



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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Charlayne Bozak

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Jennifer Klimek

Jason Nixon, MLA, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre

Vladimir Pasek

Stephen Raitz

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Tuesday, January 20, 2026

[Justice Miller in the chair]

**The Chair:** Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. We're convening the evening session of our second day of our second week of the second round of the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission.

To be very brief and succinct, our independent commission has been appointed by the Alberta Legislature to do two things, deal with boundaries for 89 ridings rather than 87 from 2017 and deal with the significant increase in Alberta's population, which is in excess of 800,000 more people since the 2017 Electoral Boundaries Commission report. I have a formal PowerPoint presentation, but I think we'll forego it in order to save some time. Our task as a commission is to make sure that we provide boundaries that are clear and understandable and provide for effective representation for all Albertans.

We'll start tonight's presentations with – the first regular scheduled person is not here yet, but Mr. Nate Glubish is here, so we'll start with him.

Please get comfortable at the table, tell us what electoral division you represent, and which ones you wish to comment on.

**Mr. Glubish:** Great. Okay. Thanks for having me. I'm Nate Glubish. I'm the MLA for Strathcona-Sherwood Park. First, let me just say a big thank you to the commission. I know you guys have put a ton of work into this and there's still a lot of work ahead to get to the finished product. I know that you're trying to juggle a lot of competing priorities and a lot of challenging things, including priorities like effective representation, communities of interest, and reasonable population distribution across ridings.

I wanted to just share a little bit of feedback from my perspective as the MLA that represents Strathcona-Sherwood Park, and then I'll also offer just a couple of thoughts about the adjacent riding of Sherwood Park for your consideration. The first point I would like to make is: given that Strathcona-Sherwood Park is roughly 51,000 people today, give or take, it's just about 6 per cent below that mean of 55,000 people that you're looking for, and it is on a growth trajectory that is going to surpass that mean very quickly.

We've got two subdivisions that are undergoing significant growth. You have Ardrossan, which is a small community just outside of Sherwood Park that is growing exponentially, and they're going to add several thousand people over the next couple of years. Then you have Hillshire, which is a new subdivision on the corner of Clover Bar Road and Wye Road. This is a subdivision that's been in the works for over 10 years. They just broke ground a few years ago, and they're now coming into their stride, so they've got, you know, several hundred folks who've already moved in there, but there are going to be several thousand who will live there in the next couple of years.

So in two to three years you could see Strathcona-Sherwood Park under the current boundaries easily reach 55,000 if not 57,000 people, and that's right in the sweet spot of the mean. Then over the next 10 years you'll likely see a shift from maybe having been 5 or 6 per cent below the mean to being about 5 or 6 per cent above the mean, all of which is permissible under the current rules and all of which is very manageable to deliver effective representation. As a result, on the argument of population numbers alone I believe there's a strong argument to be made to keep the riding under the old boundaries. There's no need to make a change from a population perspective. The current size is reasonable, and the growth trajectory is such that the size will be manageable for the foreseeable next 10 years.

Some of the proposed changes in the first draft included adding half of Beaumont. I know you've heard some feedback on that. I just want to get on the record highlighting some of the reasons why I think that is probably not the best choice. First of all, when the federal boundary review process was being conducted, they had considered combining Sherwood Park and Beaumont, and they ultimately decided against that and kept with the Fort Saskatchewan and Sherwood Park combination. It just makes more sense to have Beaumont and Sherwood Park and Strathcona county separate. They are two very distinct communities.

Beaumont is a significantly-sized community, and splitting it into two to take half of it and put it with an unrelated community like Strathcona county I think would lead to a degradation of effective representation. You would have folks in Beaumont who are less happy because they have one MLA that is distracted with the majority of their time focused on Strathcona county, and then another MLA who's in whatever the other half of Beaumont was going to be combined with. Then you're going to have the folks in Strathcona county who are saying: Well, but we're a significantly-sized community that has very distinct priorities, and we're going to have an MLA who has to spend much of their time out in Beaumont. So, you know, the old adage of: if it ain't broke, don't fix it. You've got two MLAs that represent the vast majority of Strathcona county today, and as a result those two MLAs can live in that community, have deep ties to that community, and represent it well. If you were to mix it up, to add the distraction of Beaumont, I think you'd end up with less effective representation.

5:50

Then I'd like to speak a bit about Heritage Hills, which I know is a neighbourhood that is just east of Clover Bar Road that is currently proposed to move out of Strathcona-Sherwood Park into Sherwood Park. I would like to suggest, especially if you agree with the premise of not adding half of Beaumont to Strathcona-Sherwood Park, that there's no need to take 3,000 or 4,000 people from Heritage Hills and move it into Sherwood Park. That community has got deep ties to this riding. It's been there for several cycles.

That whole urban block basically from highway 16 down to Wye Road and from Clover Bar Road to highway 21: that's the urban portion of Strathcona-Sherwood Park. Those neighbourhoods are deeply connected. They're in similar school catchment zones. If you live in Heritage Hills, your kid might be going to either Heritage Hills elementary or Davidson Creek. If you live in, you know, some of the other neighbourhoods like Summerwood or in the Foxboro neighbourhood – like, the families that live in those communities: they're deeply connected by the schools that serve that region. If you start divvying that up, you end up, again, harming the effective representation.

When you look at this riding, it's a hybrid riding with about 50 per cent of the population urban, 50 per cent rural country residential subdivisions. It works because it's a specialized municipality that is 50 per cent – well, maybe not 50 per cent urban, 50 rural, but give or take. It's got several communities like Ardrossan, South Cooking Lake, North Cooking Lake, Uncas, Antler Lake, Hastings Lake, and Colchester, all of which are distinct communities that are a part of that specialized municipality. Being able to represent all of them effectively is part of what I think a good MLA should be able to do. If we keep the riding much closer to its current levels, that will allow for an MLA, whether it's me or someone else in the future, to better represent those communities. It has worked well for the last 10 years. I think it can certainly work well for the next 10 years, even with the population growth we anticipate.

If you absolutely had to add some population to help solve some problems with some adjacent ridings, my recommendation would be that you consider going east towards Tofield because Tofield is a much smaller community and it has much more logical ties to Strathcona county and to Sherwood Park. People who live in Tofield come into Sherwood Park almost every day or at least several times a week. People who live in Beaumont don't come to Sherwood Park and vice versa. The folks in Tofield, if you had to move them into Strathcona-Sherwood Park, I think a lot of them would say: "Well, we used to be with Camrose. They're 20 minutes away. Now we're with Sherwood Park. It's 20 minutes away, but we all actually go to Sherwood Park because it's right along highway 14. It's the logical corridor to bring us in." If you had to add something to Strathcona-Sherwood Park, that would be my suggestion. I think you would see less resistance. While I don't believe you need to do it – that's my personal viewpoint – if you had to, as an MLA I could see it being doable, certainly easier than trying to accommodate half of Beaumont.

Those are my thoughts on Strathcona-Sherwood Park. Recognizing that if you were to adopt my suggestions about not moving Heritage Hills out into Sherwood Park, that raises the question about what the population target for Sherwood Park is, which, again, is about 50,000, give or take, under the current boundaries. So if you don't put 3,000 or 4,000 people from Heritage Hills into Sherwood Park, what do you do if you wanted to raise their population levels a little bit? Certainly, I would advise against trying to add any of Edmonton into there because Edmonton and Sherwood Park are very, very different. And for all of the reasons I mentioned about Beaumont and Sherwood Park, I just don't think you're going to end up with a lot of happy people on either side.

What I do believe is in opportunities to start looking north of highway 16. You already have the neighbourhood of Cambrian that is in Sherwood Park but north of 16. You have about 4,000 people that live in Strathcona county north of highway 16. You could take a portion of that and carve it into Sherwood Park to reach your population targets. Then Strathcona county would end up having two MLAs that represent 99 per cent of the population of Strathcona county, and you would have Strathcona-Sherwood Park, that understands both the urban and the rural needs of Strathcona county as a specialized municipality, and you would have an MLA in Sherwood Park who would also better understand both the urban and the rural needs of this specialized municipality. I think that would allow for both MLAs that represent that community to do a better job of more effective representation for that community.

My suggestion would be, if you were to consider that, to essentially take all of the Strathcona county north of highway 16 up to Fort Saskatchewan and then up to highway 15 and draw the line there. If you were to go all the way to the northern boundary, then you would make Fort Saskatchewan noncontiguous with the rest of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. I understand why that's problematic. If you were to go up to highway 15, that's a logical boundary that would allow for, you know, shared communities of interest. Then the vast majority of the population would be represented by two MLAs that actually live in the community and understand it.

I'll give you one example of why I think that's important. The Sherwood Park arena that is being developed by the Sherwood Park Crusaders is north of highway 16. They have had challenges being able to get time and attention with the Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville MLA because she has to represent 19 different municipalities. She has to drive three hours from one side of the riding to the other. It would be helpful to them and other community groups to have their MLA be in that area.

I know that is some feedback I've heard from them and from others. I think this is a way to solve the population challenges you've identified, to focus on effective representation, focus on communities of interest, and ultimately deliver a better path forward for the next 10 years for the two ridings of Sherwood Park and Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Thank you for your time.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Clark, any questions?

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you. Thanks for being here. We have definitely heard from the good people of the mighty hamlet and Beaumont as well. It's great to hear from citizens, and this whole process is about that, but it's also really good to hear from the people who represent the entire community, yourself and your colleague here as well. We do put a lot of stock in that and just appreciate you taking time to do this because I know how busy your schedule is.

I wanted to ask a bit about growth rates. One of the questions here is not just absolute rate of growth but relative rate of growth. Undeniably, Strathcona-Sherwood Park and Sherwood Park have both grown but at relatively lower rates than the rest of the province. As you know, we've seen a massive influx in the last seven, eight years, most of that, you know, reasonably recently. The province has grown 20 per cent since the last time we drew the boundaries. Strathcona-Sherwood Park has grown about 7 per cent. Sherwood Park has grown about 10 per cent.

I know there are some new developments that are coming. I guess I'm just curious. If they are lower density than we might see in the big cities, are you confident that the rate of growth will exceed the provincial average going forward or will it sort of be, you know, roughly in line with what it's been like historically?

**Mr. Glubish:** I think the key for me is if your target is 55,000 across the board, Strathcona-Sherwood Park under the current boundaries will far exceed that in the next 10 years. I would argue that in the next two to three we'll be at that level. I recognize that in the last 10 years my riding has likely grown at a rate that is not as high as the province at large, but that's because several of these subdivisions are under development.

I mean, you were an MLA. You know how this can go. Sometimes it takes 10 years to get an area structure plan from concept to where you actually have houses being built and people moving in. We're at the end of that 10-year phase right now, where folks are actually moving into houses in Hillshire and in Ardrossan. There's a significant run rate ahead for those homes to get built-out. I'm confident that you are going to see at least another 5,000 to 7,000 people moving into the riding over the next several years.

So we're going to get very close to that 55,000 target mean. Now, if that target mean changes 10 years from now, then I would say: let's address that 10 years from now, because at that point you're also going to have seen – we're at the very beginning of the planning stages of Bremner, which is in between Sherwood Park and Fort Saskatchewan, north of highway 16 in Strathcona county. That's a community that 20 years from now will be 40,000 people, but 10 years from now it's probably only going to be about 5,000 people.

That's just at the very beginning of the growth rate. I would say that 10 years from now, looking at Sherwood Park and Strathcona-Sherwood Park and Fort Saskatchewan and the whole area, we're going to have a whole different conversation about this. But I think that today we only need some minor surgical changes that will set up those two ridings to be very effectively represented. I think the suggestions I've offered here today could allow for more effective

representation than the last 10 years and for them to be well represented for the next 10 years, and then 10 years from now I think we're going to have to completely revisit that area because you will have seen a significant influx and a pipeline of future growth that at that point will just be coming into high gear.

That'd be my thoughts.

6:00

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much, and thank you, Minister. I was taken by your remark about Heritage Hills and how it had been for several cycles within your riding. It prompts me to think about the historical relationship for the county boundaries in general. In other words, have the boundaries of the Strathcona-Sherwood Park riding been stable for quite some time?

**Mr. Glubish:** They have. The last time that the boundaries changed was right around the time I began to get involved in politics, with the intent of running in the 2019 election. I was a volunteer at the time that we were under the previous boundaries, before the 2019 election, and then became the candidate under the 2019 new boundaries. The only thing that changed in Strathcona-Sherwood Park was that there was one neighbourhood called the Estates of Sherwood Park, which is right north of Salisbury Greenhouse, south of Wye Road. It's right on the corner of range road 232. That's a neighbourhood that they took from Strathcona-Sherwood Park and gave it to Sherwood Park. And then there were a couple of spots where there was nothing there. It was just land along the south edge of Wye Road, but there were some future subdivisions being planned. They added that to Sherwood Park, out of Strathcona-Sherwood Park. And now you have Salisbury Village, which is that spot there. Those were the only changes.

I can't remember if Sherwood Park changed much other than accepting that from Strathcona-Sherwood Park. I can't remember when the area where Cambrian is, north of highway 16, was added to Sherwood Park. It might have been in that cycle as well. Basically, the boundary of highway 16 to the eastern boundary of Strathcona county to the southern boundary of Strathcona county to the Henday to Wye Road and Clover Bar Road, that boundary: all of that was completely unchanged. The only thing that changed was the Estates and what now is Salisbury Village, and that was a very manageable tweak.

**Dr. Martin:** I have one supplemental.

**The Chair:** Sure. Sure.

**Dr. Martin:** That's Looma, what I would call the Looma block. I infer that you'd just as soon not have that because it's not in the county.

**Mr. Glubish:** My suggestion would be, if you're looking to add population to Strathcona-Sherwood Park, that Tofield would make more sense than Looma.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** I should say for the audience and for the record that Mr. Evans, who has faithfully been a commissioner, unavoidably is in another meeting for the last hour-plus, and he should be returning, hopefully, sometime this evening.

Mrs. Samson, any questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you, Minister, for your time tonight. I appreciate you coming in person. I want you to know that Beaumont triggered a huge influx of information to us, so although I'm not familiar with your riding, I am now just from what I've read.

**Mr. Glubish:** That's why we go through the process, right? It's all good.

**Mrs. Samson:** Yeah. Thank you for reinforcing what I've read, and thank you for your time tonight.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** As I described to a previous presenter, our arranged marriage between Beaumont and Strathcona-Sherwood Park is not going over well. We recognize that.

**Mr. Glubish:** Well, thank you for hearing me out.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** Sorry. Can I . . .

**The Chair:** Oh, I want to ask a question, but go ahead.

**Mr. Clark:** It may be the same question. Name?

**The Chair:** Okay. I think there are too many Strathconas in this area. Tell me: what would you do with a name change? Too many Strathconas and not too many Sherwood Parks.

**Mr. Glubish:** Well, you've got two Strathconas. You've got Edmonton-Strathcona and Strathcona-Sherwood Park. I have never found that to be a problem as the MLA that represents this area.

**The Chair:** Because you live here.

**Mr. Glubish:** Because I live there.

People who live in Strathcona county: they get it, and at the end of the day that's all that matters. People who live in Edmonton-Strathcona: my assumption is that they get it because they're from Edmonton and it's Edmonton-Strathcona whereas we're Strathcona-Sherwood Park, i.e., Strathcona county.

**The Chair:** Okay. So it's only us unenlightened people from the south that find it confusing.

**Mr. Glubish:** Your words, not mine. I would just say that I don't see that as a problem. I've never heard anybody complain who lives there. I think you could keep that name, and everyone would understand it.

**The Chair:** Interesting. Okay. So that's not a problem we need to solve.

**Mr. Glubish:** I don't suggest that it's a problem that needs solving.

**The Chair:** Okay. Check that one off our list. Thank you.

**Mr. Glubish:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Vladimir Pasek? Good evening.

**Mr. Pasek:** Good evening.

**The Chair:** Please make yourself comfortable, identify yourself, and tell us what electoral division you live in and which ones you want to comment on.

**Mr. Pasek:** Okay. Well, first, thank you. I know that you people work very hard and, you know, these evenings that – yesterday all day and today until night, so thank you very much for that.

My name is Vladimir Pasek, and I am a resident of Pineview in St. Albert-Sturgeon, which was formerly Morinville-St. Albert. A few years ago that part was also part of St. Albert, but then they split. I'm a retired teacher and principal; at the end I was a principal.

All right. So here's why I support the proposal maps of St. Albert and St. Albert-Sturgeon, because they just came out – right? – and everything. Here's why. Both of these riding boundaries delivered effective representation for voters in the 2019 and 2023 elections, and the commission has struck the right balance by maintaining them largely as is in the interim report. Keeping a stand-alone St. Albert riding recognizes our history, political culture, and our role as a hub city of the Sturgeon county region. The approach used in St. Albert, one fully urban riding and one hybrid riding, should be used in other small cities with a similar population like Medicine Hat or Airdrie.

I have trouble. I have rheumatoid arthritis, so to flip pages: sometimes it takes a while. All right. Let's do it. Here we go. Sorry for the interruption.

The changes proposed by the commission to the St. Albert riding's northwest boundary align with planned growth. There are several new neighbourhoods in this part of the riding, including Riverside, Jensen Lakes, and Cherot, that will likely grow over the next few years and bring St. Albert over the average riding population. The St. Albert-Sturgeon boundaries also allow for planned growth in the Erin Ridge North neighbourhood as well as smaller new developments in the Meadows of Morinville and in Jupiter Heights. Keeping these growth areas balanced between the two ridings is the right call.

Now you're probably wondering why I am – but I am concerned that several . . .

**The Chair:** I knew there was a punchline.

**Mr. Pasek:** But I am concerned that several of the recent written submissions have called for moving the Woodlands neighbourhood – polls 43, 44, and 45 – out of St. Albert-Sturgeon and attaching them to the St. Albert riding. That was submitted on the 2nd of December by one of the persons. You don't want to know the name, do you?

**The Chair:** No.

**Mr. Pasek:** Okay. I won't say anything, then.

Now, this would be a poor decision because it would reduce effective representation. As to geography, voters are used to a clear boundary between the two St. Albert seats. Keeping a clear boundary like Boudreau Road as the dividing line between the two ridings minimizes confusion and makes this easy to communicate to voters. Attaching Woodlands – that was the proposal – to St. Albert would make this more confusing by having the north-south boundaries shift around. Is there a map there? You can't see the St. Albert part. It's so small.

6:10

**Dr. Martin:** We've got one right here.

**Mr. Pasek:** Where is it?

**The Chair:** We've got the same thing you have.

**Mr. Pasek:** I can blow it up, then.

**Dr. Martin:** No, we can't blow it up.

**Mr. Pasek:** Oh, you can't? Oh, well. St. Albert: I'm talking about the . . .

**The Chair:** Sir, if you want to take that microphone, go up to the screen, and point out the areas you want us to see, that would help.

**Mr. Pasek:** Okay. St. Albert is here. Now you want to put up Morinville-St. Albert. Oh, no. Well . . .

**The Chair:** St. Albert-Sturgeon.

**Mr. Pasek:** Yeah.

I guess you have Boudreau here. Yeah. That's good. That's good. Go back to it. Okay. Here's what happens. Now, according to that submission – like, here's Boudreau, see? It cuts it right in half and goes up. Now, what was planned there was that someone said to go around here, in other words go around Winston Churchill. I don't know if you can see it here, but Winston Churchill goes right around and goes this way. What was said was to go around here. Instead of going straight to Boudreau, we would just go around, but that's a big point, you know?

**The Chair:** What's the area of the city that you are saying the proponents are asking to be moved out? What's the name of this area?

**Mrs. Samson:** Woodlands?

**Mr. Pasek:** Yeah. Woodlands.

**The Chair:** Woodlands. Okay. So do not move Woodlands into St. Albert.

**Mr. Pasek:** Yeah. That's basically my beef, because you can see – look. It's beautiful. It goes up.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Clear and understandable boundaries is one of our goals.

**Mr. Clark:** So you do like it the way it is? You like along Boudreau Road?

**Mr. Pasek:** Yeah. Boudreau, the way it was. Like, we were so happy.

I submitted also the first time and the second time. You know, at first I said to keep it the same, and then the second time I noticed that you guys did, and I said: that's great. That's what we want. Then all of a sudden you look through the submission reports, and one person there said he'd like to move Woodlands out of it.

**The Chair:** You are conscientious.

**Mr. Pasek:** Well, you know, I believe.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, thank you.

**Mr. Pasek:** Should I continue?

**The Chair:** Oh, okay. Yeah. If you have more.

**Mr. Pasek:** As to history – and I'm going through a few things – Woodlands residents have voted in the same riding as Erin Ridge, Oakmont, and Kingswood residents for the last four years. That's that area. These neighbourhoods are all demographically and economically similar and should be kept in the same riding. On page 25 of the interim report the commission mentions trying to adhere to the status quo as much as possible, which would mean

leaving ridings as is where appropriate. Separating Woodlands from them is a disruptive change that doesn't align with this goal.

As to population, moving the 2,000 residents from Woodlands into St. Albert from St. Albert-Sturgeon would push St. Albert's population up significantly and make it become overpopulated faster. In other words, if they go from there to St. Albert – actually, both areas are growing, right? St. Albert has more growth areas than St. Albert-Sturgeon. They got Cherot, Riverside, and Jensen Lakes versus St. Albert-Sturgeon has Erin Ridge North and the two smaller Morinville developments. This means that if Woodlands is moved now, it would push the St. Albert riding population over the average faster and require more aggressive changes from a future commission to rebalance the population of the two ridings.

As to effective representation, St. Albert-Sturgeon is one of the few hybrid ridings in Alberta that actually provides effective representation because of how balanced it is between urban, small town, and rural areas. Actually, it represents all of Alberta, basically. Any candidate who wants to win the riding must secure support in each of these areas. Removing 2,000 urban voters in Woodlands would disrupt this balance and make it easier for a candidate to win without needing to campaign in and earn support from voters in the St. Albert part of the riding. You see? This would make it less likely that the St. Albert-Sturgeon riding could provide effective representation for its voters, especially those who live in the St. Albert part.

Finally, I shall give you my conclusion. The commission made the right call to keep these boundaries mostly as is. It is a riding that already provides effective representation, both St. Albert ridings, and have the multiple elections. The commission should continue to take a do-no-harm approach. I hope that the commission will continue to maintain the status quo in both St. Albert ridings and avoid any further changes.

Thank you for listening to me. Basically, the beef was that little bump there.

**The Chair:** Right. Thank you, Mr. Pasek.

There may be some questions from the commission, so I'll ask Mrs. Samson first. Any questions of this presenter?

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for coming out tonight. We haven't had anybody from St. Albert, I don't believe, in person, just written responses.

**Mr. Pasek:** In the first one. You hadn't for the second one, but I think the first one you did, you had a person called Andrew Traynor.

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay.

**Mr. Pasek:** Yeah. He was a big guy, red hair, you know, looks like a Viking.

**Mrs. Samson:** I want to say to you that I appreciate you reading the submissions and following it that closely. You're as well versed as we are, almost, so thank you.

**Mr. Pasek:** Well, you're welcome. I'm pleased that, you know, you were listening to me and everything.

**Mrs. Samson:** Yeah. You know, when you say that you like the ridings with no changes, I mean, that makes it easy. The job is quite a bit easier, so thank you again.

**Mr. Pasek:** You're welcome. Yes. Okay.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much, Mr. Pasek. I just wanted to ask you your impressions of the population growth potential in the city of St. Albert.

**Mr. Pasek:** Yeah. Well, you know, I'll be honest. After the snowstorm we were the best city to live in. All the roads were clear and everything was beautiful. Like, I came into Edmonton. It was terrible. You couldn't come in, you know?

Anyways, it's a great place. It's growing quite a bit, both areas, like St. Albert itself and then the St. Albert hybrid is also growing. The way I see it is that it's going to go to Morinville, like along the highway they're going to go, so maybe Boudreau and then the highway will again separate. Who knows what's going to happen in the future? But I see that – like, for example, traffic. There's so much traffic now. When I moved to St. Albert, my area was brand new. We just saw the house being built, and now there's so much traffic because they built that highway, the Henday highway, and then the other, and the buses come. In the morning it's crazy, you know? I'm right on Boudreau, so I see it all the time.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** No questions. Just to echo our thanks because it's very impressive when someone goes to the level of depth of research that you have on this. Thank you so much.

**Mr. Pasek:** Oh, well, you have to. I mean, you have to. I'm a teacher, right?

**Mr. Clark:** We can tell.

**The Chair:** We'll mark you down as in favour of hybrids, too. Is that okay?

**Mr. Pasek:** Yes. That's okay. That's all right.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Pasek:** Okay. Well, thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Charlayne Bozak? Good evening.

**Ms Bozak:** Good evening.

**The Chair:** Make yourself comfortable and identify yourself for the record, please. Tell us what electoral division you are in and which ones you wish to comment on.

**Ms Bozak:** For sure. Hello, everyone, members of the commission, and thank you for your time. My name is Charlayne Bozak. I am a resident of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. I also spoke to the commission at the hearing in June of last year, so it's your second time getting lucky to see my beautiful face.

**6:20**

Anyway, I took some time to review the interim report from the commission, and I want to share my thanks for your careful, thoughtful, and well-reasoned report. Your findings and the explanations to support them were helpful and informative. Overall, I found the interim decisions reasonable and practical. There is one point I kept going back to, though, and this is the item I want to discuss in my second visit in front of the commission, more as food for thought than addressing any concerns with the commission's interim report. In the report there is a section that states:

One presenter from Southern Alberta insisted that Lethbridge be treated the same as Calgary and Edmonton. While this may not

be possible, it is not unreasonable to have Alberta's two largest cities begin to reflect what goes on in the rest of the province.

Second, the assertion that an MLA could not effectively represent urban and rural concerns . . .

I could go on and read the whole thing, but you're probably . . .

**The Chair:** Sorry. What page is that part of the report?

**Ms Bozak:** I couldn't tell you.

**The Chair:** Oh, okay.

**Ms Bozak:** Sorry. I should have made note.

**The Chair:** Fine.

**Ms Bozak:** I can finish quickly, though.

. . . is belied by two examples. First, currently 18 MLAs do in fact represent both concerns

both rural and urban.

Second, 13 federal Members of Parliament in Alberta also routinely represent constituencies with urban and rural populations. We are confident that the democratic process can rise to [these] new challenges.

Third, the Commission is concerned that viewing rural and urban Alberta in constant opposition to each other tends to increase polarization. While this province is less rural than it has been in the past, approximately 40% of the population resides outside Calgary or Edmonton. Having MLAs who represent both a city and areas not in a city may cause MLAs to understand issues important to all aspects of Alberta society. It will help depolarization and increase understanding.

While I understand the commission's intent in this statement, there is something about it that strikes me as not quite right. I can't put my finger on it exactly, but it reminded me of a scene in a book I read a while ago by pop culture writer Chuck Klosterman that addresses comparisons. Calgary and Edmonton I don't think can be compared to the other medium to small urban populations within the province.

If you'll bear with me, I'm going to read this passage. The passage goes:

"Why do you keep saying that?" he asked in response. "Apples and oranges aren't that different, really. I mean, they're both fruit. Their weight is extremely similar. They both contain acidic elements. They're both roughly spherical. They serve the same social purpose. With the possible exception of a tangerine, I can't think of anything more similar to an orange than an apple. If I were having lunch with a man who was eating an apple and – while I was looking away – he replaced that apple with an orange, I doubt I'd even notice. So how is this a metaphor for difference? I could understand if you said, 'That's like comparing apples and uranium.' [I could understand if you say] 'That's like comparing apples and baby wolverines' . . . Those would . . . be valid examples of profound disparity."

There is just something about the hybrid response for me that isn't quite accurate. There will be some urban centres more suited for pairing with their surrounding rural areas. I recognize that the commission has noted several times in its interim report the skepticism expressed by residents such as myself, and I sincerely appreciate that skepticism being noted. I continue to be skeptical of the pairing of Calgary or Edmonton with rural areas outside of the municipal boundaries.

I recognize that addressing issues of inclusion and polarization are challenges for all of us, but if I'm being honest, I don't think electoral boundaries are the best, most effective way of addressing these concerns. Given where I live and the lack of understanding I

see for my neighbourhood and my neighbours in the inner city of Edmonton, boundary changes will do little to resolve that issue.

I also recognize and sincerely appreciate the commission's recognition of setting fair and practical boundaries as historically established in Alberta and Canada and that the American format is not currently being considered.

I understand the changes to the boundary of my own riding due to population shrinkage although I am still a little skeptical. With the changes I have seen in the past 10 years since moving into my neighbourhood, I know it's shifting. In just the past few months since I spoke to you in June, we've seen a new single-family home valued at over \$700,000 in our neighbourhood built and sold, which was unheard of previously. Residences of that size and price range were duplexes or fourplexes before. We continue to see the duplexes and fourplexes being built in our areas changing from more basic to more elegant, high-end-looking designs. While as property owners we see this as a positive impact for our pocketbooks, we do have concerns about gentrification and what that's going to look like for our low-income neighbours and friends in the area.

The repurposing of the Coliseum and adjacent Northlands grounds will also have an impact on our riding's population but perhaps not significantly before the next boundary review. I'm almost finished; I have two sentences left. We are seeing growth, but like with many mature communities in Edmonton like Whyte Avenue and Wihkwentowin, formerly the Oliver neighbourhood, there will be periods of stagnation and ebb and flow before any real impacts start taking place. I'm not entirely convinced removing a riding from Edmonton's downtown is the best decision either.

Generally, although I remain skeptical of the urban-rural hybrid format for Calgary and Edmonton, I have no concerns with the interim report, and again I thank the commission for its efforts and for the clear and informative explanations for its decisions. I also thank you for your time. My experience in speaking before the commission and observing its responses to myself and other speakers has been very positive and fulfilling. I want you to know that I am grateful for the experience and for your contributions to this important democratic process.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

**The Chair:** Ms Bozak, thank you for your comments.

Mr. Clark, any questions?

**Mr. Clark:** No.

I think you've done a nice job of summarizing, you know, some of the differences between rural and urban. As I know you know, we've had a lot of mixed feedback on that. Part of our remit is communities of interest, keeping folks – that sort of old saying: I can't define it, but I know it when I see it. We've sort of seen a fair bit of that. I don't want to put words in your mouth, but is that sort of what I hear you say?

**Ms Bozak:** Yeah. I grew up in Barrhead during kind of its heyday, when Ken Kowalski was the MLA and stuff like that, so I've seen what impact a rural MLA can have on a small community. I lived in Oliver from 1999 to 2016, so for almost 16 full years. When I moved into Oliver, it was just hitting – you were just starting to see the condo conversions and everything. It went from, like, low income to literally within a year you could start seeing low-income families being displaced and the population growing, more condo developments being developed, and now there are high rises and stuff.

I lived in a house. I was the only house on a block with, like, three-storey walk-ups on either side of me and an old school across

the street. Now that school is gone and there's a high-rise there. There's a high-rise behind. They ripped down three houses. I've seen that population explosion happen in up-and-coming neighbourhoods, and with what I am seeing anecdotally within my own community, I don't anticipate it being too much longer before that shift starts happening in Parkdale, Cromdale, or in Highlands-Norwood.

**Mr. Clark:** All right. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah.

I was actually thinking about apples and oranges, and what you quoted to us is basically a philosophy lesson in category mistakes or not. It's relevant to discussion of hybrids. I for my part am skeptical of the notion that these are different categories of community. I think there's a gradation in Alberta, as in many other places, between the stark extremes of a condo and a skyscraper and a guy bailing hay. You know, there are forms of life all the way along that spectrum. I find it very difficult to see it as simply one or the other.

Be that as it may, your riding may very well in fact grow as they sort out what to do around the old Coliseum, let alone everywhere else, Cromdale and so on, but it is in our interim report still the smallest population division among all the Edmonton ridings, so you've got a lot of headroom, so to speak.

6:30

**Ms Bozak:** Yeah, and it's not necessarily, I think, my concern, particularly for my own riding, but just generally for the downtown core going from six to five, and with the . . .

**Dr. Martin:** Well, on that point, if I may.

**Ms Bozak:** Yeah. Of course.

**Dr. Martin:** Four of the five are under the mean still.

**The Chair:** Still.

**Ms Bozak:** For sure. Yeah, and agreed.

**Dr. Martin:** So there is the rate of growth, not the absolute growth.

**Ms Bozak:** Yeah. This is where, like, I get the hedging the bets, so to speak. You know, we do have room for growth. I think, going back to Mr. Clark's point, it's just – I can't quite put my finger on it. There's something, and perhaps it's my shared experience or my lived experience growing up in a small town, living in a developing neighbourhood, and now living in an up-and-coming neighbourhood and seeing that disparity between low income, rural, urban. Like, I understand it. My impulse, my instinct, is that that urban-rural hybrid isn't the solution to that problem. I understand it might be a first step or something like that, but unless you're creating boundaries that are like doughnuts of an urban with a pocket of a rural in the – I know that's not possible, but yeah.

**The Chair:** Okay. Can I . . .

**Ms Bozak:** Yes. I'm sorry.

**The Chair:** We've got a few more.

Mrs. Samson, any questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation tonight. I appreciate that, but I don't have any questions. Thank you.

**Ms Bozak:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans. Welcome back, by the way.

**Mr. Evans:** Oh, thank you for waiting. I apologize. I came in midway, so I'm not really in a position to ask you any questions, but I really appreciate you showing up and participating.

**Ms Bozak:** Awesome.

**The Chair:** You, obviously, Ms Bozak, have looked at this more than casually, and your comments on hybrids are much more generous and nuanced than many criticisms of hybrids. Hybrids are a legitimate tool that have been available to commissions who redraw boundaries for over 30 years. Eighteen ridings in the province do have. Your quoted – I found the quote in page 28. It maybe could be worded a little differently, a little more nuanced. I like your analogy. Some may say that it's a category mistake, but imagine Alberta as a basket of fruit. We've got representatives from every variety – well, not every variety; three varieties – and we have to use them.

**Ms Bozak:** Yeah. Absolutely, and I agree. Like, having grown up in a rural community, I understand how important that representation is.

**The Chair:** But back in the day of the former speaker: that was a different world. Alberta has changed, and we cannot look at Alberta anymore as Calgary and Edmonton versus the rest of Alberta. So we're fans of hybrids but "hybrids . . . if necessary but not necessarily hybrids," to quote.

**Ms Bozak:** And I think urban sprawl is necessitating that as well, right?

**The Chair:** Yeah.

**Ms Bozak:** So I agree. There's just something that's a little – not quite.

**The Chair:** Do you teach literature, by the way?

**Ms Bozak:** No. My education is in journalism, though, so research, and I'm a data analyst, so it's always picking things apart.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much for your second round of presentations. Much appreciated.

**Ms Bozak:** Well, thank you for your time. I appreciate all of you.

**The Chair:** Please remain to hear other presenters if you can.

**Ms Bozak:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mr. Jason Nixon.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Justice Miller. Just before I start, if you would allow me, my former friend and colleague – he's still my friend, I should say. My former colleague Mr. Clark and *Hansard* here today know it usually takes me 10 minutes to clear my throat, and I was told that we keep it to a really tight timeline, so I put my remarks together in this quick presentation very much about what I think we need to talk about. I'm sure you can appreciate that to keep that down to six, seven minutes, given the depth of that area, is not easy.

Just before I do that, though, if I could, Mr. Chair, I do want to emphasize that I'm silent in this presentation about the decision around Rimbey and Ponoka because I agree with it, so I didn't want to waste too much time on that at the moment, as well as bringing

Lacombe together into that area. I also very much agreed overall with the report, though I do think there were some contradictions for the rest of my current constituency that I would like to talk about. With that, I'll get into my remarks, which I've kept pretty disciplined, as best I can, for this process.

My name, first of all, is Jason Nixon, as mentioned, and I have the privilege of being the MLA for west-central Alberta for more than a decade, and I have lived in that area for my entire adult life. I'm here to share my community's concerns with the proposed dissolution of western Mountain View county and Clearwater county into three different ridings, which would disconnect and disfranchise the people of west-central Alberta.

In west-central Alberta our towns act as gateways to the Rocky Mountains and to Banff national park backcountry. For the people in this region these gateway towns are their lifelines, providing access to provincial services like health care, schools, and policing, and unlike other distinct mountain regions like Canmore-Kananaskis and Jasper-Hinton, the Banff-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre region is vast and sparsely populated throughout, and towns like Sundre, Rocky Mountain House, and Caroline provide the home community for thousands of people that live west of them in the foothills and the mountains to the west.

The shared geography and economy of west-central Alberta also unite the region. For example, both Sundre and Rocky are home to sawmills that operate to the west of these towns in the Rocky Mountain forest area. However, the proposed boundaries place the forest they rely on in unrelated ridings, connected to towns that do not even have sawmills. The eastern slopes are critical to communities that I represent. They provide fibre for our sawmills, require unique emergency services and wildfire planning, and are home to a distinct tourism industry recognized by Travel Alberta and the province as distinct to the area west of our communities.

Additionally, Parks Canada has a close relationship with multiple communities across west-central Alberta, including the Rocky Mountain House national park, which is in this boundary disconnected from Rocky Mountain House, very concerning to them – a lot of people forget that we have a national park in Rocky Mountain House that's different than Banff – and the Ya Ha Tinda Ranch west of Sundre. These towns provide some of the only access to the backcountry of the national parks that cannot be provided by highway 1. They provide the emergency services like search and rescue, emergency health care, and police to support backcountry portions of the park.

The service relationship between western communities and the national park does not exist in the same way in Canmore. In fact, isolating the national parks from the rest of west-central Alberta, especially from Sundre and Rocky Mountain House, would be like removing Canmore from Kananaskis. Dividing thousands of people from their closest towns would unnaturally split people from their communities that they share priorities with.

The primary routes connecting communities of interest of west-central Alberta are highway 22 running north to south and highway 11 running east to west between Rocky Mountain House and the national park, which the proposed map does not reflect.

A quick note on highway 93. It's frequently closed for avalanche control in the winter, it has several hundred kilometres of no cell service, and there are no service stations along the road. Even when it's open, it is a federal toll road. For Nordegg and western Clearwater county the only reliable way to get to the rest of the proposed constituency is to drive through Rocky Mountain House and Sundre, which are both in other proposed ridings.

Under the proposed boundaries constituents will have to travel needlessly long distances to reach their MLAs. An Albertan west of Nordegg, in order to have a meeting with their MLA, would have

to drive nearly 400 kilometres each way to get to the MLA's office in Canmore. For a resident of Panther River valley west of Sundre the trip would be 300 kilometres each way. On this journey they would pass through up to four different constituencies, pass by several other MLAs' offices in towns along highway 22, before re-entering their own riding. Their MLA would not represent the provincial infrastructure this constituent relies on, so the representative cannot even intervene without stepping into a different MLA's constituency hundreds of kilometres away. The constituents are completely cut off from the representative.

The proposed boundary also cuts residents off from seeing their MLA at community events. The MLA for thousands of people would never be present at important community events because they do not represent any of the regional towns.

Finally, disconnecting rural residents from the regional towns they rely on will present significant barriers to voting. Some residents will have to drive an extra hour or more each way to get to the nearest polling station in their riding.

I want to bring also to your attention one of the most significant effects of the dissolution, the impact on several First Nations who have called west-central Alberta home for generations. The proposed Banff-Jasper riding will take three reserves within Clearwater county – the O'Chiese, Sunchild, and the Big Horn – and completely disconnect them from their local town. Since 1799, when Fort Rocky Mountain House was established as a fur trading post, Rocky has been the meeting place and economic hub that is important to local Indigenous nations. Today Rocky Mountain House is the service hub for the O'Chiese, Sunchild, and Big Horn. Hospitals, police, and social services are all located in Rocky. Nation members go to work, shop, and participate in community events in Rocky every day. Placing these nations in Banff-Jasper would require members to drive three to four hours each way to get to their MLA's office. This would fundamentally, obviously, harm the representation for these nations because they are disconnected from the region. It's essential to note that the commission has not had an opportunity to hear from the Big Horn, O'Chiese, or Sunchild, and I certainly do not speak for these nations.

#### 6:40

Coincidentally, I did meet with Chief Poucette of the Big Horn reserve yesterday, and he did ask me to share his concerns. The Big Horn are very concerned about the disconnect from Rocky Mountain House and express their opposition to any boundary changes that would disrupt the highway 11 corridor between Saskatchewan Crossing and Rocky Mountain House. He also expressed concern that nation members would be required to use a federal toll road to connect to their MLA. I have been asked to provide a letter from the Big Horn that outlines their opposition to the proposed Banff-Jasper riding, which I have provided to the clerk for the record.

Before I close, it is important for the commission to understand the extensive historical precedent for maintaining a west-central riding that encompasses Clearwater county, western Mountain View county, all the way to the B.C. border. What I have up on the screen right now for you on the left is the 1913 Alberta electoral map with riding 18, which encompasses Clearwater county, western Mountain View county, and portions of Banff national park. On the other side is the 2010 Electoral Boundaries Commission map with the riding of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, which includes northern Banff national park. In fact, I represented these boundaries until the 2019 election. These two maps show how it is unprecedented to not have a dedicated west-central riding.

This historical precedent is not accidental. I want to stress that. It reflects how our communities have developed before there were

roads and continue to be connected. I sincerely hope that the commission will take the time to consider the more than 120 years of history and the many reasons that every boundary commission since Confederation has kept these communities together as you look towards your final report.

I will conclude, though, with an alternative proposal for a Banff-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre riding. I recommend uniting shared geography while keeping communities of interest together and respecting those historical boundaries. In your handout I will leave you several maps that show you how industries like forestry and tourism as well as our natural regions and our transportation corridors are already organized into distinct regions along the mountains. First, Canmore-Kananaskis, Banff-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, and Jasper-Hinton: embracing these regions and historical ties that bind them together will result in effective representation for Albertans.

I will take a moment just before I turn it over to Justice Miller for questions to also put on my former hat as the mayor of Kananaskis. I was Alberta's environment minister for a long time. A lot of people don't know the environment minister in Alberta is the mayor of the municipal district of Kananaskis and operates Kananaskis, and I know it well, not as an MLA; as a minister. There is a deep connection between Canmore and Kananaskis that I think nobody can doubt. I want to stress, as I did in my comments, the deep connection that we have to the back end of the national parks with Sundre and Rocky Mountain House. Canmore has a very distinct relationship with all of the parks that move to the south through there, where we have some of our most significant provincial park infrastructure as a natural connection. While Canmore is close to Banff, it does not provide the same level of services to Banff national park that we do in these communities, which I know that you've been hearing through your submissions.

I want to stress this map right here if I could. I know I went fast, but this shows very much how the eastern slopes are divided up between that Jasper-Hinton, Banff-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre type of corridor that has very different locations. Then, as you can see, as you get thinner into the province through much more of the recreation areas and that corridor, the big difference between those three areas – it's very important to understand. You can't understand if you don't come there or you aren't from there and aren't moving around. I spent a lot of time in a helicopter over these areas. Everywhere else is quite thin. The ridings are very, very similar to the north, where you may have vast ridings as far as landscapes but one or two corridors of roads that go to communities along the way.

That riding there, where my home is, in west-central Alberta is very vast, and the community is spread out all across that area. Often when you look at the map, you'll see just Sundre and Rocky Mountain House, and you'll think that's where all the population is. It's easy to forget that our communities go for hours the other way. I lived right on the Forestry Trunk Road, highway 40, and the Red Deer River. I ran a place called Mountaineer Lodge near the Ya Ha Tinda Ranch for the Banff national park, about 45 minutes hauling to Sundre, more likely about an hour, in Clearwater county. But my closest town was Sundre in Mountain View county. That certainly was my home.

You won't find that in the other districts where they are able to maintain that same level of corridor. That's why you're hearing that conflict with Clearwater and western Mountain View county. They go together like a puzzle piece, and that is ultimately why they've been held together since the very existence of the province.

Justice Miller, I'm happy to take, obviously, any questions.

**The Chair:** Okay. I think there will be one or two.  
Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you. Thank you for your time today. We heard from the reeve of Clearwater county yesterday, and he reminded us how big the county is and how Rocky Mountain House is the hub. One county; one town. And now we have split Clearwater county into three. We will certainly be having a look at that. Since the interim report we have had some hot spots, and this is certainly one. We will be revisiting it.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you for that. I just want to add one quick comment to what it sounds like the reeve is saying. I actually think it's really important to identify that a one-town county like Rocky Mountain House is very unique. There are not a lot of them in this province. It has not been divided twice; it's actually divided three times, which I think has created some of those challenges.

I do want to also really identify for the commission that as you go into southern Clearwater county, it is very much connected to Sundre. That's something that can often be missed if you're not looking at the population maps. If you just go just out of Sundre city limits, you enter Clearwater county. To everybody who lives there till about halfway to the village of Caroline, Sundre is home. That's where they go to school. It's a very small community. You know, when we talk about hybrids, these are communities of a few thousand people, and that is – well, Clearwater county residents are very, very much connected to it. The further that you go west, the more you encounter that.

If you go to my home in Mountain View county and you drive just off my home quarter section, like, a hundred feet, you cross into Bighorn county. My neighbour is in Bighorn county. The only way he'd ever be able to get back over to the other corridor is, obviously, if he goes through Mountain View county and our west portion of that. His kids go to school in Sundre. That area that is the Rocky Mountains forest reserve on that map is very much entwined in that population.

I just really want to emphasize that, and I appreciate you listening to the reeve and others who've come in.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** I just want to make sure. When you were talking about the, you know, narrow electoral districts, you're really referring to a north-south corridor?

**Mr. Nixon:** Yes.

**Mr. Evans:** And on the wider ones in terms of specifically looking at here Rocky Mountain House-Rimbey-Sundre, et cetera, that's an east-west corridor.

**Mr. Nixon:** No.

**Mr. Evans:** It's more than that, right?

**Mr. Nixon:** It's more than that, yeah. Yeah. Sorry, John. I interrupted you. I should let you finish your question.

**Mr. Evans:** It looks like it's east and west on 11 but north and south on whatever the . . .

**Mr. Nixon:** Yeah. Let me maybe just really emphasize that point. If you're talking from the national park boundary to the town of Rocky Mountain House in that portion of the province, highway 11, which is east to west, is a critical corridor, right? I mean, that's the town. That's the town for everybody who lives there. So everybody

west of town – this current drawing is not attached to that town, but that’s where that road goes to.

As you get into Rocky Mountain House, you get back into a primarily north to south corridor: Sundre, Caroline, Rocky Mountain House. Obviously, you know, the county line – highway 22 kind of jogs a little bit to the west as you get closer to Rocky Mountain House. Then down to Sundre it keeps jogging west as you go further through. The county line up around Clearwater county goes a little bit past that. In general the 22 is kind of that east-west boundary.

That highway 11 to Rocky Mountain House – this is something that a lot of people won’t understand as you’re trying to figure out the roads there as well. I know that Dr. Martin knows this because I’ve heard him talk about the Ya Ha Tinda Ranch. There’s a road called Coal Camp Road, which would be a county road, which is the east-west corridor between the Ya Ha Tinda and the west portion of what is attached to Sundre. That is its road back and forth, the same way as highway 11, but you would not see it on a provincial map. I know that you know it. That’s the corridor if that makes sense.

I think I answered your question, John. I certainly tried.

**Mr. Evans:** What about Cremona?

**Mr. Nixon:** Cremona should be – it is not currently; it probably should have been caught in the last map – on the 22 side. If you drive down 22, Cremona is the only populated place that is just over on the east side of the 22 highway. After that, it’s nothing but farms all the way to the highway 2 corridor.

Of course, as I know you probably have heard, Mountain View county is so different. You have a very mountain-type community like Sundre, and then you have, to us, the high-population area around highway 2. We have what we call the highway 2 communities and the 22 communities. The 22 communities have much more in common with their friends to the north.

6:50

Oh, and I should mention, because I know highway 93 has been a big topic of conversation for obvious reasons, that if you are in Clearwater county or Rocky Mountain House, you cannot get south without going through Caroline and Sundre. You just can’t. Now, you can, once you’re in Sundre, take highway 40 down to highway 1A. I lived there. I ran the only service station and lodge on that road. I know it well. In the 10 years I lived there, it wasn’t closed once. It flows pretty good. I drive it all the time. But if you go north of there, there’s a thing called Corkscrew Mountain, the pass between Rocky Mountain House and there. When you drive there, it is quite beautiful. But you look down, and you’ll see cars all the way back to the 1930s and ’40s that they can’t even pull out of the ravine. Nobody should be driving that in the winter, and it certainly is not a safe corridor, right?

So no matter what, you’ve got to connect through the 22 to Caroline down into Sundre as you commute through there.

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

**Dr. Martin:** A fascinating handout, and I am very, very grateful for the range of information in it and particularly interested in the historical boundaries because that is one of our considerations, historical expectations of communities in this regard. I have a very kind of picky question if you don’t mind.

**Mr. Nixon:** For sure.

**Dr. Martin:** We’ve addressed this theme with other presenters. It’s about: does Rocky Mountain House have commuter traffic? Does Sundre have commuter traffic? Are they similar kind of sets of activities?

**Mr. Nixon:** The answer is no, I mean, as a general rule. If they did have commuter traffic, it would be south and north. South and north are the high-load corridor, which is a large part of our industry. You would not use the eastern highways. I mean, you may swing by Olds occasionally to get to a Walmart, but in general it’s north to south.

I think, primarily, you’re probably asking about highway 11 and then highway 27, obviously, between Olds and Sundre and between the eastern portion into Rocky Mountain House. Highway 11 is a major industrial route and a major tourism route. I mean, you can come there on the May long weekend: there’ll be trailers stretched all the way back to Red Deer. I have represented highway 11 for a long time. I know this corridor. There is no natural flow between Eckville, which would be the middle of Lacombe county as you come out of Clearwater county and back. The flow would be north to south, maybe occasionally heading all the way out to Red Deer if you’re doing some shopping with the family. But again, Rocky Mountain House, Caroline, Sundre is the flow of most of the traffic there or to the west, which is obviously a little bit unique, flowing back to it.

I know I was listening earlier, Justice Miller, to my colleague Tara testify, and you made a joke about it being a magnet to the mountains.

**The Chair:** You are following this.

**Mr. Nixon:** Yeah. Well, I followed hers.

What I would have said to you at that time is that, no, actually, Sundre, Caroline, and Rocky Mountain House are a magnet for those who are in the mountains. I think that’s hard for everybody who’s around Calgary, the highway 1 corridor to understand, that there’s nowhere else to go, right? That’s where you go. There’s no path back over. You’re going to have to go back to Rocky Mountain House. You’re going to have to go back to Sundre or Caroline, and you’ll have to head south. It’s not that we like the mountains; we are the mountains. The only corridor is between us and the mountains.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much. Good to see you again.

**Mr. Nixon:** Good to see you, Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** A lot has changed since 1913.

**Mr. Nixon:** The one thing that hasn’t changed is those communities being together.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. What has changed is that the Liberals were in power then.

**Mr. Nixon:** I did notice that. Yes.

**Mr. Clark:** It seems unlikely.

Also, I was trying to figure out how this worked, that Calgary seemed to only have two electoral divisions. Don’t count this as comprehensive, but Centre Calgary had 20,000 voters and Clearwater had 74, so things were a little different in 1913.

**Mr. Nixon:** You had to be a landowner to vote in 1913.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. There you go. So a lot has changed, but your point is taken. You know, I mean, obviously, a lot has changed.

What I'm interested in – you were talking about the challenges in representing west-central Alberta and the unique nature of that, and it made me think of your MLA colleague Mr. Sinclair, who was in earlier today. We've received a lot of feedback and a lot of input from the north. Do you feel like your area is a little more akin to the north than it would be to areas east?

**Mr. Nixon:** Yes. That was what I'm trying to get across, that my area is much more like the north, even more than the Jasper and Hinton area and Canmore and Kananaskis, because – sorry; it's like the north as far as scale. It's actually unlike the north as far as how the population is distributed. If you go up to my colleague Minister Williams' constituency, he drives one very long corridor, large woods areas all around, but all that is primarily on there, maybe a couple of roads where you divert out to a town. Down in that portion everybody is spread right out, right? It's not like you just go to Caroline and everybody is right at Caroline. The population, the community will just keep going all the way up to the forest reserve and beyond, where they live. We're like the north in the fact that we are unique and we're vast and it's a big place to represent, but we are unlike that north corridor where we just have a real tight corridor. Our population spreads out significantly more.

You'll see down in John's neck of the woods as you get down towards the Crowsnest, it becomes the opposite again because it's so thin on the Alberta border, right? You have all that community right tied up to there. If you ever get the opportunity to go for a flight west of Rocky Mountain House, you will be blown away by how spread out every thing is. You know, when I said those drive times there, it's true. I mean, the Big Horn would have to drive in almost 45 minutes just to get to highway 11, and then they're going to have to continue on there. There are people that live all over there, including myself, who live in very remote places like that.

**Mr. Clark:** I'd love to ask a little bit more about that because I really appreciate you bringing in this letter from the Big Horn. It's my sort of naïveté or maybe lack of understanding. They are connected to the Stoney Nakoda, so that was the rationale, right? That was part of what we thought would make sense, would be connect those reserves into the O'Chiese, Sunchild, Big Horn in with Stoney Nakoda. That was quite a conscious and deliberate choice, but you're saying that the connection with the Sunchild, O'Chiese, and Big Horn is actually more with Rocky Mountain House.

**Mr. Nixon:** I was with the Stoney yesterday, coincidentally. That's how I talked to the chief. There was a protocol meeting happening with government. They are Stoney, and I'm not saying they're not Stoney, and neither are they, though they are on Treaty 6, not Treaty 7, land. Their home, their corridor, their life is highway 11 into Rocky Mountain House. That's their home.

You know, bringing the Stoney together into the same constituency is not a terrible idea, but it would be a heck of a lot easier to add the Stoney into a west-central Alberta and not force the Big Horn to drive through three or four constituencies to get down to there. Certainly what the chief is saying is that he's not overly concerned about being connected to them in a constituency. He's very indifferent, but what he is not open to is being disconnected from Rocky Mountain House in the constituency. That's what he's saying. Sunchild and O'Chiese, while different nations, have the same challenge. It's the only place. That's it.

You know, it's a very historical community, one of the oldest communities in the province. It's been around since 1799, and it wasn't built off the roads that you and I think. It would have been

flow off the mountains, bring in your fur trade at the forts – it's why we have our own national park; a lot of people don't know about it – and then go back out to the trapline or to wherever you were living. Rocky Mountain House is that hub for those First Nation communities. It predates treaty, right? That's what I'm trying to get across and I think the chief is getting across. They don't want to be disconnected from Rocky Mountain House.

To your comment on that, don't forget, Mr. Clark, not just the 1913 boundary; the 2019 boundary and the current boundary encompass all of that area that we call the west country. It has for the entire existence of this province, and there's a reason that every boundary commission has done that. It's because of how these communities interact with each other.

**Mr. Clark:** No, that's a great point. I'll just maybe end on this thought and one other question. I mean, you know, constituency boundaries are not brick walls either, right? You drove through probably a dozen of them to get here today. That said, we are also trying to connect communities of interest, and I think your presentation here is helpful and compelling. I'm just wondering if you feel like your experience representing the west country is a little different than the experience of those MLAs that you would have a bit to the east of you who have pretty good cell service all the way through, pretty good roads, and even though the geography there may be large, it's not as large as what you dealing with. It's not as large as the north. Is that a fair characterization?

**Mr. Nixon:** I think I'm the best person to answer this question. I represented what was I think for a lot of people in our community's perspective a gerrymandered constituency in 2017. I mean, it's open for debate. It went and added Rimbey, Ponoka, Lacombe county, little portions of Red Deer county into that area, and I know you probably heard from the highway 2 corridor about that. I have represented as far north as almost Pigeon Lake right now, Winfield, Alberta, in Wetaskiwin county, and down all the way into Mountain View county.

I represent some of those eastern communities, and it's very drastically different. They're very different communities. There's no natural flow between the corridors. You know, if I come home on a constituency day and I can get from Sundre, Caroline, Rocky, whip out all the way to the Bighorn, I'm on a natural flowing highway. I'm doing work the entire way. I'm connecting with people. I'm not in no man's land. Then all of a sudden you've got to divert, head all the way up to a highway 2 community. You take off the rhythm.

7:00

At the end of the day, though, it shouldn't be about us. It should be about, you know, how constituents can get the best access to you, which is why I'm concerned about breaking this into three because you separate from them. But there are some real significant differences in the communities, which is why I opened with: I believe you got it right. I'm not coming here and telling you that there shouldn't be a adjustments to Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. I've said the opposite. In fact, I believe that the commission got three-quarters of what they did in this area of the province right: Rimbey and Ponoka being naturally connected to each other. I love representing the people, but it makes sense that they were there. Lacombe, which has been split into two, you know, the beautiful community of Bentley that has been disconnected from the community of Lacombe: you guys have fixed that. Eckville coming into one proper Lacombe county has been fixed.

So I just want to be clear on that, Greg. This isn't me who's coming here and saying: you got it all wrong. This is me trying to

come here and say: there's one portion of this province that is very unique, and it certainly is not going to be easy on that community if they get separated. As Susan said, I think it's really important to recognize that there's nowhere else in this province on any map where we have done that to a small population, one-town county where we divide it into two, let alone three. So, you know, that's what we're trying to do, and unless you spend time there you wouldn't know how these roads connect. You just wouldn't.

**Mr. Clark:** You gave us a B. That's all we got, was a B.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, it's actually really important to me to do the opposite, because this is a hard job. I thought the report was great. I don't think that, unless you want to come and spend the day with me and I could drive you to all these communities and I could show you how the roads connect and all that, that you could know that. That's why you see people like the reeve driving to Edmonton to say: "Hey. Whoa. Whoa. Whoa. This doesn't change anything very significant as far as electoral fortunes, but this change is a real significant issue for our community and how it's attached."

**Mr. Clark:** Sorry, Justice Miller. I really apologize. Can I just ask one more?

**The Chair:** Sure, because any questions I ask are going to be dumb because I don't know this area.

**Mr. Clark:** Well, that's untrue.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, when you're all done, you come out. We'll take you for a trip.

**Mr. Clark:** Again, I'm probably stealing Justice Miller's thunder here a little bit. So we have very limited tools at our disposal, right? We're really trying to square an unsquare circle. One of the things we wonder: why 89 constituencies instead of 91, 93, or 150? In all sincerity, you know, what was that debate and discussion in the Legislature? Because if we had another two or four, these sorts of discussions would be a lot easier.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, I will point out that I think in the past there's been a point where the commission recommended that the Legislature quickly add other seats on top of that. I don't know the history of that, but it may be that you need to communicate that back to us. I can't remember the full debate, and I'm certainly not the one that decided it. I certainly, though, as a rural Albertan was emphasizing the fact that we were going to have to add seats. I was thinking a little bit about the Ed Stelmach era, which was a tough boundary commission where I think in the end they decided: "Hey. Whoa. I think we are we going to have to add seats." I believe they added four, if I recall.

So, you know, I won't speak for the Justice minister on exactly how they ended up with the number, but I can tell you as a member of the Legislature because you've asked that question, if the commission was absolutely convinced that they needed more, I would be very interested in that, but that might be a conversation for a different date.

I also want to be clear, Mr. Clark: what I'm proposing here does not make it harder for you, though, to deal with that inside your numbers because it's recognizing putting Canmore and Kananaskis back into that natural corridor that is already an existing riding and letting that quarter go there. So it doesn't disrupt the overall number of problems that you've got; it actually solves some of the problems that you've got in that hot spot, and it allows you to continue to deal with the other challenges you have along the highway 2 corridor.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thanks, Greg.

**The Chair:** Yeah. I was going to ask that question. We received a fair amount of submissions, or it seemed like it to me, about those that are in the emergency response industry along that corridor. For someone that's really ignorant of this area of the province, I have to admit that I don't think I've ever been to Rocky Mountain House or this area. Maybe we could have saved time by having a public hearing there in June.

**Mr. Nixon:** Please come out one day. You will enjoy it.

**The Chair:** Tell me about that. I want to call it an industry, and that's not pejorative. It's a serious service that's offered in that part of the province. Tell me more about where they're headquartered. Are they all in Rocky? What kind of equipment do they have? Helicopters, planes: that kind of stuff?

**Mr. Nixon:** So they're located in both Rocky and Sundre. This is a mountain community in the backcountry there, so they are fully mountain certified. They have helicopters. They hang out of the helicopters; they do that work. As I mentioned earlier, I ran a lodge way in the backcountry there, so I've interacted with them. You're the only place, so obviously there are accidents going on and you're dealing with it. So they're extraordinarily well trained. They're volunteers, just similar to our volunteer firefighters. If your kids or your family are camping out there – and over 100,000 people do on a weekend back there – and they get hurt, it's my neighbours answering a page, jumping on a helicopter, and coming to get them. I've had the opportunity to be back there. Unfortunately, people have been killed by grizzly bears or had quad accidents, and we've participated, obviously, in recovering their body.

So they are high-quality individuals with heavy, heavy equipment, and they're the only ones with proper access back there. You know, there was a terrible grizzly attack that made the news not long ago of a nice couple in the back end of the park, just past the Ya Ha Tinda, which is a name I know I've said lots. There were crews from both Sundre and Rocky who had to respond to that, very, very remote, after the distress call came in, many hours, because we couldn't fly that night, coming all the way in and dealing with the grizzly bear attack. Unfortunately, those people were deceased, but others have lived. So that's unique.

I can tell you as the former head of Kananaskis that we have a search and rescue crew like that that keeps care of the park, but they don't have to keep care of that area that I call the Rocky Mountains forest reserve because we have such a top-notch team that's in there. Justice Miller, I don't know if any of the submissions say this, but the reason it came to be was because a child got lost back there, and then nobody was equipped to be able to go deal with it. The national park obviously didn't know anything about that side as you get into public land, so the community of Rocky Mountain House eventually with their partners in Sundre said: we have to deal with this; we have to come together.

They also run a task force that manages all of that area together. It's called the Rocky Mountains forest reserve. Sundre to Rocky to Bighorn county all the way down to the 1A: that is all run by the municipalities in partnership with the province. Again, imagine 100,000 people camped outside a community like Sundre with 2,600 people in the town. It's a big job for them to be able to manage that. So I hope I answered your question, but it's very vast, and they do a really good job, and I'm glad they submitted some stuff.

**The Chair:** Okay. Good. Well, thank you very much. I think we're all wiser.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well over.

**The Chair:** Yeah, you're well over time – that's for sure – but we are much the wiser for your presentation. Thank you very much, Mr. Nixon.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Justice Miller, and I hope I broke up a little bit of the long Edmonton day. I'll let you get back to Edmonton ridings.

**The Chair:** I do encourage every presenter to remain and hear the other presenters because it's always helpful to hear other Albertans. So that takes us, then, to William van Engan.

**Mr. van Engen:** Thank you, and that will be a difficult act to follow. Let me know when I can begin.

**The Chair:** Yes. Please make yourself comfortable, identify yourself, and tell us what riding you live in and which ones you're wishing to comment on.

**Mr. van Engen:** Thank you, sir. My name is Will van Engen. I'm a resident of the Griesbach neighbourhood of Edmonton, which is part of the Edmonton-North West constituency. I wanted to begin as well by thanking you for the work that you're all doing on this panel and as well to thank Mr. Roth. I had previously signed up online to make submissions, but I was a little late to get to my submissions, and I e-mailed, and he was kind enough to make some space, so I did appreciate that.

I'm going to limit my submissions to the Edmonton-North West electoral district.

**The Chair:** Sorry. It was Edmonton-North West you're commenting on?

**Mr. van Engen:** That's right. That's right. Just so you have a bit of background about myself, I live there with my wife and two young sons. I've lived there since about 2021. I work downtown here in Edmonton as a criminal defence lawyer, and my wife is an elementary school teacher who teaches in the Calder neighbourhood, which is incidentally one of the neighbourhoods that has been contemplated to be included in Edmonton-North West.

My submission today is simply to ask that the commission not expand beyond what it has contemplated in the interim report. In the interim report I see that the neighbourhood of Calder will be included. I understand it has been part of Edmonton-North West in the past, so it's not a significantly controversial inclusion, but it does put Edmonton-North West at about 11 per cent or so over the average, and so I would just urge the commission not to go beyond that.

**7:10**

There are a couple of reasons that I'll say for that, the first being that – and you'll probably have access to better data than I have – anecdotally, being part of that neighbourhood, there is significant growth in the neighbourhood, at least from what I can see. I live in a newer development. There are new developments in the area as well that are growing. There's also another development that I'm aware of called Goodridge, which is a new development that's on the Anthony Henday and 127th Street. My understanding is that the community is growing quite quickly. I think being at 11 per cent is already higher than usual, but I would just urge the commission not to go further than that.

The other reason I would urge the commission to keep the boundaries as they are or not too dissimilar from how they are is that we already have a pretty good, cohesive makeup in Edmonton-North

West. There are a number of communities of common interest. Edmonton-North West is a largely middle-class community. There are similar needs, interests, and challenges for this community. You also may be aware that Edmonton-North West houses the Al Rashid mosque. There is a large Muslim community in Edmonton-North West. You may also be aware that the Al Rashid mosque is historically, I think, the first mosque in Canada, actually. I believe it was somewhere else previously, but it is now in Edmonton-North West. So there's a large Muslim community here, which I think is important to keep in that riding.

Finally, the current structure as it is: there's a logical geographic structure to the riding being bounded by 127th Street, Yellowhead Trail, 137th Avenue, and 97th Street.

In short, my submissions are simply that the commission keep the riding as it is or not significantly different.

**The Chair:** Do no harm. Okay.

**Mr. van Engen:** Thank you, sir. Appreciate your time.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans, any cross-examination of this lawyer?

**Mr. van Engen:** They say lawyers are the worst witnesses.

**Mr. Evans:** No. He dodged a bullet. Thank you.

**Mr. van Engen:** I've got King's Counsel staring me down.

**Mrs. Samson:** I'm not going to question you if you like the riding the way we drew it out. I'm going to take that.

**Mr. van Engen:** Take that and go?

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah.

Thank you very much. I appreciate that you think the interim is, you know, on balance good. I mean, you have a mix of very classic historical neighbourhoods near the rail yards, a very, very old, traditional layout as well as neighbourhoods, and then you move into more modern, suburban styles of laying out roadways and housing. I'm glad you think we got the balance right there.

Also, if you didn't happen to know it, that mosque is now in Fort Edmonton Park.

**Mr. van Engen:** The actual original mosque.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah.

**Mr. van Engen:** That's right, and I've seen it. It's quite beautiful.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. I've visited it, and it's very beautiful to see it there.

**Mr. van Engen:** Yeah. Indeed.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah.

Thank you. Your Member of the Legislative Assembly was in here I think yesterday and basically made exactly the same point that you've made.

Earlier today we had a presenter talking about the name of the constituency. His concern was cardinal directions. We have lots of northwests, southwests, southeasts, whatever. He suggested Edmonton-North West be called Edmonton-Grand Trunk to respect the railway history of that area. Do you have an opinion on that?

**Mr. van Engen:** Not particularly. I mean, I think I like Edmonton-North West because I've known it as Edmonton-North West for a time. Grand Trunk certainly is a feature of the community, but I don't know if I would say it's sort of the defining feature, the defining nomenclature for that area. I see the challenge that exists with using northwest in various ways and places. I think I would err on the side of keeping the name as it is and keeping it as it has typically been known.

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

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. van Engen:** Thank you. Good day.

**The Chair:** Please stay if you can to hear the other presentations.

**Mr. van Engen:** Thank you, sir.

**The Chair:** I believe that takes us to Kate Faight.

**Ms Faight:** That's me.

**The Chair:** Good evening.

**Ms Faight:** Good evening. I also note the challenge of following a minister, but I'll do my best.

Yes. My name is Kate Faight. I'm a resident of Edmonton-Whitemud since 2009. I live in Brookside, within that community. I'm a lawyer. I'm a mother of three children, who each go to three different schools in the community. My husband is a software developer who works at home, and I work downtown. So I do think we have a broad range of experience within our community. Given my comments this evening you also might be interested to know that I have deep rural roots. I grew up in Castor, Alberta, but I am here tonight to mostly comment on Edmonton-Whitemud but also on the combination of the two Edmonton ridings in the centre, Edmonton-Glenora and Edmonton-Riverview.

Like my predecessor, I'd also like to thank you for your hard work in preparing these proposals. I found the interim report very interesting. As a lawyer I was tempted to start by reviewing the foundations of effective representation, but I see that was very well canvassed in the interim report. I certainly concur that, although my comments are somewhat directed on the population of these ridings, I would not want us to march towards the American one person, one vote approach. I'll leave that there.

I did take interest in the commission's comments in the interim report on their assessment of the relative difficulty in representing rural versus urban ridings. That piece goes to my commentary on the difficulty in amalgamating those two central Edmonton ridings.

Time after time we see in polling and the media that the most concerning issues to Albertans are health care, education, cost of living, and public safety. In my view, each of these four items disproportionately affects and needs to be addressed by urban representatives. In health care we see that ER wait times are, you know, approaching a state of emergency, of course, depending on who you speak to. But there's no denying that that is highly contentious, even resulting in a death in an Edmonton hospital just before the new year.

In education we saw a teacher strike this fall, of course, like, very similar timing with the interim report, and the issues giving rise to that teachers strike, again, were disproportionately involving issues in urban schools related to classroom sizes. Certainly, we do not see those issues arising in rural schools.

The cost of living. We see housing costs being much higher in the cities. Utilities and insurance, the cost of recreational opportunities: these pieces are dramatically higher in urban settings.

Finally, the public safety piece that I mentioned mostly arises due to a drug crisis and mental health issues in our visibly unhoused people in urban core areas.

Out of these four pieces the matter of addressing these issues largely falls to representatives of urban ridings. I do note that this to some degree was spoken to in the Carter case that's mentioned in the commission's interim report. In that case the Supreme Court of Canada felt that the rural divisions were more difficult to represent. They cited difficulty with communication, transportation challenges. However, I do note the significant change in our society since 1991, and I find those comments quite dated.

The changing demographics resulting from immigration policy even over the last 10 years have had a far more dramatic effect on urban centres than rural ones. Three-quarters of the growth, as we know, from 2021 to 2024 has landed in our urban centres, and that's made representing residents in urban ridings more difficult due to language barriers, access to services, and more. Representing an urban riding might be more geographically contained, but it's far more complex in my submission. Social media and the availability of face-to-face meetings over Zoom or Teams has vastly increased the ability to interact directly with constituents even when not directly in person. I know that's imperfect, but it does address those concerns somewhat.

**7:20**

More directly, though, in the Edmonton context the commission – again, I also want to echo the previous speakers in saying that for the most part I was very happy with the map as it is presented in the interim report. However, I did feel that there was still some room for improvement that would improve even the voter parity and effective representation even further. The amalgamation of Edmonton-Glenora-Riverview creates a population that's 12 per cent over the midpoint. That's based on numbers that are from 2024, which have likely increased even more since then given the population growth even since the 2024 numbers came out. I do agree, of course, with the commission's decision to add an additional seat to Edmonton's west and southeast, but for that to come at the expense of the amalgamation of the central Edmonton ridings I think is an error.

Both of these ridings, Edmonton-Glenora and Edmonton-Riverview, are experiencing infill and population growth, and that's likely to increase, in my view, in the coming years as more housing projects break ground pursuant to the city of Edmonton's efforts and policy to increase housing density in neighbourhoods near to the city's core. You see that in these neighbourhoods they are seeing the push or neighbourhood pressure to sign restrictive covenants, for example, to limit that infill coming their way. There's also going to be the imminent operation of the Edmonton Valley Line west LRT, which likely will also draw people into those neighbourhoods. Again, to put these two neighbourhoods together to create a superriding that's 12 per cent over the average population in my view is not a step that's necessary here, and I hope that you'd reconsider that.

As to my own riding, as a resident of Brookside we're on a little bit of an island, so I was actually very pleased to see that we remain in Edmonton-Whitemud, and I want to ensure that I lend my voice to support that no change would happen there. My interests are closely aligned with Riverbend and Terwillegar. My kids go to school in all of those neighbourhood schools. We do all of our grocery shopping; my daughter has a part-time job; all of their sports are centred in those neighbourhoods, so I want to ensure that there's no reconsideration to move us into Riverview. Bringing Mactaggart into that riding also does make sense, and I support that as well. It'll allow for more growth in Edmonton-South without that

riding becoming too overburdened. Their interests, I think, and daily activities are well aligned with Edmonton-Whitemud, so I do support that as well.

While for the most part I think the interim report is an excellent reflection for Edmonton, I think it's an error to combine Edmonton-Riverview and Edmonton-Glenora, and I would hope for a reconsideration on that point.

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

**Ms Faught:** I'm open to any questions.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson, any questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** No. We have heard quite a bit about the combination of Edmonton-Glenora and Edmonton-Riverview. I don't have any questions on that. I'm pleased that you're happy with Edmonton-Whitemud. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

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

**Mr. Clark:** The community you live in: I think that's still within Edmonton-Whitemud or we've moved that – what is it?

**Ms Faught:** Brookside.

**Mr. Clark:** Brookside?

**Ms Faught:** Yes.

**Mr. Clark:** Brookside. Perfect. My only shortcoming is that I'm not from Edmonton.

Sorry. You're generally happy, then, with Edmonton-Whitemud?

**Ms Faught:** Yes. I was concerned that my community, because it's sort of geographically set apart, might fall to a different riding, but it's much better suited to remain in Edmonton-Whitemud.

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

**The Chair:** Just so I'm clear, you're happy with our report, but you're a little disappointed with the fact that we shrunk five into four in Edmonton.

**Ms Faught:** That's right, sir.

**The Chair:** Six into five.

**Ms Faught:** Six into five.

**The Chair:** Now I'll let Dr. Martin ask you a question. Sorry; I shouldn't set up a lawyer like that, but I just did.

**Dr. Martin:** Brookside is isolated. It's only got one access and egress, and you've got the Whitemud freeway and you've got the ravine, so it really is an island – lucky you in many respects – but that's the virtue of living along that Whitemud Creek. There are a lot of opportunities of that kind along there.

I don't think this is the place to debate it, but it would be fun sometime elsewhere to debate the points you make about: you aim to make a significant distinction between urban situations and rural ones. One of them, just for example, that you point out is public safety, and I would have to disagree with you fundamentally on that point. The rural situation with respect to public safety is very dire, and I think that's probably not one theme that you want to pursue if you want to build out a story of the differences.

**Ms Faught:** I take your point, and I didn't mean to focus on trying to sow those seeds of division, but I was interested in the commentary that was already in the interim report that went to that point, so I felt it was fair to speak on it. But certainly, yes, I take your point that there is a lot of discussion. Particularly in years previous to perhaps the rise of attention paid to the fentanyl crisis, certainly the rural safety, you know, was a more visible-in-the-media issue, and I certainly wouldn't minimize that conversation for rural people either.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms Faught, but I can't let someone from Castor leave without asking, and I know it's a generation before you, but do you know my colleague Charlene Anderson?

**Ms Faught:** I do. I know her well.

**The Chair:** And my good friend Dan Hein, who graduated in the class in 1980?

**Ms Faught:** I worked for Charlene's brother in a grocery store.

**The Chair:** Okay. Good. Well, say hello to them when you see them next.

**Ms Faught:** I will. Thank you so much.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Jennifer Klimek.

**Ms Klimek:** Klimek, right.

**The Chair:** Welcome.

**Ms Klimek:** Thank you. I'm going to be brief because I've listened to the people before me and I don't have much to add, especially to the woman before me. I live in Gold Bar, and this is my second time before you.

**The Chair:** I know. That's why I said welcome. I was going to say welcome back.

**Ms Klimek:** I had no idea this existed, so it's been a real learning for me, and I thank you.

**The Chair:** Neither did we 11 months ago.

**Ms Klimek:** It's really interesting, especially when you watch the stuff in the States about all the gerrymandering, so I want to thank you for doing the good job you did. It gives me confidence. I was a little skeptical. Like, what do these people do? What are they doing? And you did well.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you. We were unanimous, and our goal is to be unanimous in the final report.

**Mr. Clark:** And we can't spell gerrymandering.

**Ms Klimek:** Well, you're not going to do it, so you don't need to.

**Mrs. Samson:** Or unanimous.

**Mr. Clark:** We can spell unanimous.

**Ms Klimek:** I liked what you did, with a few little tweaks that I think you need to do. I was happy that you didn't create a lot of

hybrid urban-rural. I grew up in rural Alberta. I grew up near Vermilion, so I still have a lot of contact out there, and there are different concerns. Every time I go home we have the city folks, the rural debates about concerns, and I think it would be hard for an MLA to separate those out as much. So I like that you left what was there.

**The Chair:** Well, we added a few hybrids.

**Ms Klimek:** Yeah, but it could have been worse.

**The Chair:** Or it could have been better, some people say.

**Ms Klimek:** Yeah, and I think it's important to keep that in mind because especially now I think the demographics are changing so much. When I go back to my little town, there's nothing there.

**The Chair:** Where's your town?

**Ms Klimek:** Dewberry.

**The Chair:** Oh, my goodness. Where is that?

**Mrs. Samson:** Where is Dewberry?

**Ms Klimek:** You're going between Vermilion and Lloyd, you turn north and go about 20 miles.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Dr. Martin:** Towards the river.

**Ms Klimek:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** Battle River.

**Ms Klimek:** Yeah.

**Mr. Clark:** You'd be a chuckwagon racing fan, then?

**Ms Klimek:** Yes. The Bensmillers.

**Mr. Clark:** That's right. Exactly.

7:30

**Ms Klimek:** Yes. They grew up there. And you see that everywhere in rural Alberta, and I think that's part of the problem here. How do you deal with that? I think that's the hard part for you.

I also live in Bonnie Doon, and I'm watching infill. When I moved into the neighbourhood 30 years ago, the schools were almost closing. There were places to park on the streets, you know. Only half the houses have been replaced, so it's going to become denser, and that's okay. I'm okay with that, but we need to deal with that. I think when you're looking ahead, you have to project that even more people are going to be in the cities. That's my big thing. I think you need to account for maybe another seat, not putting some together, so that the urban people are well represented numberwise.

Even within a city you see disparity in how neighbourhoods see each other. My neighbourhood seems to be quite open to infill where other neighbourhoods are not so open. You know, so you have to kind of keep them together so you have stuff.

I guess my only thing I'd say is that a tweak we do need, especially because I think it's 10 years to do the next one – right? So there could be maybe one election? Two? Three?

**The Chair:** That'd be two. Every two election cycles.

**Ms Klimek:** Oh, every two elections.

**The Chair:** It works out to be eight to 10 years.

**Ms Klimek:** Yeah. So if we're pushing up to that top now, where are we going to be in the next elections? You know, it's even going to be more disparate between ridings, one representative representing way more people than someone who has less. It's not everything, but it is important that, you know, my vote counts the same as someone else's.

I guess that's the only thing I really have to say today. I'm happy with mine. Nothing to complain about Gold Bar. We're kind of caught anyhow behind industrial stuff, so you can't move us out anyway.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Do you like the name still?

**Ms Klimek:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** Okay. Good.

**Ms Klimek:** I ski down at Gold Bar.

That's all I really want to say. I just want to say thank you. It was a pleasure to learn about you. For me that was a real education.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Dr. Martin, any comments, conversation?

**Dr. Martin:** The one significant thing we did with this – well, we did two. We moved Riverview – is it? – back into the . . .

**Ms Klimek:** Riverdale.

**Dr. Martin:** Riverdale. We moved it back north of the river because we like the river as a boundary. But we also have added Ritchie, Hazeldean, and Argyll. We've heard quite a lot from people from Ritchie. This really was one of the situations where we felt we were really pressed because of the population. Gold Bar has a very, very slow growth pattern, perhaps more than anywhere else in the city. You know, there are about 9,000 people there, and adding them to Gold Bar gets you just about on the mean. If we didn't move it – it's traditionally been in Edmonton-Strathcona – then it would make Edmonton-Strathcona 63,000. So that's why that came about, just in case you were thinking: why did it happen?

**Ms Klimek:** Yeah. And it makes sense to put them in. I mean, they can go either way: Hazeldean, Ritchie. I spend a lot of time in Mill Creek Ravine. We all congregate there from both sides. It's very similar, you know, so that's fine. I can see, like, Gold Bar doesn't grow as much, partly because, I would say, its proximity to the industrial area.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah, thanks. It's, again, helpful to get the on-the-ground, you know, lay-of-the-land kind of input.

**Ms Klimek:** Yeah.

**Mr. Clark:** You know, part of our struggle and challenge, as you've identified, is that we've had this significant influx of population in the last seven or eight years. Most of it, the vast majority, three-quarters of it, has ended up in the big cities, Calgary and Edmonton.

**Ms Klimek:** Yeah.

**Mr. Clark:** And we are also tasked with effective representation. You've heard from other folks, if you were here for Minister Nixon's comments, about some of the challenges we have in particular in the far north. We're trying to balance almost, really, the impossible. What we've done is, in essence, and this is not a strict mathematical exercise either, but on average – let me see. The city of Edmonton: the average constituency is about 3.5 per cent over, which is kind of a consequence of having the areas outside, in particular the far north, quite a bit under.

**Ms Klimek:** Yeah.

**Mr. Clark:** You know, there are even some adjustments, potentially. I guess my question to you is: do you feel that is sort of about right given the challenges, you know, the push and the pull, right? There are different challenges for rural and remote areas. We have challenges in the inner city as well, right? MLAs have lots to do. Do you feel like that's an appropriate balance that we've struck, or would you advocate something different?

**Ms Klimek:** Well, I think what you have now I'd say we could live with. Okay? It's fine. Having come from rural Alberta, I can't be – like, some of my friends have never been out there. It is a different world. That's for sure. I can't imagine being an MLA trying to – like, with the hybrid, they're very different concerns, but they need to be represented. I know my family keeps saying, "Well, no. You guys don't appreciate us out here," you know, my family in the farm area. I do worry that it might be okay now, but where are we going to be two election cycles down the way?

**Mr. Clark:** I don't know.

**Ms Klimek:** We have to look ahead. I mean, I would assume we're going to grow. It's just going to happen. See, I did environmental work. We don't want to keep growing out. We want to become denser because that's good farmland. I'm a good farm girl. That's good farmland we're putting houses on. That's your challenge, I guess, and I don't know how you do that, like, how much you project ahead. My neighbourhood is suddenly: there won't be any parking. Now there's at least one parking spot. You know what I mean? I don't know how do your job to project that, but I think you have to give yourself some leeway in there for it to bump up, and maybe rural Alberta is going to even get smaller.

**Mr. Clark:** It's a real dilemma. Generally, I think if you look back at past boundary commissions, basically, we're always chasing it. Right? Because the large urbans do tend to populate quicker. At least, you know, even when other places outside have absolute growth, they grow relatively slower. So I think the answer to that question is that we're probably always chasing it. That's actually why I asked Minister Nixon about the number of seats, because that would potentially help.

**Ms Klimek:** You don't get a say on that, do you?

**Mr. Clark:** We don't. We can nudge and ask nicely, but no. We don't get any control there.

**Ms Klimek:** Can you write back that you're hearing a lot that the public wants more seats?

**The Chair:** That's exactly what we may very well recommend.

**Ms Klimek:** Because, I mean . . .

**The Chair:** We have one more presenter yet this evening.

**Ms Klimek:** Yep. Okay.

**Mr. Clark:** Sorry. I've taken too much time.

**The Chair:** On the issue of hybrids, it's a legitimate tool that we have to use if necessary, but not necessarily hybrid. I think we're being very selective. The communities of interest have to be there. Eighteen different areas of the province have had hybrids for decades. I had someone read back part of our report – she wasn't necessarily convinced – earlier today, but we have to keep hybrids as an option.

Mrs. Samson, any questions?

**Mrs. Samson:** No. I want to thank you for coming out. With you liking the changes to Gold Bar, I'm happy to carry on. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** No. No questions for me. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you for coming again.

**Ms Klimek:** Thank you for the opportunity.

**The Chair:** Yep. Okay. I'll excuse you.

We have our last presenter, Stephen Raitz. I'm sorry, sir. You came late.

**Mr. Raitz:** No, that's all good. That's my bad.

**The Chair:** No extra charge for you. You got to see the whole evening.

**Mr. Raitz:** Yeah. I appreciate it.

I don't have a specific ward that I'm speaking to. I came in June to speak when you were . . .

**The Chair:** Tell us what riding you are in.

**Mr. Raitz:** I guess I'm now in Edmonton-Gold Bar. I'm in the Ritchie neighbourhood. Yeah. I think it's important to reflect on where people come from because I feel like I might have something to say about the hybrid stuff as well. I did not grow up, like, in the country at all, but I grew up outside of Edmonton and Leduc, and my partner grew up in Sherwood Park, so very much have that commuter mindset and understand the connection that some of those smaller cities have to the bigger cities.

Some of the main points I wanted to raise today: I just wanted to bring some of my experience as an urban planner and a lawyer and someone who was on the ward boundary commission for Edmonton in 2019-2020.

Just a quick story to start with. Presenting the proposals for that, we had some concerns, and then we tried to adjust for those concerns and presented the final proposal. Then there were still concerns, but it was that right balance. Ultimately, I think you guys are already well aware that there's always going to be some sort of concerns, and it's about trying to find that good compromise. I think you're on the path to compromise. I would reflect a lot of the comments that came from people from Edmonton earlier today where I think it's close, but there's maybe some tweaking. There might be other parts of the province where, yeah, there might need to be a little bit more juggling to accommodate for some larger scale concerns.

**7:40**

But reflecting on that community of interest idea, I think broadly some of the big pieces were gotten pretty close to where we'd want

to see it, with a lot of those mid-sized cities that are across the province, you know, not getting distributed out but still kind of being their own anchors and having their own electoral districts. Then, you know, pretty similar in the Edmonton or Calgary regions and some of those municipalities on the edge, where those municipalities can anchor their own electoral districts. They still are proposed to be, so I think that's positive. I think you're headed in the right direction there.

I would say, like, if there is an opportunity to shake things up, it might be some of those commuter cities like Leduc or Beaumont. I formerly worked for the city of Beaumont, so I have some experience with folks out there, and then grew up in Leduc. Right now the split with Beaumont: I've heard concerns, and I could see how that would be concerning for that community, to have it split down the middle. Does it make sense to adhere it just to one district and then have it flip into Edmonton if 50th Street is such a corridor into the city? That just might be a proposal that you'd want to consider as not necessarily a hybrid but not necessarily not, or whatever the statement that you were saying was. It's in those edge-city cases where I think the hybrid might make the most sense. Like, similar to St. Albert and Morinville, there's that clear connection between a pretty urban place and then a smaller city there.

I think the community of interests are close. The only other one that I would maybe mention is the Edmonton-West-Enoch. I guess the point on communities of interest is that we're trying to keep similar communities altogether, but there are, of course, different scales of these communities of interest, so when you see a smaller community of interest get split or subsumed in a larger community of interest, just really listening to that community's feedback, if it's the Enoch First Nation or if it's Beaumont, like, understanding that their voices would be underrepresented in that situation and seeing where they see themselves in that broader community of interest.

Yeah. The last point that I'd just be making is something that's come up a couple of times, and there are references to some of the electoral districts that I had in my notes that I then heard about in presentations earlier, so I can just be pretty brief. But specifically that line on page 33 about some of the growth patterns, especially in Edmonton, reflecting specifically that electoral districts near the core of the city like Gold Bar, Strathcona, Riverview, Glenora are growing at slower rates than more suburban areas of Edmonton. There's some truth to the that being the case in the past, but just some of the stats in recent years of 40 per cent of new development permits approved in the city of Edmonton were in those core neighbourhoods, so I would caution against really relying heavily on the assumption that the suburbs are going to be booming.

**The Chair:** What page is that?

**Mr. Raitz:** Page 33.

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

**Mr. Raitz:** It's not something that's totally untrue, but it's just something that I don't think you can rest on too heavily because it might present a situation where 10 years from now we have, you know, discrepancies of 40 per cent like we do right now. Like, let's get in front of some of that.

Just some of the specific ones that I would point to – again, it's maybe reflecting on some of the city plan maps, like, where densification is identified. You know, you'd maybe consider how Century Park in Edmonton-Rutherford is already 5.7 per cent over, but there's a lot more intensification that's going to occur there. Similarly, Mill Woods Town Centre in Edmonton-Mill Woods: that's 8.6 per cent over. The electoral districts mentioned earlier: west Valley Line spurring a lot of growth in Edmonton-Glenora-

Riverview, which is already 12 per cent over; Edmonton-McClung, which is 12.6 per cent over; and then the example from earlier today, Edmonton-North West. Griesbach is a redeveloping neighbourhood, but then it's also Goodridge Corners, which is a Greenfield neighbourhood.

Just assessing those situations and seeing if there are ways that – and this was our experience on the ward boundary commission. Like, if some ridings can kind of nibble at other ones and then nibble around until you address those potential discrepancies, that might be just some of the areas where you need to do that adjustment. But, yeah, I would just hope to see some additional context on that page 33 comment and then just some adjustment there.

**The Chair:** Sure, and that's fair. Have you submitted that in writing to Mr. Roth?

**Mr. Raitz:** I can submit my written comments by e-mail.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you. Thank you for your presentation, and thank you for giving us hope that there's life after the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

**Mr. Raitz:** Yeah. It's great, guys. It's great. It's fun.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans, any questions?

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

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for the presentation. I appreciate that. Just in your comments you indicated that you had experience with Beaumont. Could you give us some suggestions what to do with it? Just because, you know, we're getting push-back. That split: okay; I won't go in any further. Tell me what you think.

**Mr. Raitz:** Well, I just think what it's split into might be the concern, especially, like, the east half reaching all the way around to Strathcona county and Sherwood Park. Like, when we talk about communities of interest and communities of interest relating to one another, you know, it's kind of a quarter around the Henday. Like, it's kind of not in that same quadrant of the areas around Edmonton, so, you know, right now it's Leduc-Beaumont, but it's also pretty high above the thresholds that you'd want to be at, and it's probably going to get worse if it were to be kept the same. So it might be that, you know, in all these compromises, that might be one of the compromises, having Beaumont split that way, but it would also be worth while to explore: is it worth it to cleave off a part of Leduc that might make sense and then keep Beaumont and Leduc together, or does it make sense to consider flipping part of Beaumont into Edmonton, like the southern expanding area just because of that 50th Street corridor?

I don't purport to speak on behalf of these communities, but that's some of the experience. That's where my mind would go in trying to solve some of these issues.

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay. Thank you for your expertise.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah.

I'd like to pick that up, your more general point about edge communities. Now, this is planner speak, but I am fascinated because we've heard about gateway communities with respect to the mountains, for example, but edge communities are very interesting and I think pertinent because there are many examples of that, I suggest, in Alberta. So can you tell me a bit more about what characterizes these spaces?

**Mr. Raitz:** Well, I think if you're looking at your average kind of population, like, how much does that community fill it up? If you're in a situation where 20,000 people are in that edge community, it's going to have to cleave on to something else. I guess just community writ large, like a 20,000 population community is probably going to have to merge with something else in its surrounding, and an edge community, like those communities that are just on the edge of the big cities – yeah; like, growing up in Leduc, you know, my weekdays were in Leduc but my weekends were in the city, and I think that's the experience of a lot of people who grow up in those places. They do a lot of the day-to-day going to school or going to doctors' appointments, but they might, you know, go to Costco or that kind of thing in the city. Like, there is still that connection that might be more strongly felt in that increasingly urban direction instead of that increasingly rural direction.

I guess another point to raise, that I brought up in June, is that if you go in that increasingly rural direction from those edge communities, that rural voice gets diminished over time just proportionately because these edge communities are growing so fast. So, like, you're kind of grouping together two areas that are growing very quickly, but they might also be just two areas that are more connected and more tied into a community of interest along a corridor like highway 2 or 50th Street for that kind of thing.

**Dr. Martin:** Yeah. Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** I'll just pick up quickly on the edge community comment. Not being from Edmonton, I don't always fully understand

the context. Sherwood Park: I mean, it sure seems like it's an edge community.

**Mr. Raitz:** Yeah, it's literally right on the edge. This is an example of numbers, where Sherwood Park probably fills out an entire electoral district like St. Albert fills out an entire electoral district. Spruce Grove, Leduc: like, they get pretty close because they're 30,000, 40,000 people. Stony Plain is in that 20,000 range. So, really, the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board: like, you're obviously familiar with that with Calgary, I'm pretty sure. So that's kind of a good blueprint to, like, look at. What would have seen itself as a part of that region or as a part of that, being on the edge of something more urban?

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

**The Chair:** Thank you again for presenting, and thank you for, well, you didn't have any choice . . .

**Mr. Raitz:** I didn't have a choice, but it was good. It was good to listen to everybody else. I appreciate your work. Thank you.

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

This is the conclusion of our public hearings for the second round except for a special day tomorrow. Thank you, everyone, for appearing – such great presentations – and for listening, and we conclude today.

[The hearing adjourned at 7:50 p.m.]









