



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Virtual

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7:02 p.m.

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Electoral Boundaries Commission

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Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Virtual

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Courtney Walcott, Councillor, City of Calgary

Wendy Whitehouse

7:02 p.m.

Monday, June 23, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Good evening, everyone. We are just commencing our first session of the Electoral Boundaries Commission hearings virtually as part of our last evening of public presentations. I see that we've got, I believe it's Ms Whitehouse, Wendy Whitehouse. I know you are scheduled at 7:30, but we've decided to pull you forward if that's okay with you.

Ms Whitehouse: Sure. Can you hear me all right?

The Chair: Yes. Yes, we can. Let me just give you a quick little intro. You can see the five of us here. My name is Justice Dallas Miller. Mr. John Evans is on the far left, Mrs. Susan Samson to my left, Dr. Julian Martin, and Mr. Greg Clark. We're from across Alberta, and for further details you can find everybody's bio on the website. Our task as a commission is to redraw the boundaries of Alberta, and there are a couple of things that are causing us to do this. First of all, the legislation demands at this stage that a good look at the boundaries be made and redrawing. We're having to do it for a couple of reasons. The legislation has increased the number of electoral divisions from 87 to 89, so we have to deal with two new ridings, and we have a huge population growth increase, so we must deal with that as well.

By way of background, we were established as a commission in late March of this year, and from the time of our establishment – we're on a time clock. We have a one-year time clock. We've had a full round of public hearings across the province, today being the last day, and we begin deliberating after today to consider the basis for our first report. Our first report will be due to be delivered to the Speaker of the Legislature in late October. After we deliver that report, it'll be made public, and the public will have an opportunity to respond to that in written form throughout November and December. We'll have further public hearings in January, and then we'll fine-tune the report for a final report, which is due in late March. The Legislature will then take that final report and enact enabling legislation to deal with our recommendations.

Just to give you some background in terms of population. The last Electoral Boundaries Commission had a population of just slightly over 4 million. We have a population of almost 4.9 million to deal with, so a huge population increase. When you look at the mean average for each riding's population, it's 54,929, but that's not necessarily the target. The target range is 25 per cent below or 25 per cent above, and that ranges from 41,000 to almost 69,000.

Our task is to establish effective representation for the province of Alberta. In doing that, we look at several factors that are outlined in the legislation: sparsity and relative density of the population throughout the province, common community interests, geographic features, communication and transportation lines. Our task is to come up with understandable and clear boundaries, and we are entitled to take into consideration other factors that we may find of benefit and of use through our public hearing process.

Now, as I state, I've kind of condensed my typical introduction into about a third of the time I usually take, ma'am, but we want to hear from you. Please tell us your name again for the record, tell us where you're from, and begin your presentation.

Ms Whitehouse: Okay. Well, I want to start by saying thank you to the members of the commission for the opportunity to speak this evening. My name is Wendy Whitehouse. I'm going to apologize at the outset for reading. I know it's a small group and it's online; it still makes me nervous. I'm going to read what I wrote out, and

then I understand that there's a time for sort of discussion or questions or anything like that afterwards, if I understood correctly.

The Chair: Sure. Yes.

Ms Whitehouse: Yes. Okay.

It's Wendy Whitehouse. I'm addressing the concerns related to the boundary changes for Calgary-East provincial electoral district. I have lived in the riding for 11 years and worked teaching English to immigrants in the riding in the late '90s. I also volunteer for the Southview Community Association and 12CSI, which is the 12 community safety initiative, and the 12 communities in the safety initiative are represented by many of the communities in Calgary-East.

The city of Calgary refers to our area as traditionally underserved. This you will hear said by the councillor for ward 9. You'll hear it said by planning people. We had a local area plan. They started the local area plan by referring to us as traditionally underserved. I understand this to mean that working-class and immigrant populations are often treated differently when it comes to providing services. It is clear to me that systems developed to accommodate the needs of professional, English-speaking, technologically adept citizens often do not serve the needs of Calgary-East constituents, resulting in their voices and concerns going unheard.

Government's job is to ensure that all citizens' voices are adequately heard. As I understand it, the primary goal in changing electoral boundaries is to ensure the electoral districts reflect changes in population distribution and maintain fair representation for all constituents. Electoral boundary changes should support inclusion and should not be used to create favourable voting blocks regardless of the party in power at the time. That's my personal opinion. I have three main points for your consideration.

First, I think that the provincial riding boundaries should stay aligned with municipal boundaries. It is critical that the voters of Calgary-East who have chosen to live, work, and build their lives in Calgary have fair representation. If our riding is lumped in with communities outside of Calgary, our vote will be diluted.

This brings me to my second point. Calgary-East is a unique riding with a large visible minority population, 35 per cent based on the 2021 census and I believe that it's probably closer to 50 per cent right now. This demographic includes Filipino, Southeast Asian, and many African countries such as Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, and so on. There are several others, but I just mention those three. This is a unique demographic which is not seen in other parts of the city, so much so that the business district is named International Avenue. The large Filipino population is a unique characteristic of the riding. The communities in this riding need to be kept intact to ensure that they have access to fair representation.

If our riding gets lumped in with neighbouring communities, then the racialized voters in this community will lose their access to fair representation. I believe it is important to keep the communities of Calgary-East together and closely aligned with the municipal boundaries. This is important for the constituents of these communities to have a voice in the electoral system. Concerns identified by Calgary-East constituents are often different from those of Calgary writ large and communities farther east such as Chestermere due to the unique demographics of this district.

7:10

Concerns identified in Calgary-East. I asked some people I know to send me some things about which they were concerned. Some of them, of course, are similar to what many people in the province are concerned about and some of them are the concerns of many but

really stark in this community. Some of their concerns are access to adequate and affordable housing, access to purpose-built rental housing – 40 per cent of the area is rental housing – free, universal health care, multilingual doctors and health care workers, having a living wage, a wage that allows any full-time employee to pay for rent, food, utilities. Many people here work two, three jobs just to get their basic needs met. The high cost of insurance, the high cost of utilities, of course these are huge burdens on working-class people. Food insecurity is an issue in this area of the city.

In working-class, multicultural communities it is already challenging for constituents to raise their concerns and be heard. I believe that the creation of a hybrid urban-rural riding would further dilute the voices of Calgary-East constituents. It would create confusion, lead to constituents feeling even more unheard, discourage engagement, and have an unnecessary negative impact on this riding.

My third point is regarding the creation of the two new seats. I think the two new seats should be allocated to areas with the most current and future population growth. All areas of Calgary have experienced population growth. However, north Calgary, ward 5, has seen the most population growth, followed by the far southeast, ward 12.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak and to share my perspective on the impact of the electoral boundary changes for this riding, Calgary-East.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much.

Aaron, can you tell me if there's anybody in the room just so I know if I have to . . .

Mr. Roth: Paul McLaughlin.

The Chair: Okay. But he's not till later.

Okay. Thank you.

Questions, starting with Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: Thank you for your submissions in addressing and just speaking to your concerns. If I understand your position correctly, the concerns that you listed off, you would say that those would be unique to Calgary-East as opposed to any other riding, or are you saying that it's unique to rural versus urban ridings?

Ms Whitehouse: I think both. I know that there has been some discussion about a hybrid district with Chestermere. I don't know how much discussion there's been about that, but I did read some things about that. In terms of the rest of the city, the demographics are quite different here in that we have many new immigrants landing in this community. The income levels, the education levels, people learning new languages, those things are really concentrated. It's not that they don't exist in other communities. Yes, there are immigrant and racialized people in many areas of Calgary and in rural areas, but the concentration in this area of the city is significant. The economics are different in this area of the city and in this electoral district.

Mr. Evans: You would be in ward 9? Is that primarily in ward 9?

Ms Whitehouse: Yes, we're in ward 9. Most of it's in ward 9. Some of it would be ward 10. I think the northern edge might be in ward 10.

Mr. Evans: And ward 11?

Ms Whitehouse: No, I think just ward 10. If anything, it would be ward 10, and we're only the east part of ward 9.

We already experienced the disparity. We refer to it. You'll hear people in this community, we talk about ourselves – now, I've only lived here for 11 years now, but you'll hear people talk all the time about being east of Deerfoot. Communities, even in ward 9, who have smaller ethnic populations, greater incomes, and are west of Deerfoot have many more amenities and services and access, so we often talk about how, you know, when you go east of Deerfoot, it's like we sort of drop off the radar in a way. I think it's very telling when our city representatives and our city planners refer to us, traditionally, like it's embedded, that it's an underserved community. If you pull up Google Maps and you look at Google maps of Calgary, you can see the disparity just looking at the map of the difference in this area of east Calgary versus west Calgary.

Anyways, I digress, but yes, I think the differences hold true when you compare us with other districts, both urban and within the city.

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Mrs. Whitehouse, thank you so much for your presentation. I found it quite informative, and thank you for bringing up – I didn't realize that the minorities are such a high percentage in your riding, and I want to thank you for bringing that to my attention and the concerns that come with it. Thank you.

Mrs. Whitehouse: You're welcome.

The Chair: Julian.

Dr. Martin: Yes. Thank you. On a similar note, I take your remarks that characterize the various new immigrant communities as being an opportunity for a community of interest, even if it's rather like common concerns as much as anything else. But by your comments in that regard, then, I think you're arguing – are you not? – that the present riding boundaries contain a cohesive point of view?

Mrs. Whitehouse: Yes, I would say. I mean, nothing is ever 100 per cent cohesive, but I would say a fairly cohesive and distinct point of view, yes.

Dr. Martin: Thank you, and a rather different point. Is it your personal experience that there is housing growth in the district?

Mrs. Whitehouse: Yes. We're in a period of what I would call revitalization, as I'm sure you're familiar with Calgary's recent city-wide zoning change. Previous to the zoning change, two new areas had been designated. I don't know how much more is going to be built, but there's Belvedere out by East Hills mall, and then there's another area just south of that that is currently being built. Those are both very high-density areas, and the housing appears to be geared to low to low-middle income. Like, it's not high-income housing. It's new housing, but it's not super expensive housing relatively speaking.

The established communities of this area – Forest Lawn in particular and Albert Park, Radisson Heights – are experiencing a lot of row houses being built and smaller, more increased density. I would expect that over the next few years – and this is just an expectation – we'll begin to see more condominiums and things of that nature being built in the area.

7:20

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you. That was similar to the question I was going to ask, but maybe I just – I like that term: cohesive point of view. It's amazing; we've been in these hearings for some time,

and that's the first time I've heard those words. That actually sort of lands, I think, in terms of a good description of a community of interest.

I guess maybe if you can just talk to me a little bit about: you'd mentioned that Belvedere and I think it's Huxley, which is just next to it, are developing. There's some growth there, but beyond that there's still quite a bit of land before we get to Chestermere. I think you've made your point that there's a cohesive community of interest in east Calgary, but maybe just talk to me a little bit about sort of the orientation of that in terms of where the services are. If you're travelling from your neighbourhoods, do you ever go into Chestermere? Do you know if your neighbours go east, or is it all within the community and neighbourhoods and elsewhere in Calgary?

Ms Whitehouse: I would say that it's predominantly in Calgary-East, and when people for the purposes of work leave this district and go elsewhere and come back – honestly, as I say, I'm involved in volunteer groups, and I can't say that I have a deep knowledge of what people are doing in the community. I don't know anyone who goes east to Chestermere ever for anything. All of the services that people need are available. The farthest east people go is the East Hills mall, the new shopping mall. For a lot of people in the community that type of travelling is difficult. When you have people who don't have a lot of money, there are limitations on what they can do in terms of travel, so transit access and C-Trains are helpful, and a lot of the activity remains local.

Mr. Clark: That's very helpful. Thank you so much.

The Chair: Well, thank you so much, Ms Whitehouse, for your presentation and for taking the thoughtful time you put into it, obviously. We're going to excuse you now. I am told that if you want to participate by at least listening to the rest of the presentations, you can go on our website and hear the audio on our YouTube channel. If you're so inclined to hear what other people say this evening, that's your opportunity.

Ms Whitehouse: I just have one quick question because I didn't have any previous information. Do you need the PDF of what I was reading for your files?

The Chair: Well, if you want to send it to info@abebc.ca, we'll certainly retain it and put it with the other written material. If you wish to do that, feel free to do so.

Ms Whitehouse: Okay. Thank you very much for your time. Good night.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you for coming.

I'm going to call the next presenter. Is Amanda Chapman in?
Is there anyone previous to Wendy Whitehouse here?

Mr. Roth: No.

The Chair: Okay. Our next presenter, then, if that individual is still here, is David Carpenter. It's a little earlier than we had you scheduled, but we assume flexibility on our presenter's part. Please identify yourself, tell us where you're from, and begin your presentation. Maybe unmute, too.

Maybe I didn't make it clear. Is David Carpenter in the waiting room and ready to present?

Mr. Carpenter: Okay. Can you hear me?

The Chair: Yeah, we can hear you. Sorry; we brought you up a little earlier because we've got some gaps. We assume you're flexible. Please identify yourself, tell us where you're from, and begin your presentation.

Mr. Carpenter: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm David Carpenter from the city of Lethbridge. My purpose in submitting this presentation is to assist the commission in considering recommendations respecting constituencies representing the city of Lethbridge. This will not be a partisan political presentation. I've been a lifelong provincial Conservative member, and my reasons have been quite simple. In my view, provincial Conservatives have shown integrity, honour, truthfulness, loyalty to Canada and citizenship and combine those qualities with a modicum of business acumen. As Alberta currently does not have a conservative option which meets my minimum stated standards, I am not a member of nor do I represent any political party.

My presentation must therefore be anchored in my personal history and experiences, which I'll briefly recount for you. I was born in Lethbridge, as were my mom and my siblings. After graduating as a chartered accountant, I completed the CICA in-depth tax program, wherein I concentrated on agricultural tax. I served three terms as a Lethbridge councillor and an additional five terms as mayor, concurrently representing Alberta municipalities on the board of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the special forces pension plan.

Provincially I served as chair of WCB Alberta, a director of the Association of Workers' Compensation Boards of Canada and also served on the Alberta Capital Finance Authority as official administrator of Alberta Health Services and as chair of the finance committee and audit and risk committee of AHS, having been appointed by both the UCP and NDP as well as the PC government before them. I served on the board of Calloway Real Estate Investment Trust, which is now SmartREIT, and was publisher of the *Farmer/Stockman Ad-Viser*, *Lethbridge Living Magazine*, *Taber Times*, *Vauxhall Advance*, and Coaldale's *Sunny South News* as well as serving as president of Robins Southern Printing and the southern Alberta web press group. I believe I can provide a unique perspective on both urban and rural southern Alberta political representation.

While the commission must honour the principle of one person, one vote, their recommendations must consider other elements, a significant one of which will be to ensure that communities with shared interests are kept together within electoral boundaries. Additionally, the danger of mixing disparate groupings of people such as both rural and urban in the same constituency will make the job of the political representative almost impossible, with the result that one group or the other is not fairly represented in the Legislature.

In my tax practice most of my large clients came from the ag sector surrounding the city. Combined with my urban and rural publishing experience, I believe I've acquired a solid understanding of the economics and values of rural southern Alberta. As I operated several businesses in Lethbridge and grew up and raised my family here, I also understand the importance of urban issues. My interactions with Alberta MLAs, various members of Executive Council of differing political stripes, as well as deputy ministers, Auditors General, and senior staff have given me some insight into provincial representative realities.

I sit on my back deck and look across the river at the Galt Museum building, where I was born three-quarters of a century ago. It's about eight miles south of the portion of what is colloquially known as Feedlot Alley in the county of Lethbridge. As a local I understand the value of those operations, but not everyone does.

Should northwest Lethbridge and the county feedlot operations, each with their attendant ancillary issues, be represented by one MLA, enormous pressure will be consistently applied to eliminate one or the other of the competing uses.

I served almost a quarter of a century on Lethbridge city council, and concurrently my cousin served on the county of Lethbridge council. Lethbridge desperately needed a site for a new solid-waste landfill, and city council was convinced the best possibility was the county. What we in the city thought to be the ideal location was not, however, in the view of county council the best choice, and my cousin cast the tie-breaking vote in opposition to the site. While subsequent Thanksgiving dinners were somewhat challenging, the whole process required both councils to rethink and come up with a better solution. Put simply, and this is important, the urban council did not properly appreciate the importance of rural concerns.

7:30

Joint urban and rural jurisdictions do not work well. Rural concerns and urban concerns differ. Both are important to Alberta's continued prosperity, and both need to be independently and properly championed in the Legislature. Treating the city of Lethbridge as a rural outpost or treating its surrounding agricultural lands as just another civic subdivision does not recognize their value. Urban and rural must be represented separately. Both are crucial.

That's my presentation, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir.

Mr. Clark, any questions?

Mr. Clark: I don't have any questions. No questions from me. Thank you very much for your submission.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: No questions, but thank you for your presentation.

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Just a comment. Thank you for your presentation. I assume that you are in agreement with the current electoral boundaries for the city of Lethbridge as they stand right now.

Mr. Carpenter: That, of course, is going to be your decision. As I understand it, we are within the norms of the median population on both sides, so it doesn't make sense to change them from that perspective, but, again, I don't have all of that information.

Mrs. Samson: Yes. Thank you.

Mr. Evans: Thank you for your submissions. I don't have any questions.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, sir, for coming, and thank you for your flexibility, for letting us pull you up sooner on the agenda. I'm not sure if you heard my comments to the previous presenter; we'll excuse you now, but if you want to continue to hear the rest of our presentation, you can go to our website and listen to the streaming audio on our YouTube channel.

Mr. Carpenter: Thank you very much, sir.

The Chair: Thank you.

Again, Mr. Roth, has anybody before Wendy Whitehouse appeared?

Mr. Roth: No.

The Chair: Okay.

Is Paul McLauchlin in?

Mr. McLauchlin: Yes. Good evening.

The Chair: Good evening. Please identify yourself and tell us where you are from and begin your presentation.

Mr. McLauchlin: You bet. Well, thank you for having me this evening. I'm Paul McLauchlin. I'm currently a fifth-term municipal councillor in Ponoka county. I'm the reeve of Ponoka county. I'm the former president of the Rural Municipalities of Alberta, and I've really been fighting for rural voices for a long time. I couldn't believe I've done a fifth term, and you know what? I'm going to step in for a sixth term. Pretty excited to chat with you today. I live in a cow pasture on the northwest end of Ponoka county.

What I'd like to tell you today is, really, I think what I've heard in a few of the presentations, that we are different, and I think our differences are important to point out. When I was elected in 2007, 21.2 per cent of the population was rural, and right now 15.2 per cent of the population is rural. This hyperurbanization, I think, is evident. We know it's happening. Rural places are growing but not at the speed of our urban friends, but it's important, and there are some important statistics for you to understand. We punch above our weight. The fact is that rural municipal folks represent 26 per cent of the GDP, 41 per cent of the capital investment. Again, low population, but still doing a lot. Six hundred and fifty thousand of us live rurally. Many of us know our septic system intimately. I've gone on my journey with mine. I know it extremely well.

Really, the point that I'm trying to say is that definitely there's a different lens and a different view. I was on the board of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and fought hard for rural issues for those folks. We do have a lot in common with our urban friends, but the reality is that blending that representation is different. I'll give you a few reasons why.

I imagine in this conversation is population density. Ponoka county has 721,000 acres, so we're three times the size of the good city of Calgary, almost three times the size of the city of Edmonton. Our population is 3.6 people per square kilometre whereas the city of Calgary is 1,592 and the city of Edmonton is 1,320. What do those numbers mean? Population density means we're spread out. We have a different world view. We have a different view of things, and this hyperurbanization is changing our politics significantly.

I think that for you to actually be a representative of both a rural and an urban riding at the same time is extremely complex. I'm dealing with cattle prices. I'm dealing with transportation issues. I heard some of your folks talking about urban issues, which I don't discount, but I'm not talking about row housing in Ponoka county. I'm talking about market conditions for canola. I'm talking about oil and gas fracking, and I think it's important to understand that lens is a different view.

I can't deny that with hyperurbanization we're starting to lose our representation. Many people have complained that the rural vote gets 2.1 of strength to an urban vote, but I think it matters, because 41 per cent of our wealth, 41 per cent of our investment, 26 per cent of our wealth, everything that you talk about being Alberta is beef, blue skies, grain, oil and gas, and mining. I think that it's important to understand that those folks need to have a strong voice in moving forward.

We brag about our clean air, our clean water. We're the stewards of those areas, and I think it's important to understand that we need to be recognized in that capacity, much like our Indigenous friends do as well and our Indigenous neighbours. Their worldview is much like ours, in some cases, being stewards of the land.

I think that one of the difficulties I've always had is telling our voice. More than once I got to – at the RMA conference we would have a credenza, and we'd have all the MLAs there, and I could sure tell an urban MLA from a rural MLA, only in as much as they knew the language, they knew the plain talk that many of the municipal councillors have. That's so refreshing to me, and I think it'll be diluted. I hear words of rural ridings and dividing a city in half, and I know we need to still have that voice. I think that if you really push that 25 per cent envelope, I think it's important to have that rural voice, because it's not just about row housing and it's not just about energy. It's about both, but those voices can sure help one another, and we can actually build and prosper together.

A lot of decisions are being made in the urban centres about rural Alberta. I'd sure like to have a rural voice in that conversation. It's not as simple as some people think. We saw the biodigester in High River create some stir, the coal mining up in the front ranges, decisions being made in Fort McMurray, renewables, and not having that voice. I think it's important.

One of the final things I want to give you is that a lot of folks look at the rural landscape and they think: wow, there's a lot of land there. Every farmer you'll meet doesn't have enough land. They do not believe they have enough land. I'll tell you what's probably the best thing about the community that I live in. My land has been farmed since the late '50s as one of the first cleared in the area. It doesn't matter what I do. My farming friends and neighbours will tell me how I've done it wrong and how they did it better in the past, and I appreciate that conversation. That plain talk, I think, makes good politics. Honest people that work on the land, that punch twice above their weight need to maintain their voice.

The reason why I've come before this commission today is I think that I've been fighting hard to have that rural voice, and I'd sure hate to lose it. I know what the demographics are doing. I know how things are shifting. I remember that I used to catch frogs on the north side of highway 16, the Trans-Canada highway, which is now Whitehorn. So I've seen those changes in my lifetime, but at the same time I live rural, I've raised my family rural, and I think our population of four people per kilometre here in Ponoka county needs an important voice.

I think a lot of people talk about trade centres. The reality is that our trading centres – I would not choose Red Deer or Edmonton. I choose where I can get the best price, and I happen to be going to town to get us something else. I think people really think that we're travelling to one centre or the other. We're choosing to make our best choices.

The one thing that I want to leave you with at the end is that I think that this hyperurbanization is occurring worldwide, and I travel quite extensively. Rural is rural, and the one thing I find about our immigrant populations that are new Canadians that come here: if someone's grown up in rural anywhere, rural India, rural Africa, they are still rural, and they want to become rural again. They're looking for any opportunity to be on the ground. The fact that I have chickens, horses, and cows is fascinating to all of our new Canadians, so we need to recognize that these new Canadians would love to be out in the country. If you're born in the country, you want to be back in the country as well.

I'd love to ask questions. I wish I had three hours to present, but I was told I'd have a pretty tight timeline, so I'd be open to any questions. I could discuss this topic for hours. I have a huge passion for rural Alberta. Please don't blend that much. We still need that strong voice at the cabinet table. We need a strong voice for rural Albertans.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Evans: No. Thank you for your presentation. Your enthusiasm and voice for the rural constituents is loud and clear, so thank you.

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: If I can just echo my neighbour, thank you for your commitment to the province and the past work you've done and the current work. It's refreshing to hear you. Thank you.

7:40

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much. I'm just looking at some of the numbers here. Lacombe-Ponoka in particular has grown actually. It's not grown, like you say, at the same rate as the rest of the province. It's up about 10 per cent whereas the province of Alberta has gone up about 17 per cent in the time between boundaries, but that's not bad, and certainly compared to some other parts of the province it's still showing some growth. That's certainly a positive thing.

Maybe if you could just tell me – and that was really an interesting comment about opportunities for new Canadians in rural Alberta. I guess I'm curious what you think it would take to encourage that and what the role of an elected official, be it an MLA or yourself or even federal, would be in making that happen?

Mr. McLaughlin: For sure. Yeah. Definitely. You can imagine as a new Canadian maybe family was there or you might have been attracted through job opportunities. I'll take a personal example. The Filipino population in Ponoka is probably the greatest thing to ever happen to the town of Ponoka. That Filipino community is just energy, youth, and openness, and that community has embraced the Filipino community. You know what? You can get a really good meal there now, too. Not that it was bad before, but you can get a really good meal there now, too. Amazing people. They've been embraced by the community. What we can do is look for those opportunities, recognize that there aren't just the cities.

I think that only about between 6 to 9 per cent of new Canadians actually go to rural centres. There really needs to be more welcoming, a stronger voice from folks in the rural communities. We need ambassadors, and I'm starting to see that. We're starting to see some programs that are developing. The greatest thing to happen to a lot of these rural towns to really energize them has been this immigration, these new Canadians moving into these communities. They're being actually embraced. They're being welcomed. They're being shepherded by this community to get the services they need to ensure that they're not held out.

Amazing performers in school, and you know what? They've added so much flavour to the Ponoka Stampede, which by the way is the best stampede, best rodeo in Alberta. I have to throw that in. Sorry, but it is. Just that energy has been so refreshing for a town like – and this is happening in other places. I think that we just need to make sure that that's our goal. We need to grow our rural centres. Definitely, I think that's critically important.

The one thing to talk about is the growth around the corridor. The highway 2 corridor is a blessing for many of us. That growth has occurred on the highway 2 corridor. The folks that are proximal to the highway 2 corridor have just not seen that growth. You go to the east of the province and even further to the west. It's probably the greatest resource that Ponoka has other than, I would say, good governance, but I can't say that. That highway 2 corridor and that number 2 soil are the greatest assets we have in Ponoka county. That's an important consideration that those main arteries are an important part of that growth as well.

I think that we need to embrace more new Canadians; 6 to 9 per cent is not a great number. Definitely, I think that there need to be

opportunities, and I think it's important for everybody to identify the opportunities in rural Alberta for sure. Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Mr. McLaughlin, you said that you wanted three hours. We've used 10 minutes of your 15 minutes. So I'm going to put a proposition to you. Someone earlier had said something about the principle of one person, one vote. We don't live by that principle in Canada. Our legal principle is effective representation, and thank goodness for that, that we don't have one person, one vote, which causes all the problems of gerrymandering that we see south of the border.

Effective representation. That principle actually is derived to some extent from section 3 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In other words, we are constitutionally bound to provide boundaries that give effective representation to Albertans. You cited a couple of statistics, which are very helpful, and it shows a serious drop in the percentage of the population of rural Alberta from 21 per cent just not even 20 years ago down to 15 per cent now, if I understood you correctly.

Okay. As a strong proponent for a strong voice, let me suggest that this commission has really – well, not only this commission but the Legislature and this commission really have only three choices dealing with population change: one, vastly increase the number of seats in order to provide a narrowing of that effective representation target; number two, eliminate rural seats in order to give them to the fast-growing cities; number three, create more blended or hybrid ridings. Those are really the only three options. Am I mistaken in saying that your position for a strong rural voice may in fact produce a diluted rural voice? Does that make sense? I'm interested in your response to that.

Mr. McLaughlin: I think your logic is extremely sound. You know, I always like to like to use some folksy terms, but in my community if you're wearing your cowboy boots and your jeans on the inside and on the outside, I know where you're from. Do you want someone to fake it or do you want someone to truly be a rural voice? I think that these blended ridings – because you used to hang out at your grandma and grandpa's acreage doesn't necessarily give you a rural lens. I'm not trying to disparage anybody. But I think that the important conversation is that a strong rural voice may be diluted, but it's a strong rural voice. If I'm being represented by someone in Beaumont and I live in Ponoka county, I'm going discount that person's ability to speak for me as a rural Ponoka county person. That's an important piece. They could be the best person in the world and maybe they did hang out at their grandma and grandpa's farm and maybe they'd come out to my place and chuck some square bales for me, but that voice is diluted.

Hey, the reality is that in the next census it's going to be 90 per cent urban and 10 per cent rural. Like, you can't – you know, your finger's in the dike. You're just not going to be able to stop that flood. But I'd rather have less genuine rural voices than people faking it because you're going to be faking it. I think one of the people beside said that that battle between the two – I love my urban friends. My family lives urban. I grew up in an urban centre, but I have a rural lens, and I always have had a rural lens. I'm going to basically probably die rurally if I could get a doctor, which is a whole other conversation. I think that we do have a different situation. I think that, when you start blending it, it will dilute maybe the numbers but not the quality. I'd rather have a strong rural voice than a watered-down rural voice, if that makes sense to you.

The Chair: Yeah. Well, you seem to be rowing against yourself, but I understand your position.

Mr. McLaughlin: I've looked at the situation in Europe, and I'm actually heading there in a couple of weeks just to look at some project work in Europe, and I know they've had this problem as well. They've actually created a proportional – they've changed the whole voting structure, to be quite honest, but they have created those extra blended seats as another “in addition to.” It is an effective model. It would probably be outside the scope of what you're doing, but I do think that the number of seats might be the solution.

The inevitability in the next census: 10 per cent rural, 90 per cent urban, and everything is going to be about housing, and we're going to stop talking about agriculture. We're going to stop talking about trade goods in agriculture and more about energy or energy conflicts with agriculture because it's hard to have that conversation unless you have a rural lens. I think that's what I'm really worried about going forward.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much. We've maxed out your 15 minutes. Much appreciated. I presume you didn't have prepared notes. You went right off the cuff. A very, very coherent presentation. Thank you so much, Mr. McLaughlin.

Mr. McLaughlin: Thank you for having me. Appreciate it.

The Chair: It appears that Ms Amanda Chapman may be here.

Ms Chapman: I am.

The Chair: We're only five minutes late for you, so why don't we bring you in. Please identify yourself. Tell us which constituency you're from. We generally give 10 minutes for presentation, and five minutes for question and discussion.

Ms Chapman: Sounds great. My name is Amanda Chapman. I live in the community of Huntington Hills. That's part of the Calgary-Beddington riding.

It was really interesting just listening to Paul talk. I wish I could have given him some of my time because I think my presentation is going to be fairly simple and straightforward.

Should I just launch right in?

The Chair: Yes, please.

Ms Chapman: Okay. Perfect. Really what I want to talk about today is essentially how great I think Calgary-Beddington is as a riding, the way it stands right now. There are a few reasons for that. One is that it has a very logical flow and shape to it. If you look at Beddington on the map, you know, you can see that we're bounded by a couple of major roads: by Deerfoot, by 14th Street, by Country Hills Boulevard up at the top. The communities are all in a nice clump together.

7:50

One of the reasons I think it works really well is because when we're serving these communities, they have a lot of similar needs. The communities in Calgary-Beddington have not experienced any kind of dramatic shift in their population. Of course, we're a more – I mean, heck, with the way Calgary is now, we're almost an inner-city suburb at this point. In terms of the way that people move around through the riding, it all has a very logical flow. You know, we are lucky to have a rec centre, a small one right inside the riding and then a big one right up at the top.

Everything around here is very like to like. It's a really similar population. We have a lot of newcomers, of course, because we still have some affordable housing. There's not so much of that left in the city, but we are lucky to have that in the riding. When I talk

about kind of the ease I find in Calgary-Bedlington, it's just that there are similar needs. The people who live here have very similar needs. Access to public transit is a huge one because we have so many newcomers. You know, lots of these folks are using public transit to get around for all of their day-to-day. Centre Street, of course, is the busiest transit corridor in the city. It's a really natural path through the riding that people travel a lot.

Actually, I just heard the end of Paul's presentation there, but I just wanted to comment. He was talking about that, like, the difference in city voices and rural voices are in their priorities and what they want to see. You know, I grew up spending summers on my grandparents' farm, and he's absolutely right. That does not make me a country mouse. I'm a city mouse. I was born in Calgary, I've lived here my whole life, and when I look at what the priorities are of the people who live here, they are very different than the priorities that I see in some of the smaller communities around Alberta.

I'm going to go back to public transit because, honestly, that is the biggest one in this community because it is a reason that people choose to live here. It's one of the only places in the city that you can live outside of the downtown core where you literally can leave your house and walk the four blocks to Centre Street. You don't even have to check to see if a bus is coming because we've got that BRT line that runs through. That desire for public transit and for easy access – honestly, as a driving place it's really great, too, because we've got all this road access. That's something that I definitely hear about from a lot of my neighbours and people I talk to in my communities, that the desire to live in Calgary-Bedlington comes from that ease of transportation, feeling like it becomes very easy to move around the city.

Oh, the one piece that I wanted to talk about – I don't know if you've heard this from other people. One of the pieces of Calgary-Bedlington right at the top is Country Hills. There are four communities up there, hills communities: Country Hills, Coventry Hills, Panorama Hills, and Harvest Hills. I've interacted with these folks quite a lot through my job. They have come together. Essentially, they have one community association, which is actually a really smart model for doing it. I see in a lot of communities – again, this is a very urban thing, too, your community associations. A lot of communities are really struggling to have their community associations have enough volunteers, kind of the manpower they need to go. So those four hills communities have essentially come together, and they have one community association that serves all four of them.

I would be remiss if I did not bring it up to you, as they have mentioned to me so many times: those communities very much desire to be within the same riding. They're thinking about that across levels of government: municipal, provincial, and federal. They struggle a little bit with, you know, they have three different provincial representatives who are responsible for their areas. They have two different municipal. So I know that those folks would love to see a boundary map that actually grouped those four communities together because they kind of think of themselves as one community. I did say that I would mention that for them here.

I think those are all of my sort of key points that I wanted to say about Calgary-Bedlington. Like I mentioned at the beginning, we're a really different beast, I think, than some of the communities that are out towards the edge of Calgary because we haven't experienced the growth that many of those communities have. I do think that the riding works really well right now for how its boundaries are. I think that we're able to provide really fair representation for newcomers in this riding simply because we have a large population of them, so we're able to, you know, try to spend our focus on how to make things in the riding that serve their needs.

Then I guess I would just mention, because I know that a lot of the discussion here has been around the blending that we're looking at on the city-rural boundaries, I really think Calgary-Bedlington is kind of a case that shows why that's not a great idea. It is a lot more straightforward to serve a population when you have a little bit of similarity in it. Like Paul said, it does not matter how many summers I spent on my grandparents' farms; it's not the same. Like, I understand more fundamentally what urban populations are looking for in their communities, and I think that those things are very different when we are switching over to – I mean, honestly, even small municipalities can be very different than a big urban centre like Calgary is.

Those were all my points. I don't know how much time I took.

The Chair: Thank you. You're right under 10 minutes.

Can I just get a clarification? I'm sorry; if you said it, I missed it. Are you the current serving MLA?

Ms Chapman: Oh, yes. Oh, my gosh. Did I not say that? I'm sorry.

The Chair: Well, if you did, I missed it.

Ms Chapman: Oh, okay. I'm sorry. You know what? I actually never expected to have a job like this, so it's still a weird thing for me sometimes. But yes, I am the MLA for Calgary-Bedlington.

The Chair: For how long? When were you first elected?

Ms Chapman: In the previous election, so just for two years. Yeah.

The Chair: Okay. Good. I did want to clarify that.

Mr. Clark, any questions?

Mr. Clark: Thank you. Yeah. You pre-empted my question, but I'll ask it anyway. I want to say that Country Hills looks like a shark fin on the map.

Ms Chapman: I call it a penguin. I say the riding looks like a penguin and Nose Hill is the belly of the penguin.

Mr. Clark: Oh, sure. Yeah. Okay. I see that.

Ms Chapman: Right?

Mr. Clark: That's my only question. No, that's not my only question, but you did pre-empt that question. You have been contemplating community associations and natural, quote, unquote, boundaries of roads and things, and I appreciate very much what you're saying. Perhaps Country Hills would find a new home in a provincial constituency north of Bedlington Trail, then. I don't know if I can promise that we can put all of those ones together although it certainly would form part of our consideration based on your input. We're wrestling with substantial population growth.

Interestingly, Calgary-Bedlington has grown 23 per cent in the last six, seven years, which is a little higher than the provincial average of 17. I guess that maybe takes me to the question of: where might that growth be? If you could, there's a map that's just been put up. Where is that growth happening? Maybe you can just sort of expand on that. It looks like it is fairly well developed, but is there some infill or densification, and where might that be happening?

8:00

Ms Chapman: My suspicion, because there are no – yeah, there are no new development areas. But there are quite a few – we have a really great mix of housing in Calgary-Bedlington. Like, we've got it all – right? – apartments, duplexes, row houses, single-family

homes. But there definitely has been a growth in secondary suites, so that would be my guess. That's my experience certainly from being out in the community, that there are a lot of single-family homes that now are also having a basement suite as a part of them.

The infill development hasn't quite come up this far. You know, it's definitely working its way up from the core, but of course the homes here, like in the oldest part of the community, in Huntington, would all be mid-60s builds, so the homes are all still, actually, in quite good condition. So we haven't gotten to the point where too many of them are being knocked down for the infills.

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

Dr. Martin: He pre-empted my question, but if I may pursue it a bit further. Do you anticipate these trends to continue unabated? I mean, how many basements are there left to be converted? You know, the whole area is quite mature and reasonably endowed with people who are doing personal renovations of their homes and the like, so do you see the turnover demographically? Are people aging in place, or are they selling to their kids, to put it crudely?

Ms Chapman: Yeah. We're at the point now where, I would say, because there are still quite a few original owners who live particularly in the Huntington and Beddington area, there is a demographic shift that's happening there because those people are increasingly moving on to more care-based facilities. My experience of the community is that every time one of those houses empties out, it is immediately filled by a family. Calgary-Beddington is very blessed to have many schools, so that's another reason. Like, in addition to ease of transit and rec facilities that we have, the schools make the community really attractive for young families. A good point, too, I should have mentioned, Greg, is that some of that population growth is probably just happening there, where we have one or two folks moving out of a home and we're having families of four or five move in.

In terms of a trend going forward, I suspect that there are still quite a bit of spaces and homes available for redevelopment here, because it's not something that has been happening at a super quick pace. You know, on every block maybe one or two homes is adding a secondary suite. But there are just so many people looking for housing out there and affordable housing that I think that that is a trend that's going to continue. I don't know how fast it will accelerate, but I wouldn't be surprised if it just kept going at the pace it's going at now.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Evans: Good evening. Thank you for your presentation. I've just got a question about – my colleague referred to it as a shark fin. I see it as a shark fin; I'm not exactly sure how I see the penguin. In any event, tell me what the connection is with that Country Hills Drive NW, that area and everything, I guess, west of Beddington Trail.

Ms Chapman: Everything west of – I'm trying to picture. Like, the hills communities that I was talking about: those are on all sides of the shark fin, I guess is what we're discussing. When I think about the riding, Country Hills is the only piece that maybe feels a bit disconnected from the rest of the riding, which is partly just how the road network works, like, how you drive when you're going to get over to Country Hills, but the riding shape is so funky because of Nose Hill, too, right? If I had seen any more logical way to package up the riding, I for sure would have presented it. It's hard, just the way the community is shaped.

Now, the only thing I will say about Country Hills – because I love them; it's not like I want to get rid of them – is that it is definitely a path that a lot of people flow to, because that's where the big rec centre is. Like, that's where the Vivo is. There's a huge commercial area up there, so for people who live in Calgary-Beddington, that is a naturally travelled path and a natural destination spot for them, which just speaks to how I feel like Country Hills is still a part of the community. How I think of it is: do I run into people, parents from school when I'm up in that area? I sure do, so people from Calgary-Beddington have a natural flow up into that part of the riding.

Mr. Evans: Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Ms Chapman. As I always say, when we have an elected official that knocks on the doors, walks the sidewalks of a riding, we gain and we appreciate so much more. So thank you so much for your presentation and for coming. If you wish to hear what goes on later or for the rest of the meeting, it's my understanding you can go to our website and click on the YouTube channel and hear the audio. Thank you very much for coming.

Ms Chapman: Great. Thank you so much for your time.

The Chair: I am of the view that we should probably just keep soldiering on through a break, if that's okay with everyone else, although we may have our own man-absent, person-absent break.

Mrs. Samson: Do we have somebody in the . . .

Mr. Roth: There's somebody, but I'm not sure who it is.

The Chair: Oh, okay. Good evening. The person that we just welcomed in, could you please identify yourself and tell us what riding you are living in? The individual with the initials RN.

Dr. Martin: Has the mute on.

The Chair: Oh, okay. I'm going to ask one more time. For the person with the RN logo: if they could identify themselves, maybe unmute yourself if you're muted.

Okay. Well, it must be a mistake, a wrong room. Is there anyone else that you are aware of, Mr. Roth, that may be hanging around?

Mr. Roth: There's nobody.

The Chair: No?

Okay. We will have a break then.

[The hearing adjourned from 8:08 p.m. to 8:28 p.m.]

The Chair: Good evening, Mr. Carra. Gian Carra, can you hear me?

Mr. Carra: Yeah, I can hear you. Can you hear me?

The Chair: We can, and we can see you. We appreciate you coming. I understand you probably had other commitments this evening or meetings of some sort.

Mr. Carra: I just walked away from the soccer practice for the team I coach. I told them: finish your scrimmage; I've got to go and talk to the provincial group that's organizing MLA ward boundaries.

The Chair: Good. Well, what I'd like you to do is just simply identify yourself, tell us which riding you want to talk about or

which riding you live in, and proceed for the next 10 minutes, and then we'll have a five-minute interchange of questions and answers.

Mr. Carra: Okay. My name is Gian-Carlo Carra. I'm the city councillor for ward 9 in the city of Calgary. There are a number of MLA ridings that overlap with ward 9. What's motivated me to reach out to you guys is a very similar conversation I've had with the city of Calgary's Ward Boundary Commission about striking the right balance between meeting the population where it is, chasing the population from where it's been, and heading to where it's going.

Let me start off with sort of the global picture that's confronting Calgary. In 1999 our transportation department came to the realization that as we grew to a million people and beyond, we needed to make significant changes in how we plan to move people around our city, otherwise we would not be able to keep on keeping on. There had to be a greater mode shift away from just private automobile use otherwise things would not work.

In 2009, 10 years later, we produced a municipal development plan. That municipal development plan said that for the first time in Calgary's history, over the next six decades we are not going to exclusively grow just on the edge of our city; we are going to balance growth on the edge with growth in the established areas. The six-decade plan, that is our statutory plan in our municipal development plan, is to balance over six decades 50 per cent growth in the established areas and 50 per cent growth in new areas on the edge of the city.

In 1999 to 2009 our growth ratio was 105 per cent on the edge and minus 5 per cent in the established areas. In 2009 to 2019 we achieved 10 per cent redevelopment in the established areas, 90 per cent growth on the edge. That means that over the next five decades, 42 per cent of our growth has to occur on the edge and 58 per cent in the established areas of the city.

We are bending in that direction, and what is really important is that we establish ward boundaries that are reflective of where the population is going as opposed to where it's been, if that makes sense. I know that there is always a conversation about, you know, with the city of Calgary: do we give everybody a little piece of the downtown and then create a pie-shaped city? The reality is that we need to be able to elect representatives who are not only representative of the population as it is today but representative of the population of where it's going.

If we create too many wards that are reflective of where it's been, and we're chasing that demographic, the ability to get to where we need to get is going to be increasingly compromised. You know, I don't think it's a political conversation about balancing growth, growing out. We don't have much more than 42 per cent available on the city's edge, and people are pouring into this city.

I know that you guys are considering, you know, potentially shifting the boundaries outward to accommodate more growth on the edge. I want to assure you that more and more growth has to occur within the established areas. To chase the boundaries out, you're going to be coming back in no time and chasing it coming in, and on top of that, you're going to make the project of redevelopment harder if we don't elect representatives who understand and are reflective of those demographics that are moving towards higher urban densities.

That's my basic pitch to the ward boundary commission. I know that you have to be very thoughtful about reflecting the populations that exist today, but the population is constantly shifting. You know, I think transportation planning is a great example of that because if you're trying to meet the demand today, by the time

you've met it, you're already behind, and you have to get ahead of that.

That's my basic pitch. I have very similar conversations with our own ward boundary commissions as they try to find the right balance of more inner-city or more suburban wards.

The Chair: Mr. Carra, I'll turn it over to the other commissioners, but the question that comes to my mind is: how often do you do the redrawing of the ward boundaries?

Mr. Carra: Well, we try to do it as infrequently as possible. We are mandated by the province to maintain a certain population balance. I would say that we had a demographic challenge in our northeast because our northeast in Calgary has a huge number of South Asian families who live multigenerationally. Generally what we did was we said: we have planned for this many housing units, and we expect there to be this many people – you know, 2.1 people – living in each of those housing units, as it is through the rest of Calgary. What happened in northeast Calgary is we had something like a population of six for every dwelling unit, so we really had to create a massive shift.

8:35

In 2017 when Councillor Chabot decided to run against Mayor Nenshi and abandon ward 10, that gave us the opportunity to do a major shift because we weren't pulling the rug out from underneath an existing elected official. That allowed us to do a massive, massive shift. We basically split ward 3 into half, and then everything shifted from there.

You know, we had been nibbling around the edge of that problem for almost my entire time in office. My first term involved a ward boundary shift. I was stepping into a ward 9 that had never existed before. It adjusted in the next two election cycles, but in 2017, with the opportunity to do a grand change, we haven't moved it, and the expectation is that there doesn't really have to be another shift because I think we've equalized that for at least 10 years or so.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

Mr. Evans: Do you live in the Calgary-East electoral district?

Mr. Carra: I live in, I think, Calgary-Buffalo. I think NDP MLA Joe Ceci is my riding. North I also have Kathleen Ganley. I also have Peter Singh. I also have Tanya Fir. Yeah. And I think I've got one more MLA in my riding.

Mr. Evans: Well, you're well represented. Thank you.

Mr. Carra: Yeah. I mean, that's the question: am I well represented? Like, that's the big challenge you guys have. Do you create more representatives, or do you – I mean, we have that same question. Our downtown is one of the major economic engines of the province and of the country, and, you know, we have one city councillor, basically, representing it. We said, "Should every councillor represent it?" and we made the decision: no because, actually, that would be less good representation if everybody had a minor piece rather than it had one representative who was born out of that.

That's, I guess, my pitch to you regarding: don't be too quick to chase the population outward as the population wave is coming back inwards.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for your presentation tonight. I'm just going to let you know that we had lots of people from Calgary present to us, and I have heard many times about the redistricting

overlay that the city has put in place to increase the densification, and we are certainly paying close attention to that as we look at the boundaries.

Thank you again for your presentation.

Mr. Carra: Thank you.

The Chair: Yeah. Thank you. We wish you'd have been here the first week we were hearing.

Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you, and thank you very much for your presentation. I found it illuminating to hear some of the history of Calgary's planning cycle. Nerd that I am, I regard those things with a lot of respect, and I sympathize with the struggle to keep it flowing in the directions suggested by the planning documents. I found it very interesting, the notion to balance the density of periphery and core, because I take it that a lot flows from that about budget decisions and allocations as well.

You know, the densification in northeast Calgary is only possible because of many budget decisions about subsurface infrastructure on the one hand and permitting on the other. How's it going? I mean, Calgary is very full on the periphery, and some of the more mature neighbourhoods have nowhere near that kind of growth rate even though you have land-use bylaws that permit the conversion of – allow you to have secondary suites and the like. We still, at this moment at least, seem to have a very different rate of growth in the periphery as opposed to the old core. Can you comment on that?

Mr. Carra: Yeah, I can comment extensively on that. Thank you for the question. I will also nerd out with you. The first thing I'll say is that in the 1980s the city of Calgary created, like, R-1 zoning, which allowed a single house on a single lot. It was adjusted in the 1980s, and we created R-2 zoning. R-2 zoning just allowed for an organic subdivision of some of the wider inner-city lots. The analysis shows that that netted us 80,000 units that wouldn't otherwise have come into existence organically over time.

The universal upzoning that the city just undertook in response to the housing crisis I think will do the same kind of work. If over the next five decades, between 2019 and 2069, which is the life of our municipal development plan, we need to now get 58 per cent of our growth for those last five decades into the established areas, I think the universal upzoning will account organically for maybe about 30 per cent of that 58 per cent. The other 70 per cent plus probably has to occur in significant transit-oriented development receiving areas like the East Village, The Bridges, the new University District, Truman West District. Those are four examples, and we need 40 to 50 of those over the next five decades.

The challenge is that Calgary is unbelievably efficient and excellent at developing high-quality peripheral growth, and that growth is getting denser and denser. We have yet to crack the code both from a market perspective – I mean, the market is responding every time you build it. More developers who can do that work, more communities who are accepting of that work, and a regulatory system and a planning system that can actually help those things happen is our current planning challenge. We are winning the day on that and getting there. It just takes time.

Dr. Martin: A secondary point, if I may, is – again, this is classic stuff, and I commend you for doing it – building out along the transit lines, establishing high-density nodes at the transit centres, and the like. The net effect, then, implicit in your description of Calgary's various planning documents is a multinodal city.

Mr. Carra: I think a multimodal city is the exact correct term for what we are going for. We are looking outside of our downtown core of, you know, minimum 30, maximum 50 over the next five decades to get to that point. That's a significant shift, but that's happening. I think it's really important that our representation boundaries reflect where the puck is going as opposed to chasing it.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Yeah, this is great stuff – thank you so much – and, I think, timely because we're starting to really grapple with some of these things. The data that we have here seems to really reflect a lot of what you were talking about in terms of that the growth in the past over the last seven or eight years has been largely on the edge but also downtown. Places like Calgary-Mountain View and Calgary-Buffalo have grown really substantially, but primarily it's northeast, south, southeast that have really grown. I guess I just want to validate with you that your perspective is that those edge areas are going to continue to grow and perhaps grow in a more efficient and densifying way, and we're going to have some growth in the core. Just validate that that's correct.

Then you listed off, I think, four: East Village, The Bridges, University District, and Truman West District. I know where most of that is, but maybe can you just let us all know where those things are specifically? We want to make sure we're aware of that if we need to make some adjustments.

Mr. Carra: Yeah. Well, The Bridges and the East Village are our two best examples of these sorts of high-density, transit-oriented receiving areas. The East Village is a neighbourhood off the eastern flank of the downtown between city hall and the Confluence, and it's a significant success. Just south of that is the new entertainment district, which is part of the provincial community revitalization levy, the new entertainment district with the new Flames arena and all of that.

8:45

Across the river in Bridgeland you have The Bridges, which is the rebuild of the general hospital, which is achieving build out. East of that, we have the East Riverside lands. The province owns a big chunk of that land, and we are actively redeveloping that.

Then we've got all of our transit stops which are growing up. The green line is going to have significant density nodes along every step of the way, you know, from Calgary-Buffalo into Ogden, where Tanya Fir represents right now. I'm sorry; I'm not as familiar with the names of the provincial ridings as I am with the city.

I guess what we saw was that from 1999 to 2009 105 per cent of our growth was on the edge. From 2009 to 2019 it was 90 per cent, and we're going to see a decreasing trend of that. We're still going to have significant growth there, and we're going to see an increasing amount of growth in the established areas. Some of that's going to be organic infill through the upzoning, but most of it's going to be significant nodal development along all transit stops on our primary transit network.

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

The Chair: Thank you for a very enlightening presentation, sir. Much appreciated.

Mr. Carra: My pleasure.

The Chair: Okay. You're excused.

I see that our next presenter, Mr. Trevor Sloan, is present. Mr. Sloan, if you could just identify yourself, make sure you're

unmuted, tell us what electoral division you are from, and begin your presentation. We usually have 10 minutes, and then we have about five minutes for questions.

Mr. Sloan: Yeah. Absolutely. Can you guys hear me okay? Excellent.

This is going to be a lot less data centric, a lot less interesting, a lot less useful and informative than Gian-Carlo's work there. That was great. I didn't want him to stop. I can just quit and he can come back if that's better.

I'm Trevor Sloan. I'm a constituent of the Highwood district just southwest of Calgary, just on the outskirts here, so I'm going to come at it from a little bit of, I guess, a different viewpoint than the city focus. The only reason that I'm here is, really, a bit of a concern around the change in legislation that removed that requirement around establishing electoral divisions remaining within the boundaries of the cities of Calgary and Edmonton. It's a bit concerning to me in a couple of respects, I guess. You know, I understand the initial impetus. I guess the explanation makes some sense. We're going to need the ability to incorporate places like Chestermere or Spruce Grove or whatever it is into existing electoral boundaries.

My concern is a little bit twofold, I guess. One is kind of practical. It's a little bit of accountability. This is still a rural district, largely. It becomes rural very quickly when you leave the city, and the concerns of rural constituents are pretty different from those of the city. I just think that we have different sort of representation needs around those, you know, things for us or around water use or land use, land development whereas in the city it's really more, as we just heard – right? – about density and infrastructure and how growth gets managed. Out here it's a pretty different world.

I don't live in Calgary, and I don't live there for a reason even though I benefit a lot from all of the pieces of the city that I can take advantage of. You know, my representation and where I live and where I pay my taxes to are a little bit different. I think from an accountability perspective, for me anyway, it's kind of important to have – if we start sort of elongating and blending the rural-urban divide, it makes accountability a little tougher, right? If I've got an MLA that's where the urban and rural interests are in tension, I think accountability demands that you have a representative that's going to speak to your interests. It just makes it a little bit easier to chastise those that aren't really representing you the way you want them to. That's really kind of what our system is designed around – right? – both accountability but also tension between competing interests. Those are always going to exist. I kind of want a representative that understands and is going to advocate for my interests out here.

The second is really longer term, and it's just about sort of the erosion of democratic accountability more broadly that's concerning in this province. This isn't gerrymandering itself, but it's a first step towards being able to do that. You know, the maintenance of a highly qualified and independent commission – which you all are, and I'm very thankful for that – is a really good breakwater, but it opens ever so slightly the ability to start to have politicians pick their voters as opposed to have voters elect their politicians. In a time when democracy is under threat in a lot of different ways, I don't like that advancement.

It seems like a benign thing. It's like: well, it's a municipal boundary, you know, who really cares? I would argue that it's pretty important to maintain that division, even if it's only a suggestion now as opposed to a requirement and that only under really the most extenuating circumstances do you erode that line both for the reasons of accountability, as I've suggested, but also as one step

towards drawing the really most ridiculous districts to maintain certain power centres.

Anyway, that's kind of about it and all I have.

The Chair: Well, thank you, Mr. Sloan. I will turn it over to the other commissioners, but I have a question about the name of Highwood. Are you happy with that name?

Mr. Sloan: Sure. Well, I mean, I guess I wouldn't say that I'm happy. It doesn't really concern me.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Sloan: Is that an issue?

The Chair: Well, part of our job is actually to provide names for the electoral divisions. Tell me: where in the riding do you live?

Mr. Sloan: I live just basically about three miles south of the city limits on the west side. If you know where Spruce Meadows is, I'm about two miles south of it.

The Chair: Okay. Good. Thanks.

Mr. Sloan: I guess the only point just in terms of district names: Highwood is perfectly acceptable. The Highwood river runs right through the heart of the electoral division, so that makes a lot of sense. I am generally opposed to long extended hyphenated names. I think simple, clear concise names are – even if sacrificing, you know, certain designations or trying to honour certain people or places. You can try to do too much with too little. Keep it simple, is my view.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Evans?

Mr. Evans: Would you consider yourself to be in any way connected to the city of Okotoks?

Mr. Sloan: It's interesting. If we're thinking about going to Costco – let's call it going to Costco. We're pretty much equidistant between the Okotoks Costco and the new Costco on the Tsuu T'ina reserve. One of my kids went to high school in Okotoks. One went to high school in south Calgary. My kid played basketball in Okotoks. Do I consider myself a part of that community, though? No, probably not. I worked in Calgary most of my career, so I wouldn't consider myself an Okotokian at all.

You know, I would consider myself aligned in some ways. I mean, I read the local community newspaper pretty regularly. I'm very concerned about the deer issues going on in Okotoks. But no, I wouldn't consider myself either aligned with Okotoks any more than I would be with Calgary.

Mr. Evans: Just a question in relation to your child that went to school in Okotoks. You had to drive your child there because there wouldn't be busing, would there?

Mr. Sloan: There was no busing. Thankfully, we delayed him a little bit, so he had his driver's licence for most of high school, and it was just for high school.

From K to 9 they went to Red Deer Lake, and we drove them there every day. Yeah.

8:55

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you very much for your presentation.

Mr. Sloan: Yeah. You bet.

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: No questions.

Dr. Martin: I have a question about growth. We always ask this because we're all about population as well as about communities of interest. In your experience, where are significant and imminent growth opportunities occurring in your district?

Mr. Sloan: From what I understand, it's pretty similar, I think, to the rest of the western world, frankly, and urbanization continues apace. My understanding is that, you know, predominantly Okotoks and High River, which are the two larger communities in the district, are where the majority of people are growing. I see there are new builds out in the country. I live very rurally. We live on five acres in what is considered country residential surrounded by kind of a 160-acre cattle farm, and we've got some horse people to the north. I see a little bit of development and the odd house popping up here and there, but from my understanding and from keeping my ear to the ground from the real estate perspective, the whole country living thing isn't really where people are going. I think both the amenities and the ease with living in smaller towns is really, in this area anyway, where most people are gravitating to: Bragg Creek, Millarville, Okotoks.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. I'll just build on that. Would you say that Okotoks and High River and maybe Diamond Valley: are those sort of fairly connected communities? I mean, those are the three largest urban areas, I imagine, in the general area. Is that fair to say those three have a pretty close connection?

Mr. Sloan: Yes and no. They're not very far away from each other, similar in size, and surrounded by rural communities. I think Okotoks stands out probably a little bit from those in terms of size, pace of growth. They all have their own very distinct entities in my experience as well. From an electoral perspective, if you were to group them: yeah, I think that's pretty fair. Would having one in one district and one in another be, you know, avoid at all costs? No. Not necessarily. I think they wouldn't need to have contiguous representation necessarily. It's certainly better, I think, than, say, splitting one of the towns. Right? They're certainly not of that size or importance. Individually I'd say that they should probably have the same MLA, but to make sure that they're all combined: no, not necessarily, I don't think.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir. Much appreciated. If you want to hear the rest of the evening, you can go to the website and go onto the YouTube channel.

Mr. Sloan: That's great. I appreciate all the work you all are putting in on this. It's very valuable, so thanks so much for doing all you're doing. We appreciate it.

The Chair: Thank you.

Where are we at? Courtney Walcott. Can you bring her in?

Mr. Clark: It's a guy. It's a male. It's a him. A city councillor of Calgary.

The Chair: Oh, okay.

Mr. Walcott: Get it all the time.

The Chair: Okay. Sir, please identify yourself and tell us your home base. Yeah. We look forward to hearing from you. Ten minutes and then five minutes of questions and discussion.

Mr. Walcott: All right. Thank you, all. Can you hear me okay? Perfect. Thank you so much.

My name is Courtney Walcott. I'm one of the city councillors in the city of Calgary. I got here just in time to hear you listen to Councillor Carra and the questions you asked him, so I'm going to do my best to try and skim over anything that is of similar nature so that you're not hearing anything too repetitive. The only thing I'd offer is, hopefully, anything that's in addition to his comments plus the rest of my own.

Ward 8 is the area that I represent, and it overlaps with three separate ridings at the provincial level: Calgary-Buffalo, Calgary-Currie, and Calgary-Elbow. Primarily it's Calgary-Buffalo, where Calgary-Elbow and Calgary-Currie just edge into the area that I represent. To build out on what Councillor Carra was describing earlier with looking toward the future of where development is going to go and looking toward the future of where the population growth is going to be, I really wanted to identify one of the areas in which Councillor Carra didn't go into too much detail.

When he looked at the relationship between the external growth versus the inner-city growth, he went all the way back to 1980 to describe the R-1 zoning description and what we were experiencing in some of the city, but I actually want to just go back, just in the last decade, to 2015. In the city of Calgary when they were experiencing such a massive downturn following the oil and gas, one of the biggest engines that we had was construction: home building and new community growth. To crosspoint about the long history that existed with suburban growth in Calgary over the course of the years, creating new single-detached suburbs that were massive land sucks, they required such a significant amount of geography to be able to put the appropriate number of houses in to match the growing population underneath the single-detached zoning that was allowed for so many decades.

Later, closer to 2015, they started to shift how they built out suburban communities, and what you'll hear, actually, in the zoning world about Calgary is that our new communities are coming back denser. They're less suburban and more urban in nature because we finally started to abandon that single-detached development type and move toward true multifamily communities, massive nodes. I believe one of you mentioned multimodal, so massive nodes. You'll see that with things like McKenzie Lake; you'll see it with Seton, where there are these massive work centres that will be drawing people to these spaces almost so you can have complete communities on the edges.

But in that gap between 1980 and 2015, we weren't creating those types of suburbs, so it's the new suburbs that are starting to come online in the years since then that are seeing that high-density growth. That's what you're experiencing in the northeast, in Cornerstone and Skyview, this new form of suburban growth that's being developed in those spaces where the communities that are coming online are 40,000 people strong whereas the communities that were being built in the '80s were about 7,000 or 8,000 people to 15,000 people and were twice the size because of the physical geography.

What we're seeing now in our rapid growth in Calgary is the fact that there's about a 10- to 15-year build-out period for many of these communities. The experience of suburban growth is a result of a policy that came into effect 10 years ago where we started to look at building out those communities in a different way. They're

no longer that traditional single-family suburban development, which is why there's such a rapid population growth that's happening on the edges. That change: the reason why I talk about it as so significant is because that change that we would have done 10 years ago in the external edges of the city, we have finally matched it in the inner city.

He mentioned the R-1, R-2 zone. We created something called the R-G zone in the new suburban communities. That's that multifamily. When you heard all about rezoning in Calgary, the suburban communities already had it, right? They were being built with this new zoning, which allowed more density, more flexibility, more housing, more people. That has finally only last year, eight months ago, been established across the entire city. It was because of that rapid growth that we were seeing at the edges that we finally matched the political energy that we had put towards suburban growth, changing from the single-detached to multifamily, multinodal communities. We matched that energy in the established areas in the inner city all around where communities used to be stagnant because of the massive land and geographic uptake of single-detached housing. That is no longer the norm.

9:05

The trend that Councillor Carra was speaking about is that there's going to be a slowing of suburban growth because we finally allowed the policy to catch up to the intentions of our municipal development plan. He spoke about the 50-50 split. The reality is that that 50-50 split was a title in nature, something that we could speak about, but it was something that wasn't able to be matched in policy. We never actually built the policies to enable that 50-50 split that we promised in the MDP, municipal development plan – sorry; too many acronyms – whereas now we have. We finally have the policies in the established areas of the city of Calgary to start to experience that population shift back to the established areas, where we historically have seen it go out to the suburban places. That's just the one part of the story that I felt that Carra didn't get.

Then I'll talk about kind of one of the challenges of being a city councillor, this idea of geographic/urban representation versus population-based representation. One thing many of you will know is that when we look at population-based representation – that's what the city of Calgary does as well with our ward system. We look at trying to balance our wards to about 100,000. The result has been pretty diverse in the sense that you're going to get some words that are massive like ward 5, which is the northeast ward where you have about 110,000 people, and then you get some wards that are – when I say massive, I mean, geographically, not populationwise because we're all the same population for the most part, whereas you look at my area, my density, we're about 90,000 to 95,000 where I have the Beltline. I'm a dot on the map. If you zoom out to look at the entire ward system of city of Calgary, you can barely fit the word ward into the area that I represent because the population density is so different, and that's because of an area like the Beltline, which is what is in Calgary-Buffalo, which is experiencing a massive population growth upwards of single communities growing at a rate of about – it's going to be about 31,000 pretty soon and it was 25,000 in the '20-21 census.

The reason why I stick on that so much is because the creation of a population-based ward system or a population-based riding system versus having a better understanding of the geographic and urban representation that can come with these different areas and how they're created. The impact is that it creates these arbitrary distinctions where elected representatives become tasked with governing communities that they have very little legitimate connection to.

It takes good, strong representation to speak to the realities of being able to be a diverse representative across unique changing demographics. That's a good elected leader. But the capacity of that representative to be effective, to be a good elected leader across these unique demographics is almost determined by the range and spectrum of that diverse demographic.

When I look at what we talk about with being an inner-city representative, I do not experience the same needs as people who are in the suburbs of Calgary. And that's just within my own city boundaries, let alone to speak to that urban-rural divide, about what it means to be a representative of an urban space and to be a representative of a rural space. That conflict creates a tension where your representative is diluting their focus and unable to actually be a true representative of everybody because to serve the infrastructure, to serve the people, you are always trying to figure out how you serve their interests, and when their interests are so diverse, you struggle to be that representative in that larger landscape.

That's probably an interesting way, for me, of describing what it means to be a representative for people based on where they live. I find that representation and choice in where you live is in many ways a demonstration of the chosen interests of an individual. Since effective representation and governance to me is best demonstrated in the most valuable exercise you can have as a city councillor, which is the budget, when representation is split between areas with diverse and unique budgetary needs – from health care to education, transportation infrastructure, income supports – you choose where you live based off what you either need to create a good life or what you believe is a necessary ingredient to a good life, a similar way that people would choose to live on an acreage, where it's the space, it's the connection to nature, or maybe it's the connection to a farm or an agricultural lifestyle. Whereas in an urban space, it might be actually the employment opportunities that come from a denser, urban living environment. Where you choose to live is – essentially, what you're also simultaneously suggesting is that you're hoping that your representative is going to support that infrastructure that helps them build out the way of life that you've chosen.

When you have ward systems, in Calgary for example, that are too large, you end up seeing those experiences very closely, where the inability for a representative to be that close to the ground to such diverse, changing, unique physical landscape, infrastructure changes, health care, education, across diverse geographic landscapes. They are constantly diluting their ability to represent their people, picking and choosing winners depending on the time. And that is why I just wanted to speak to this.

When you're starting to look at some of the edge growth in Calgary and no longer having the responsibility to stay within the city's boundaries, I find that there's a risk, that I already experience on a more microscale at the city of Calgary, where the scale of representative across geographic and distinct, unique interests, based off where people choose to live, is becoming really challenging for me to be effective in my representation of the public. And I have one of the denser, smaller wards. I only bring this up to suggest that in the potential future where we have an urban-rural riding, if I'm experiencing the challenging ability to be an effective representative, based off the diverse needs of the people that I serve, because of the geographic challenges that come with a growing city, and, of course, just the fact that every community is a little bit different than the last, to do so outside of the city is almost like that probably times 10.

With that, those were my thoughts that I wanted to share with you. Thank you, guys, for taking the time to hear me out.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Walcott.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

Mr. Evans: Yeah. Thank you for your submissions. You've talked about the difficulty in representing diverse interests within your geographic area. You're in ward 8, but you also have a portion of ward 6.

Mr. Walcott: Correct. Right now. And that is probably the perfect example of some of the growing challenges.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Let me ask you about the challenges you face in trying to represent a portion of ward 6, ward 8, and then bearing in mind that ward 8 alone – I think, if I got it right – you have Calgary-Buffalo, Calgary-Currie, and Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Walcott: That's correct.

Mr. Evans: And you're boots on the ground under the MGA. I understand your roles and responsibilities, and they're different than the MLA. So I'm interested in how you are able to manage the diverse groups that you're representing in those two wards.

Mr. Walcott: Yeah. I think probably one of the best examples is to contrast the spectrum of socioeconomic statuses that I represent. That is probably the best way of kind of describing it. The Beltline has the largest concentration of low-income people in the city. It's not to say that it's the poorest neighbourhood by far. It's not. It's just because of the scale of it. Out of 25,000 to 30,000-strong people, you have the largest concentration of low-income Calgarians in that space, so there are some very particular needs and requirements that I have to spend my energy on to support that community, one of which actually falls into the space of provincial jurisdiction with regard to poverty reduction.

There's a natural overlay between poverty reduction at a municipal level and poverty reduction from the provincial level. And that's just the Beltline. But then when you go out to ward 6 or even some of the edge communities within my own ward, you experience a very different space where you're still undergoing suburban development. They're still pushing to the edges of the city in this experience where they are looking at acreages, and they're looking at a very different socioeconomic lifestyle where their focus is on the education system. That's actually what comes to my office the most, quality of schools, parks, and open spaces whereas with the inner city, you're often focusing on the different types of housing supports that would be required of a lower socioeconomic group. That diversity means that, at some point, I have to provide a focus to be able to solve one problem; just one at a time every single day, one at a time. Because some of my inner-city issues do function around the concept of life safety, I spend a lot more time on life safety issues than I do on some of the challenges that are being faced by some of my suburban communities.

9:15

Mr. Evans: Can you explain to me: what's life safety? What do you mean by that?

Mr. Walcott: Yeah. When the Beltline experiences a higher rate of drug overdoses, there is an experienced – we have our supervised consumption site in that area. Traditionally you have a higher population of homeless people. I consider homeless people to be my constituents because they're still living within my ward even if it's not in a home. So you end up seeing that these particular challenges cross from policing to health care to education to housing. They cross different orders of government. I end up doing a lot of intergovernmental work to try and support some of those needs, that I'm not actually – those are not the needs that are being presented to me by constituents in the portion of ward 6 that I

represent or in some of the higher socioeconomic areas that I also represent.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Susan, any questions?

Mrs. Samson: No questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Yes, I do, actually. Thank you. I wanted to follow up on remarks made by your colleague, and you yourself began your remarks by picking up on some of the history of zoning, so to speak. If you will forgive me for being slightly mischievous, I'd like to contrast what Calgary is experiencing in accordance with its various planning regimes and what I think we are seeing in Edmonton. Edmonton, at this time, seems to be on a very different part of the cycle, by which I mean that its inner, traditional neighbourhoods are very low growth whereas, as you would expect, the periphery has been growing at a more robust rate. Now, confronting this contrast, would you look to a difference in zoning regimes and transit and LRT build-out as contributing factors?

Mr. Walcott: To be honest, actually, no. Primarily what I would attribute it to over the last several years, in particular the last decade, has been about the economic opportunities that are represented in the Edmonton area when dealing with population demographic shifts. I think that leading up – like, let's exclude the 2023, '24, and '25 kind of massive changes to the city of Calgary. I would argue that one of the reasons that Edmonton experienced its suburban growth at the scale that it did versus its inner city is primarily also because they were experiencing a lot lower degree of population pressures and they were getting closer, with the establishment of the St. Albert, Sherwood Park municipalities, to being these larger, almost urban places that are just directly at the edges of their city whereas Calgary, as a unicity model, instead of building out Airdrie, Okotoks, and Cochrane, absorbed Bowness and absorbed, historically, Forest Lawn.

That landlocked nature of Edmonton meant that people could be in Edmonton and be in an urban municipality without actually being there, because of the Edmonton metropolitan area, whereas in Calgary the Calgary metropolitan area – I think we're 1.7, but 1.6 of it is Calgary, whereas Edmonton's metropolitan area I think is 1.6 and 500,000 of that is the surrounding municipalities, right? So they have much larger and more affordable urban centres that are closest to the edges. As this changes with higher population growth and the requirement of economic development in the city of Edmonton, that will likely come from Calgary pricing out the affordability opportunities that we've seen, I think that focus will shift back into Edmonton. They will start to experience pressures, and they'll need to start accommodating, but they're effectively landlocked by surrounding municipalities.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. That's useful. Thank you very much.

Mr. Walcott: I appreciate it.

Mr. Clark: That's great. Thank you. Thanks so much for being here. I guess I just wanted to ask specifically about growth in the inner city. We talked to Councillor Carra about some of the bridges in East Village and some of those areas. Do you anticipate that, with things like the downtown office-to-residential conversion or,

frankly, any other factors, that trend is likely to continue, sort of plateau, or is it going to accelerate?

Mr. Walcott: I think it'll actually continue. I don't know if it will accelerate. That is dependent on CMHC and how much money they want to give Calgary builders. I'll admit that one of the reasons why last year our rents went down just over 10 per cent on a year-over-year basis was because of the fact that the established area of growth in multifamily developments was so high that it created a supply stream in the market that started to shift our rents down. That was really fundamental to the – that was primarily based on the availability of federal funding for multifamily building. So as long as these streams are open, and they appear that they're going to be open for a while at the federal level, the development industry is really building at an unchecked pace.

Right now I can tell you that I know of 2,000 units in ward 8 that are about a year and a half away from completion, so the population that will be moving into those spaces: we're just waiting for the doors to be finished and the keys to turn. That's just the pipeline that I know that started last year, let alone the pipeline that's coming right now. So I think it'll continue. Accelerate will be dependent on the federal government's finance policies, but it will definitely continue at least in the short term.

Mr. Clark: It's been a pretty steep line. Those 2,000 units: are they scattered around? Are they in a particular neighbourhood? Are they right downtown? Beltline? Any clues you could offer us?

Mr. Walcott: I mean, 1,250 of them are in one single community alone, Crowchild, in the site called Viscount Bennett. There's probably 350 of them that are split between the community of Shaganappi along Bow Trail and 37th Street just behind Westbrook Mall, and I know of another 600 units going up in the Beltline in one single building. Another 500 going up in Marda Loop is proposed right now. Should all these proposals go through, there is going to be significant growth in these areas for years to come.

Mr. Clark: That's really helpful. Thank you so much.

The Chair: Mr. Walcott, thank you so much for coming in and for the very easy to listen to presentation. You just presented it so winsomely, and it gives us a better picture, especially those of us who are not from Calgary. Thank you so much.

Mr. Walcott: I appreciate it. Good luck with the rest of your meeting.

The Chair: Thank you.

Our next and I believe last presenter is Mr. Malcolm Adams. Mr. Adams, please identify yourself, make sure you're unmuted, and tell us what electoral division you are in.

Mr. Adams: Yeah. Hi. Good evening, commissioners. I live in Calgary, Alberta, and I live in the Briar Hill area. I actually haven't looked on the map of which electoral division I'm in. I apologize.

The Chair: Okay. Ten minutes for presentation and then about five minutes for exchange and discussion and questions.

Mr. Adams: Okay. Super.

Do I put the slides up, or how do we proceed here?

The Chair: Oh, no. We will do that for you.

Mr. Adams: The slides I sent out included the notes. I'm the CEO of a tech company, so I haven't had tons of time to polish the presentation here, but I wanted to have the full content in for you.

My perspective is a little bit different maybe than some of the other ones you've seen. I don't know; I haven't seen those presentations. I believe there's a greater responsibility beyond just the provincial electoral reform. I'm hoping this process and the changes that can be made going forward will actually help also trigger some federal election justice for Alberta. What I mean by that, on slide 2, is the unfairness that's happened on the federal level. Just for some context, these are the shocking stats of Alberta right now: 3.2 million people had 37 seats in the federal election, where five provinces with roughly 300,000 less people got 46 seats.

9:25

You could say: why are you talking about federal election stuff? Well, it really comes down to – I tried to bring this up with an official from the UCP over a year ago. If you go to the next slide. So this is all about voting power. At the end of the day, in the last election the average Albertan had the least amount of voting power in this, quote, unquote, democratic Canada. You can see provinces in some cases are 1.2 all the way up to 13.3 times. I'm not really focused on the three territories – you know, I'm originally from New Brunswick – but there are provinces out there with over three times the voting power of Albertans.

That impact, you could say: so what? Well, when I brought this up, as I mentioned, with a senior UCP official over a year ago, his response was surprisingly honest. He said that we can't challenge federal representation imbalances because the UCP benefits from a similar imbalance of power provincially between rural and urban ridings. So the proverbial pot, you know, calling the kettle black is one of the reasons, I've been told, that Alberta is not challenging the fact that we're underrepresented in federal elections based on power.

If you go to the next slide: Is That Truly the Case?, this is my analysis of the 87 ridings. Black bars represent rural ridings, and yellow bars represent urban ridings. An easier way to see this would be to go to the next slide where I just take the smallest 10 ridings and the population in those ridings versus the largest ridings in Alberta. As you can see, the top 10 largest ridings are all urban, and the lowest 10 are all rural. Now, I understand this is based on the 87 seats, and there are two new seats coming in. By quick math and looking at the balances here, one of those should go to Calgary, one of those should go to Edmonton. In this case 420,000 people are voting in 10 elected officials, where it takes over 750,000 people in Alberta to elect 10.

If you go to the next slide. What that really means is that those 10 rural ridings have 1.8 times the voting power of the top 10 ridings. This is today's reality. This isn't, you know, taking projections of population growth. I'm no expert in which areas are going to see more population growth or not. This is just sort of the current reality.

Every day that we delay rebalancing, we're telling 334,000 Albertans in our largest ridings that their votes matter less than their neighbours. Of course, your mandate is to consider effective representation, but, once again, effective representation means more than just population balance. It means credibility. Like I said, you're not just redrawing maps for 89 constituencies; you're potentially unlocking Alberta's ability to stand up for our democratic justice federally. Once again, we can't do that if it's a pot calling the kettle black situation. My recommendation is that we need to fix our house first. Then we can demand Ottawa fixes theirs.

Observations and recommendations from the data that I looked at. Obviously, my first comment – and this is on the act,

beyond maybe the scope of what you guys are looking at, but, once again, I'm not sure of the recommendations you're putting in place. Letting the boundaries be redrawn every 8 to 10 years, or eight years at a minimum, in my opinion, is archaic. You know, predicting population changes 8 to 10 years out is like trying to predict what the price of oil is going to be in 2035. It's virtually impossible. You know that you're going to be wrong. My recommendation on that front is to do this every four years and match the election cycles and adapt faster to the population trends and changes that are going on in our province.

The second point, observation, is: why should democracy lag behind, for example, a ride-sharing app in technological sophistication? Like I said, I get it when it's years and years ago, and it's a very arduous task to rebalance boundaries, but in this day and age we can leverage AI and technology and open source tools. I have nothing to do with Uber, but Uber's hexagonal mapping, it's called, or H3 mapping, would allow with very little effort either the panel or others involved that do this work to balance out these boundaries and get a proper balance within the province. It can be done on a more dynamic basis. You know, someone with a few years of software engineering ability and the balances and using forward sortation areas could do this very fast for you guys. So that was my second recommendation, to lever the existing technology that's out there.

Going to the next slide. This is just an example, with some links in it, for those that are interested of exactly how – this is open source code. This is free code that people could use to create a more dynamic and sophisticated balancing system for Alberta.

Next slide. As I said, you know, in terms of the solution, getting to a sort of Olympic-style frequency, the benefits are a more responsive democracy.

Technological leadership. Alberta leads all kinds of industries right now in tech development. Why not lead the country in how we balance these things out? I've looked at the data, for example, in the federal election for the largest and smallest ridings in Ontario, and it's actually the opposite trend federally. Rural ridings have the largest populations per seat, where the urban ridings actually have the smallest populations, so that one is completely out of whack as well.

Finally, it provides federal credibility. You know, with balancing the Senate, we will actually gain the moral authority to demand Ottawa fix their 1985 Representation Act that has been disastrous for Alberta.

Of course, economic efficiency. Continuous small adjustments cost less than massive, decade-long disruptions.

Final slide. The point I'm trying to make is that, obviously, the stakes are higher than just drawing a couple of changes, you know, adding two or three, whether it's coming to the urban or potentially taking one away from the rural based on the percentages and numbers I've seen in the trends. Right now, in my opinion, the commission's work will determine whether Alberta continues accepting second-class status in Confederation federally or if Alberta has the opportunity to finally step up and have democratic credibility to demand equal treatment. Every riding you balance fairly strengthens our case against Ottawa's grandfather clauses and Maritime vote multipliers, or every imbalance we continue to live with undermines our federal arguments for the next decade.

Thank you very much. I'm happy to answer some questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Adams.

Questions? Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: I guess, yeah. I'm not quite sure. First off, I appreciate your presentation. I think one of the challenges, and perhaps Justice

Miller is better to explain this than I am, and the fundamental difference between Canadian and American is the one person, one vote versus what we call effective representation, which isn't to diminish, I think, your broader point that perhaps the situation we have now is not exactly, I imagine, in your opinion, entirely effective. But we do have in Canada the ability to have larger and smaller sort of constituencies within a range, basically plus or minus 25 per cent or, in up to 5 per cent of the constituencies, up to 50 per cent, just reflecting the vast geography that we deal with.

I guess maybe my question to you would be: how would you respond to a rural MLA, say, that says: "Listen, the entire top left-hand corner of Alberta is my constituency. It's larger than Germany. How do I deal?" There may only be a few tens of thousands of people who live in that area, but they still deserve representation, and there are other factors we ought to be considering. What would your response be to someone who would bring that up?

9:35

Mr. Adams: Yeah. No, that's obviously a fair question. Like I said, I've been diving into some of the math on that area piece because I went through and read the act lately here. I actually had someone send me the square kilometres of each of these ridings. As an example, Peace River – and you guys probably know this – but it's over 109,000 square kilometres and has a population of 43,700. Down below that, which is one obviously based on the new math of going to 89 ridings, Lesser Slave Lake, for example, is technically below that 50 per cent threshold even after you've got the new 89 ridings average of 54,929.

When I look at that in terms of representation, in my opinion, Lesser Slave Lake and Central Peace-Notley: those two actually should be combined into one riding. When you go down to the bottom of the list and look at what ridings are not represented based on the volume of seats – I'm just going to that right now. Got to get to the right slide here. Here we go.

Right now in Calgary, for example, when I did the math, three of the ridings have 233,000 people in them, which works out to over almost 78,000 per riding, which is 1.42 or 42 per cent obviously above that threshold of 25. Then, of course, Airdrie-Cochrane, when I look at the math quickly, is growing so quickly, and they're also underrepresented based on population.

The balancing for me, if it's actually 89, is that Calgary and Edmonton should each get one more seat, and the Lesser Slave Lake and Central Peace-Notley areas should be combined into one region, which would have a total square area similar to the square area of Peace River.

Dr. Martin: Yeah, thank you. Thanks for running all the numbers. We think about it a lot ourselves.

I wanted to bring to your attention something. You're assuming that AI could solve the problems of the distribution of numbers, but it cannot. You, I think, presume that a census is an empirical outcome, but they're not. There's no census ever created that is empirically accurate, which is part of our fundamental problem because it is necessary to find, first of all, census data that is evenly distributed across the working area, province, in this case, and that the data being deployed can be evaluated and refined and adjusted as all census material is. The minute, for example, a federal census is created, the demographers turn around and start assessing the probability factors of all the component parts that led to that outcome number. Building a census is more like making a sausage than pressing a computer button. That part of your argument – the professor in me can't help it – needs to be reassessed for certain assumptions that you're making about the direct application of AI.

A second point is that if those kinds of tools were available, you wouldn't need a commission, but then this is sociological, not mathematical. The act speaks very directly and pointedly to the need for, for example, plus 25 or minus 25 range, and then it speaks of a variety of other more sociological as well as geographical factors. The net effect is that the legislation envisions a patchwork quilt, not a uniformity, as being normative.

Thank you.

Mr. Evans: Mr. Adams, thank you for your presentation. Like Mr. Clark, my colleague, I have a question for you, and it relates to overlaying on your analysis the inequities that exist in terms of if you think about an electoral district like a country and the GDP of that country or even like a province and the GDP of that province compared to other provinces.

Let's say, Cold Lake, for example. The Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul electoral district has a population of 53,763 people but generates a GDP which is very significant. Some would say it's – and I don't know if this number is accurate, but it's one of the numbers that was tossed around – in excess of 80 per cent of the oil revenue in terms of tax revenue base that rolls through that electoral district, yet they don't receive in kind anything like that, you know, in reciprocation in terms of the benefits they receive from the province. How do you ameliorate that issue when looking at, from your perspective, one person, one vote and the power involved there?

Mr. Adams: Yeah. Like I said, you crunch the numbers on GDP per capita or GDP based on Alberta: yeah, we would have an outrageous – we should have way more seats in the federal government. I mean, it would be a huge number. The economy aside, once again, I'm just looking at the definition of what is democratic, and democratic, in my view, once again, is that it shouldn't matter where I live in Canada, or provincially it shouldn't matter where I live in Alberta. My vote as an individual, as a taxpayer, but also as just a citizen shouldn't be 1.8 times or one-third the power based on where I live in a province or where I live in the country even though I might work in a job that generates more revenue than someone else does. I don't equate economic power to democratic power.

Mr. Evans: I think that's what Ottawa says to us.

Mr. Adams: My analysis that I showed at the beginning has nothing to do with economics. It's purely based on population.

Mr. Evans: I understand that, but I don't know that we can discount economics. I don't know that we can discount a number of factors in terms of determining effective representation. Certainly, the act spells that out as does the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in the reference case that really is the foundation upon which we're operating.

Mr. Adams: Yeah. As I said, my point is that, in that 1985 act, that was done on purpose to give eastern provinces more power and to lock in their power and grandfather in the number of seats they should have regardless of population growth. It has nothing to do with economics, but in turn it does have an impact. Economics does have a factor in population growth.

The population in Newfoundland between 1976, when this all came in, and 2021 actually declined by 2 per cent because some of those people actually left and moved to Alberta, which grew by a population of 140 per cent. Once again, based on population, in some ways, the population growth is a bit of a proxy for the economic focus of where things are happening in a country. You

know, people are moving away from areas that don't provide jobs, and they're moving to areas of the country that do provide jobs.

At a baseline, once again, if you want to do it on GDP, yeah, the numbers are outrageous in terms of the power Alberta should have in the Parliament. I'm not saying that's the case. I'm saying that right now on a population basis we have 300,000 more people than five provinces in this country combined, and they have nine more seats than we do in Ottawa. You know, as I mentioned, the individual I met around the UCP said: we can't take this issue forward because we benefit from having smaller rural ridings in Alberta that typically vote UCP.

9:45

Mr. Evans: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Adams. Thank you for your presentation. You've obviously put a lot of time into it and have thought about this considerably, but I just want to touch on a couple of things where I don't want to be seen as talking past each other.

First of all, we are not an electoral reform commission, okay? We are an Electoral Boundaries Commission, so we have to stay in our lane and live by the terms in our legislative mandate. Secondly, every eight years; you may think it's archaic. That's what the legislation says. We'll get lots of arguments and complaints about changing too often. People don't like change too often. In fact, some people have said that maybe it should be every three elections.

You made reference to Ontario as well. It's my understanding that Ontario's provincial ridings are based on the federal boundaries, so I'm not sure if that makes any difference in your equation.

Most importantly, your suggestion is well made about the north, and that may very well be a solution. However, if we just looked at a map and we just looked at square kilometres and population, you know what? People have to drive on roads. People have to have access to things. It's not as easy as just collapsing it. Transportation is a big factor. We were just there last week, and we can tell you that transportation is a limiting factor.

One final comment. I would encourage you to look at the constitutional requirements of some of the ridings in eastern Canada. I believe Prince Edward Island is protected in that respect.

We've got enough to worry about. We don't want to be tasked with sending a message to Ottawa. I think I can say that on behalf of the commission. But it doesn't mean that what you say isn't valuable. In fact, maybe it should go to an Alberta legislative committee of some sort, many of your points.

Mr. Adams: I appreciate all those comments. I agree, not talking by any of them. I said that I didn't come here tonight to say that I've got the answers. I think you guys have a super tough job. I don't have all the answers in terms of how these boundaries are balanced out. The point I just wanted to have on the record because, like I said, my attempts to bring this forward to the Alberta government have gone nowhere. That's my point in terms of the Maritimes, P.E.I., and others. Like I said, it takes 35,000 people in P.E.I. to vote in an MP, and it takes over 80,000 people in Alberta to vote in an MP, right? Economics aside, that was a raw deal back in 1985. When we talk about being heard federally and being taken seriously federally and watching on election nights and realizing that even before the Alberta votes or the B.C. votes are in, CBC or CTV has already called the election and who the next government is when we're underrepresented, someone has to stand up for us at some point to do that.

I understand that's not the mandate of this electoral commission. I understand, and I appreciate that, but that's what I just wanted to

have on the record because I don't know who else to talk to about this.

The Chair: Okay. Well, I'm sure there's a legislative committee somewhere that you could raise this with, but thank you so much, Mr. Adams. Like I said, we all agree that you put a lot of time into your presentation. You also have the distinction of being the very final presenter for our public hearings.

Mr. Adams: Yeah. I'm the last one.

The Chair: Thank you so much for closing us out this way. Good night.

Mr. Adams: All right. Thank you, everyone.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

[The hearing adjourned at 9:50 p.m.]

