



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

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Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Edmonton

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[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Oh, we're past 1:30. We were supposed to start at 1:30. We're late.

Good afternoon, everyone. I will skip the PowerPoint and go right into our first presenter. Mr. John Kolkman is here. Please come forward, sir. Have a seat at the table. Mr. Kolkman, I'm going to do something very unusual. I'm not going to let you present. We've read your material. Why don't we go right into dialogue and asking questions?

Mr. Kolkman: Sure.

The Chair: You've gone to all this work, and it's most helpful. Dr. Martin, any questions?

Dr. Martin: Well, several. I have one, and of course it's raised by the details in your own presentation with respect to Edmonton-City Centre and Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. I'm curious. My colleague and I have been noodling around with maps while we read your material. The district of Spruce Avenue, as you call it, the neighbourhood of Spruce Avenue in the northeastern part of what we designated Edmonton-City Centre, is, you reckon, available to be moved into Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Let me ask you. That includes but doesn't totally include the footprint of the Royal Alex hospital?

Mr. Kolkman: No, it would not include that. Well, the Royal Alexandra hospital is actually south of 111th Avenue, so it would not be included. But you also have to consider that, I mean, there is residential and nonresidential. Like, for example, the long-term care centre, the Norwood extended care centre, which was, you know, significantly expanded not that long ago, does fall within the Spruce Avenue neighbourhood but not the Royal Alex. It would really only be north of 111th Avenue and then up to 106th Street and then up to Princess Elizabeth Avenue.

It just struck me as being logical for a couple of reasons. One is that I think there is a pretty strong community of interest between the Spruce Avenue neighbourhood and then the Westwood neighbourhood immediately to the north. The other reason, really, is to equalize populations. If you look at the population of the proposed new Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood neighbourhood, it's right just at 49,995. There are about 1,725 residents in Spruce Avenue, and the Edmonton-City Centre population is 54,000. So it would equalize the populations. I think it would also create a more logical boundary to include Spruce Avenue neighbourhood with the Westwood neighbourhood.

Dr. Martin: I can see the logic of it. The mathematical part is without dispute, but then it leaves us – I'm much more interested in your arguments about a community of interest for the Spruce Avenue area. Is this not an area that has NAIT students?

Mr. Kolkman: Well, probably. It's very proximate to NAIT. Although I would say it's predominantly, you know, a residential neighbourhood. There would definitely be some NAIT students that would live in both Westwood and Spruce Avenue. I would suggest they live in both neighbourhoods, which I think further increases the community of interest between those two particular neighbourhoods.

There's then a little bit of separation because of the Kingsway Garden Mall and the Royal Alexandra hospital. There actually is a little bit of separation between Spruce Avenue neighbourhood and

other neighbourhoods in Edmonton-City Centre. It's not a really big deal, but it sort of made sense to me from several perspectives to include the Spruce Avenue neighbourhood in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood rather than in Edmonton-City Centre.

I mean, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, despite the inclusion of the Westwood neighbourhood, is still the least populous, you know, electoral division in the city of Edmonton, so I think increasing the population of it a little bit is a good idea. Then particularly when you consider that the former municipal airport lands are in Edmonton-City Centre – even though it's been slow to develop in many ways, I think there's been more housing starts, as I understand it, in the last year or year and a half than there was in the first six or seven or eight years of development of the Blatchford neighbourhood, and that's in Edmonton-City Centre. I think we can reasonably expect with increased density in the downtown as well as the development of Blatchford that Edmonton-City Centre's population is likely to increase more rapidly than the population of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: That's very helpful, and I think I don't have any questions because this is exactly the kind of stuff that's really, really helpful for us, especially those of us who don't have the good fortune to be from Edmonton. It's really helpful when you have someone who's from the neighbourhood and community give us a sense. Then this also allows us to continue to follow a community league boundary as well, which I think is important. Yeah, that's helpful. No questions beyond a word of thanks for putting together a thoughtful submission and being here today.

1:40

The Chair: Mrs. Samson.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

I echo that. I appreciate having it in writing because it's not the kind of thing that you're going to do right this instant. It'll be there when we're ready to look at that area of the map and see what we can do. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: Yes.

Mr. Kolkman, would you agree, based on the logic that you record in your submissions, that it would make sense in terms of the urban ridings, particularly in the city centre, to get those populations to as close to 68,000 as possible, which would then allow more leeway with respect to lower populations in the rural ridings?

Mr. Kolkman: Well, I'm not sure what you're asking because the very premise of my submission is that the interim map gets the seat distribution correct. And 68,000 sounds like an awfully high number for an urban riding. That would definitely put it, you know, toward the 20 to 25 per cent above average. I think voter parity, population parity is perhaps the most important criteria for electoral divisions. I know some have called for an additional seat for the city of Edmonton rather than a loss of seats. I would actually say that the distribution in the interim report is correct between all these different parts of the province.

That still means, however, that there is room if somebody has got a better idea. Like, for example, with the 10 ridings in northern Alberta, if there's a better way to draw the boundaries, I think the commission should be open to that. But I don't think the commission at this point should be adding seats to the north and

taking them away from Edmonton and Calgary. I mean, that's going to throw the whole – that was kind of the job of the initial round of hearings, to identify the correct distribution of seats.

Mr. Evans: I don't think you understood my question.

Mr. Kolkman: Maybe I didn't. Yeah. Okay.

Mr. Evans: The population average that we're using is 54,929. We have a range from that, plus and minus, so the lowest end we can go is 41,198 and the highest we can go is 68,662. My question is: do you agree that it makes sense, based on using all the tools that we have available to us, to densify the populations in the inner-city ridings because there's a natural absence of densification in the rural ridings?

Mr. Kolkman: Hmm. Yeah. It's the part where you talk about the rural ridings that I'm not so sure of. I mean, I think the interim map provides 21 seats to the city of Edmonton. There is that one seat that I mentioned that extends into Parkland county where I think the boundary should be, you know, the city of Edmonton boundary on the west end, and it shouldn't impinge into Parkland county. I'm not sure I quite understand where the rural – I guess that's what I'm having a hard time wrapping my head around. How does this tie into the rural seats?

The Chair: Let me jump in. Because we've started your presentation in a rather unorthodox way, I'm going to jump in with a story from last week. We had someone present in Calgary, and he used the term: the riding may be outrageously large. And I said: well, can we talk about outrageously large? A proposed northern riding that we have in our interim report: I'm told – I haven't verified it by doing the math myself – that the southern boundary is closer to Montana than it is to Northwest Territories. That's outrageously large. Okay? So can you get a perspective as to how vast the north is from that little description and why there is, I would say, a bipartisan cry from the north, "Please restore the riding you took away"?

Mr. Kolkman: But how are you going to do that? Because you're restricted to 89 seats. How are you going to do that without – you'd have to take a riding away.

The Chair: Check with us on March 27. That's when we give our report.

Mr. Kolkman: Right.

I actually think you did a very good job with the city of Edmonton map in my view.

The Chair: Okay. But that leads to what Mr. Evans was getting to. The only way we can do that, if we do restore a riding to the north, is take advantage of the variance that we are allowed, minus 25, plus 25, and I believe Edmonton-Highlands is, you know, 5,000-plus below the average. So there's lots of room to grow in Edmonton-Highlands.

Mr. Kolkman: Yeah. Although there are other ridings in Edmonton, like on average – one of the things I would say to that is that I would be strongly opposed to removing, you know, a riding from the city of Edmonton. Frankly, if you were going to remove a riding, I personally think it should be then from Calgary, not Edmonton, especially if you stick with option A. Now, I was recommending that you go with option B.

The Chair: And predominantly the public feedback has been that.

Mr. Kolkman: Yeah. But even with option B, the average riding in Calgary is, according to my math, plus 2.5 per cent whereas in Edmonton it's already plus 3.5 per cent. I think Edmonton needs another seat, and that's why – I'm also a bit surprised. I guess if you would have let me read my presentation, I would have said that I'm aware that there is this fierce, you know, opposition to the loss of a seat, particularly in the north. I've also heard opposition because in west-central Alberta, there's also going to be a loss of a seat. There, of course, are people in Edmonton who are unhappy about – even though two seats are being added more to the west end and the south side, they want to reinstate a seat in Edmonton, something that I don't think the numbers warrant because then it would mean that adding a seat to Edmonton would basically put us pretty much right at the provincial average and give you no scope to have somewhat larger rural ridings.

No. I would be strongly opposed to removing a seat from Edmonton. I mean, I appreciate the fact that there's been quite a bit of push-back, but all five of you signed the interim map. Sort of the whole premise of my presentation was that you need to stick with that, recognizing that there is a lot of push-back, particularly in northern Alberta, and also acknowledging that some of these ridings are quite large in size. I'm not disputing that. Just because of the lack of population density, it's going to be very difficult to not have variances that I think are excessive. I support the decision, as painful as it was, to remove a seat from northern Alberta. That's what the numbers warrant.

The Chair: Just so you know, though, there are other legislative tools that we have. We've not utilized the concept of section 15(2) ridings really at all. In fact, we reduced them. That's another tool we could use to justify very, very, very low-density ridings that are outside of that targeted range.

Mr. Kolkman: Yeah, but just having said that, I would be careful because it opens up a real can of worms. Essentially, you would be repudiating, you know, the interim report and the interim map.

Dr. Martin: We're allowed to do that. No one else gets to.

The Chair: We're allowed to change it. That's no question.

Mr. Kolkman: Yeah. Well, then I think there's going to be some real push-back. I mean, I appreciate the fact that if you're losing a seat – I mean, the same thing happened in the last redistribution, you know, when there wasn't even an increase in the number of seats. Several rural seats were lost. There was a lot of push-back, but the commission sort of stuck to its guns. There was one person who did a minority report at that time, if I remember.

1:50

Mr. Evans: They were slavishly tied to population, which seems to be your focus. You're slavishly tied to population and these derivations, when in fact – and I'll quote from our report on page 12 – "There's been a clear trend towards greater emphasis on voter parity in Alberta, despite neither the case law," specifically the Supreme Court of Canada, "nor the Act historically mandating this," and that's the present legislation. So being slavishly tied to voter parity in this concept is really missing the point of what the Supreme Court of Canada stated and what our legislation states. It's one factor.

Mr. Kolkman: Well, I think it's the most important factor.

Mr. Evans: I understand that. I can see that from your report.

Mr. Kolkman: Yeah. I think it's your job at this point to stick with what you agreed to in terms of the distribution of seats in the interim report. That's my view. And I think the word "slavish" is a rather pejorative word – I'm sorry – with all respect.

The Chair: Okay. Any other questions or comments or discussion?

Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Kolkman. Please stay; it's always instructive to hear other presenters, so if you are able to please do.

Mr. Kolkman: I'll try to stay for a bit. Thank you.

The Chair: Lorne Dach.

Mr. Dach: Good afternoon, panel. Actually, the pronunciation is Dach.

The Chair: Dach. Sorry, Mr. Dach.

Mr. Dach: That's okay. When I sold real estate it was: Call Lorne Dach and Start to Pack.

Mrs. Samson: That's good.

Mr. Dach: It worked. You remember it.

Anyways, thank you very much for slotting me in this afternoon. I know you're busy. As I said, my name is Lorne Dach, and I've been a member of the Legislature for Edmonton-McClung since 2015. I've been a very proud west-end resident for most of my life. Before becoming an MLA, I did sell real estate in west Edmonton for 30 years, during which time I gained a very intimate and detailed knowledge of the constituency that I now represent as the MLA.

To start off, I'll say that I was pleased to see that the proposal is to rejoin two neighbourhoods in my constituency, Jamieson Place and Ormsby, which comprise the Willowby Community League, back into one riding. I was rather shocked at seeing that they got separated into two different ridings, and it made for difficult representation with two MLAs representing one community league. You'd go to the events, and both MLAs might be there or one might not be there in the community league. It was good to have the decision made, I think, to have Jamieson Place and Ormsby community leagues put back into one riding, as I feel that a single MLA representing all the neighbourhoods which comprise a community league makes common sense. As we all know, the community leagues in both Edmonton and Calgary have a long and proud and very valuable history, and they're vital organizations serving their communities and keeping them together and unique, and being represented by one MLA is a smart idea.

Also, kudos for adding Wedgewood Heights back into Edmonton-McClung, because it's located inside the Anthony Henday ring road adjacent to other neighbourhoods in the constituency. Allowing arterial roadways to bisect ridings has historically been listed as a criteria that boundary commissioners should avoid to prevent neighbourhoods from feeling isolated or disconnected from the main body of a riding. So we're welcoming back Wedgewood Heights into what feels like where they belong: inside the ring road, joined with other like, geographically oriented communities.

Bound to the west by the Anthony Henday ring road and the North Saskatchewan River valley to the south and the east, Edmonton-McClung is an easily identified and cohesive urban enclave, which represents residents who can easily identify it because it really is geographically feeling like its own community. It's just completed that way.

Now, another thing that has been proposed is the resumption of Rio Terrace, Quesnell, and Patricia Heights back into the McClung constituency. Historically they've been a part of the McClung constituency and have also had a very notable Jewish population in those three neighbourhoods, particularly Rio Terrace because the Jewish community centre used to be located in Rio Terrace. It was sold and redeveloped as housing, but consequently, because of the history of the Jewish community centre in that neighbourhood, a good percentage of the Jewish population of Edmonton located there, and this Jewish population of Rio Terrace, Quesnell, and Patricia Heights now has once again been reunited with the other west-end Jewish population centres found in Edmonton-McClung, which are anchored by the Beth Israel synagogue and Chabad Lubavitch synagogue as well as the K to 6 Talmud Torah school. This permits, in my view, a very focused representation of a majority of Edmonton's Jewish population by one MLA. It was a good move to reunite those communities, in my view.

Now the other thing I'd like to say is that the population of our city is growing and we do need an additional seat in Edmonton, in my view. There are four surplus school sites which are being developed in my riding alone. Many individuals may think that the mature neighbourhoods are not necessarily growing in population because there may not be a lot of real estate development going on, but there are other things happening, not to mention the population density that is increasing as more people share living spaces and we have intergenerational family homes and tenant roommates trying to deal with the rising cost of living, increasing the population in a mature neighbourhood. A seat count needs to reflect the population growth in Edmonton and Calgary to maintain equitable representation. If not, a number of the ridings in Edmonton and Calgary will exceed the 25 per cent variation before the next scheduled redistribution.

That's a short presentation, but I wanted to bring forth a couple of points and mention that I appreciate the consideration that you've given as a panel to the points I've listed and all those who have also given submissions. I believe that the effort that you're making to be fair is duly noted and appreciated. I stand ready to answer any questions you may have.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dach. Let me start out by suggesting to you that if we were to add one more electoral division in Edmonton, you would lose some of Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: That's probable, but I'm not . . .

The Chair: And you just started out by saying that you're glad that we kind of restored those communities and you've got a significant population there, but you didn't complain about the numbers in your riding. You realize that you'd lose some?

Mr. Dach: I would think there is a potential risk of sacrifice by different ridings depending upon where that riding got added, but certainly I'm not unaware of that.

The Chair: Okay. So, "Be careful what you wish for," they say.

Mr. Dach: Pardon me?

The Chair: "Be careful what you wish for," they say.

Mr. Dach: Oh, of course. Absolutely.

The Chair: Mr. Clark, any questions?

Mr. Clark: No. No specific questions beyond just saying: thank you very much for the details on those communities. We do try to

respect the community league boundaries as best we can. It's not always possible, but it's just good to know that the ones that we have aligned together seem to make logical sense, so thanks very much.

Mr. Dach: Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Yeah.

I'd like to echo that and thank you for pointing out that bringing Rio Terrace and the like back in just seemed right. So, too, using the Henday on the southern end of your riding just makes perfect sense. I wanted to ask you, though, about what you might call the Misericordia campus precinct, that whole chunk up here on the north end. Are you okay with that? It has to go somewhere, but does it make sense to you from a communities of interest point of view?

Mr. Dach: To have the west Meadowlark and the north of the Whitemud portion?

Dr. Martin: No, not this bit, just the top hat bit.

Mr. Dach: Yeah. I represent that already. What I'm losing to the north is West Edmonton Mall and Summerlea. I'm not exactly certain what the rationale was on the minds of the panelists when they eliminated that. It may have been, like, a domino effect, needing to balance population and so forth. I mean, I think that panelists have to be given the respect they deserve in terms of acknowledging that judgments have to be made to make sure the population is right. As much as I'd love to continue representing Summerlea and West Edmonton Mall, you know, I'm not going to squawk about that knowing the limitations that you work under.

2:00

Now, one thing I will mention about that, though, is that if you look at the LRT construction that's going in along there, there are two consecutive stops at the Misericordia and at West Edmonton Mall. Both of those establishments are also joined by a pedestrian walkway across 170th Street, so there's a natural community of interest there, the major populations of commuters are going to both locations, which would make sense from that standpoint to have one MLA represent because they are a big population centre of people coming to and fro with the hospital and the mall. Summerlea itself is a relatively small population. They don't really have anything except houses there to the north of West Edmonton Mall, although there is a school surplus site that is in Summerlea that might be developed into more housing.

I'm thinking now of people who live in Summerlea. This is going to be, I think, the third distribution in a row where they get to change ridings. That is probably something that the panel tries to avoid so that a community doesn't feel like it's being bounced around. But that notwithstanding, I still appreciate the limitations that you work under, and if indeed it needs to be, well, it needs to be.

I think I've pointed out some of the things that I appreciated and had concerns with and the fact that I think all in all there should be another seat in Edmonton even though it may be injurious to my riding, but that's part of the growing process.

The Chair: Okay.
Mrs. Samson.

Mrs. Samson: No questions. Thank you for your presentation. I appreciate it.

Mr. Dach: Thank you.

Mr. Evans: I have no questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Dach, how long does it take you to get to the Legislative Assembly?

Mr. Dach: Pardon me?

The Chair: How long does it take you to get from your house to the Legislative Assembly?

Mr. Dach: It will be, depending on traffic, 20 to 30 minutes.

The Chair: Okay. You appreciate that there are many MLAs that take four, five, six hours?

Mr. Dach: Oh, absolutely.

The Chair: I didn't want you to misinterpret my earlier comments, "Be careful what you wish for."

Mr. Dach: Oh, yeah.

The Chair: The limitations on us to add another Edmonton seat, I think to be realistic, from where I sit are pretty difficult.

Mr. Dach: Yeah. No offence taken.

The Chair: Okay. Yeah. Thank you so much for your presentation.

Mr. Dach: You're welcome.

The Chair: Samuel Goertz.

Mr. Goertz: It's rare that people get that last name right.

The Chair: Welcome. Tell us what electoral division you are in and which ones you want to comment on.

Mr. Goertz: I live in Edmonton-Strathcona, but I want to speak today more generally. I want to start off the top, at the risk of being maybe overly saccharine, to express my sincere appreciation for the work of the commission and also a great opportunity to speak in front of my fellow citizens both in this room and online.

I don't think it's overly dramatic to say that lots of the world is facing threats to democracy. I can certainly appreciate that, and I think it's processes like this that fulfill the promises of a healthy democracy. I think it's quite essential, important that we have an independent commission like yourselves who are making these decisions. I know we haven't always had that, but I think it makes our democracy much better. I appreciate that there's a tremendous amount of pressure and considerations you all have.

I just want to express my appreciation also for this process because everybody in here is contributing to our democracy in some way. I just want to make sure that that gravity is expressed, and I want to express my gratitude to you all.

The Chair: Mr. Goertz, we're all proud Canadians at this table.

Mr. Goertz: Yes.

The Chair: And I think this process has made us even prouder.

Mr. Goertz: I imagine. I appreciate that.

I'm not going to bore you with my biography, but a little bit that might be important for my comments: I'm currently fortunate to be doing my PhD in political science at the University of Alberta. My supervisor, Dr. Jared Wesley, was the chair of the Edmonton Ward Boundary Commission. I do not represent him by any means, but I

tried to pick his brain as much as possible on the sort of principles behind this process, however different they may be for that. I've also lived in Edmonton most of my life besides a couple of brief stints elsewhere, lived all over the city. I also spent the summer for my research travelling Alberta to many wonderful, wonderful communities large and small. While those communities are wonderful, there's just something about Edmonton that I dearly adore, and I don't think there's any place quite like it.

In my comments today I don't have particular recommendations for certain parts of city, particular electoral districts. Like the previous speakers, I think that generally the commission got it right, and I respect that you have limitations on potentially adding another seat to Edmonton. I think given the growth projections that were particularly well articulated by the mayor's office and then that I reiterated in an op-ed I had published in the *Edmonton Journal* alongside a dear friend Rajah Maggay in mid December, that you could make the case for adding a seat to Edmonton, particularly because core growth seems to be sort of reversing and now the core of Edmonton has seen a number of housing starts intensifying. I appreciate your limitations on that front. I think that at the very least the additional seat in Edmonton should be preserved as well as the two seats in Calgary, although I have less of a perspective on the Calgary seats.

Then I wanted to speak to Edmonton as a community of interest in its own right. I know you can define communities of interest in various ways. You can find them at the community league level, which I appreciate, but also at the city level. This is particularly in response to some conversations that I've seen around sort of splicing not just the city of Edmonton but other cities up into hybrid urban-rural ridings, which I think can do a sort of disservice to both urban and rural citizens with their own different interests and perspectives.

I greatly appreciate the commission's decision on Lethbridge. There's sort of a bizarre proposal to slice that up in a funny way, and that obviously isn't in this interim plan. I just wanted to reiterate my support for the plan as presented. I understand that it is a draft, but I think it gets that community of interest right. Then the sort of hybrid riding on the west end with Enoch I think generally also makes good sense. I just wanted to reiterate that, Edmonton as a community of interest.

Then I know that you are sort of bound by legislation and case law so that the vote parity principle is not the only one that you look at. I certainly respect that you're bound by slightly different rules, but I, too, am bound by rules, and that is my sort of conscience and principles I hold dear, so I wanted to reiterate my support for that as much as possible. I understand you're working within bounds of about 41,000 to 68,000, but I think as much as possible if I can just urge my support for keeping vote parity. I understand the north is very tricky, but those ridings: my goodness, they're large, very geographically large. Underrepresenting certain parts of our province – citizens in Edmonton, Calgary, other cities – to slightly shrink what will continue to be a very large geographic riding doesn't quite make sense to me. I don't think that they should be underrepresented. I also don't think that they should be overrepresented, the same as I don't think that for citizens in Edmonton or Calgary or anywhere else. I'm going to speak as just a city dweller. I just want to speak from that principle of vote parity.

Those two points beside, I think I'll leave my comments there, and I'm happy to take questions from here. Thank you again.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

Mr. Evans: I have no questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Mrs. Samson.

Mrs. Samson: No, but that was an excellent presentation. If I can just say one comment, we're working on population, not vote. Everybody is represented, not just the voters. You use the terminology "vote parity."

Mr. Goertz: I appreciate that correction. I mean population parity. Yes. Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: I only do that for the general listener.

Mr. Goertz: I appreciate that because it shouldn't matter whether they vote or not. Population parity: thank you for that. I appreciate that.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Yes. I'd just like to follow that up really because, you know, population is lumpy. The density is different in different neighbourhoods. Gosh, there are parts of Edmonton that look like suburbs. Mentally they're inside the city limits, but they're still suburbs relative to other parts that have much higher density and sort of a classic multistorey environment. Now, we haven't actually modelled anything we had about voter parity, but I bet you it's lumpy, too. So you have to be careful about those terms. We have to constantly remind ourselves, let alone our speakers, not to mix the two concepts.

2:10

Mr. Goertz: Yes. I take that correction. May I retroactively say "population parity," and scratch out "voter parity?"

The Chair: The literature says "voter parity." You're right on that, but we base it on population, so nobody's wrong. You know, we're just taking a different slice of it.

Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you.

I'm really interested in your perspective as a student of political science, far more advanced than I ever got in political science. I'm curious how you would make those tradeoffs. You know, if we're really challenged in finding another spot, another seat for the north, and you feel like the city of Edmonton or the city of Calgary shouldn't bear the cost of that, do you feel like – there are similarities and there are differences when you're representing an area. I mean, there are some amazing statistics of geography in the north. I think Mackenzie county is something like two and a half times the country of Belgium in size and has like 15,000 or 20,000 people in it, just sort of these almost mind-blowing statistics. Then you would have different areas that are rural but maybe have a few towns or villages or even small cities, somewhere along highway 2, for example, in central Alberta. Do you make a distinction? Would you say that maybe there's a different way of looking at that voter or population parity – we won't make you choose one or the other of those options – and also blending the concept of effective representation in particular for those more remote communities?

Mr. Goertz: Yeah. The first thing I want to say is that you have much more experience in political science in the practical sense. I have the maybe much less useful theoretical knowledge, but even then only arguably.

In terms of the trade-off, I was struck by something I experienced this summer. Again, I travelled across Alberta to many different

communities, including Fort McMurray. Fort McMurray obviously is a city, but I was struck by the way that many residents of Fort McMurray describe themselves. They describe themselves as remote, and I never quite clocked that before. Maybe other people had and it was just my ignorance. It stopped me sort of in my tracks. I thought: okay; I've never been this far north before, and it is different. It's obviously not rural, but it's not urban in the same way, so it matters that they feel represented effectively as a sort of remote community. Fort McMurray has its own oddities and challenges that I can't speak to. It's just to say that I have an appreciation for remote versus rural versus suburban versus urban. Remote communities are different.

As far as the trade-off, I don't know that I can say anything concrete about that. I think that's a tremendous challenge. I do know that the large geography, which is a problem all over Canada, will probably remain a challenge for the commission even if you, say, have seats in the north that were even less than 41,000 people per riding. It would still be rather large, so I just don't see the sort of watering-down thing as really aiding effective representation. I guess that's what I would say. I think they're going to be large either way, and that's a heck of a challenge for those people and those representatives. I don't know if underrepresenting certain communities really helps with that.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

Mr. Goertz: Thank you.

The Chair: By the way, Mr. Goertz, what's your research focus?

Mr. Goertz: I'm working on research concerning Alberta's independence, separatism movement, as part of a research team as well as American influence on Canadian political priorities. So not controversial at all.

The Chair: Well, you know, you made a case, as have other presenters, for another seat in Edmonton. It's not difficult to make that case, but it's difficult for us to accede to it. I'm not speaking for the rest of the commissioners, but having travelled the province, I have to say that the times we were in Edmonton, I have found the Edmonton presenters to be the most polite, congenial, and courteous presenters in the province. You've been very, very good to us both in the first round and second round.

I didn't do the little introduction that I probably should have at the beginning because Mr. Kolkman was here and so ready to go, so we just jumped into it.

Our goal is effective representation. As you know, it's not one person, one vote, it's not rep by pop, and effective representation is an elastic concept. I always encourage presenters to stay to hear other presenters, and I wish you could hear all of the presentations we heard. Somebody from northern Alberta said to us last week, you know: by straining to get as close to the average population in a northern riding, you expand the boundaries and you've got more territory. That's the paradox. We make effective representation more difficult for the northerners by doing that. So it's a paradox and it's a challenge.

Yeah. Thank you so much for your presentation and for your good comments.

Mr. Goertz: Thank you very much for the opportunity.

The Chair: Again, please remain if you can to hear other presenters. Sarah Hoffman is not here. Okay.
Joanne Sasges.

Ms Sasges: It doesn't look like it sounds. Like Sam said, if you get it right, you're probably related to me.

The Chair: Okay. Tell us where you are from and what electoral divisions you wish to comment on.

Ms Sasges: I, too, want to speak about things generally, particularly around Edmonton. I live currently in Edmonton-Glenora.

I want to start by talking about when I reviewed last summer's submissions. I noticed you were asked to use population data from the Office of Statistics and Information, the OSI. Well, before I retired from government in 2015, I'm the one who built the OSI, and my job was – I was mandated actually by the Premier – to develop a suite of official statistics and, particularly, an official statistic for population for exactly this kind of work.

The Chair: Well, thank you for your work.

Ms Sasges: Thank you. Since population changes are integral to informing the decision-making process you're going to use, I'd like to talk primarily about population with you because I think the big story in Edmonton is population. I have some slides.

Mrs. Samson: Aaron is coming.

Ms Sasges: Okay. Thanks.

Are you Aaron? Hi, Aaron. Okay. If you can go to the third slide, I guess, we can jump right into it.

I've already heard from what you said to Sam that accurate population statistics alongside consideration of emerging factors and historical factors are part of the process that you're going to be using to make electoral decisions. But I want to share three examples in the hopes of commission members seeing Edmonton as it is and not in an outdated way. What I noticed last year were comments about how nice it was to get to know Edmonton, so I would like to share just a couple of facts that are relevant.

First, official population data for Edmonton, you can see on the slide, is much greater in terms of its growth than other census metropolitan areas in Alberta. So we're growing faster than other census metropolitan areas.

Secondly, I'm Métis, and my family roots go back to Fort Edmonton in the early 1800s, and for 200-plus years, I know from this history, Fort Edmonton was a regional economic hub, and long before that, it was an Indigenous gathering place. Today it continues to be an economic and infrastructure hub for the oil and gas industry in the north and an important health and postsecondary hub for surrounding communities. Surrounding smaller communities has long been regular users of Edmonton's infrastructure and services, but it's Edmonton who builds and maintains them, and it's not the surrounding communities who necessarily have priorities around what happens in Edmonton. They have their own priorities.

Thirdly, Edmonton has a reputation now for affordable housing, and we're attracting all kinds of interprovincial migration. So I think these factors are the things that make Edmonton a community of interest for the commission's consideration.

2:20

Now I'd like to speak a little bit to Edmonton-Glenora. I live in Edmonton-Glenora in one of the neighbourhoods called North Glenora, and I'm advocating for it to be well represented even if it does not always vote conservative. It seems that an assumption behind combining Glenora and the Riverview constituencies is that they may be made up of stagnant, older communities.

I want to show you these two slides. These homes were just a block or two away from where I live. They've been in our neighbourhood

since 1953, and until 2025 they housed single families, and there were about 48 single families that would have lived in these homes. In the space of six to eight of those homes, this is what now exists. There are four-storey apartment buildings that exist – I’m assuming you can see that somewhere else. Can you? Sorry. So, yes, in the space of six to eight homes, we have now a four-storey, 48 two-bedroom suite, fully rented building. The full set of family homes is now represented by this one building, and there will be three more buildings. If you do the math, that’s 384-plus voters in the same space where there were 96, and that will all happen this year.

Dr. Martin: Population, not voters.

Ms Sasges: There will be more population. I’m assuming two adults in these places. There will be families as well, so for sure you can say population if you like. It’ll be more if you use population, I suspect.

I can’t speak to Edmonton-Riverview because I don’t live there, but I know the concerns they’ve had about the fast pace of infill growth. These are not constituencies that are stagnating. They are housing our growing population, and our roadways carry folks from surrounding rural communities in and out each workday.

My proposal is to leave the footprint of these growing communities in Edmonton-Glenora and Riverview as is and add a hybrid constituency where other population growth is occurring on the outskirts. I’ve seen the Alberta Is Calling campaign in every Canadian airport I’ve been in in the last couple of years. The province also financially incentivized people moving, and, not surprisingly, families have moved here. We did a good job, but the corollary requirement of this successful campaign is good planning. That includes considering fair representation for a population that is now calling our province and Edmonton home.

I want to go back to official population statistics one last time. Between 2022 and 2024 Edmonton grew by 100,000 people. That’s like adding a small city, and the forecast is for continued strong upward population growth in Edmonton. I’ll echo the Edmonton mayor saying that he recognizes the commission does not have an easy job. In my experience this is why you rely on official statistics, because it ensures objectivity in your decision-making. In good data analysis we look for patterns and data to explain them. I hope you’re convinced that significant population growth has occurred and is continuing to occur in Edmonton.

I want to say thank you, just like Sam did. It’s always wonderful that you give time to these kinds of things, anybody who does it. In closing, I want to ask you to future-proof Edmonton’s population representation based on its population growth, keeping in mind that we don’t know the voting preferences of these new constituents but that they’re moving here knowing what our government is and they’re moving here, probably, because they want to be here. I’d like to see a seat added to Edmonton. I know this is a big ask, but it’s not just reasonable; it’s essential to ensure that decisions concerning the future of Edmonton as a regional hub are data-informed ones.

Thanks for your time, and the best in your deliberations.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I’m sure we’re going to have some questions, so we’ll start with Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Thank you. Yeah. I have a few questions.

First off, thank you for establishing the OSI. That’s incredibly valuable, and I think the point you made right at the end is why it’s valuable.

Ms Sasges: Yes.

Mr. Clark: You know, it’s interesting. We were talking earlier, just in the break, about: often in past commissions they’d spend about half of their time arguing about which census to use and back and forth, and that really hasn’t been a real subject of discussion here. So that liberates us in a lot of ways. I just want to thank you for putting us on that path.

Ms Sasges: I appreciate that.

Mr. Clark: It’s good stuff. I just want to ask a little bit about the idea of hybrid constituencies around the edges of Edmonton. We’ve had some pretty strong push-back on that and didn’t include much in the way of Edmonton, really just the Edmonton-West-Enoch constituency. The primary argument we’ve heard is, “We want to be with people who are part of our community of interest,” and there’s a concern either that that community of interest is diluted or that we would perhaps put an MLA in a difficult position of having to advocate for quite different perspectives. We’ve had a few different examples of what that may look like. You’ve argued that you think that’s probably a good idea around the edges of Edmonton. I’m just interested in your thoughts on that.

Ms Sasges: I’ve argued that it’s a good idea because I think you’re going to – well, I mean, assuming this kind of review happens every seven to 10 years, the Glenora-Riverview combination is going to have to be split. I think there’s no question that population growth will be so great in these inner areas. So I’m asking you not to make a short-term decision that actually isn’t in the interest of these communities in the long term.

I completely agree with the arguments that are being made about why it’s challenging to have a hybrid. I know the legislation now allows that and doesn’t require Edmonton and Calgary to stay within their limits. But, as I said, every community around Edmonton is chockablock full of cars in the morning and in the afternoon. They’re coming in, and they’re leaving. Those communities don’t support Edmonton in its priorities. They have their own priorities. I think that’s a big concern with the hybrid. If the hybrid is truly a community that fits the needs – I think the problem with Enoch is that it has, I would say, the same thing. I have concerns about the loss of the constituency in Lesser Slave Lake. Those are communities of interest. We have a government that’s going to be needing to do consultation around pipelines. You want to make sure those communities of interest feel like they’re going to be heard.

I don’t envy your role, and I agree with all the things that you’ve heard. It’s why I didn’t argue them again.

Mr. Clark: That’s exactly it. Those are all the things that we’re tasked with. Just as someone who’s a data person, we also struggle a bit with lagging versus leading statistics. You know, the lagging statistic would tell us pretty clearly that Glenora, Riverview, the sort of more inner-city Edmonton has grown in an absolute sense, but relative to other parts of Edmonton and Alberta really hasn’t. What we’ve heard a few times is: well, that’s about to change.

Ms Sasges: That’s why I showed you the pictures. It isn’t just, “I think it’s going to happen;” those patio homes are bulldozed or in the process of being bulldozed, and the developer’s intent is to build the same. The building that is in place – it’s about four blocks from me – is fully rented, and it’s actually rented by young kids who are friends of my children. You know, these are young people wanting to start in their own home community, which is wonderful. I’m sure

there are lots of other people, but I know that it's already chockablock full.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thanks.

Similar problem. We just want to enrol you in our dilemmas, I guess. The business of future-proofing is really off the limit. It's out of our scope, and as you, involved in statistics and census work, will know, it's always a lagging indicator. Census people: the minute they publish a census, they are immediately preparing revisions. It's just an endless task. So future-proofing sounds right, but we don't have the tools or the foreknowledge to do it, which is why, you know, anyone can say that things are growing, but I want to see the Tyvek on the buildings before I feel that it's so imminent that I can take it seriously. Now, some of the examples you gave are actually built, but again, as a commission, how are we to know how far into the future we can go into planning a riding? I mean, it gets very murky very fast.

2:30

Ms Sasges: Yeah. I think one of the great things that has happened with the declaration of an official statistic for population is also the declaration of who is the statistic owner, and in this case it's the demography area in Treasury Board and Finance. They're the ones that have given the data that I shared with you today. The data isn't as old as it is in a census, and the data that they're giving you – I think it's 4.77 million.

Dr. Martin: Four point eight eight eight.

Ms Sasges: Okay. That's growing. That's not census data anymore. So you do have numbers that are leading indicators in the sense of you know what direction they're headed in, and that's my point. I know from living in this city for a long time that our city did not change for a long time, and it is rapidly changing now in a good way. You know, as much as I don't like living beside the infill who's next door to me, I very much support the need for this to happen. We have schools and parks and all the infrastructure in place to welcome far more families, so we should be doing that and we are. That's what's happening. People are coming to our city because we have affordable housing, and we're building more and more housing.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for your presentation. That was really good. Did you say you were retired at the beginning?

Ms Sasges: I am retired, yes.

Mrs. Samson: You should not have.

Ms Sasges: Oh, thanks.

Mrs. Samson: But what I wanted to say – and it's more of a comment in that, you know, we couldn't give the room that the city of Edmonton needed to grow. And, yes, it's growing. Can you answer this. Do you feel it's still growing at that same fast rate that we talk about?

Ms Sasges: My husband had some surgery, and we had a nurse in our house this morning. She said, "I'm here from Montreal," so, yes, I think people are coming here, and they're coming here because they're attracted to what we can offer. I don't necessarily know what is bringing them here, obviously, but I think for sure for families – my kids are 20-something and they talk about, you know,

their friends making choices between food or paying the rent and stuff, so things around affordable housing are really, really important for them. We have rental spaces now. You don't have to get into the market as a buyer necessarily, which is very hard to do.

Did that answer . . .

Mrs. Samson: Yeah, it does. Thank you very much for that.

The Chair: Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: No questions. Thank you for your submissions.

The Chair: You obviously read our report, particularly pages 15 to 17. Did we do okay in that regard?

Ms Sasges: I mean, the great thing about using the official statistics as the basis means that it's kind of hard to argue the facts. That's the point of having them. When I was given that responsibility – it was in 2007 – it was because of an event much like this where they had population statistics coming from all over. I think the census before that had – well, there was a 2006 census, but that data wasn't out, so they were using 2001 census. You had the municipal censuses trying to guide what was happening. You had Treasury Board and Finance sort of sticking with the census data and not so much doing forecasts. So the question was: first of all, who owns this data? That was a big part of my job, building collaboration and relationships. It's okay to let go, particularly for Municipal Affairs. That can be supplemental data, but it should not be the official data that we make decisions on the basis of.

The Chair: Would you say it's reasonable – we're in the last round of public submissions. We've got a legislative deadline, March 27, to table our report. Are we still on good grounds to rely on the 2021 federal census, which is updated by OSI up until July of '24?

Ms Sasges: Yes. They are the best at doing what they're doing. They are some of the same people that I used to work with who are still doing that work, so I can speak to that personally.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Ms Sasges: Okay. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Our next presenter is Sarah Hoffman. Ms Hoffman, indicate the electoral division you are commenting on, and welcome again.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Justice Miller and to all of the commission members. I currently represent Edmonton-Glenora. I am probably going to comment mostly on the current and proposed Edmonton-Glenora-Riverview map.

I want to start by saying how grateful I am for the clearly tremendous amount of work that went into this and how I think it's to be commended that you found a way for all five of you to come up with something you could live with. I imagine that means nobody is particularly excited but that there is lots of compromise. I appreciate for the most part keeping municipal boundaries intact. I can think of some examples where that isn't the case, but for the vast majority it was. I think that that is sound democratic principle.

I wanted to bring information that shows what is happening today and what's proposed to be happening, particularly in the current riding of Edmonton-Glenora, and the parts that are proposed to maintain within Edmonton-Glenora-Riverview, in terms of development. The first document that I brought and brought copies for all of you is showing the priority growth areas for rezoning within the city of Edmonton. It's got the city on the top. It's about

a three- or four-page document. You'll see that they mentioned three priority areas for growth, and two of those are in Edmonton-Glenora and one is in Edmonton-Riverview today. The bottom one, the university-Garneau node, is proposed to go into Strathcona, but the other two are proposed to still be within Glenora, that being 124th Street as well as the Stony Plain and 156th corridors.

Then I brought with those some maps, and you can see that a lot of it is the city planning around transit-oriented development. I was trying to decide if I should explain my lateness by complaining about construction or traffic or my own tardiness, and the answer is all three. It was the trifecta today.

It is very evident that there is a lot of densification happening in the core of our city. I'm not here to argue in support or opposition to that. I am here to say that more and more people are moving into the core, particularly into the parts of Edmonton-Glenora that are proposed to still be in the new map with Edmonton-Glenora-Riverview. Already I believe it's proposed to be the third most populous riding in the province. Even without all of the initiatives that the municipality has launched in the last five years, over the last duration of the map we have kept up with provincial growth, and now the efforts to densify are so much greater. Those are the maps of the specific neighbourhoods where they're really focusing on the densification.

I spent about 90 minutes yesterday driving around just taking a few photos in those areas, and that's the last big stack that Aaron will pass out. You can see that there are many eight- and 16-unit properties being built where there used to be one single detached home. You can see that there are a number of – yeah; it's mostly eight and 16s that I really highlighted for photos as well as some areas where there are a number of skinny houses in the middle of blocks, and there are also areas where there are going to be six and eight units that are currently under construction in those areas as well.

2:40

As well, there is the Charles Camsell site in Inglewood, which is in Edmonton-Glenora and proposed Edmonton-Glenora-Riverview, which is the hospital that closed in the '90s and now has been converted into apartments, and it is about 60 per cent occupied now. On that same ground they've built seniors' housing that's only at about 20 per cent occupied right now. They're building townhouses on that same parcel of land. So there's a ton of densification happening within Inglewood, North Glenora. North Glenora, I believe, was the community where the garden suites were referred to, and that's where 16 and even more dense than that units are being built, and it looks like they're all being built right now as purpose-built rentals. It is really changing the number of people who are living in the community in an increased way.

Whether you think that that's a positive or negative, I'm not here to explain, but I want to make sure that no matter where you live in the province of Alberta, you feel like you have access to your representative and that your representative can do a good job meeting with the constituents and giving their feedback. So I think it would be unwise to have an area where there's so much intentional effort around densification be already one of the most populated ridings in the province before the map even comes into play. I know that it's hard to anticipate with certainty where we'll be in eight years, but I can say that these are all going to be on the market this spring, and it's going to be many more people even by the time the next provincial election comes around and many more after that given the city's intentional efforts around densification.

I'm not wanting to propose a specific neighbourhood be included or removed or any of that. I'm sure that this has been a very difficult effort for all of you to date. I again want to commend that I think

you've applied some really good principles, both that were in legislation that I think others were urging you to consider, and say that I think Edmonton, particularly the more mature areas: those ridings are larger than they should be for this proposal.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Hoffman. Let me give a bit of a perverse scenario. If you're right – and let's assume that all of Alberta continues to grow. You've got a bit of a microcosm in the province that clearly is going to be exploding. But let's say the province continues to grow. You're saying: look, be careful; we're almost at the limit already. You're 61,000, 62,000 right now, right?

Ms Hoffman: Yeah.

The Chair: In our proposed riding. If the province continues to grow, the range is going to be higher, too, so we're not going to offend anything, right?

Ms Hoffman: I believe that the smallest proposed riding is at about 32,000, 33,000.

The Chair: Forty-one thousand before we get to 15(2).

Ms Hoffman: Sorry; 41,000 residents versus 62,000 residents?

The Chair: Yes, 41,000 to 68,000.

Ms Hoffman: Okay. I'm looking at the riding I currently represent, and I think that having – I believe that's Drumheller-Stettler, is it, that's 41,000?

The Chair: Probably, yes.

Ms Hoffman: We lived in that riding for a while when I was a child. We lived in Altario, a very small town not far from the Saskatchewan border. It was a one-block-square town, and even fewer people live there now than did then. When you look at the trends of what's happening with population in ridings that are proposed to be significantly under the variance, it's unlikely that those ridings will increase or at least that they will increase at the same rate that Edmonton, Calgary, and the other more urban centres are. I think the best determinant of future is the recent past, and that's what I'm trying to bring to the table.

The Chair: Okay. That was probably a little bit of an unfair scenario to put to you.

Ms Hoffman: I don't think it's unfair. Your job is to ask the questions.

The Chair: It goes straight to the paradox that we're faced with.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah. I think my riding is growing much faster than the communities I grew up in in rural Alberta, which are declining in enrolment.

Mr. Evans: What I'm hearing from you, Ms Hoffman, is that previously, I guess, your riding would be at 52,000, presumably, and it's proposed to be at 61,000. You're saying that you're expecting significant growth and we're going to overshoot our mark by quite a lot if we don't pare it down now.

Ms Hoffman: I think that 61,000 is based on the most recent data that we have, which is almost a year old at this point, is it?

The Chair: Yeah. You're right.

Ms Hoffman: I think it's already more than 61,000 quite a bit, especially given some of the seniors' apartments that have opened in the riding. I'm just showing you what's currently under construction in about the four neighbourhoods I had a chance to drive through in those 90 minutes. I think we're already significantly over 61,000, and we'll be far in excess of it by the provincial election and definitely by the following provincial election.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: I hear exactly what you're saying, and we heard it in the submissions. I don't know if you know, but we got 1,100 submissions from the interim report.

I call this a hot spot that these two ridings join together. We will be looking at it. I can't promise anything, but we're going to look at it.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: This is really valuable stuff that you took the time to do.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you.

The Chair: There are some ridings in Edmonton that are not close to yours. I mean, there's room for us to play without adding another electoral division.

Dr. Martin: I'm trying to absorb the maps that you provided, which I will, but I haven't done it yet. I want to take you to one just so you can walk me through what it's actually telling me about proposed densities.

Ms Hoffman: I'd love to.

Dr. Martin: Let's take this one since I've scribbled it up.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah.

Dr. Martin: So down the middle of this is an increased density plan for 124th Street. Then, of course, in classic form, for the most part it goes to medium and low density as you move away from 124th Street and the other side. Then the Stony Plain intersection is going to be even more dense. Am I reading this correctly so far?

Ms Hoffman: Yes. We're just east of Stony Plain Road and 124th Street and that sort of 105th Ave area. There have already been some low-rises that have been demolished and some high-rises built in that area in the last year, and it looks like there will be more to come.

Dr. Martin: Sure. That's just south of the Oliver . . .

Ms Hoffman: West. Yeah.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. Okay. All right. Now, what is the status of this plan? Presumably, it's a city plan and it has been passed as an area redevelopment plan.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah.

Dr. Martin: What is your sense of the current building activity in this particular zone?

Ms Hoffman: I took a number of photos along 127th Street, so actually just west of it, where they look like it's not going to be densified for higher zoning. Within there is where there are a number of the eight- and 16-plexes being built. I actually didn't take a lot right along 124th Street, which is kind of funny because it's where the city has got a lot of focus. With what's happening right now within the residential areas there are a ton of four-, six-, and eightplexes. There's even a 10-plex being built on one where it looks like four upper townhouses with four basement suites and then two garage suites being built as well over the four garages on one corner lot. So quite a bit of densification that way.

Yeah. Further up 124th Street, as you reach 111th Avenue, which is near the top of this map, there are a number of brownfields I think it is referred to. I think people who've owned that land for 20-plus years have been prospecting for increased densification. There aren't for sale signs on them right now, so it feels to those of us in the neighbourhood like there's going to be more construction in that area imminently as well.

Then along 111th Avenue the city has been buying up a lot of the corner lots along that street. It also is anticipated that there will be more purpose-built, probably nonprofit or city-partnered housing along that way. So while 124th Street is a north-south running corridor, there are branches coming off it to the east and west, where there's densification happening right now as well.

Yeah. The largest area of densification is that sort of red centre around Stony Plain and 124th Street, where they're putting in a major transit centre. We've already got a few eight- and 16-storey buildings, and it seems like there will be significantly more in the future if council's proposals continue.

2:50

Dr. Martin: Thank you. That's helpful.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah. Thank you, Dr. Martin.

The Chair: Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Yeah.

Thank you very much for this. This is, I think, the reason we write an interim report and put out specific proposals, so people who are actually in those neighbourhoods can tell us specifically what's actually happening on the ground. As I think you may have heard from the last presenter, the data we have is lagging data, so in the past. Over the last seven or eight years Glenora, Riverview have grown, absolutely, but less relative to the rest of the province. Do you believe that the growth in the next seven or eight years is going to meet or exceed the average of the rest of the province?

Ms Hoffman: I think Glenora grew at about the provincial average, but I'm not sure about Riverview. I think you highlighted that, actually, at our last presentation. I appreciated it.

One of the reasons why I think Glenora, Riverview will grow much faster than the rest of the province is because even in this last year – and that data isn't factored into the census data you have – the city of Edmonton open data shows that within the Heday over 40 per cent of the new units were added to the city of Edmonton. So there's still slightly more than the majority happening outside of the Heday, but there's a ton of new units being built within in terms of a net increase. Because the LRT is coming through my riding and that Valley Line west is anticipated to have significant transit-oriented development and already some towers have been built around where the proposed stations will be, I expect that it will be even faster.

The other piece that I did want to highlight is these, you know, 16-plexes and eightplexes that are coming in in the middle of

neighbourhoods. Those aren't even in these transit-oriented routes, but they are within a five- to 10-minute walk of where transit will be and where there are bike lanes and other opportunities.

I remember feeling some guilt when I moved into a duplex in my riding. I was like: oh, I don't know how people are going to feel about a duplex. My neighbours were overwhelmingly positive in that it used to be a rundown house that had police and EMS at it on a regular basis. People were squatting in it, those types of things. Instead, now there are two homeowners who are active members of the community. There is more of that happening throughout the area as well as a number of seniors retiring and wanting to downsize.

One of the buildings that opened on the Charles Camsell site: that's sort of in the middle of this package.

Mr. Clark: While you look for that, if you don't mind, maybe I'll ask a follow-up question if that's all right with you.

Ms Hoffman: Sure. Yep.

Mr. Clark: In your presentation you said that you wouldn't suggest which parts may shift elsewhere, so I won't ask you that specific question. But are there neighbouring parts of Edmonton that might or might not border on your constituency . . .

Ms Hoffman: Which one of your children is your favourite? Is that your question, Mr. Clark?

Mr. Clark: I tell my two kids that they're within the top five kids I have.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah. Okay. That's good.

Mr. Clark: But in all sincerity, if there were somewhere – you know, we're looking at this, for example. I see your next-door neighbour colleague is sitting in the audience behind you. Again, there's some cascading that needs to happen as well. I guess I'm really just interested in: are there parts that are adjacent that would be slower growing that might make some sense if we were to try to balance out things here a little bit?

Ms Hoffman: One of the pieces that I brought last time, that I encourage you to consider again, is around high school catchment area. When you think about communities of like interest – kids who grew up together, who play sports together, who go to the same high school – as much as we can keep those families connected in the same representative area I think would be wise. That doesn't mean our boundaries need to match high school catchment areas, but I think that would be a good measure of influence for communities of like interest.

The two most easterly neighbourhoods that are proposed to come out of Edmonton-Glenora and go into Edmonton-City Centre in the last redraw were added. That was Prince Rupert and Blatchford. They have been the child that's been moved between families multiple times over the last probably three or four rewrites of the maps. They regularly move, and I imagine that one of your considerations is that Blatchford will have continued increased development over the next eight years. I didn't even include it in this because it isn't proposed to be in Edmonton-Riverview, but if downtown is having more densification and includes Blatchford, I think that's something that you'll want to consider moving forward.

The furthest west parts of the riding were proposed to come out of Edmonton-Glenora as well. Honestly, it is such a pressure point. I don't want to pick a specific neighbourhood, but I will say that the two furthest east that are already being proposed to come out were only added eight years ago. I don't know how people will feel about

that, but I think they're used to having some change. At one point they were Edmonton-Calder, at another point they were Edmonton-Centre, at one point they're Edmonton-Glenora, and there is a lot of change happening in those areas in terms of densification and completely new build-outs in Blatchford, so I understand why you may be proposed moving those out.

If I were in your shoes for an hour, because I don't want to be in them for the duration of this, I would say that maybe we need to add one more seat somewhere between the Yellowhead and the Whitemud to do some reconfiguration of that part of the city because I think your acknowledgement that we are continuing to grow outside of the Henday is wise, and we will continue to grow outside of the Henday, but we are also growing within. To take one seat from within the Henday and put it outside of the Henday to account for that I don't think is fair to all the people who currently live in the core and are planning on moving there in the next year or beyond.

That's my general problem that I leave you to solve.

Dr. Martin: We want to hear solutions.

Ms Hoffman: Well, yeah. Good luck.

Mr. Clark: Appreciate the honesty. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. By the way, you've got 55 minutes left in your hour to be in our shoes.

Ms Hoffman: I'll stay for at least 20.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. One more presenter before break. Yeah. I've got David Eggen.

Dr. Martin: Two. Earl Dreeshen.

The Chair: Oh, Earl is not on mine. Okay. I guess Earl is first.

Earl, come forth. Welcome. Introduce yourself and tell us what riding you're in and which ridings you want to comment on.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Well, thank you very much. My name is Earl Dreeshen. I'm a former MP for Red Deer and Red Deer-Mountain View, and I wish to speak to the proposed riding of now Sylvan Lake-Innisfail. I wanted to kind of give a bit of an overview of my experience as far as being a political representative. My wife and I: we've been farming the Pine Lake area for over 50 years, continuing the tradition of forefathers that had come here prior to Alberta becoming a province.

Really, I suppose, in one way I'm one of those people that you can say went to a one-room schoolhouse and all of the stories associated with it, but I bring this up not just for nostalgic reasons. When consolidation had taken place in 1961, there were 13 students in our school. We ended up being split into four different directions, so we ended up having students go to Delburne, to Elnora, to Huxley, and in our case to Innisfail. This is sort of some of the things that can happen when governments go through the things that they must do in order to maintain what is required.

I also became a teacher, and I started teaching in Elnora, grades 1 through 9. Then for the next 34 years I taught at the Innisfail high school as a senior high math and science specialist. I also served as a political liaison between the Alberta Teachers' Association and the government of Alberta.

My political career started municipally when I was elected as a hospital board director for Elnora, and I served on this board for many years, eventually as the chairman. I also chaired the Eltrohills advisory committee, implementing innovative health care delivery

systems in the communities of Elnora, Trochu, and Three Hills. During that era I had the good fortune to be able to work with many provincial cabinet ministers and other members of the Alberta Legislature on an ongoing basis.

During the boundary review that was taking place at that time, we were able to stress the importance of rural representation, and I spoke of the necessity of representation by responsibility. Rural MLAs at that time dealt with multiple hospital boards, school boards, municipal councils while their Edmonton and Calgary counterparts had but one municipal council to deal with, two health boards, two school boards, and significantly they shared that responsibility with many other urban MLA colleagues. Also, the extensive travel time in rural areas and extensive points of contact with constituents were considerations that were often overlooked. When the commissioners understood the reality of that rural representation, changes that reflected rural community needs were gratefully implemented.

3:00

Now, after retiring from teaching, my life took an unexpected turn and I was once again involved in politics. I've served as a Member of Parliament over 16 years. Initially I represented the Red Deer federal riding, which encompassed both the city of Red Deer and the county of Red Deer and all of the towns and villages within the county, including the two largest of Innisfail and Sylvan Lake, so I quickly got first-hand experience in dealing with the responsibility of representing a diverse group of citizens. My experience was much different than that of my urban MP colleagues, who shared a far lesser variety of issues.

In 2015 the Red Deer riding was split into two electoral districts. The northern part of Red Deer, Sylvan Lake, and the northern Red Deer county became part of the new Red Deer-Lacombe riding. Red Deer-South, Innisfail, and the southern part of Red Deer county joined Mountain View county in the new Red Deer-Mountain View riding, which I had the honour of representing until my retirement in 2025.

Rural provincial ridings in Alberta should not be decreased. Representation by responsibility is as important today as it ever was. Rural MLAs have huge geographic areas to cover, many municipal councils to deal with, many varied issues to address, and are the main point of contact for government services for their constituents.

I'd recommend that the growing town of Sylvan Lake, soon to be a city, be added to the Lacombe provincial riding, mirroring the present federal central Alberta riding configuration, and I believe that Innisfail and the other towns, villages, and hamlets along the highway 2 corridor such as Bowden, Penhold, Springbrook, Gasoline Alley, and Blackfalds along with the towns, villages, and hamlets along the highway 21 corridor of Joffre, Delburne, Lousana, Elnora, Huxley, and Trochu should be included in a new riding. My recommendation is based on the unique aspects and ties of these vibrant rural communities. They represent strong north-south economic corridors, with major railways and highways that support farms, ranches, grain company elevators, machinery dealerships, and other agriculture businesses along with oil and gas industry and resource development in central Alberta.

I thank you for your consideration, and I'd be happy to take your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dreeshen. Just give us a moment so everybody has that map. By the way, have you submitted a written presentation?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Yes.

The Chair: So your proposed descriptions are in . . .

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Yes, they are.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

Mr. Evans: No, but thank you for your submissions.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: Hi. Long time no see.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Hi, Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Welcome. It's good to see you. Sorry you're bringing me bad news.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: I've already gone through that once when I had to say goodbye to Sylvan Lake when the change took place in 2015.

Mrs. Samson: Absolutely. You know we have strong ties. I want to get your opinion on: when I think about the history – I'm speaking specifically of Sylvan Lake – of our ties into that riding since 1993 with no change, when I think about the county of Red Deer being, in its entirety, the only level of government to help out those municipalities that are inside it and the convenience of that, and lastly when I think about the strides we've made on partnerships with our area partners when it comes to health care and urgent care and forming a solid voice to advocate with the government, I find it interesting that you think the town of Sylvan Lake would be better elsewhere. Can you speak to that specifically?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Certainly. One of the portions of the proposal was of course to reduce rural representation in central Alberta, and it's from that position that I'm coming from. I believe that there was a basis at the federal level for Sylvan Lake and Lacombe to be together in that the lake is surrounded by the two counties. When it was done federally, that was the trade-off that I felt: at least that's a positive that we can talk about. I believe, continuing with that, it also makes the fact that Sylvan Lake – even just the name that we've given, Sylvan Lake-Innisfail, shows the prominence of that community. I think that's part of what we're looking at there. Where a boundary might go between Sylvan Lake and Red Deer: I guess that's something that one can, you know, take a look at. I really think that it's important that we look at the key component, which is ensuring that rural representation remains as it is at this particular point in view. That's my reason for going that particular route.

I know many people that are in the Sylvan Lake and Lacombe area and the things that are going on along highway 20. You know, there's great growth potential that is there. We certainly see what is happening. My daughter had taught in Sylvan Lake, so I know all of those things that are taking place in there. That's really where I'm at when I put that into the proposal.

The key aspect of it as well, though, is the rest of the riding where we're talking about the highway 2 corridor. We have CN and we have CP, the two rail lines that come down. They are part of an economic corridor that is really critical. I think that's really important. We have massive grain terminals that are on both of those lines. We have in Springbrook probably the largest flour mill in Canada that is being built and this year probably is going to start in production. We see that more on the agricultural side of things. I think agriculture is the key component. We have equipment dealerships in Penhold and a couple in the county of Red Deer and

a couple in Trochu. I mean, these are the areas that are really key into the agricultural – and there's a lot.

You know, we live at Pine Lake. I mean, we're on a farm. There are tens of thousands of people that show up there in the summertime. We have a lot of people that are coming in; there are new subdivisions that are showing up but also smaller areas as well. These are what I'm looking at in the future.

Really, I did look at the health care side of it because I was part of it when the health care boards were removed. I know that the complete story was: oh, there must be something wrong that Alberta did. Of course, as a federal politician I recognize the major cut there was from the federal government to the provinces, so they had to do something in order to maintain balance. I understand those types of things. I understand how politics sometimes works but also what it does to communities. That's why my major focus is to make sure that we have that type of rural representation.

The other aspect of it is that – you know, love my colleagues, the ones that are in the cities and so on – if we have a Canada Day event or if we have a Remembrance Day ceremony, there are 15 or 20 of them that can kind of decide where they want to go. With us, we have seven or eight places that we are supposed to go at one time. It's very difficult to do. It's a labour of love and you do it, but it's hard that way.

I'm not sure how my time is.

The Chair: You're well over it, but keep going.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: The last thing I would like to say is that when the city of Red Deer was split in half for that time being, the one promise that I made is that I would never represent half of the city. I believe that those MLAs that share the city and the rural area around it are richer for that experience. I believe in the hub-and-spoke concept of it. I know that we are here in Edmonton and, you know, the city centre has to be associated with the pockets that are there and the ridings that are there, but when you get into the outer edges, there's an opportunity then to get a bit more of that rural flavour that makes the riding so important.

Thank you very much.

3:10

The Chair: Okay.
Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much, sir. I wanted to take you to the eastern part of the riding and to highway 21, which is, as you very well know, adjacent to the railway. I want to ask you about Trochu, which currently isn't in this map, but we've heard a very great deal about this as a grain corridor. I wanted to press you on the economic logic, if you will, of including Trochu in this riding.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Trochu has some unique aspects to it. It has two equipment dealerships that are there. It also is in the centre of three different high capacity grain terminals. There's one closer to Three Hills, there's one right by Trochu, and there's one in Huxley, which is a few miles away. These are 100-car, 120-car spots that they – two of them are. And the traffic that goes along there – we were hauling grain last week, and it would take you two or three minutes to get onto the highway from 590, where we're at, because of the traffic that is there. There's a massive amount of activity that takes place, and Trochu is certainly one of the key components of that.

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you. It's tough when you have to go last because Julian often takes my questions. Lots of discussion last week about Trochu.

I guess, you know, one of the mandates of the boundaries commission, I'm sure you know, is clear and understandable boundaries, and in the case of the current Innisfail-Sylvan Lake we haven't done a whole lot to the constituency, right? As it stands now, it's not massively different. I think we bumped it out a little bit west. I guess that's part of what I wanted to ask you about. Is it currently functioning okay? I know you may have some insight into the current MLA, but notwithstanding that I guess I'm just curious. Do you feel like it's working okay as it is now? I know you've made a case here that we need to shuffle things up a little bit.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Well, I think that where I look at it from is that when the proposal was that there would be less representation in central Alberta, then you take that as your first premise and then say: okay; now that means we need to do this, and then we need to do that. I'm suggesting that that is not the right way to go and that we should be looking at maintaining the same number of regions in central Alberta. When you look at potentially three ridings – one in central Alberta, one in southern Alberta, one in northern Alberta – being pulled out from the rural – we do have the extra two that are coming into the cities. But then to change that: that's where I believe that we need to really reconsider just where we're at there.

That's why when you start to say, "Okay; well, how then would you make that work?" I'm simply saying that this would be a way to do that, to pull in this again. You know what? I still spend a lot of time in Sylvan even though it wasn't part of my riding. Nevertheless, sometimes you simply have to look at it and say: okay; well, this is a chance. It's also a chance for, hopefully, the new city of Sylvan to have its own future and design, you know, as we move forward.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Okay. Thank you very much.

The Chair: I'll excuse you from the table, but please remain. By the way, this has got to be the best day of people staying after they presented. I always gently encourage people, and most people just leave, but it's helpful for everybody to hear the other persons' presentations, especially if it's somewhat contrasting. So thank you very much.

Mr. Eggen, please come forward. I was all set to make some smart comment when I was going to call you up earlier saying that we were on time, just before the break. But no, we're not on time. As you can see, time limits are not strictly enforced in these proceedings. So please proceed and tell us what we need to know.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you. I appreciate being in front of you here again. Just by way of opening remarks I, of course, am the MLA for Edmonton-North West, so that's what I am advocating for here today as well as the city of Edmonton.

I must say before I begin that I'm very impressed with this interim report, and I can see a lot of thoughtful collaboration that took place. I think that's evidenced by the fact that you all voted for this interim report as well. I'm sure you know that is not often the case. I think that demonstrates a lot of work in the background that produced something that was both thoughtful and collaborative.

The Chair: Did you read appendix D?

Mr. Eggen: I probably did.

The Chair: Which is the history of Alberta's EBC going back to . . .

Mr. Eggen: Yes. I was using my own anecdotal history, you know, since I started doing this. It was fractious at best. Congratulations for breaking that mould.

I was struck by a number of the other presentations that I heard earlier, and it's something similar that we can see in Edmonton-North West as well. This is the phenomenon of density and building growth through infills. We see a lot of this here in Edmonton-North West as well. I find it interesting when I look at your interim report that the proposed four most populated constituencies are all in Edmonton north of the river, and Edmonton-North West is fourth in that regard.

You know, we can see some density. We can see some congestion there as well. As described by my colleague from Edmonton-Glenora, they're literally building these places in Edmonton-North West right now. As we speak, they are going up, these 200, 300, or even 400-person apartments, eight or 10 stories high, in places like Griesbach and in Albany. The density is quite breathtaking, really. It's growing. I think there are a whole bunch of reasons why we see this growth, but people are building on spec around new LRT and transit lines, and they're building for affordability, right? Quite frankly, young families will move into a place where they can get a single detached home or a town home or a duplex where they can afford the mortgage, and that's what's happening in the north part of Edmonton-North West.

As I said when I previously presented, I have neighbourhoods in my constituency that are more than 100 years old and I have neighbourhoods that are a few weeks old, probably, at best. It's a dynamic place. I love representing Edmonton-North West. I just want to advocate for a sense of purpose.

You did listen to the people that did present before, myself included, who were saying that we would like to keep the configuration of Edmonton-North West as much as possible. Certainly you did achieve that in this interim report, but you did add one neighbourhood that I did represent before, but it's another 5,000 people or so.

I know, as Dr. Martin said, that you're not here necessarily to project the future, but we have to use an informed analysis of the immediate past to see what direction we're going to. For Edmonton-North West to be at 61,000 and change with this proposal, I think it's a pretty conservative projection that it will exceed 70,000 in the next five or six years, so we need to think about that as well.

I'm here representing people that have a very strong connection to community, and we have some of the best community leagues I think in Edmonton. Edmonton has very good community leagues in Canada, in fact. They divide themselves up into areas, so a lot of the neighbourhoods that I represent belong to the Area 1 community leagues. Keeping those together: I really appreciated that, and they appreciate that, too. I'm literally going to a dinner in a couple of weeks where they meet every six months or so. Those are all of those neighbourhoods in Edmonton-North West. You know, that sort of informal governance and community building is not always so tangible, but it's indispensable for people looking after each other and so forth. So I appreciate that somehow you did manage to keep those things together.

3:20

Again, I can see that Edmonton is growing very quickly. I appreciate that your proposal does add a seat to the city of Edmonton. But considering, as I said, with Edmonton-North West, Edmonton-Glenora, Edmonton-West Henday, and Edmonton-

McClung being the top four sized constituencies in your proposal, it's an indicator – it doesn't necessarily have to be this immediate geographic area – that Edmonton needs another seat.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. You caught me . . .

Mr. Eggen: Well, you know, I'm 30 seconds short, so there you go. Yeah.

The Chair: Just having heard the last two presenters, we have one lawyer on the panel here and maybe there are more lawyers in the crowd, but in law school you have to moot cases and sometimes you have to switch sides. I was just thinking: you know what would be a really good idea? To make the rural MLAs advocate for the city's expansion and the city MLAs advocate for the rural.

Mr. Eggen: Yeah. I mean, certainly my proposal around . . .

Mr. Evans: Next we're going to have Mr. Eggen up here, and we're going to give him some submissions.

Mr. Eggen: Someday I may be on the electoral commission, but not today.

I mean, my advocacy for another seat in Edmonton: I'm not doing it at the expense of the rural areas. I think it's very important for us to recognize the differential between – you know, you can't have a 62,000 person rural riding, of course. Right? But at the same time we can see the trends, and people do pay attention to the value of a vote. If someone is coming from an area like the proposed Mackenzie area, for example, it was 30-some thousand, I think. Yeah. Then, of course, that would be half as much as the one in Edmonton-North West. God bless the proposed Mackenzie. I think that's a fantastic idea. I really do. I'm just here to advocate for Edmonton-North West.

The Chair: You know, I don't recall any Edmonton MLA complaining at all about their high numbers the first time around. I mean, in fact, they were fighting not to lose areas because everybody loves their area. But I get the pressure points from Ms Hoffman and your presentation and the uniqueness of those four ridings. They're probably not only the highest but they're going to be the most pressure laden.

Okay. Questions.

Mr. Clark: Again, if you've heard some of my questions, they'll be similar. I guess I'm interested in the Edmonton-North West context. How foreseeable is some of that development that you suggest is likely coming? As you can tell, part of the challenge we're dealing with here is always a bit of a cascading effect. Trying to keep community leagues together: that was part of the reason we put all of Calder into Edmonton-North West. It's a bit of a six of one, half dozen of the other kind of thing. Are there, you know, like with MLA Hoffman, very specific, targeted developments that are planned for North West, and if so . . .

Mr. Eggen: For sure. You know, we have the good fortune of having the many of the developers who are developing in Edmonton-North West also live there, so I know. I meet with them on a regular basis, and I'm friends with some of them. They're building significant units and development in Griesbach in anticipation of the transit that will be there on the corner of 113A and 137 Ave. Right? Then, again, they're literally building the multiunit apartments and townhomes in Albany as we speak. Then even on the other side of the Henday jumping across immediately

west of the remand centre there's a significant development that's being sited and graded right now.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

Dr. Martin: Where is that?

Mr. Eggen: I can't remember the name of it now because there's no one there right now, but it's just on the other side of the Henday with the 127 Street overpass and then west. Oh, yeah. Okay. Thanks.

Ms Hoffman: So originally you were talking about over here – right? – when you were talking about Griesbach?

Mr. Eggen: Yeah. So 127 street when it hits the Henday, and then it's just immediately west of there. That's projected. Yeah. Higher. Yeah. You can't reach that?

Mr. Evans: Forest Lawn I think is where it is.

Mr. Eggen: Yeah. So that's another one, but the real density is Griesbach and Albany.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Samson, any questions?

Mrs. Samson: No.

I'm just looking at the map in front of me, and I can see where the four ridings are holding that heavy density, and we certainly will have a look at it. I don't know where the extra electoral district – there are no extras. So what I see happening is that we're going to start pushing things around.

Mr. Eggen: Yeah. I mean, again, I'm not here to ask for this neighbourhood and put this neighbourhood over wherever. I'm looking at the city globally, and just, you know, these four constituencies are a case in point for significant growth and density, and they happen to be the top four in the province. It's a good problem to have in a way. I mean, we see the vibrancy. I see shops and so forth that I would never dream of having in Edmonton-North West 10 years ago, so it's definitely growing and the economy is growing, too, which is a good problem to have.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay.

Did I get you?

Dr. Martin: You didn't, but I'm just kind of dumbfounded, so I don't really have a question. You know, Livingstone-Macleod has over 60,000 people in their configuration.

Mr. Eggen: Okay. Good for them.

Dr. Martin: These Edmonton ridings plus the farthest away riding in the south: I don't know how we make you smaller, actually, Mr. Eggen.

Mr. Eggen: Yeah. I mean, again, I'm arguing this based on the premise that there's growth in Edmonton. You know, I'm trying to look at it on a more global sort of basis. So Edmonton-North West is a case in point. That's the approach I'm taking.

Dr. Martin: And just to conclude, again, enrolling you in our dilemma: you know, past performance is no indicator of future events, and this is something that we're always told about the markets and investing, but it is also true about area restructure

plans. We have to be very, very careful. MLA Hoffman provided actual pictures of stuff that has Tyvek on it, which I love to see because that seems much more real than a developer's brochure or a city planning department's expectation. For us, we need to feel confident that we're actually seeing, as it were, real growth rather than potential, because everybody has potential.

Mr. Eggen: For sure. Yeah. I restricted my comments to the Griesbach area, you know, where these buildings are. They're there, right? I mean, people are moving into them, and they're not reflected in the population census that this interim report was based on.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Eggen, for presenting. I'm going to excuse you from the table.

We're about 10 minutes past our scheduled break time. I'm going to use the Chairman's prerogative, and we're not going to have a break. If any of the panel members have to take a break, then go do it now. We will go to our next presenter, David Shepherd.

Good afternoon.

Mr. Shepherd: Good afternoon. Do we want to wait for Mr. Clark to return or . . .

The Chair: Just talk really slow.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. Sure. I'm sorry. What is the time that I have again?

Dr. Martin: Six minutes.

Mr. Shepherd: Six minutes. Thank you. I will just set a timer to make sure that I keep track of that.

The Chair: No one's met that deadline except for Mr. Eggen.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. I try to be thorough. You know, practice in the Legislature and all.

Good afternoon. Thank you. It's wonderful to see you all again, and I appreciate the opportunity to present again. I am David Shepherd. For the last 10 years I've had the honour of serving as the MLA here in Edmonton-City Centre. I've been a resident of the constituency since about 2008, so I appreciate the chance to share a few thoughts on the draft constituency map that you put for the commission.

3:30

First, I want to say thank you for all the work you have put in creating this map. I know it's not an easy job. It's a pretty challenging task, in fact, weighing a lot of different intersecting considerations, competing interests. I love puzzles. I love word games, jigsaw puzzles, logic puzzles. Working on a 2,000-piece one I started just over the Christmas holidays. But I think the work that you've had is a bigger puzzle than I've ever attempted. I'm not sure I'd want to, but I really appreciate your efforts.

Clearly there's a lot of thought and consideration that went into creating these new proposed boundaries. In particular, I want to say thank you for recognizing the rapid growth of our population in Edmonton by granting us an additional seat. I think, as you're aware, '22 to '24 our city saw its highest two-year rate of growth since 2003. That's about 100,000 new residents. That's a 10 per cent increase. The chief economist does forecast that growth is going to continue, hitting about 1.25 million by 2027, and that's about five years earlier than had been projected in the city plan that

was put forward in 2019. So the additional seat, I think, is well essential and important. Indeed, as my colleagues have noted, there could even be room for consideration, I think, of an additional seat.

I note in the report that you did talk about the six electoral divisions in the urban centre of Edmonton being consolidated into five. That is, in fact, what you chose to do to reflect that the rate of population growth in these areas has been below that of the city. I think my colleague Sarah from Edmonton-Glenora spoke well to the growth that she's seeing in her community. I'll speak a bit to what I'm seeing in Edmonton-City Centre.

Now, I don't have specific photos of projects, but what I can tell you is that as I'm out door-knocking in the communities around Edmonton-City Centre, whether that be Spruce Avenue, Queen Mary Park, some of these neighbourhoods, Westwood, you cannot go down a block without seeing infill. It is consistent, it is rapid, and it is continuing. You know, Edmontonians chose to re-elect a mayor and council who are dedicated to incentivizing that work. So we are certainly seeing that growth here.

We have new condo towers that are being built across the downtown, I would point to, and I would note the parks just over here by O-day'min park. As we see that development investment from the city, we are seeing new condo towers in the downtown and in Wilkewentowin. We are also seeing current apartment buildings, some of these three-storey walk-ups, that are being redeveloped, so torn down, redeveloped, adding additional units. We are seeing some significant growth here.

I would note also then that the province stepping forward with their investment for the Ice District alongside the city of Edmonton includes plans for 4,500 new homes in the village at Ice District.

I think, ultimately, as Sarah noted, taking a seat from between the Yellowhead and the Whitemud could be a decision for now, but it could be a decision that could rapidly have to be reversed as we continue to see this growth and development within the inner core.

Just to reiterate, I think, what I said previously when I presented here, I think the most effective and fair electoral map is one that groups communities of like interests and needs together. I would say in terms of Edmonton-City Centre that the adjustments you're proposing do meet with that. But I would continue to iterate, I think, that it's worth considering as we are looking at some of the communities around the fringes of our city as well.

I'll just take a look here. What else do I want to make sure I get in?

Yeah. In general I'd say that the communities in my constituency have common interests and needs, and then those outside our core, those in the suburbs, those communities in turn have their own more common interests and needs than those outside of our city boundaries.

Lastly, I would just say, I guess, hearing some of the comments like looking at rural versus urban – and I appreciate, I think it was my colleague David Eggen that kind of noted, that we do need to consider, you know, local representation, yes, in terms of the ability of MLAs to appear at community events, to be able to get out to local councils and those sorts of things, but we also do really have to weigh the democratic representation in terms of keeping those numbers similar so that we don't have too much discrepancy between the population sizes in some of the rural seats versus the urban seats, to have that equity of representation in the Legislature where these considerable and major decisions are made.

Ultimately, what I'll say is, you know, this is a process about creating electoral boundaries that provide Albertans across the province with fair representation, and that is absolutely core to our democratic process. I think at a time when we only need to look south of the border and see the significant degradation of democratic norms, including an increasingly illiberal President

openly calling for partisan interference in electoral boundaries, it's a reminder of how important a fair and balanced process driven by data truly is.

I truly appreciate the work that you're doing, the questions that I hear you asking, and the opportunities we each have to present to ensure that we get the best outcome we can for folks here.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Shepherd.

Mr. Evans, questions?

Mr. Evans: No. I don't have any questions for you, but thank you for presenting.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for coming. Would it be safe to say that you like Edmonton-City Centre in the interim report?

Mr. Shepherd: Yeah. The boundaries have remained more or less similar. You know, you have chosen to make the adjustment of removing Westwood and adding in Prince Rupert and Blatchford. In terms of numbers: relatively equal. In terms of communities of interest: I think still very well connected.

Mrs. Samson: Great. Thank you.

Dr. Martin: That was basically my question. I take it, Mr. Shepherd, that you have been here to hear your colleagues speak to Edmonton on issues as well, so I won't press you on the same points. That would be tiresome. But really, the points that we have heard through much of this afternoon about Edmonton, I think, would apply to the Edmonton-City Centre situation as well. Yes, you probably need another seat. Do we have one? Probably no.

Mr. Shepherd: Fair.

The Chair: I was going to tell Mr. Eggen that if he was a betting man, I wouldn't bet on . . .

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. Yeah. You don't have a spare in the back pocket at the moment. I understand.

The Chair: No. But strangely – well, no. I won't.

Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, and apologies for stepping out there for a second. If I missed this already, I apologize. The Spruce Avenue neighbourhood: there was a suggestion earlier today that perhaps that would fit a little better in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood from one of the first presenters of the day. How do you feel about that suggestion?

Mr. Shepherd: You know, I will echo my colleague from Edmonton-Glenora in not wanting to have to pick amongst my children. I would say I was at the Spruce Avenue junior high today and had a great conversation with the kids there. I really appreciate that community. They are active. While they are not quite the same as some of the more urban, they are very closely connected with areas like Queen Mary Park – right? – certainly Prince Rupert, others. So I think they have quite a bit in common with the communities that I have here. Yeah.

Mr. Clark: Do you feel you have the similar growth pressures as your colleague to the west and in Edmonton-Glenora?

Mr. Shepherd: Oh, absolutely. As I was saying, you know, I can't walk through Spruce Avenue or Queen Mary Park without coming across infill. Certainly, that's very actively growing there. I mentioned new condominium buildings, apartment buildings that

are going, redevelopment of previous apartment buildings. There was some slowing through COVID-19, but we are seeing that rapidly start to restart now. Certainly, I anticipate quite a bit of growth.

Mr. Clark: Just one last quick question. Is there a fair bit of kind of mid-rise density in those areas that you've talked about as compared to a little bit to the west?

Mr. Shepherd: I believe Wihkwentowin is the densest community in Edmonton. Certainly, we have quite a bit of those three- or four-storey walk-ups and, like I said, a number of those being redeveloped into larger properties. Yeah. There's a fair amount of that there. Westwood, which you are proposing to remove, also has a number of those sort of mid-size apartment buildings, as does Central McDougall.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Shepherd, maybe I could use this as an opportunity. This isn't meant to be a cheeky question, but how far does it take you to get to your legislative office?

Mr. Shepherd: To my legislative office? You know, it's about 10 to 15 minutes depending on the weather and the traffic, but yes, it's a short drive.

The Chair: Just to illustrate the stresses that we are under. Last week someone from northern Alberta presented and said – this morning I had a presentation on effective representation, which is ultimately the goal of this commission. It's not numbers. It's not one person, one vote. It's not rep by pop like the Americans. We have a different approach, effective representation. One of the northern presenters said: there's a paradox in that because when you work to make a northern riding closer to the average, you increase its size, and that makes it less effective representation. So I hope you appreciate – I know you do because you have colleagues that drive in five hours to the Leg after every weekend, and you didn't advocate numbers that much. But that's the problem for us. It'll be very difficult to give an extra riding now to Edmonton.

3:40

Mr. Shepherd: I certainly recognize the challenges that are involved in that. When we're looking at geography and population distribution, the challenges that creates – I have colleagues like Sarah Elmeligi in Banff-Kananaskis. Talking with her about, you know – I mean, that's not as large as some of the northern, but certainly hearing the kilometres she puts in in her due diligence to visit all the communities she represents. Certainly, it's a piece to balance.

The Chair: Yeah. Part of the weaknesses or the limitations we have is that we only have two more ridings to deal with. You know, 87 to 89. Probably could have used six or seven more.

Anyways, thank you so much, Mr. Shepherd. Appreciate it.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Now we've got, I believe, a group of presenters, is it?

Mrs. Doblanko: It's just me.

The Chair: Okay.

Mrs. Doblanko: I think. Leduc county? Yeah.

The Chair: Yeah. Are you Michael Scheidl?

Mrs. Doblanko: I am not Michael. I'm Tanni Doblanko. I'm the mayor of Leduc county. Michael probably organized all that, so that's probably why his name is there.

The Chair: Okay. Sorry. Can you give us your name again?

Mrs. Doblanko: Absolutely. First name is Tanni, last name Doblanko. I am the mayor in Leduc county.

The Chair: Okay. Good. Thank you.

Mrs. Doblanko: Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak this afternoon. We're not here from Leduc county asking to add. We're asking for some tweaks on the boundaries.

The Chair: We're good at tweaks.

Mrs. Doblanko: I know. In fact, we've made the right work easy by giving you some options to look at because that's just how we think. Really, it's about: we currently have five ridings that touch or affect us in Leduc county, and we're just talking about how we can make some of those more effective for our residents. I really appreciate listening to some of the other presenters talk about community. Our changes aren't based on population; they're based on either social or economic community as we call it. With that, I'll get to taking a look at it.

The first change that we're going to look at is the one that's from the Strathcona-Sherwood Park riding. If you take a look in the bottom corner, you can see that, well, first off, this riding is very large, very rural, and it is looking to take a little piece, half of Beaumont, and a very small piece of Leduc county. That part of Leduc county actually is very densely populated, which is probably why it's been included, for numbers, but it actually breaks up a significant social and economic sort of area for us, which is our country residential area in the east end of our county. The farmland isn't quite as good there, so we've actually allowed that to be where a lot of our country residential growth happens. We think that that isn't going to work well for the residents in that area when you look at an MLA being spread out as far as he or she would be in that area.

The second one is then a change to the Camrose riding, which is the next page in your handout. This riding actually sits, if you can look really carefully . . .

The Chair: Sorry. Did you say handout?

Mrs. Doblanko: Oh, I'm sorry. Did you not get our handout?

The Chair: Okay. As soon as Aaron comes in, he'll get it up to us.

Mrs. Doblanko: Aaron. On a break. No worries.

If you can look really, really hard up at above the red line where it says Leduc county, right above that is that little piece that was going to go to Strathcona-Sherwood Park riding. Now this bigger piece is going to be attached to the Camrose riding.

Again, we're looking at a very large, mainly rural agricultural riding which will include New Sarepta, which is a growth hamlet for us. We are looking at that as sort of our small growth hamlet. But also, again, it is a community of country residential areas out there that really stay together. Most of the people there work, for the most part, in Leduc, Nisku, Leduc Business Park, or the airport. So the transportation corridors, all of those sorts of things are fitting

into that smaller Leduc subregion, and this really breaks up that social community.

I heard one of the earlier presenters talk about things like community halls. I think you all know how important a community hall or a community is. This is dividing it up by lines, and I think it would be less advantageous unless we looked at a couple of other options, which we actually have for you.

Moving on, what we would propose – again, we like to make the right work easy, so we’ve given you some options here. We’d like to see that we keep the Leduc-Beaumont riding the same. We believe that has been one of the most successful ridings and we work with the MLA there. We are looking at both the airport, Nisku Business Park, and all of those sorts of things which are really an industrial driver for the province, and having that economic generator with one MLA is absolutely, we believe, critical to the continued growth. Currently Leduc county is looking for some additional industrial growth on the west side of the airport that will tie in well with this sort of development that we’re looking at. That’s one of the options that we have for you.

Thank you, Aaron, for handing those out.

This next one involves actually two ridings: Wetaskiwin-Maskwacis-Ponoka and Stony Plain-Drayton Valley-Devon. I currently live in the Drayton Valley-Devon riding, farming out there with my husband until we run out of money, like every other farmer does, but happily doing it. A couple of changes on here. This one actually extends the Stony Plain riding a bit, but we also think it makes more sense. It keeps the types of activities, the types of economic development the same, and it keeps that rural focus. Adding in Stony Plain would help with the population as well. That’s that option.

Mr. Clark: Sorry. Can you just explain the different colours?

Mrs. Doblanko: Our option?

Mr. Clark: Yeah.

Mrs. Doblanko: Our option on the handout, and it’s kind of hard to read, expands the Stony Plain riding all the way out to highway 814. Again, that provides a little bit more population while maintaining that notion of like-minded community, like-minded people, like-minded activities. It also kind of reflects how people move in that area and how they interact with each other. Again, our best idea.

Yep?

Dr. Martin: Sorry to interrupt. You’re speaking north of the big river, and that will be the Genesee Bridge?

Mrs. Doblanko: Right now I’m speaking 814, which goes east.

Michael? Correct? Correct. Right.

It already goes across the river into Parkland county. That’s not an issue. That’s been there for a while. I think it mimics the federal one, which goes across the river as well. This is about expanding it a little bit farther east than what it was. Or, you know, you could shift a little bit around Calmar. Again, that’s in one of our pictures.

The final piece is around the Wetaskiwin-Maskwacis-Ponoka. It deals with Pigeon Lake. Pigeon Lake is a very, very unique community and, we believe, would be better served with one MLA. The number of summer villages, the number of property owners that are both in Wetaskiwin county and Leduc county: I think there’s a likeness there that’s better captured with one MLA as opposed to the proposal, which was to divide the lake up a bit.

That was really four and a half minutes because I’m trying to keep under six.

Again, we realize that the commission was going to want to know: what do we want to do about it, right? Here are some issues and so these are some options we have for you. Really, you know, first and foremost, keeping our Leduc-Beaumont riding the same and not dividing up the area around Beaumont is critical, absolutely critical. Again, I understand the need for population, but I heard you say so eloquently before that it’s not just about population. Beaumont’s not a big enough city to be divided up with two MLAs. It’s a small, growing city, but it’s more like Leduc and that area than it is that larger Strathcona or Camrose area.

With that, I’m all out of – I should have taken a water during the nonbreak, but I’m done.

3:50

The Chair: Okay. Now you’re going to get grilled.

Mrs. Doblanko: I will just defer to Michael.

Mr. Evans: I really appreciate the options. That’s very helpful. I can’t find Pigeon Lake. I’ve driven through it.

Dr. Martin: No, you haven’t.

Mr. Evans: Well, not the lake.

Mrs. Doblanko: It’s right at the bottom.

Mr. Evans: It’s the one that’s Sundance Beach.

Mrs. Doblanko: Yes. That is Pigeon Lake.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah. It’s just half of it. That’s why it looks weird.

Mrs. Doblanko: Yeah. We only get half of the lake.

Again, the options just provide some food for thought for the commission. I know it’s hard to think about how to redraw a line if you don’t live it.

The Chair: For not being a large metropolitan area, you have a busy area.

Mrs. Doblanko: We are extremely busy in Leduc county, and that doesn’t, you know, take in Genesee and all of those sorts of areas and things that are happening out there. We are proud of what we do.

Mrs. Samson: Just to be clear, because the maps are numerous, the priority is that the city of Leduc and the city of Beaumont reside together entirely inside your county.

Mrs. Doblanko: Inside the current Leduc-Beaumont riding. That’s currently the riding, and we believe that will not only allow us to grow commercially and industrially, but it really holds the social fabric together for that subregion.

Mrs. Samson: Good. Then, you know, the other tweaks: I will tell you that we will look at them in detail and do what’s appropriate. But that Beaumont thing: we got a lot of push-back. It’s a hot spot.

Mrs. Doblanko: Again, sometimes we’re using a solution for one problem instead of looking at the whole problem. Hopefully that gives you some food for thought. We did run the numbers from the last statistics, and they seem to be plus or minus 25. We’ve done that work, too. Okay; I didn’t do that work.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you so much. I appreciate it. Take the credit.

The Chair: Okay. Julian?

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

I want to tell you that our numbers' modelling suggests that if we bring the entirety of Beaumont back into the fold plus give you back Rolly View and the Looma piece, you're at 75,000.

Mrs. Doblanko: Huh.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. So there's our problem.

Mr. Evans: Are you okay at 68,000 or 65,000?

Mrs. Doblanko: Which people are we throwing out?

Dr. Martin: Well, there you go. Welcome to our world.

Mrs. Doblanko: Thank you for that. I wasn't aware of that. That's very interesting because that area is the absolute – you know, I hear growth pressures from urban: both Leduc and Beaumont are facing 20 per cent or 30 per cent. Whatever they're facing for growth is ridiculous, plus Leduc county itself has a small urban growth area that is exploding as well.

Thank you for that, Dr. Martin. I guess that's the good and the bad of growth.

Mr. Evans: Where's the exploding growth portion of Leduc county?

Mrs. Doblanko: Do you know where the Nisku Business Park is? Okay. If you take a look at Beaumont on one of the maps and you come a little bit west, there's a small area between Beaumont and Nisku Business Park that is being developed at an urban standard by Leduc county. It's called the vistas. I don't know what we're going to call it when it actually finishes. Yes. We do have an urban growth node there, and it is growing very rapidly.

Dr. Martin: I happen to have been there three weeks ago.

Mrs. Doblanko: Oh, really?

Dr. Martin: I was lost. I turned into it and said: wow, look at the houses. So I can attest to this.

Again you compound the dilemma, don't you?

Mrs. Doblanko: It's about growth, right? Growth is good and bad. I think that we all agree with that. But knowing those numbers is a little bit more sobering for me. Let me, you know, echo what I heard some of the other speakers saying: I'm glad I'm not on that side of the bench.

The Chair: You know why we carved Beaumont out.

Mrs. Doblanko: Yeah. It makes sense now.

The Chair: Was it 50th Street . . .

Mrs. Doblanko: Yeah; 50th Street goes right down the middle. But, again, Beaumont is such a small city to divide.

The Chair: Yeah. Okay.

Mr. Clark: That's actually really what I wanted to dive into. Your current boundaries do not include the areas immediately east of Beaumont: Rolly View, et cetera.

Mrs. Doblanko: Those are in Maskwacis. Yeah.

Mr. Clark: Yeah; exactly, right? So if you're saying, "What we'd really like is just to keep it the way it is now," which is Leduc and

Beaumont together, now, that still leaves us other problems that we sort of have to sort out.

Mrs. Doblanko: Yes.

Mr. Clark: So right now, according to our Office of Statistics and Information, Leduc-Beaumont is about 65,460 on the average of 54,929, which puts you about 19 per cent over but still within the range.

The Chair: That's with all of Beaumont.

Mr. Clark: It's with all of Beaumont.

Mrs. Doblanko: All of Beaumont. Right.

Mr. Clark: Today's 2017 boundaries, which is all of Beaumont and Leduc together, essentially it's just the two urban areas of Leduc and Beaumont and not much else and everything in between.

Mrs. Doblanko: Yes. Which is pretty small.

Mr. Clark: I guess, really, the question – because often folks are coming to us saying: "Please, please, please. We have too many people in this constituency. You need to make it smaller." But what you're saying is: actually, we're willing to take that in exchange for having Leduc and Beaumont together.

Mrs. Doblanko: Right.

Mr. Clark: Then some of the other – okay.

Mrs. Doblanko: Right. Again, you know, well said. Right now those country residential areas, the New Sareptas, those are currently in with Maskwacis, and that works really well. Minister Wilson understands that area, works really well out there. Again, it keeps a community that's alike together. That country residential has very, very distinct needs from the rest of our county. There's no doubt about it.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Then the other portion that you mentioned, to move Pigeon Lake into Maskwacis.

Mrs. Doblanko: Yeah.

Mr. Clark: You've got a line here that runs east-west on your map. I guess what I wonder is – sort of south of Cavanagh, south of Thorsby, which would take it out of Stony Plain-Drayton Valley-Devon and put it into Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin, what line have you chosen?

Mrs. Doblanko: Well, I think a couple of things. When you look at that area, Cavanagh down to, like, the Leduc border, that's generally very sparsely populated farmland. I guess my comment is that whether it goes with Stony Plain-Drayton Valley-Devon or it goes with Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin doesn't really matter because those are very alike, right?

Mr. Clark: Got it.

Mrs. Doblanko: The small population in there isn't going to make a difference for population, but it might help you guys with how you draw your lines.

Mr. Clark: This is a fabulous map. It would be really great if we could have maps just of your suggestion, without the others. Is that possible?

Mrs. Doblanko: My guy says yes.

Mr. Clark: I think that would really help. And that's probably just my shortcoming; I'm having a difficult time visualizing what's what.

Mrs. Doblanko: Yeah. They are hard to read. I agree.

Mr. Clark: No. The work you put into this – and lots of folks come to us with problems and not many solutions, so we really appreciate proposed solutions, especially from folks who are elected representatives in their communities. It helps a lot. Thank you.

Mrs. Doblanko: Thank you.

The Chair: Could we have a Case IH tractor instead on the front, too?

Mrs. Doblanko: No. I would have been fired if it hadn't been a John Deere.

The Chair: Oh, okay.

Mrs. Doblanko: Not that I'm a John Deere girl, but it is the tractor of Leduc county.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much.

The Chair: The next presenter, Jason Deol.

Okay. Introduce yourself, please, and tell us what riding you live in and what electoral district you want to talk about.

4:00

Mr. Jason Deol: Sure. Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. My name is Jason Deol. I've been a lifelong resident of the Mill Woods area, but specifically I want to talk a little bit today about the south of Edmonton and a little bit about Edmonton in general. Yeah. Thanks to the commission, you know, for all the work that's already gone into this, into the report, all these public hearings. I'm sure there are a lot of different types of opinions about challenges, balancing, all of that.

I just wanted to speak to, I guess, some of the kind of concerns specifically in my community. I live in Crawford Plains. It will now be under the proposed boundaries in the new Edmonton-South East riding.

The Chair: Sorry. Could you describe your district again?

Mr. Jason Deol: Yeah. I live specifically in the Crawford Plains community.

The Chair: Crawford Plains. Okay.

Mr. Jason Deol: Yeah. Just north of Anthony Henday and east of 50th Street, just that kind of northern little cut-out in the new Edmonton-South East.

Under the current boundaries I live in the Edmonton-Ellerslie riding. When I'm kind of thinking, I guess, of effective representation and about community, I don't actually feel like either of these boundaries, you know, were effective representation or represented where I live in my communities. I was happy to see a new riding get added in the south. I think that was absolutely necessary. Like, with

the population, the continued development moving south, it was absolutely necessary.

My own community and specifically the communities north of Anthony Henday between 50th Street and 34th Street – Crawford Plains, Pollard Meadows, Daly Grove – are, you know, much more mature and older neighbourhoods that really feel like a part of Mill Woods as compared to everything that is south of Anthony Henday. Even within the current boundaries, being in Edmonton-Ellerslie, I think it feels like quite a disconnect from all of the communities kind of north of that. If you asked anybody around that area where they live, like, nobody would identify with Ellerslie, I think, in terms of the naming identity and then even in terms of how you commute, where you work, where you shop, and, more specifically, maybe where you're going to school or where your kids go to school.

I think there's a bit of a divide between maybe some of the concerns and challenges that people will care about in these communities, specifically just when it comes to kind of the identity, right? Like, everything north is, you know, built in the '70s. It's kind of part of that old Mill Woods, versus everything south of that is where we're seeing most of the development. I know there are a lot of challenges, especially when it comes to population, in terms of how you kind of make that work, but under both of these boundaries it feels like my community has just been a little kind of add-on to balance out the population.

Like, as I mentioned, in the current boundaries when it comes to Edmonton-Ellerslie, it just does not feel like it actually represents those areas of Crawford, Daly Grove, and Pollard Meadows. You know, when it comes to challenges that people are facing in these newer areas, something we typically see is infrastructure, like access to schools. That's always been a concern for people when we're seeing newer areas get developed. It feels like a lot of that infrastructure is lagging behind versus – in areas north of the Henday, this is not really a concern, right? They've been built out for many years, and these are not the issues that people are concerned about there. I feel like this ends up alienating people a little bit from their riding, from their representatives, potentially hurting things like voter turnout and engagement because people are not going to feel as connected or represented by their riding.

When you're looking a little west, in terms of that cut-off, like I mentioned, north and south of Henday between Edmonton-Ellerslie and Edmonton-South, Gateway Boulevard and Calgary Trail are kind of used as the boundary, which I think visually makes sense, even the physical distance between those communities makes sense, but I think the communities east and west of Gateway are actually much closer in identity in terms of the age of these communities, in terms of what they look like compared to those that are north and south. Again, I know that the main challenge here is balancing population . . .

The Chair: Just let me stop – I want to finish this conversation here. As long as you're both on the same page.

Mrs. Samson: Mm-hmm.

The Chair: Okay. Sorry. Continue.

Mr. Jason Deol: Yep. No worries.

Yeah. When it comes to the communities that are east and west of Gateway Boulevard, I think those are actually much closer in identity – you know, we're thinking about the idea of representation in a community – as compared to those that are north and south. Even the Edmonton-Ellerslie boundaries also include some of those neighbourhoods just north of Anthony Henday as well.

I think some of these challenges are also quite difficult because of the northern boundaries of these ridings. Like, Edmonton-Mill Woods being cut off at Whitemud makes a lot of sense. I think that's exactly where it should be. And then when it comes to Edmonton-Meadows, it's kind of stuck in that northeast corner and you can't really do much besides cut it out where the population kind of works. So I understand some of the challenges that come with how we're dividing up the southeast, but I just don't feel like these areas that are kind of getting tacked on feel like they're being represented or are of the same identity as everything that is south of that. It feels quite distinct and different. Crossing south of Anthony Henday is, like, very distinctly moving into what you would consider Ellerslie and into those newer communities.

When it comes to the naming of some of these ridings as well, I think it's kind of the same issue with some of that identity. Like, at the moment now we have Edmonton-South West, Edmonton-South, Edmonton-South East. We're kind of hitting all the directions of the compass but, you know, not really representing some of those communities. When it comes to areas like Edmonton-South West, I think there could be names that make sense, like Edmonton-Windermere, for example. I think that area of the city is identified as Windermere by people throughout the city. Edmonton-South: maybe something like Edmonton-Heritage Valley.

But when I look at the southeast, it kind of comes back to the same issue. I don't even know what I would call it. The areas that are north of Henday: if you kind of use those names, I don't feel like that would represent all the development in your areas that are moving further and further south and even a little to the east, including that little cut-out of Laurel that's included in there as well. Who knows what that could become in the future. That could become kind of its own Windermere. In terms of where it's located geographically, it's very similar to when Windermere started to develop. You know, today I think that's what that area of the city is known as, versus right now we don't really know what the southeast is going to be.

When it comes to kind of concerns with growth and development, I think that also applies to the rest of the city as well. You know, development is going to keep continuing further and further south. We're seeing the roadways get developed more and more. That 41st Ave is going to be completely built out; 17th Street is going to get built out further south. And I think we can expect development to continue and population to continue to grow in those areas as well.

I also have a bit of concern where the way the boundaries are drawn up now – oh, sorry.

The Chair: No. Just wrap it up.

Mr. Jason Deol: Okay. Yeah. Just wrap it up.

Just the concern that by the time this comes into effect, maybe it's already going to feel like it's lagging behind. These areas have continued to grow, especially when it is south of Edmonton, and even the mature areas. Like I'm sure many people have mentioned, the city is really pushing a lot of infill and redevelopment, so it seems like this population growth is only going to continue, and by the time this is implemented, it's already going to feel like we need to update it again at that point.

The Chair: Okay. You've made several points. Do you have a proposed map that articulates what you are suggesting?

Mr. Jason Deol: Unfortunately, I don't have a direct suggestion in terms of what the change would be. As I mentioned, the difficulty really is that because of the kind of northern and eastern boundaries that are very defined, I know it becomes a challenge of what the

populations look like. If you took the few neighbourhoods that are in Edmonton-Ellerslie and in the new Edmonton-South East that are just north of Henday, I don't think the population is enough there to make it its own riding. I guess my concern is that it really does feel like a very distinct difference, you know, things that are north and south of Anthony Henday. When it comes to the idea of effective representation and kind of thinking of that, I feel like that's missing for those communities.

The Chair: Okay.

Any questions, starting with Mr. Clark?

Mr. Clark: Hoo boy. Yeah.

It's a big challenge. This is very, very helpful, though. Where possible we've tried to respect community league boundaries, but I'm realizing here that we cut Laurel in half, and I do hear you on the Henday. I'll look again. In the last round we had many different iterations. I just recall that the southeast corner of Edmonton is about 220,000 population, divides neatly into four. What I'm hearing is that we may not have drawn the boundaries quite right. So 220,000 divided by four is 55,000. That's pretty much right what we're looking for, but what I'm hearing is: try to maybe restructure things a little bit and, to the degree possible, north and south of Henday is an important barrier.

4:10

Mr. Jason Deol: Yeah. I think it's a very distinct barrier and one that – like, I've grown up in this area my entire life. I feel like if you ask anybody through any of these ridings, that really is the distinct kind of line. To the west, like, 91 and the north Whitemud and the east Henday are very defined. I think that kind of box is how people identify this area of the city.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Thank you.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. Your primary critique, as it were, is that we have not respected communities of interest as much as you would wish for, which is a fair comment. I draw your attention to my estimate of the population in this current interim map for Edmonton-South West. My estimate of the population north of the Henday is 20,000.

Mr. Jason Deol: You mean just in the southeast?

Dr. Martin: North of the Henday.

The rest of it is along 50th Street south of the Henday. There are two large blocks of residential populations. Ellerslie is starting to develop from east to west as a main street. It's not entirely there yet. Of course, we've got the big freeway blocking it to some extent. Nonetheless, there's a huge amount of growth south of the Henday. Admittedly, it may not feel like the same communities that are much more long established north of the Henday, but the population growth in the Mill Woods region has been very, very large.

We've heard from the constituency manager of Edmonton-Meadows this morning about the difficulties of what – we played the thought experiment. You're at 53,000. If you wanted to have more, which would it be? Would you want the northern bit to put those communities back together, or do you want the southern bit to put those communities back together? He wasn't sure which way to go, nor are we. You know, this whole area is very difficult to connect together coherently.

The Chair: Because it's so new.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for your presentation. Lots of information there. I have no questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: Yeah.

You know, I was really interested in looking at Edmonton-Ellerslie, which has a population, at least in our numbers, of 82,000 and change, and comparing it to the proposed Edmonton-South East, which brings it down to 52,000, 53,000. I was specifically drawn to Crawford Plains in that we've actually added all of Crawford Plains into the proposed. The fact that you live in Crawford Plains and now we've included all Crawford Plains into this: I would have thought you'd have been ecstatic. Then we took out half of Laurel, and nobody likes Laurel anyways, right? We took out half of Laurel. That I could understand if you said: hey, my best friend is in Laurel; now you've taken him or her out. But you didn't mention that. All we've done is take out Ellerslie, Summerside, and The Orchards to move some of that population out. The rest is exactly the same. If it was connected before, would it be connected now?

Mr. Jason Deol: Well, as I mentioned, even with the current boundaries I think it just went along Mill Woods Road. It kind of cut that little north section almost in half, the previous boundaries. I also feel like that was not the best representation. Like, it was kind of the same issue of that north-south divide of the identity of Ellerslie versus the identity of these more Mill Woods areas. I actually had kind of the same concern or same issue with that.

Now when we're seeing a new proposal of boundaries, this kind of southeast area – as you mentioned, we're seeing development across Ellerslie Road. As 17th Street gets built a little more as well, I think we're going to see continued development, you know, on that southeast side as well, like, just below where Edmonton-Meadows is. Those areas all feel very different in identity, in the challenges they're going to have, and specifically just the age of those communities compared to everything in the north. I think I would have had the same concerns with the previous boundaries as well, but I couldn't do too much about that.

Mr. Evans: That makes sense now.

Mr. Jason Deol: Yeah.

Mr. Evans: Okay. I understand.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. Jason Deol: Thank you.

The Chair: Just for everyone's benefit, we are technically supposed to be concluding our afternoon session now at 4:20, and we have to come back in an hour and 10 minutes for the evening session, and we have four more presenters. So I'm going to restrict the questions. The questions are getting way too prolonged, so it's not the presenter's fault. We like to hear the sound of our own voice.

Nicholas Rheubottom.

It's going to be one question per side. Flip a coin.

Sorry. Please identify yourself and tell us what electoral district you are from and which one you want to comment on.

Mr. Rheubottom: For sure. My name is Nicholas Rheubottom. I'm an affordable housing consultant and the former executive director of Infill Development in Edmonton Association, so I have a housing background. I live in Edmonton-Strathcona riding. My main commentary today is going to be talking about the central ridings

in the city, the six that are being proposed to be consolidated into five, as well as just the idea of hybridized ridings, the urban versus rural and the sort of effects that can have on the representation that we see in our ridings.

Thank you so much to the commission for the opportunity to speak today. I speak today as a consultant actively working in the space of housing and the former executive director of IDEA, Infill Development in Edmonton Association. My work has involved supporting affordable housing, redevelopment, and neighbourhood-scale initiatives across a wide range of communities.

My intention today is to not oppose fair redistribution. I know you have a very difficult job ahead of you. It's just to demonstrate that assessing population growth without considering growth modality can lead to premature consolidation in Edmonton's urban centre and increase reliance on hybrid ridings, both of which weaken effective representation over time. That's a piece that I would like to talk about.

Population growth in Edmonton's mature neighbourhoods is increasing, not decreasing. While that growth occurs at a slower rate, it is sustained, infill-driven, and produces stable communities with shared functional needs. Reading slower growth as stagnation or as evidence that these areas are being hollowed out may misinterpret what is actually happening. Growth in mature neighbourhoods occurs through redevelopment, gentle density, and reinvestment. It accumulates over time rather than appearing all at once. That distinction between how fast growth occurs and how growth occurs is central to understanding where representation pressure will emerge over the next boundary cycle of eight years.

To ground this I'll offer a brief example from my professional work. I was recently requested to provide an early-stage consult on a feasibility-level housing project located in one of Edmonton's urban centre ridings. It is a medium-scale redevelopment project that sits entirely within an existing mature neighbourhood, the Strathcona area of the city. What stands out is not the scale of the project – it wouldn't move the dial very much population-wise in and of itself – but the nature of the work required. Even at this early stage, it involves zoning considerations, alignment with city plan objectives, engagement with the surrounding community, and anticipating future public funding pathways. Basically, the community needs to support those projects.

This is how population growth occurs in mature neighbourhoods. It is incremental, policy driven, and front loaded in terms of predictability, coordination, and effort. From a year-to-year population perspective a single project like this doesn't move the dial much, but taken together these projects reflect a broader pattern, the normalization of sustained growth that introduces residents who are likely to remain in these neighbourhoods for years to come. That sustained growth gradually expands the local property tax base and supports collective neighbourhood needs such as infrastructure renewal, transit, and local services.

That relationship is most effective when the neighbourhoods within a riding share similar functional needs and are at compatible stages in their life cycle. When that alignment exists, an elected representative can advocate consistently for reinvestment priorities that benefit the riding as a whole. When it doesn't, those same gains become harder to translate into outcomes that feel equitable or responsible across the riding. This is why the composition of a riding matters as much as the population. I would call it a kind of modality in addition to growth as a consideration. When representation in the urban centre is consolidated too early, population pressure does not disappear; it's just displaced.

4:20

The result is twofold. First, core ridings composed of mature neighbourhoods will reflect meaningful population increases long before the next redistribution cycle, leaving urban residents structurally underrepresented. At the same time those areas are absorbing more people and more policy complexity. Second, hybrid boundary solutions become a release valve of sorts, whether between rural and urban communities or within cities where the neighbourhoods might have competing interests. Competing functional needs are being combined, so more of an implicit representation of hybridization. These configurations make it harder for a representative to advocate coherently and consistently over time.

Hybrid ridings may appear efficient on paper, but in practice they combine communities that require different policy priorities, different investment sequencing, and different forms of representation. This matters because growth in Edmonton's mature neighbourhoods is not accidental. City policy explicitly supports infill and reinvestment as a core growth strategy. That direction is being operationalized through zoning reform, redevelopment, and sustained public and private investment in the urban centre. Provincial tools, such as the community revitalization levy, reflect long-term confidence from the province in that approach. Representation should be aligned with where it is occurring and how it is occurring, not solely with where it has already appeared in headline population counts.

I know this is something that you know, and that's why this is not so much a criticism or a specific thing that I think you should do in a specific place. I just felt it was very important that I come and say: please make sure that you're considering representation as part of population growth. I'm really inspired and happy to hear that this seems to be something that's front of mind for you.

In closing, population growth in Edmonton's mature neighbourhoods is increasing, not decreasing. That growth is sustained, infill-driven, and produces stable communities with shared functional needs. Interpreting this pattern as decline has led to proposed consolidation in the urban centre that does not necessarily align with how growth is actually occurring.

My first recommendation, to give some recommendations, would be that representation in Edmonton's urban centre should be maintained in a manner that reflects both the direction and the modality of growth specifically by retaining the existing six urban centre ridings rather than consolidating them into five.

My second observation is more of an observation. It concerns the broader system effect. When hybrid boundary solutions are used to manage population pressures, unintended consequences could occur, whether through the creation of explicit rural-urban hybrid ridings or implicit hybrid ridings where mature neighbourhoods are combined with maybe more suburban-prioritized areas as well competing functionally with – sorry. Let me start that again. Implicit hybrids where mature neighbourhoods and suburban areas have competing functionality within a single riding, making effective representation more difficult to sustain over time.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this perspective, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rheubottom.

This side, any questions? One question.

Mr. Clark: I'll just ask this: how new is the infill? You know, these policies, I guess: have they started to bear fruit already, or is this sort of a point forward?

Mr. Rheubottom: I think so. Like, the idea as an organization when they started doing info advocacy: that was about 14 years ago, and they already were as a grassroots group before that. The new zoning bylaw has now been around for coming up on two years. The impact that the new zoning bylaw has had is major redevelopment. I'm sure a lot of you have followed the news from last year in the summer. There was a lot of discussion over row housing and increase in density, some people being very supportive of it, some people being less supportive of it. But the point of the matter is the densification is happening. We're seeing it happening in row housing. We're seeing it happen at mid-level density. We're seeing it happen in our downtown core.

I live in Strathcona. I see density everywhere. I see infill everywhere. We constantly have projects that are popping up. The downtown area: I used to live there before. Mr. Shepherd mentioned Wihkwentowin. You're definitely seeing a lot there. Glenora: it's the same thing. West end Edmonton development is majorly shifting.

Proof that the policy is still behind would be in our development of the district plans as a regulatory mechanism to manage development in Edmonton. By the time they got the zoning dealt with and got to the district plan level, they realized that their population modelling was way off base. It was way under.

I can't speak to riding populations. My area of expertise when I used to work for IDEA was very much focused on looking at it from that municipal perspective, but we were so far behind where we thought we would be that by the time we actually were debating the policy, the policy was already redundant. So what I guess I'm saying to you is that I'm not trying to challenge your prescription of any specific riding. I know it's a really hard balance between population growth versus population modality.

The biggest concern, the thing that really flagged me and kind of prompted me to speak was actually the consolidation of the six ridings to the five. The big piece behind that is that I wanted to make sure that the core ridings really represented the shift, the municipal shift, in growth priorities for our city. I feel there's so much emphasis on the downtown core that there needs to be that electoral representation happening, and the partnerships that we need to foster between the province to actually get these changes happening needs that representation to be in the downtown centre. So that was a big piece for me.

The Chair: Okay. Any questions from this side?

Mrs. Samson: I'm good.

Mr. Evans: No. Thank you for your presentation.

The Chair: If we get it wrong, you will be one of the most empathetic individuals out there for us, right?

Mr. Rheubottom: Well, I ran for municipal office last election cycle, and definitely from just the door-knocking and the experience of engaging with residents, I know how difficult it is to please everyone. It's not possible. All I hope, and it seems like it's being demonstrated just in the way that you're engaging with the speakers today, is that there's a lot of mindful consideration and that it's not just about the numbers. That seems to be the case, so I really appreciate the work that you're doing there.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

Our next presenter on the list is Rahin Deol. No? Okay.
Tania Kajner.

Dr. Kajner: Thank you. Good afternoon.

The Chair: Good afternoon. Just tell us what electoral division you are in and which ones you want to comment on.

Dr. Kajner: Sure. My name is Tania Kajner. I live in the Ritchie community, currently Edmonton-Strathcona riding, and I want to speak about the proposal to consolidate six ridings in the Edmonton urban core as well as the boundaries of Edmonton-Strathcona.

I'm speaking today as a citizen because I want to ensure that Alberta's new electoral boundaries provide fair and effective representation for my city and my community. Like many others I want to start with some thanks because I can only appreciate how complex it has been for you to date and will continue to be. So thank you for taking up this complicated task of recommending changes to Alberta's electoral boundaries.

Given the growth in Edmonton and city residents' distinct needs, challenges, and demographics that differ from those of neighbouring municipalities, I really appreciate your recommendation to add a new electoral division in Edmonton. I am, however, concerned about the proposal to consolidate six electoral divisions in the urban centre into five.

4:30

The commission's interim report states the population growth in these areas has been lower than the rest of the city, and that population numbers in these areas are below the provincial average. You know, this feels contradictory to what I see happening in my community and other communities in Edmonton's urban core, and it doesn't appear to incorporate the impacts that Edmonton's focus on urban densification and their growth plan aims will have.

I've witnessed incredible growth and densification in my community. Single-family homes are replaced with duplexes, skinny homes, both of which have legal basement suites to help with mortgage. Sometimes single-family homes are being replaced with a four-, six-, or even an eight-plex in my community. I see the growth of garden suites and garage suites, which is a trend that I think will probably continue. As a result, the same lot that used to host and house an older couple is now housing upwards of eight to 16 people. Many of the 1950s homes, you know, on my street for example, have legal basement suites, and I see population density increasing in these rentals as well. In the past, many of these spaces were rented by one or two university students. Today, I see families of four occupying the same space, many looking for safe and low-cost housing that is centrally located because of its proximity to transportation and other services.

As I think you heard from the last speaker, much of this growth is linked to zoning bylaw changes that are meant to encourage densification in Edmonton. In 2024 Edmonton made bylaw changes that support higher density in mature neighbourhoods. The city plans to accommodate a full 50 per cent of new residential growth through infill with existing areas, and it's off to a strong start in meeting this target.

The implications of these fairly recent zoning bylaw changes, I think, are just beginning to be felt and visible in my neighbourhood, and I do believe they will be amplified as the developments approved in 2024-2025 become finished and available for rent and purchase. I think the impact will be significant population growth in the urban core neighbourhoods. I really feel like this growth needs to be recognized partly because density in urban core ridings creates unique challenges, and it's really critical that residents in Ritchie and in other communities in Edmonton's core have fair representation to address these challenges.

Density brings a kind of, I think the last speaker called it, policy complexity, and certainly there are a lot of issues that arise with density that folks need representation to address. I think collapsing

six ridings in the core into five works against, you know, the principle of fair representation because of these complex issues and because the resulting impacts would in part lead to ridings such as Edmonton-Glenora-Riverview, which is 12.3 per cent over the provincial average.

In addition to concern about collapsing six of those urban core ridings into five, I wanted to speak more specifically about the Edmonton-Strathcona riding's proposed boundaries. I feel like these boundaries don't align with the geographical boundaries and that they divide up the community of Ritchie.

As a resident in Ritchie living west of Mill Creek ravine, I rarely travel east for work, recreation, health services, or entertainment. Like many of my neighbours I'm more closely connected to the university, medical centres, restaurants, and services that are west of the ravine. The Ritchie community hall sits in this little patch that has been carved off and separated from other Ritchie residents who are on the west side of 99th Street. This is a gathering place where Ritchie residents come together to talk about issues, and to have us then joining as constituents who will have different representatives is problematic. My suggestion for this is to consider the community of interest for Ritchie residents and align with the natural geographical boundary, in particular, to follow Mill Creek ravine from 82nd Ave to 63rd Ave. There's a little patch there that has been, kind of, carved off that I believe divides Ritchie in two, using 99th Street as the current boundary.

To conclude, I think the consolidation of six urban core electoral divisions into five might raise some equity concerns and certainly might not provide an opportunity for residents there to have fair representation given the complexity of the issues that they face. I also believe that the commission could tweak the Edmonton-Strathcona proposed boundary in order to ensure that the community of Ritchie is not divided.

The Chair: Just so I'm clear: take away 99th Street as the eastern boundary and move it over to Mill Creek?

Dr. Kajner: Yeah.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much. I note in passing, and you can see it on the map as well, that the population figures for City Centre, Highlands, Gold Bar, and Strathcona are all below the provincial mean. That will accommodate some growth, to be sure. Even at 15 per cent growth, Edmonton-Strathcona would be 63,000-ish, let's say, but I just note this in passing.

I wanted to focus on the Ritchie, Hazeldean, Argyll piece. If we use Mill Creek as a boundary, which is plausible enough, that's 9,000 persons. Where are we going to put it? We're going to put it into Strathcona, ostensibly, which makes Edmonton-Strathcona 61,000, and Edmonton-Gold Bar becomes the smallest population in the city. We struggle. It's a rough and ready balance, I think. It left us with a very difficult decision about what to do with those three communities: Ritchie, Hazeldean, and Argyll. That's why we ended up as we did. Are you proposing that we just take Ritchie and leave Hazeldean and Argyll? They have less connectivity by roadway across Mill Creek than Ritchie does.

Dr. Kajner: Well, you know, my real concern is about Ritchie being divided. My proposal to follow the geographical natural boundary of Mill Creek ravine was really because when I get together with fellow residents, many of them are coming from west of 99th Street, that part of Ritchie. We gather east of 99th Street, in that part of Ritchie. I'm imagining to myself the kinds of difficulties when we're then as a community trying to propose that some of our

issues and concerns be brought forward to our elected officials, and we've got two rather than one. I haven't seen the numbers. I haven't seen the data, the methodologies. I unfortunately think that's your difficult task, but I really would appreciate you considering that folks in Ritchie really are a shared community of interest as well.

Dr. Martin: I will say that according to the planning folk at the city west Ritchie belongs to Strathcona, not to Ritchie. I used to live in Ritchie and it was annoying that they said that, but 99th Street from the city's point of view is a boundary.

Dr. Kajner: Well, they should tell it to the community hall because we're about to order a new sign.

Dr. Martin: I know. I understand. The rest of Ritchie is deemed to be part of the Strathcona community league's turf.

Mr. Evans: You're in ward 8. Is that right?

Dr. Kajner: Yeah. I live in that little patch of Ritchie that's just south of 82nd Ave and east of – are you asking about my city ward?

Mr. Evans: Yes.

Dr. Kajner: Yeah. Michael Janz is my councillor.

Mr. Evans: You're suggesting that the boundaries that we should be changing to are basically to fit within your city ward 8 boundary?

Dr. Kajner: Yeah. I was suggesting really following that ravine in part because of the way people in my community live and where we work and where we go for services and the things that we discuss and are concerned about. I mean, we're quite connected to that kind of university, Whyte Ave sort of area, and many of us don't go east of the ravine for health services or for other services, so I'm proposing following that ravine as a kind of natural divider.

4:40

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, ma'am, for your stick-to-itiveness in staying here all afternoon.

Our next presenter, I believe our last for the day, is Maureen Towns – not for the day, for the afternoon.

Good afternoon. Please identify the electoral district you're from and which you want to comment on.

Ms Towns: I guess I just want to start my timer, so I – you've got one, I'm sure. Good afternoon. My name is Maureen Towns, and I live in the Strathcona-Sherwood Park riding. I would like to thank the members of the commission for undertaking this difficult work and appreciate that Strathcona county, including Sherwood Park, has been . . .

The Chair: Sorry. Could you identify your riding again?

Ms Towns: Strathcona-Sherwood Park. I have a feeling I left out the Sherwood Park before.

The Chair: No, you didn't. It's my misunderstanding.

Ms Towns: Okay.

The Chair: There are too many Strathconas in Edmonton.

Ms Towns: There are. Well, and we're not in Edmonton.

The Chair: Edmonton expropriated your name, I know.

Ms Towns: Well, way too many Scots here anyway.

I appreciate for the most part that Sherwood Park and Strathcona county have been recognized as a cohesive municipal entity and have not been included in Edmonton ridings, which certainly has happened in – I don't know in the past provincially, but federally it has been.

I'm a retired lawyer, and I was a school trustee and the board chair of Elk Island public schools from 2001 to 2004. I've lived in Sherwood Park for over 40 years. Since 1989 I've lived in the Heritage Hills area, which is east of Clover Bar Road and west of highway 21, south of Baseline Road and north of Wye Road. In 1989 we were considered to be the far northeast of Sherwood Park, and now we're kind of not quite in the middle, but we're no longer the far northeast.

There are three significant changes proposed for the Strathcona-Sherwood Park riding, and they are that the Heritage Hills neighbourhood, in which I live, would be removed from the riding and added to Sherwood Park; an area south of Wye Road and west of range road 231, or Clover Bar Road when it's in Sherwood Park, would be removed from the riding and added to Sherwood Park; and part of the city of Beaumont and part of Leduc county would be added to the riding.

I'll specifically address population, community of interest, and clear and understandable boundaries. By removing Heritage Hills, the difficulty here is obviously the push-pull of population. It's like a spider web. You pull one end, and the whole thing jiggles. In my view the problem starts by removing Heritage Hills from the riding and putting it into Sherwood Park. The interim proposal, in an attempt to balance the population, would then extend Strathcona-Sherwood Park considerably southward to include Beaumont.

While drawing electoral boundaries is largely not completely a numbers game, there are, of course, other considerations. The proposal that has been put forward seems to ignore the growth in population that's already occurring in areas of Strathcona-Sherwood Park, notably south of Wye Road and in the community of Ardrossan, which at one point was, like, so far away you couldn't believe that people actually went there. Now it's a common occurrence for us to be in Ardrossan. It also ignores the significant growth happening in the Sherwood Park riding, notably north of highway 16 and west of highway 21 in the Cambrian neighbourhood, and I'm sure you've heard about it.

It's inefficient, in my view, to balance the population by removing Heritage Hills and including half of the city of Beaumont. It will make it very difficult for an MLA to represent the riding and to develop effective relationships with municipal and school board representatives. What would happen is two new municipalities would be added, not completely but they would be there, as well as two additional school divisions being Black Gold school division and St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic separate school division.

With respect to communities of interest, in my view, this is the most important aspect as we try to juggle the population. I'm concerned that the configuration would result in a significant loss in the ability of the MLA to address the issues unique to these communities.

When you look at Strathcona-Sherwood Park, Strathcona county generally, and Beaumont, their histories are completely different. Sherwood Park started as a bedroom community in the '50s. Beaumont started as its own community in the late 1800s. I'm not exactly sure of what the dates look like. There is also the issue of the francophone community in Beaumont, which is not similar at all in Sherwood Park, Strathcona county. Frankly, I think it would be a huge disservice to Beaumont to cut them up and include them in Strathcona-Sherwood Park although that is their brief to make,

but that is my observation. It's not that we have anything against Beaumont. We think it's lovely. I'm just thinking that.

The other thing is that understandable and clear boundaries are set out in 14(e). The boundaries contained in the proposal are understandable only so far as they relate to population and trying to equalize population. Removing Heritage Hills from Strathcona county – as you can see on the map, you see highway 21 and a bit to the west or left of that there's Clover Bar Road, which is all squiggly, and then it goes over to highway 21. That doesn't make sense when you look at the map. To me, that is not a clear and understandable boundary.

The other boundary that's odd, in my view – and part of it already exists now – is in the area south of Wye Road. The proposal includes adding to that area, but my recommendation is that Wye Road be the southern boundary. There is significant growth in that neighbourhood, in the Salisbury Village neighbourhood, and it would make the boundary clearer, more understandable, and address the population issue.

In summary, to me, the biggest issue is Beaumont, and if we kept Heritage Hills in Strathcona-Sherwood Park, added the area south of Wye Road, and, you know, paid attention to the increase in population, in my view, that would address the population issues. The Strathcona-Sherwood Park riding has worked well since 2017, when the boundaries were last redrawn, as I understand it, and the biggest change has been in population and growth, which I believe can be addressed in the ways I've suggested.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

I think Dr. Martin is chomping at the bit to have a question.

Dr. Martin: The southern boundary of Sherwood Park is the urban service area boundary. We didn't invent that jiggly line although we did add Hillshire. But other than that, we didn't touch it. I take your point about Heritage Hills, which has been pressed on us by perhaps 75 submissions. The area north of the Yellowhead: of course, we're starting to see some Cambrian development there.

4:50

Ms Towns: Yes.

Dr. Martin: Bremner is in the other riding.

Ms Towns: In Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Dr. Martin: Yes, it is. It's projected to be 70,000 or 80,000 in 50 years' time, so who knows how rapidly it will be developed. They've cut the ground open but haven't done much more so far.

I really wanted to ask you about the county – I mean, about Strathcona-Sherwood Park per se. Without the Beaumont piece, which you say was very ill advised, then the county is significantly lower in population, which, on the one hand, people could say: well,

that's okay; why not do it? But if you wanted to add more bits, would you take a chunk north of the Yellowhead and add it to this particular riding?

Ms Towns: Oh, yes. For sure.

Dr. Martin: Okay. The Bremner bit, so to speak.

Ms Towns: Like, Bremner makes a lot of sense. My only concern with that is that you're tugging a line, which is going to have an effect elsewhere. But that, to me, if you were looking at really significantly adding population, which – okay; 70,000 in 50 years. But we really kind of only need to worry, so to speak, about the next eight to 10 – right? – so I think that's an opportunity that is there.

With respect to Heritage Hills, I'm actually not personally that busted about it except as it relates to then messing up the population numbers. To me, that's kind of the first domino: "Oh, we've taken all this population out. Now what do we do? Oh, let's add Beaumont." I'm sorry. I'm sounding flippant about the process, and I don't mean to.

The Chair: You should hear us talk about it.

Mr. Evans: You may not be as far off as you think.

Ms Towns: Just invite me.

That's kind of my view on Heritage Hills.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Ms Towns: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. On this side?

Mrs. Samson: No questions, but thank you for coming out. I appreciate it.

Ms Towns: Oh, my pleasure.

The Chair: Thank you for sticking with us.

Mr. Evans: I would just echo Justice Miller's comments before. Be careful what you wish for. We might invite you into this.

Ms Towns: Oh, I don't know. I'm retired. I've got time.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

Ms Towns: All right. Thank you.

The Chair: We will close these hearings till 5:30 p.m.

[The hearing adjourned at 4:53 p.m.]

