didn't belong to any one place. Like I said, it was a solution for management. It was like: one day a week, I was there; the rest of the time, I was not there. It was really hard for me to actually say: I was Taber's respiratory therapist. I thought of myself as Taber's respiratory therapist, but when I left nobody really seemed to care, and frankly when I retired my job

disappeared. It was actually dismantled and pieces of it were given, like this four-riding model, to other places. Then my job was given to someone in Medicine Hat and they turned it into something else, which didn't make me very happy but there was nothing I could do about it.

**The Chair:** Okay. Julian, anything?

**Dr. Martin:** No, thank you.

**The Chair:** Anything, Susan?

**Mrs. Samson:** No questions.

**The Chair:** Anything, John?

**Mr. Evans:** No questions.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, Ms Williams.

We are going to sign off now for our break and reconvene at 10:50.

[The hearing adjourned from 10:31 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.]

**The Chair:** Well, we're all ready. Maybe we can start things up and see if our next presenters are ready. Good morning, Ms Batten, Diana Batten. It looks like you're here. We're a minute early, but let's get started. We can always use time on the front-end. Please introduce yourself, tell us what riding you represent, and proceed with your presentation.

**Member Batten:** Perfect. Thank you so much. My name is Diana Batten. I am the proud MLA for the beautiful riding of Calgary-Acadia, and it's with gratitude that I join the conversation today about the future of fair and representative democracy here in Alberta. I suspect many of us, me included, may from time to time take democracy for granted. Maybe we see it as a given as opposed to the privilege it truly is, and we forget the important work that is done every day in support of this province. I want to just take a quick minute to thank you all for undergoing this important work on this commission. It is so important, and I am grateful for you reflecting on the solutions and concerns that Albertans are bringing forward.

As I mentioned, I have the privilege of serving Calgary-Acadia in the Legislature for just about two years. The southeast riding is home to nine communities, including Manchester, Kingsland, Haysboro, Southwood, Canyon Meadows, Willow Park, Maple Ridge, Acadia, and Fairview, all of whom have shown incredible growth and re-engagement in their community. I specifically use the term "re-engagement" because, of course, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, when we were all told to stay apart to keep each other safe, what we didn't realize was the social consequence of those actions. So very similarly to our social gatherings ending, we saw disconnection between residents between communities. But, fortunately, in the last two years these connections have seen a reboot across and between the different communities in Calgary-Acadia. The community associations are combining resources, they're holding events together, and are bringing forward concerns and solutions to their local representative, which, of course, I appreciate greatly as it facilitates me actually representing them effectively.

Prior to becoming the representative for Calgary-Acadia I served as a registered nurse, and the reason I bring that up is for context. When I'm thinking about the idea of effective representation, I can't help but draw kind of a parallel between the two different types of

service. Regardless of whether or not I'm setting up a shift assignment inside an intensive care environment or discussing the physical boundaries for the provincial riding, there's a few things in common to consider. Who are you serving? What do they need or want, and how closely are they located? Think patient rooms or communities that are adjacent to each other. Of course we have to consider the population – right? – what the population has done since the last commission and, of course, try to anticipate where it's going to go. I know that's the tricky part.

Let me share some of the known expansions and different connections that are scheduled in Calgary-Acadia. I initially want to talk about Calgary's light rail transit system, or LRT stations. Of course, those systems enable folks to connect between communities, and they facilitate collaboration between different people and different businesses, and those stations tend to bring high investment to the area. Unfortunately, it also brings some concerns of safety and security, which, unfortunately, because someone could use the rails kind of as a quick getaway, the communities of Calgary-Acadia have been dealing with this as a group for years now, as they literally have an LRT rail that runs right down the middle of them. We currently have seven LRT stations in the riding of Calgary-Acadia. We are looking at adding three more, one of which is the midtown station. It is a privately contracted 35-acre LRT station, mixed-use residential. When it is at full capacity, it's supposed to be about 10,000 residents.

We also have the Highfield station. That one is part of the anticipated green line. It would be located in the heart of Manchester, just up the street from the Calgary Food Bank and within walking distance of the Burwood Distillery, also small businesses like Village Brewery, that's right there.

We also are excited about the 26th Avenue southeast station, which technically resides in the riding of Calgary-Buffalo however will serve Calgary-Acadia as that station is being located directly beside the Crossroads Calgary farmers' market, which is very exciting because that's actually the one and only farmers' market we have in Calgary that's connected to LRT. That's very exciting.

Other growth that we're anticipating: the east side of Macleod, north of Glenmore, so if you think of it as kind of across the street from Chinook Mall. There are plans to develop that entire area. It sounds very similar to what they're doing at midtown. Again, we can anticipate a mixed use of commercial on the bottom and then residential up top. It's about the same square footage-ish as the midtown station, so I think it's fair to assume that we're talking about another maybe 5,000 to 10,000 residents inside there.

Then just looking at a few places that we haven't quite developed yet. Manchester, for whatever reason, has seen a lack of development. There's a whole history of Manchester that I won't get into here. But one of the main reasons that it hasn't been developed is lack of infrastructure. The addition of an LRT station will really bring some of that explosion of investment, perhaps housing, definitely commercial, and encourage folks to, of course, travel along the line.

In terms of where Calgary-Acadia is now. The housing dates back to about the 1960s. What we're seeing is the shift, where we have original homeowners who are downsizing and moving into seniors' homes or condos in the community, and then we have new young families moving in and new-to-Canada families moving in. It's really exciting. We're seeing a higher demand for seniors centres inside the riding. Folks want to stay where they've always lived, right? They invested in their home, they've now downsized, but they have built their lives in that community and so they want to stay there. So we're seeing a higher demand for seniors' homes.

When we think about the residential lots, they are big, right? They have large yards, large gardens, a large space. What we're starting to see are laneways and garden suites, cohousing, and multiple generations inside the same home.

Thinking back to the nursing assignments, I mentioned that proximity matters. Part of what I've been describing is just showing that the similar things that these different communities inside the riding of Calgary-Acadia work through and to show the collaboration that's already there, which is really important for me as I try to serve each and every one of them, understanding that having more connection points with them allows me to better serve them. That proximity is really important if you just think about the logistics and the reality of shared concerns.

We think about things like the proximity to Macleod Trail. Macleod Trail runs right down the riding. It's fantastic. Brings lots of businesses, but it also brings complications for these communities. For instance, we just had Chick-fil-A open on Macleod. It was very exciting. It caused a lineup on Macleod all the way down to Heritage. Now, not super awesome for the communities to deal with. However, bringing in Chick-fil-A is fantastic in terms of bringing folks down into Calgary-Acadia and, obviously, contributing to businesses there. The community, when that happened, got a little upset because, of course – Macleod is a busy street, and closing down one of them for a drive-through kind of threw a wrench into folks' plans. Now, when Krispy Kreme opened – yes, we also had Krispy Kreme open just down the street – the city worked with them so that their queue for their drive-through does not go onto Macleod; instead, it actually goes to kind of a field next door to them. Those are things that came up because the communities got together and said: "Hey, hey, hey. No, no, no. We want this to work, but let's work together."

Again, thinking back to the nursing assignment ideas. When deciding how to cluster care, proximity matters. I would never assign someone a patient on this floor, a patient on the next floor, and maybe in another building. Even if they all had exactly the same needs, logistically, resources are low, including time. It would make much more sense to have those folks clustered. Not only can you simply be in the area a lot more – right? – gaining more of that kind of organic communications and exploration, but you're there to actually serve that community. They have similar physical boundaries, they have similar housing, similar concerns, similar turnover inside their population.

Speaking of physical boundaries, Calgary-Acadia has solid physical boundaries, the Bow River to the east all the way down to Anderson. We have Elbow Drive and 14th Street to the west, and Glenmore, Macleod, and 26th Avenue and Blackfoot to the north. A little less clear.

10:55

Now, there's of course a number of different things. I could go on forever and talk about Calgary-Acadia and how amazing it is, but that's not the point of the conversation. The big things I would like to bring forward for the committee to consider are kind of the main ones that I had brought up initially. Who are you serving? It could just be the literal number of folks that you're serving. I believe that it's about 55,000 is what we're going for, and Calgary-Acadia right now is about 54,000 if my numbers are correct. If you think about even just the two major – like, midtown and whatever happens across from Chinook there – those alone, they both bring 10,000 residents; we're to the upper limit of the goal number.

The big thing too is that the Calgary-Acadia communities have really shown this organic collaboration, right? I think COVID, the pandemic, everything put things into a slightly different context for

folks, and so this idea of working with one another is really, really at the forefront for these folks. I'd mentioned just briefly that we're seeing that collaboration between all the communities, which is just really, really cool because previously it very much seemed like it was a barrier.

Then lastly, before I take questions, I just wanted to mention that in terms of: where should we put the two additional seats we're seeing? My understanding is that the largest growth that we've seen in terms of numbers have happened in the two big cities, Calgary and Edmonton, and so that's where I would expect that representation would go. Again, reflecting back on population it stands to reason that we would have more representation in the spaces that have a higher population, right?

With that, I will end.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much, Ms Batten. By way of trivia, do you know that Calgary-Acadia is riding number 1 in the province? We list them numerically.

**Member Batten:** Yep.

**The Chair:** I wish you would not have told me that you have a Krispy Kreme now, just off Macleod.

I'm going to allow the commissioners to ask some questions. Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

**Mr. Evans:** Good morning. Thank you. I just want to make sure that I understand a couple of things. One, Manchester is located where in your riding?

**Member Batten:** I'm calling it Manchester, however, basically – sorry, I'm looking at the map here beside me – it is north of Glenmore. It's between Macleod Trail and, basically, the Bow River, north of Glenmore.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay.

**Member Batten:** It goes all the way up kind of between Inglewood and Ramsay.

**Mr. Evans:** And you're anticipating what kind of growth there?

**Member Batten:** There are two LRT stations that are going in there. The big one that I'm excited about is going in Highfield. It's just down the road from the Calgary Food Bank, which also happens to have some local businesses around it. Manchester tends to be, right now, a lot of places of worship, regenerative farms, warehouses, that type of thing, but there's a lot of opportunity inside that space. It's an area that we really haven't spent a lot of time developing and it's huge. So, yeah, I would anticipate that, especially with our housing crisis, we would be looking at all options, including this giant parcel of space.

**Mr. Evans:** Excuse me – I'm just short on time. Are there any actual developments happening in Manchester? Then can you also tell me – I didn't capture the name of the development that you said was going to be like midtown and you anticipated 5,000 to 10,000.

**Member Batten:** Yes. Great questions. In terms of known development that LRT station is the only one I know of right now that's actually rolling. The development east of Chinook or just north of Glenmore, east of Macleod: I don't have a name for it. I say that because it is very much in the early stages. That being said, the stakeholders, like the physical businesses that sit in that space, are aware of this coming forward and are already in the works to basically negotiate how can they have their business there and also



this new space. I anticipate that it would be, I mean, in the next five years, I would hope.

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

**The Chair:** Susan.

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

**Dr. Martin:** None for me.

**Mr. Clark:** I do have a couple of quick questions, just a little bit more following on in terms of timing, but I think Mr. Evans asked those. You'd mentioned the green line LRT stations in the north part of the constituency, and I understand some of the green line is going ahead in the near term and some is still under consideration through downtown. Is this the part that is delayed, or is this the part that's going ahead now?

**Member Batten:** It's the part that's going ahead now.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay.

Can you just remind me exactly where Manchester is? Is it north or south of Glenmore Trail?

**Member Batten:** It is north of Glenmore.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. Perfect. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much, Ms Batten, for that very enjoyable presentation. You've painted a picture, a better picture, for us of your electoral division. Thank you.

**Member Batten:** Perfect. All right. Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** Our next presenter is Al Olsen. Please introduce yourself. Tell us where you're from and begin your presentation.

**Mr. Olsen:** I'm from Lethbridge-East in the south side. Okay. Justice Miller, members of the commission, I recognize you've taken on this onerous task and will respect your time and try not to speak to points that you've heard numerous times. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak. I've been a resident of Lethbridge for coming up to four years. After retiring, I relocated to Lethbridge from the tricities area of B.C. You may ask why, and understandably. It was my family. My daughter and son-in-law live here and kept singing the praises of Lethbridge. They love it here and convinced us it's a great place to reside away from all the traffic congestion and noise we grew accustomed to.

After my first retirement from commercial building supplies I joined Elections BC and held the position of district electoral officer for three elections and was regional field officer after that, covering 13 electoral districts. I also worked for Elections Canada, three elections as service point supervisor. Although my B.C. knowledge won't fully translate to Alberta's electoral districts, there are many similarities. The ridings in close proximity to where I lived had populations varying from 53,035 to 60,743, representing a deviation from minus 1.4 per cent to plus 14.3 per cent. The greatest majority of these ridings I was RFO for were mainly either contained within their own borders or were part of another city with common interests and values.

**11:05**

From Statistics Canada, in British Columbia the vast majority of the population lives in urban areas. According to the latest census, from 2021, 89.5 per cent of British Columbians resided in census metropolitan areas or census agglomeration. In Alberta in 2021 that

was 82.3 per cent of the population of Alberta lived inside metropolitan areas. That represented 3,509,966 persons. That was lower than the national rate of 83.9 per cent. A more recent estimate has the population closer to 4.8 million. In 2024 Alberta's population is increasingly concentrated in urban areas, with 87.7 per cent of residents living in urban municipalities. Specifically, the growth is most noticeable in large cities like Calgary and Edmonton.

Our area of Lethbridge continues to grow, albeit at a slower pace, with the larger ones north of us. We're divided into two electoral districts, Lethbridge-West and Lethbridge-East. While there is a discrepancy in the number of voters from Lethbridge-West to Lethbridge-East, there may be a need to adjust the boundaries, as previously mentioned. As the city continues to grow, it only makes sense to have electoral districts contained within its own boundaries.

Lethbridge is a larger melting pot of ethnicities than the rural areas tend to be. If a hybrid district were to be implemented, it could place these groups in a situation where they may never see like-minded people running or winning a seat in the Legislature. An example would be the Filipino community. In Lethbridge 14.35 per cent of the visible minority population identifies as Filipino according to StatsCan. That makes them the second-largest visible minority group in the city. In 2021 the total visible minority population in Lethbridge was 15.3 per cent.

An urban centre has much different needs than rural areas such as increased school needs as a population increases versus in rural areas where schools are either closing or due to the desire of having religious schools versus public ones. This would be a challenge to the individual trying to represent a hybrid riding. The ridings that have Indigenous reserves in them will have different issues than those of the urban areas like Lethbridge. They may be unique in their own right but be closer connected to the rural parts of Alberta versus the urban.

I submit that Lethbridge needs to have its ridings within its own boundaries. Thank you for your time.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Olsen. I'm going use the prerogative of the chair to ask you a question first. In view of your experience in British Columbia, tell me about hybrid or blended ridings in B.C. Do they exist at all?

**Mr. Olsen:** There is an existence in some of the areas that I was responsible for. I look at the Chilliwack area. It was a small city with some of the outlying rural areas. As well, Abbotsford east was a similar situation, and Mission-Matsqui was a small city with an urban area attached to it.

**The Chair:** Okay. How many MLAs are in the British Columbia Legislature? Do you know?

**Mr. Olsen:** There were 87. I believe that's now been increased since I've left.

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

Mr. Evans, any questions of this presenter?

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

**The Chair:** Susan.

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

**Dr. Martin:** No questions.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much for presenting. Yes. Very much appreciated. The outside of province of Alberta perspective is helpful, and we do appreciate your presentation. Thank you.

**Mr. Olsen:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Linda Ensley.

**Ms Ensley:** Yes, I'm here. Good morning.

**The Chair:** Good morning. Please identify where you're from and begin your presentation.

**Ms Ensley:** Linda Ensley from St. Albert in Sturgeon county. I'll tell you that the perspective that I'm bringing is that I run the St. Albert Seniors Association, and we also have a large grant to oversee Sturgeon county to help them with some of their issues.

To begin to split off these voting wards: I can already see the issues. The issues I see for the seniors in St. Albert are so different than what I see in the rural part of our county, and to not have the proper representation for their needs is a grave concern for me. There's a certain – I don't even know what to call it – level of help that's needed in rural areas that's not needed in the cities. To split that representation, for instance, around transportation. The people who live in St. Albert: they can get to most of the places they need. The people in the rural part can't. Transportation for older people in the rural parts, especially as we get further and further out, becomes a huge issue for them, especially if they don't drive or they're very ill.

Same thing for food security. There's a big food bank here in St. Albert. In the rural areas they have to drive quite a ways to get to those food banks. Part of our mission is to ensure that they have meals taken to them in the rural part. But to not have the representation that they need to be able to address the issues that are so central to their ability to age in place in those communities, like I said, is a concern. We don't really want to see that split off for fear that neither one of those groups are going to be properly represented when it comes to what they truly, truly need.

I think there's also just a kind of efficiency in public services for both that are quite different and need to be advocated and planned in a way that really meets their needs. I'm not sure that can be done if we're splitting off those different segments of our population.

There's a history and a cultural continuity, I think, amongst the two different groups. Rather than splintering them, I think it's better to represent them as a whole. I only represent about 1,800 seniors in this area, so I certainly don't represent everybody, but I know it's a concern amongst a lot of them about who's going to be their political voice if all of a sudden they're lobbed into a big part of St. Albert and they feel like their rural voice is going to be squished or if they feel like in St. Albert: oh, we're going to be lobbed off into a big part that's very rural, and our needs are not going to be met.

I'm just here to be a voice for those seniors who have expressed their concerns around this particular move. I thank you all for taking this on. This is a huge undertaking. I know there are a lot of different opinions and a lot of different variables to consider, but I'm hoping the senior voice will be one of those variables that you will consider.

11:15

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms Ensley, for your presentation, and thanks for your empathetic conclusion to this commission.

Any questions, Mr. Evans?

**Mr. Evans:** No questions, but thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation, Ms Ensley. I wanted to ask you your comments, because the city of St. Albert is split between St. Albert, period, and then the other half – it's not quite half – Morinville-St. Albert. I assume you live in the St. Albert side? Can I assume that correctly?

**Ms Ensley:** Yes, that's where we're based.

**Mrs. Samson:** And do you have any comments on the people that live in Morinville-St. Albert, particularly the seniors? Do you feel that their needs are being met? Like, speak to the thing that you know the most about, because that is a different type of riding.

**Ms Ensley:** It is a different type of riding, but, also, Morinville isn't exactly what I would call a rural city. They have their own voice and representation, and I really feel that they have been represented properly in many areas by the person, Mr. Nally, in that jurisdiction. But it also doesn't include huge swaths of rural areas, and Morinville and St. Albert are very tied to each other. I see that even in my membership. I have a lot of people from St. Albert who are members here at our association. So, yes, it's split, but I don't see that that has been a big issue with regard to Morinville, because it is already so closely tied to St. Albert. Many people come here for their doctor's appointments. Many people come here to take classes at our organization.

Heaven forbid that I should ever say anything like this, but it's almost an extension in a way of both communities. I know both of them would say, "Oh, no. We're unique," but they do share a lot of things in common. Morinville is growing and continues to grow, and I think their needs are going to be changing in the future. When I'm talking about the rural parts, I'm talking about the very rural parts of our county.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** I might pick up on your comment on growth. First off, thank you very much for being here and sharing your perspectives.

When I look at the numbers we have, the Morinville-St. Albert constituency is almost exactly right on the number we're looking for, or at least the average number anyway, of 55,929, just a shade over our 54,929, but it hasn't grown as quickly as St. Albert, and then neither of the two constituencies have grown quite at the same rate as the rest of the province. I know you indicated that Morinville is growing. Are there active development plans or growth opportunities in one or the other of these constituencies, or are they reasonably steady and stable?

**Ms Ensley:** I think they're stable. I mean, we're all experiencing growth, but let's just be frank and honest. St. Albert isn't the cheapest place on the planet to live, so I expect its growth to be steady and not explosive, just because of the cost of living here. Is that too honest?

**Mr. Clark:** I want you to be nothing but honest. That's all we can ask. That's wonderful. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for your presentation. We did have a bit of presentation when we were in Edmonton on this area, on these ridings, but thanks for stepping up and giving us a better picture, Ms Ensley.

Our next presenter is Mr. Barry Morishita.

**Mr. Morishita:** Hello. How are you? Can you hear me?

**The Chair:** Yes. We can hear you, and we're doing fine.

**Mr. Morishita:** Perfect. Justice Miller and members of the commission, thank you for the opportunity to present. A little bit of history about me. I am the former leader of the Alberta Party. I ran in Brooks-Medicine Hat in the last election, against the Premier. I have been in municipal politics for about 16, 17 years; five years as the mayor of Brooks and the rest of the time before that as a councillor. I'm a lifelong resident of Alberta, although I'm currently doing quite a bit of work in Saskatchewan. That kind of gives you a quick, brief overview.

I just wanted to talk about some of the things that I think are very important from a local community perspective as you work through this very intensive and important exercise. I think one of the core principles the commission should be considering is that electoral boundaries should align as closely as possible with existing municipal boundaries, both urban and rural. I think sometimes those words are used a little bit loosely. In lots of small communities, in cases surrounded by counties, they are entirely rural even though they have towns, villages, or even small cities within them.

This really matters a lot because municipalities are responsible for developing those key public services and planning for the communities. The work that they do with their provincial representation, whether they're in opposition or in government, on infrastructure, emergency services, health care, education, and economic development, it's really important to have a cohesive message, and it's really important for your MLA to understand your region and be very intimate with its issues. While we suppose that should go without saying, it doesn't necessarily go when you have a hybrid that tugs at different loyalties. And, beyond that, when you have, you know, split ridings, whatever you want to call them, hybrid ridings, whatever the word is these days, where the two communities are significantly different in a lot of ways.

One of the other things. When it comes to just straight governance, when we talk about governance, it does create a lot of confusion and inefficiency for agencies. When you look at, for instance, the city of Brooks and the county of Newell: we have eight corporate entities that all share the same boundaries. That's five municipalities, a seniors' foundation, a water and landfill corporation, that all surround the same area, that have the same members, that have the same strategic plans. It would be difficult if you hive off pieces of those, regardless of what community it is, in order to meet the number. And while I know the number is important and you have some restrictions there, I think we should really be thinking about how people interact with government and how the confidence is created in their representation.

As you well know, there's a lot of anxiety about government these days and trustworthiness and responsiveness, and I think part of this process that you're going through, the listing process, is certainly important, but probably more important is that however you present your findings, they resonate with Albertans and that they are done – or they feel they're done, for the most part, in their best interest.

Brooks is an interesting community because it has kind of bounced back and forth across, down the highway 1 and back and, you know, we've gotten the best representation, I think, when the community is kept intact. While I know you have to combine to put numbers together, it's been more difficult in Medicine Hat, I think, as an illustration, because Medicine Hat and Brooks are significantly different communities. Our demographics are significantly different, age, makeup in terms of ethnic, types, the amount of diversity in Brooks compared to Medicine Hat, the working age groups, the type of work that happens: significantly different. When we were with Strathmore, although we were less linked kind of communally, I would say that it was easier to manage

governance-wise because Brooks and Strathmore and Wheatland county – Strathmore and Wheatland county were a very cohesive unit, I think; well, you know, we all have our disagreements from time to time. At least we technically pretty much all work together all the time.

So that's kind of bounced back and forth. There have been proposals to hive off a little chunk of the county to meet the population thresholds, and while I appreciate that those are important things, I think we should be more concerned about the representation and how the MLA is able to represent those areas. It's a lot more important.

11:25

I can't tell you enough how, like, first, the city of Brooks and the county of Newell really do form a unit. Whether the unit is attached to another unit is probably less problematic than if it's pulled to a unit that has very little to do with it. And having to engage with an MLA – I know that MLAs are very busy and they have a lot of responsibility. To have sometimes an actual conflicting interest when it comes to economic development or hospitals, health care, or education, when you essentially create a competition in some ways, I think, should be something that's considered as you go through this exercise.

I certainly understand the need to balance population among ridings, but I think it's maybe an important thing for – I'm not sure what, like, the mandate of your commission is, but I think it would be more important to maintain municipal integrity and, if necessary, to invest in increased constituency resources, whether they be virtual, whether they be extra manpower. You know, we understand that the physical space of some of these boundaries or some of these constituencies can be daunting, but, again, in this time and age where there are a lot of resources available that could manage it differently, when you have common interests and common values, lots of specific topics and specific culture, that's important. It should be a consideration.

In closing, I think, really, I hope I made the case that not splitting municipal boundaries, whether they're urban or otherwise, is very important. You know, we have, for instance, in the county of Newell, the doughnut surrounding Brooks, two-thirds of the population of the county, and they have only 2 out of 10 of the representation. The reason why they're effective, not because they have more people to look after, is because the interests of those people around the doughnut are significantly more cohesive, and that makes for better governance. While some of those ridings, I know, probably are varying in population, the exercise of governance is far more efficient when that's taken into consideration.

However you go, I appreciate the effort. I want to just leave you with the idea that if it's within your mandate to recommend other options besides being plus or minus 25 in every single case, you certainly make those recommendations. I think the key to the public's confidence in your exercise and the public's confidence in the next election will certainly be around whether their thoughts and considerations were heard and recommendations made that reflect those very important perceptive and governance issues that Albertans face daily and with their MLAs.

Thank you very much for your time. I appreciate you listening to me.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, sir. Much appreciated.

I'm going to open it up to questions. Mr. Evans, any questions, speaking of Brooks?

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah. Thank you. Good morning. Thank you for your presentation. In terms of thinking about municipal boundaries, obviously, you'll agree there's a problem in terms of the numbers. Brooks and the county of Newell would total at best 24,000, just under 25,000. Having grown up in Brooks, I would say there's less of a connection between the county of Newell and Wheatland and more of a connection between the county of Newell and special areas. Would you agree with that?

**Mr. Morishita:** I would not disagree with that, no.

**Mr. Evans:** And probably more of a connection to parts of the MD of Taber than there would be to Vulcan county, for example.

**Mr. Morishita:** Yeah. I think historically, yes, that's true as well.

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

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation this morning, Mr. Morishita. You indicated that you felt it was a better fit previously with Brooks, Strathmore, and Wheatland county as opposed to Brooks-Medicine Hat with parts of the Newell county. Can you give me a specific example or elaborate slightly on that?

**Mr. Morishita:** Sure. Currently, right now, it's Brooks-Medicine Hat. While we take this kind of strip down towards Medicine Hat, Medicine Hat proper, the north part of Medicine Hat is significantly different in terms of its priorities than Brooks and the county of Newell. While I appreciate that Brooks and the county of Newell are a unit, that is the more important part of this to me. Prior to that it was Wheatland county and Strathmore.

You're right. Our natural kind of trading goes – as the other panellist Mr. Evans just said, you know, it kind of runs in that ranching area in the rural area back and forth up that highway. There are lots of common landholders, common settling. That's happened from that perspective. But for an MLA to, like, have kind of more – it seems kind of odd, kind of almost opposite of what I just said. When you had Strathmore and Wheatland, they had their set of issues. When you had Brooks and the county of Newell, they have their set of issues. While they weren't always the same and somewhat nuanced, at least there was one unit to deal with versus kind of a multitude of perspectives.

I believe there's a multitude of perspectives towards Medicine Hat and Medicine Hat proper, in particular, that are significantly different than what Brooks and the county of Newell face. From a governance perspective, I think it makes more sense to be mindful of that consideration versus that we need X amount of people from the north part of Medicine Hat to get that riding to 55,000. I think that's not the right consideration.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Julian.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you, sir. I want to pick up on that very last point that you alluded to but perhaps not fully digested. The instructions given us in the act are that anything between 25 per cent below the mean and 25 per cent above the mean is considered acceptable.

**Mr. Morishita:** Oh, okay.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. I think it widens the range for us somewhat from just looking at a population mean figure. Given your suggestion that boundaries should align as much as possible wherever possible with municipal boundaries, would you, then, be amenable to the final population numbers being highly variable in different areas?

**Mr. Morishita:** Yes, I would be. I think that makes a lot more sense than cutting up municipal boundaries.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Great. Thank you. Maybe I'll ask you a question that I asked an earlier presenter just, I guess, about some of the areas that connect or are closer to Brooks, places like Vauxhall, Bassano, or maybe even points east out highway 555. Is that sort of part of, I guess, the kind of, quote, unquote, natural catchment area of Brooks? If so, maybe tell me about that. If not, tell me that and if there are others that you think would fit.

**Mr. Morishita:** Yeah. Again, well, in the rural area there's some natural movement, you know, like for Vauxhall in Vulcan county – or is it the MD of Taber? Actually, I think Vauxhall is in the MD of Taber. While Vauxhall might have a tendency to come to Brooks in some regard, the natural flow of things, I guess, Mr. Clark, in a way doesn't really matter to any person. The boundary isn't something that they think about crossing.

When it comes to governance, you know, when you have the MD of Taber that has the representation and the town of Vauxhall that has the representation and they're kind of that closest level to people, if you keep that unit intact to deal with an MLA versus kind of trying to pick these individual spots that do, I think you'd be better served.

I would say that if you look at the MD of Taber as a unit and everything that's in it, including the town of Taber and the town of Vauxhall, you know, having that unit to deal with versus the city of Brooks and the town of Taber – are you kind of getting what I'm saying? – don't hive those off. Kind of look at those units as they exist. As you move that threshold around, that should be the higher consideration versus whether Bassano goes to Strathmore or whether Bassano comes to Brooks type of thing. Bassano is already in the county. We have joint meetings every month. We meet together as a group. We have all these other corporate entities that meet together as a group. How do you get that efficient governance? How do you have a voice at the table?

I realize that with 5 million Albertans, you know, not everybody is going to feel they have a voice at the table, but at least through their municipal representation and a thoughtful boundary that the MLA gets to do, I think that can be improved.

**11:35**

**Mr. Clark:** That's great. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for your presentation. It's always helpful to hear from people who are involved in governance, local government, and how our work will eventually impact the communities that you just represented. Thank you very much, Mr. Morishita.

**Mr. Morishita:** Well, thank you very much for the opportunity. Good luck with your work.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Our next presenter is Danielle Larivee. Please correct my pronunciation, ma'am, if I mispronounced, but just tell us where you're from and begin your presentation.

**Ms Larivee:** Sure. I actually live in the community of Slave Lake, so in the constituency of Lesser Slave Lake, and I have been here

since 1979, so I'm very vested in the community. I grew up here. I have raised my children here. I am with my aging parents here, looking at my kids now starting their own lives here, and certainly very invested not just in Slave Lake but in the whole region that I'm in.

I did want to speak quite specifically to effective representation in rural ridings. I had a chance to go through and review some of the transcripts from the hearings of the commission that have been hosted in rural Alberta before now, and I did read that some participants described challenges of representation in large rural ridings. I was quite disturbed to see that they used it as a rationale for creating hybrid ridings in which rural communities would be lumped into rural ridings.

I formerly was the MLA for Lesser Slave Lake from 2015 till 2019. Lesser Slave Lake is one of the geographically largest ridings in the province, so I certainly can speak to challenges with a large rural riding. I also was formerly the Minister of Municipal Affairs, so I had many conversations with people representing rural communities and many municipal leaders like Barry, who just spoke, so it was great to see his face.

I'd like to think, actually, that I was able to represent the riding quite well despite the size of it. I still regularly run into individuals who speak to how happy they were about the support and connection I was able to provide. I did have two staffed offices, one in Slave Lake and one in High Prairie. The one in High Prairie had a part-time assistant there, and I certainly made myself available to either travel to communities, meet at one of my offices, or meet in Edmonton if that worked better for folks, and between myself and my staff we were able to make sure that constituents did have the opportunity to share their thoughts, their concerns, and address their issues. Admittedly, it would have been nice to have some additional funding to help with supporting multiple offices, but we made it work even within the structure that we had.

I really do feel I was able to be visible and accessible to my constituents. I attended as many events as possible in communities from one corner of the riding to the other, and while time didn't allow me to attend every single event, and I don't think that's any different than urban ridings either, I did attempt to ensure that by rotating events, constituents saw me in their community as often as possible.

The only community that posed real challenges due to travel was Chipewyan Lake, and if any of you have looked at a map, you will know why. There is literally no way you could build any grouping of constituencies that makes access to Chipewyan Lake. It's very, very, very isolated down a one-way road that's many hours. Even then I was thankful to at least meet with their leadership even though I didn't make it to the community as often as I would have liked.

Between attending events, I hosted open houses at my office, and I shared newsletters with constituents by mail. I have to say that I was also a cabinet minister of multiple portfolios at different times, and I was able to prioritize my constituents anyways by taking the time I needed to be visible, accessible, and to connect. With many, many Indigenous communities, municipalities, and school districts, I made it a priority to meet with their leadership whenever I could to ensure I was aware of the unique needs that each of their communities represented.

I really want to challenge the idea that hybrid ridings are the solution to increasing effective representation. I actually think they would do the opposite, that they would negatively affect representation in rural ridings. The composition of hybrid ridings would by their very nature include communities of interest that share very little in common. The question then becomes: which

community of interest gets to have their needs and their concerns and their interests represented? Realistically, in hybrid ridings I would see rural voters being outnumbered by urban voters, which would truly create a position in which rural voters would be more likely to be undermined. Realistically, rural communities do have a lot of unique things about who they are and how they're built up, and the idea that that would be able to be balanced with a mix with urban would be incredibly challenging. It's already challenging just trying to recognize the different needs of different rural communities.

Then, last but not least, especially given the riding that I represented in Lesser Slave Lake, I want to address the importance of representation for Indigenous communities in this province. Along with a very dark and difficult history, Indigenous people and their communities have continued to struggle to have their voices heard. We have to ensure that whatever option we have going forward for representation for First Nations and Métis settlements, their needs and their concerns and their interests are heard. Legitimately, that continues to be a challenge to this day, and I cannot state that enough. We need to make sure that the nations for sure for each tribal council are connected together, that each treaty organization is ideally clustered together as much as possible, and keep as many Métis settlements together as possible so their voices can be amplified and ensure that we can work together to address the many challenges they continue to face and need to be resolved in order to have true reconciliation and justice.

There's a very quick rundown of my thoughts on it, but I'm happy to answer any questions you might have.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much for your very winsome presentation. My goodness, you must be a good juggler, having represented what we call a 15(2) riding under such demanding schedule.

I'll turn it over to the commissioners for questions. Any questions, Susan?

**Mrs. Samson:** Yes, thank you, and thank you for your presentation. With the numbers we're faced with today, with the census numbers Lesser Slave Lake is sitting right at minus 50 per cent. We were up in the area. Actually, we were up in Slave Lake last week, and it's a phenomenal, hugely, immensely expansive area. When I think about the riding, we need some more people. Like, the legislation demands. What do you think would be reasonable to pull in with your experience?

**Ms Larivee:** Yeah. You know, realistically, I don't profess to fully have all the answers for you in this. What I would say is that the last part that I focused on is most important, making sure that as changes are made to Lesser Slave Lake, as much as possible, rather than going further south, for example, there would be an opportunity, if at all possible, to include additional settlements or Indigenous communities as part of the riding. About half of Treaty 8 nations are part of Lesser Slave Lake, but I really worry that the more and more non-Indigenous communities are included in the riding, the more watered down their voices would be.

There are so many incredible challenges with Indigenous communities and ensuring those relationships to help with healing, to help restore those communities and build capacity. There needs to be protections to ensure that at the very least collectively there are opportunities to meet with them and speak about concerns, their unique concerns but also their collective concerns, and work on that. I mean, that's probably a little difficult. I imagine Peace River is also having some of those challenges. I'm not sure how that would look, but I do think that needs to be a key part of this review,

making sure that as many of them continue to be together as much as possible, to make sure that those voices are part of it.

**11:45**

I mean, the whole idea of hybrid ridings is not even relevant for Lesser Slave Lake. We're a long ways away from that. You know, my former hat as Municipal Affairs minister was more the voice speaking to that aspect of it. I recognize that there are less and less people in the north in comparison, particularly, to Edmonton and Calgary and that there are challenges, but I really would highly hope that you would contemplate the Indigenous communities and protecting their voices in the decisions that you make.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Julian, any questions?

**Dr. Martin:** No, thank you.

**The Chair:** Greg?

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much. Yeah, we had a great trip up there last week. It really does give you a sense of the vast geography. I think that such an important part of this process is actually going to the communities and just understanding that, right? Maybe I'll ask a specific question. Then I'll ask maybe more of a general question, just really building on what Susan had talked about.

Some of the feedback we've received from different places. The mayor of Peace River suggested perhaps moving the Woodland Cree First Nation out of Lesser Slave Lake into Peace River. That doesn't help us arithmetically, but I just wonder if you can comment on that. Then some of the other suggestions were that there's a portion of the MD of Lesser Slave River or even perhaps Swan Hills that we might want to consider. Can you speak to any of that in terms of the kind of connection and continuity of community interests amongst those different communities?

**Ms Larivee:** Sure. Speaking specifically to Woodland Cree, they're part of the Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council. I think it's really important that all the members of the Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council continue to be together, and that includes a number of nations broadly across the north. I don't think that it would necessarily be in their best interest, considering they work very closely together, to hive them off. Realistically, the numbers are small enough. I don't know that it would be of any benefit to that. While I do realize that they do travel to Peace River, there also still continues to be engagement with Slave Lake. I think, from a representation of their leadership and their identity as collectively being part of a number of nations together, that would pose its own challenges.

I do think that where municipal boundaries are cut up, there are opportunities there. There are parts of Lesser Slave River MD that aren't part of the riding. There are parts of Big Lakes county that aren't part of the constituency. I mean, realistically, those would be the easy places to go. I'm not sure that they're going to get the numbers that you're really hoping for, but as much as possible – it was difficult always. I would talk to the leadership of Big Lakes county, for example. They were frustrated that they had to talk to multiple MLAs, despite the fact, to address their concerns. So that is an area potentially where it makes sense to expand into.

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

**Mr. Evans:** Good morning. Thank you. I'm going to ask you the Costco question. If you're a Slave Lake resident and you're going to go to Costco, where do you go?

**Ms Larivee:** Edmonton. I mean, High Prairie would go to Grande Prairie.

**Mr. Evans:** That was my very next question, so thank you.

**Ms Larivee:** I knew exactly what you were going to say.

**Mr. Evans:** Great minds think alike.

**Ms Larivee:** Yeah. There you go.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you so much.

**Ms Larivee:** Although, I would say that where I go to Costco is different from where my everyday connections and interactions are. So I'm not sure how valid that particular example is but happy to answer your question.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much. We're doing fairly good for time. I've got a question about the 15(2) nature of your riding. As the MLA, I mean, when you deal with your colleagues in the Legislature and they say, "Oh, you've only got 27,000 people, and your colleague in Edmonton has got 63,000," tell me how a 15(2) MLA interacts. Do you get pitied, criticized? Are people envious? What's the interaction in the House?

**Ms Larivee:** Well, I mean, admittedly, I was a cabinet minister and a well-respected cabinet minister in our government, so I'm not sure that I could say that I would be able to speak to everybody's experience with it. But I didn't get a sense that there was any resentment on the part of any of my colleagues for the fact that I represented less, I think, because I spoke very passionately about the unique needs and challenges of the north and made it clear all the time what I was facing and what it was like to have 12 First Nations and three Métis settlements as well as a number of municipalities that I was dealing with. I think part of it was that my colleagues were very supportive of Indigenous reconciliation. That was helpful because to me that was a big part of it. When you have so much complexity in terms of the needs, then there continues to be a benefit, not just because of geography but because of the complexity of the riding, to ensure that that representation looks a little different.

I don't know. I thought it was fine. I felt respected by my colleagues. I felt heard by my colleagues, and I think they felt the same. We just made sure to share different perspectives with each other and acknowledge that things look different in the north than in some of the urban centres.

**The Chair:** Of course, as you're aware, the legislation allows for up to four 15(2)-type ridings. Do you think that that is something this commission should do; maximize the 15(2) ridings given the vast areas in the north?

**Ms Larivee:** I don't know if I would say "should." I think it should be something you're considering in terms of when we're looking at representation and when we're looking at this massive shift of people from rural to urban over the last number of decades but also recognizing, in particular in the north, a lot of the contributions economically and some of the unique challenges there as well. I think if there are areas that would benefit from that representation, then I would hope that you would utilize that and expand the

number of them to ensure that those opportunities for high-quality representation continue to exist.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, thank you. Thank you very much. It's always beneficial to hear from people who have represented or are representing a particular electoral division. So, thanks so much, ma'am. Much appreciated.

**Ms Larivee:** Thanks. Take care. Have a great day. Bye.

**The Chair:** That leaves us with one more presenter before we break for the afternoon. Mr. Andrew Knack.

**Mr. Knack:** Good morning.

**The Chair:** Good morning. It's still morning.

**Mr. Knack:** Yes. Yeah. A few minutes left.

**The Chair:** Tell us where you're from and proceed with your presentation.

**Mr. Knack:** Certainly. Thank you. My name is Andrew Knack. I live in the riding of Edmonton-Riverview, and also I'm very fortunate to serve as a city councillor in ward Nakota Sga within the city of Edmonton, which overlaps with four provincial ridings. Edmonton-West Henday, Edmonton-Glenora, Edmonton-Riverview, and a little bit of Edmonton-McClung.

I wanted to take an opportunity to come and speak to this. I know you're going through some important conversations right now about how the boundaries should be distributed and wanted to just share a bit of what I've learned through some of our ward boundary conversations within the city and also some of what I've heard through the recent federal changes, as that impacted some of what I've heard has been discussed.

I'll start, maybe, with the federal piece, the recent federal election. We used to have a riding, a few ridings in Edmonton, but the one that I overlapped with in the west end of the city included Edmonton and St. Albert. What I found over that time is that, you know, while there is great connectivity and we always are looking for great regional collaboration between us and our regional partners, being able to stay contained within the city boundaries, within the city of Edmonton, allows for our issues to be better addressed, better heard. I think when you have that split between two different municipalities, when we have a large city that can essentially sustain its own riding, that does become a concern of not being able to fully address the issues that we're dealing with in the city.

**11:55**

The other piece. I appreciate that we're coming up on lunch, so I don't want to take up too much of your time. I also wanted to give an example. In the ward that I currently serve – so we did a ward boundary review in 2020, as our populations within the wards were getting quite a bit of a disparity. Through that exercise there were two communities within the city of Edmonton – sorry, just as a quick point of information for everyone, we have a pretty active community league system. We have 163 community leagues in the city of Edmonton. We use those boundaries quite heavily in a lot of the work that we do because that really ties into this notion of communities of interest.

When that ward boundary review occurred – and it was, again, an independent commission that went through that – they did end up making a recommendation that included splitting up one of the communities that I served for my first eight years on council. In this term it was split between two wards now; I cover half of it and

Councillor Sarah Hamilton covers the other. We found that it does actually create a lot of confusion from the residents even within that community league, because, you know, they share similar issues. They're working on the same things, and when they are split, then they feel, like: who do you go to? Do you go to the one where you live within even though the issue might be on the other side of the street?

At the end of the day, I always like the independent commission's recommendations, and I believe that's the right process. That was one of the few areas I wish had changed. I wish that recommendation hadn't come forward because even within a local community league having that split makes it really hard to address the issues that are being raised to us as city councillors.

I give that example and the federal example because I have heard a conversation and dialogue about should any part of the city of Edmonton include spots outside the city of Edmonton. You know, at the west end of the city where I overlap with West Henday, could that include Parkland county or Spruce Grove or Stony Plain? I've seen it at such a local issue that it still creates challenges, and we've seen it federally that it was an issue, that they actually changed it so it was contained within Edmonton. I would hate to see us have to go back to a system where we're overlapping. I mean, I'm a former Spruce Grovian. I love the city of Spruce Grove. It's great. But my needs when I lived in Spruce Grove were very different than the needs when I live in Edmonton.

I just wanted to make sure, as we're having this conversation and having this dialogue, to really reinforce the importance of the city of Edmonton continuing to have our ridings contained solely within the city of Edmonton. That ensures the best possible chance for good representation to address the issues that we're dealing with and to not spread any elected representative too thin. If you start expanding the boundaries of that and go into the county and into the other towns and cities, I do worry you're going to lose that for a city that has a lot of diverse needs and challenging and complex things that we have to deal with each and every day.

I think maybe I can leave it there. I have more if you want, but I know you're coming up on your noon time, and I don't want to hold you long.

**The Chair:** No, no, don't worry. We've allotted 15 minutes for each presenter, 10 for presenting and five for questions. I'm sure we'll have some questions. Let me turn it over, starting with Mr. Evans.

Any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** Yes. I certainly understand the concern that you expressed as it relates to the municipal government responsibilities and how that could be confusing for the residents when we're dealing with a ward system, but I'm a little less understanding of your position as it relates both federally and provincially. The jurisdiction and responsibilities of those representatives don't really overlap significantly with your municipal responsibilities. Can you give me any specific instances where we have a confusion as it relates to the MLA representing the interests, the community interests that we're talking about here, especially focusing on the communities? I can't remember the word.

**Mrs. Samson:** Riverview.

**Mr. Evans:** Well, no not the – you have a very significantly developed group of community associations.

**Mr. Knack:** Yes.

**Mr. Clark:** Community leagues.

**Mr. Evans:** Community leagues, there we go. Thank you.

**Mr. Knack:** Community leagues, sorry. Yes.

Thanks for the question. I'll actually use an example at the west end of the ward that I represent in our newer suburban communities. I think where we need to have that continued connection point within our city boundaries – even something like our school system. We're going through, like many municipalities right now, very rapid population growth that's creating a lot of demand and a lot of pressures for more provincial infrastructure on the schools. I'm going to particularly focus on schools; we can talk about health care at a later time if necessary. What happens right now is that within the city of Edmonton there's a lot of advocacy together from many of these communities that exist within – I'm going to pick on Edmonton-West Henday as an example right now, which is the area that has the greatest lack of schools of the areas that I currently serve in. Those communities have come together, really almost through that riding association, to be able to work towards advocating to the provincial government, to bring together residents to speak to those issues. I think the worry that we run into is that if you start including the counties and if you start including the other towns and cities – I would be worried that a provincial elected representative would not be able to dedicate the necessary time needed to addressing these very localized issues.

Yes, we need schools everywhere across this province; that's understandable. We've heard the provincial government talk about that and put forward an action plan to address that. But when you have such a demand in an area contained within two school boards, Edmonton public and Edmonton Catholic, I just don't see a scenario how somebody who is serving even Spruce Grove, as close as it is, as someone that grew up there – how are they going to be able to adequately address what is a very large population on the western edge of our city, to be able to advocate for more schools, to expand on the overall supports and infrastructure that we need while at the same time trying to respond to issues that will look different?

Schools are an understandable – yes, we need schools everywhere, but what you need in each area is going to look very different. There are similarities within Edmonton. That's not going to be the same thing as you would see in Parkland county or in Spruce Grove or in Stony Plain. The growth that we're seeing is more rapid and it requires a different focus point, and I'm just not sure how I could see that being adequately addressed by somebody who's trying to split their time between potentially an urban and rural riding.

I'm not here speaking on behalf of Alberta Municipalities, but as somebody who's sat on that board for the last six years, yes, I love travelling to the villages, I love travelling to the towns and talking about their needs. They have similar overall needs, but the scale is entirely different. I can't see how you'd be able to adequately respond to both of those by having an overlapping riding of urban and rural.

**Mr. Evans:** Which ward are you in? Which one do you represent?

**Mr. Knack:** Ward Nakota Isga, so the west end of the city that goes, give or take, from Groat Road out to 231st Street, from either Whitemud or 95th Avenue, out to the northern boundary of the city up against St. Albert.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Susan.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you, and thank you for your presentation.

You indicated that a concern you have within your own provincial electoral district would be the splitting of wards or the splitting of community leagues. Do you have specific examples that you want to bring to our attention when we're looking specifically at your electoral district?

**Mr. Knack:** Sorry. To clarify, my example was on the municipal ward system. When we went through, there was a splitting of the community of West Jasper Sherwood. I gave that example as a bit of the reason of why – if that's happening locally, I can see how that would materialize provincially and federally, and I think it's why the federal commission made the changes that they did. Thankfully, the provincial ridings I overlap with: all of the community leagues are contained in that, so there's no split of a community league in the provincial boundaries that I overlap with at least.

**Mrs. Samson:** Good. Thank you. I think we've heard loud and clear from other presenters the importance and the work that community leagues give back, and that was something I was interested in. Thank you again.

**Mr. Knack:** Thank you.

12:05

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you, Councillor. I wanted to direct your attention to the question of growth. As you know, it's lumpy around Edmonton. In particular, I've been looking at some of the inner provincial ridings, including Riverview and Glenora, whose MLA we spoke with a few weeks ago, and Strathcona as well. One could probably identify a few more. These are particularly low growth, which rather surprised me. I know that you and your colleagues have instituted a series of land-use alterations to encourage infill and the like, but I'm particularly interested, as I was with Glenora, that Riverview, which is particularly slow growing, will be, in my estimation, positively impacted by the LRT. Is that your understanding of its imminent effect?

**Mr. Knack:** Yes. Correct. I wasn't on council when the original route decision was made, but I served as the vice-president of Meadowlark Community League over the years of that route decision. One of the core principles of approving that LRT route along Stony Plain Road and then down 156th Street was to create redevelopment opportunities. Certainly, we expect to see a lot of redevelopment on Stony Plain Road. In fact, there has already been an approved rezoning application right at the corner of 149th Street and Stony Plain Road. That project hasn't advanced yet, but it has the potential to be a dramatic change of significant high-rise developments. I think once we start seeing the first, you'll see a lot of uptick in that space.

So yes, we are expecting and, in fact, we have also approved land-use rules that will prioritize higher scale development along the corridors of the LRT, Stony Plain Road being one of the biggest ones, but even as you come along 156th Street at major hubs, you will see more and more larger scale residential development, which, in turn, should start to help to change the trajectory of our mature neighbourhoods, which, yeah, unfortunately, in many cases, have a lower population today than they did back in 1971. That's part of why we've made as many land-use decisions as we have, to start to change that.

**Dr. Martin:** Excellent answer to the puzzle I was looking at. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Knack:** Thank you.



**Mr. Clark:** Thank you. I'd love to hear a little bit more about – you've referred to it a couple of times – the federal boundary changes that had originally had a blended urban-rural hybrid and then went away from that. Can you just tell me a little more about what that was exactly and if you are aware of what the rationale was for going back?

**Mr. Knack:** Yes. I don't know all the inner workings on it, but the riding that I overlapped with was in the very northwest corner of the city, which included St. Albert. It was an Edmonton-St. Albert riding that I think expanded even outside the boundaries of St. Albert, if I understood.

There were five communities that were contained within the city of Edmonton that were part of this one larger riding represented by current MP Michael Cooper. Now it's made up of the new federal riding, I believe called Edmonton Northwest, which is solely contained within our boundaries now. MP Billy Morin is now the MP. It's a solely Edmonton riding.

What I found to be the challenge is that, because there were only a handful of communities that were part of this Edmonton-St. Albert riding, that connectivity between the Member of Parliament that I overlapped with and myself was quite different than my connectivity with the Members of Parliament for Edmonton West or Edmonton Centre, where we would regularly get to run into each other, regularly get to speak about issues that we were dealing with. That rarely happened where we had a riding that had a small number of Edmonton-based communities. What ended up happening is that the Member of Parliament – again, this isn't a criticism of it. It's just their time was more heavily spent outside of the city of Edmonton.

When we have a lot of issues that we need to work on – this applies provincially and federally – we need those opportunities of connection; we need to be regularly speaking with one another. It's one thing to, you know, schedule your regular working meetings with an MLA and MP, which we do. It's something else entirely to be able to regularly run into each other at these community events,

these community meetings where then we can have, "Oh, I'm hearing this at the doors right now," or "This community reached out to me. Hey, did you hear about this yet?" "Oh, no. I haven't. Thanks. Let me take over." I know that seems minor, but it's actually a really important part of our work. So I worry about that loss.

You know, I'm picking on West Henday because I could envision that one being the most likely of a conversation to say: are you going to go further west into Parkland county and Spruce Grove? How will I have that opportunity that I currently have with the four MLAs that I overlap with? I don't see that as likely because I've had a track record of that on the federal boundary that essentially proved that point to me. That's why I really do worry about splitting up the city of Edmonton with any other municipalities. I want to continue to work with our regional partners, but there are other tables to be doing that at. I think our provincial boundaries should be contained within the city.

**Mr. Clark:** That's very helpful. Thank you.

**Mr. Knack:** Oh, I think you're muted.

**The Chair:** You're right. You're right. Thank you very much.

It's always helpful to hear from people who are on the ground dealing with the community members, the community associations, whether they be MLAs or city councillors.

Thank you for adding to our lexicon. I didn't know what you called someone from Spruce Grove.

**Mr. Knack:** I actually don't know. That's what I used to call myself. They might yell at me now, so let's not.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. You're excused. We will adjourn for lunch.

**Mr. Knack:** Thank you.

[The hearing adjourned at 12:11 p.m.]





