



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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9:07 a.m.

Monday, January 19, 2026

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the first day of the second week of our round of public hearings for the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission. Of course, the commission is established by the Legislature. It's an independent commission, and if you note the members of the commission before you and if you need to know background information, you can go to the commission's website to find out about our backgrounds.

This commission was established back in late March, early April of last year, and we were given two challenges, effectively. The first one was to deal with boundaries for electoral divisions because of an increase of ridings from 87 to 89. The size of the Legislature is expanding. Of course, individuals, voters who reside in the electoral division are the ones who elect that particular MLA, and that person then represents them in the Legislative Assembly in Edmonton.

The second issue that we had to deal with is the issue of population increase. Alberta has been faced with a very significant population increase. So the first one was moving the number of seats from 87 to 89, and the second challenge was dealing with the significant increase in population. From the time of the last electoral boundaries report in 2017, Alberta's population has increased by over 800,000. Just to put it in perspective, in 2017 just over 4 million people resided in Alberta, and if you took the average population for each division, it was 46,697. That's not the target. The target zone is actually the plus/minus of 25 per cent. In order to maintain effective representation, as long as the electoral division had a population of between 35,000 to 58,000, that was sufficient.

Fast-forward to this time around, and the population of Alberta is now 4.8 million-plus. If we take that population and divide it by the number of electoral divisions of 89, that reveals an average population of just under 55,000. Again, the target range is 41,000 to 68,000.

The task of this commission is to hear from Albertans as to how best we can recommend boundaries to provide what has come to be known as effective representation for all Albertans.

The commission, since its appointment, has been busy. We first met in April to discuss and determine what population figures we were going to use. We're mandated by the legislation to rely on the last decennial census, which was 2021. That census figure is then updated regularly and consistently by the Office of Statistics and Information, a division of the Alberta Treasury Board. We agreed upon the population figures, and then we reviewed hundreds of submissions that came into this commission in the early days. In late May and all of June we travelled across the province to hear public presentations from interested citizens as to how the boundaries should be drawn and where they should be allocated. After our time dealing with the public, in late June, we then met with Elections Alberta staff, and they assisted us greatly in helping us draw boundaries throughout the province and allocating the boundaries such that we could then prepare our interim report.

The interim report was based on all the public submissions, the consultations, the population figures, and the assistance of Elections Alberta. That report was provided to the Speaker of the Legislature in late October, and he tabled it and gave a copy to each member of the Legislature immediately, and it was then posted on our website.

In completing our interim report, we followed and referenced the many factors that are mentioned in the legislation, things like: sparsity, density of population, communities of interest, geographic features, the availability and means of communication, transportation between various parts of Alberta, all leading up to the concept of

having electoral divisions that provide for effective representation. Then, finally, we want to be sure that all the boundaries that we do allocate are understandable and clear. That's what we tried to do in our interim report.

After release of the interim report, we opened a portal on our website for public submissions from November 3 to December 19, and in that time period we received over 1,100 submissions. Now, in January, we are, in a sense, travelling across Alberta again. We spent two and a half days in Calgary. We're spending three days here in Edmonton, and we spent two days receiving virtual submissions from places outside the two major centres. We've been doing that and will do that up until Wednesday of this week.

That's where we are. Now we're at the stage of the commission that in hearing these reports we will be preparing, after this week, to work on our final report.

We're pleased to be in Edmonton hearing in-person meetings. Our first presenter is Mr. Josh Bishop. Please identify yourself, tell us what organization you may be representing, and what constituencies you wish to comment on.

9:15

Mr. Bishop: Well, good morning. Thanks for having me here. My name is Josh Bishop. I'm a district director for the Rural Municipalities of Alberta. I'm also a reeve for the county of Wetaskiwin. We're here today to talk just more broadly across all the divisions and just get a sense of the greater need for rural representation through the districts.

For myself, I have lived up and down this great province, including Edmonton – large, dense, urban, as we're all aware – rural communities in the central regions, and I've also experienced living in the remoteness of the north. These lived experiences have helped me form some of the opinions that I'll be sharing with you today. I also have with me our general manager of policy and advocacy, Mr. Wyatt Skovron. He's been a valuable asset in creating a lot of the data and documentation that we've reviewed as an organization.

I'd also like to thank you for allowing me to come here today. You guys do have quite a task before you. I'm sure the pressures are immense and you want to get it right. I'm just here today to help guide that a little bit if I can.

A little bit about RMA. We represent Alberta's 69 rural municipalities, which include counties, municipal districts, specialized municipalities, and the Special Areas Board. This includes some urbanized areas such as city-sized hamlets as well as very small and remote hamlets. RMA members provide municipal services to 85 per cent of Alberta's land mass and roughly 15 per cent of the population.

Daily life for residents of our member municipalities is characterized by long distances in services and ties to the resource industries. Rural municipalities are also responsible for an outsized share of critical infrastructure, including 75 per cent of roads, 60 per cent of bridges and culverts, as well as 30 per cent of water systems. Despite the low population, rural Alberta produces 28 per cent of the province's GDP at over \$89 billion. These responsibilities and the value of our economic input need to be recognized in our rural representation.

These characteristics are central to how rural Albertans interact with and are represented by their MLAs. For context, we have massive municipalities geographically, with one of our northern municipalities, for example, being larger than the size of New Brunswick and P.E.I. combined. As you can imagine, trying to get over that scale of distance for an MLA would be quite challenging. Alberta is unique across Canadian provinces in the breadth of development and the communities spread out across the entirety of

the province north to south, east to west, making effective representation extremely difficult across such large distances.

As you can imagine, communities that are spread out will have differing priorities and challenges. In many cases rural ridings already have population centres and economic hubs that are hours apart from each other and as far as 13 hours away from Edmonton, where the MLA spends the majority of their time. These distances drastically reduce an MLA's ability to effectively represent and connect with their constituents and hear their concerns. This erodes public trust and confidence in effective representation.

The commission's report acknowledges that rural areas often present barriers to effective representation, and therefore the link between effective representation is often at odds with voter parity. The report emphasized that it is not only the commission's opinion that absolute or even relative parity is undesirable and impractical, but it is actually a core tenet of effective representation across the country, as confirmed by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1991. We wholeheartedly agree with that.

The report suggests that usage of larger variances is often required to account for rural challenges, yet the recommendations don't reflect that reality. In fact, we're seeing that reduced representation is actually being proposed. The takeaway here is that the commission's theoretical approach doesn't appear to match the recommendations we're seeing. Despite general references to a nuanced approach, voter parity is shown to be the preferred approach, despite the earlier comments that this is often inequitable in rural ridings.

Given the commission's focus on effective representation, RMA is a little bit surprised at the commission's minimal use of section 15(2) powers. Given that previously two of these divisions existed, and the commission is now recommending only one, our position is that there is justification to substantially increase the use of section 15(2). In reference to reducing the number of northern electoral divisions, the commission acknowledges that it is an imperfect solution to an impossible problem. However, you could also utilize section 15(2) to maintain the number of rural electoral divisions, if not increase, and accept some urban ridings that may trend slightly toward the upper end of the population variance threshold. This approach would lead to a more balanced distribution of access to representation.

Our view is that the commission's expanded use of hybrid ridings is similarly problematic. On page 27 of the interim report the commission argues that hybrid ridings are the only option available to them to maintain effective representation in rural areas. This seems to be linked, again, to the desire to keep those populations as close to the average as possible as opposed to prioritizing effective representation.

While it again may be an imperfect solution, the commission could choose to follow another path by tolerating slightly higher urban electoral division populations. While RMA agrees with the commission's comments that existing hybrid ridings are entrenched, expanding their use to Edmonton and Calgary could have major impacts on rural communities surrounding the cities as tensions around land use exist in these communities, and it's critical that we have our own voice at the table to defend those areas.

While hybrid ridings may support a cleaner electoral boundaries map, it risks weakening actual representation for both urban and rural residents of the riding. RMA would urge the commission to reconsider whether an expansion in hybrid ridings is inevitable, as they suggest, or whether there are other solutions to ensure urban and rural interests are adequately represented in the Legislature.

What I'd like to leave the commission with today is that many of the decisions and the approaches in the interim report that reduce

rural representation are framed as inevitable or an unfortunate reality of a changing province, but in reality the commission is making choices, and many of those choices will diminish, in our opinion, the rural representation. There are opportunities to revisit some of these most impactful changes to rural representation, including the loss of rural ridings and expansion of hybrid, and RMA and its members would be happy to work with the commission to gather any evidence that you would need to support this work.

Thanks again for allowing me to come and speak with you today.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Bishop. Thank you for your PowerPoint.

Questions from the commission. Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much. Yeah, I very much appreciate you being here.

You've flagged a couple of things, I think in particular the challenges with the way we've drawn the map for the far north. We've heard a lot of feedback on that last week in particular when we had the folks from the north speaking with us. We received well over a hundred written submissions on that point as well. So without making any promises at all, I think that's something we've heard very clearly, that there are differences – significant differences – and challenges in addressing and representing far north.

Some of the geographic examples you gave I think are compelling, very much so. I'm really interested. As someone who has lived all over the province, far north, rural and big cities, how would you characterize the difference between those areas? I guess what I'm really asking is that part of the submissions we've heard, some of the suggestions would say, "Let's blend different parts of the province together, you know, big cities and rural areas, because that's going to kind of connect us," as opposed to others who would say, "Well, wait a minute. Actually, that's quite different. The interests and the needs in a big city are quite different from rural communities and even some areas that are decidedly just outside the city but not the city." So I guess I'm just curious on your perspective on that question.

Mr. Bishop: The majority of my life I actually did live urban. It wasn't until later on that I moved into rural areas, and it's one of those things that the more you know, the more you realize how little you did know. Being on that other side of it, looking back with my perspective of being raised urban and living some of my adult life as urban, the differences are huge and I think largely misunderstood, so I did not know or understand a lot of things.

Ways that I would have voted, you know, for example, previously have changed because now I understand both sides, and actually some of the rural priorities and things that are important in the rural community I wouldn't have ever thought of, but it affects my day-to-day life in the city. So there are a lot of those types of things where I think getting that on-the-ground representation from MLAs is critical. When we're joining those ridings up with urban, you're going to dilute that voice, I think to the detriment of all Albertans.

9:25

Mr. Clark: Thank you. You know, again, as we wrestle with the challenge that with such a huge population influx that we saw between 2017 and 2025, the vast, vast majority of that ends up in cities. This isn't just an arithmetic exercise, as you've said. We have the opportunity. What we're looking for is effective representation. It's not one person, one vote. As Justice Miller said, it's effective representation. But in striving for that, the percentages of outside

Edmonton and Calgary representation in our interim report are actually greater as a percentage than we had in 2017 in the past boundaries.

That's a question. It's not that we haven't thought about it. Part of it is that you get handcuffed a bit just by the substantial influx of population, and then we only have certain tools to address it, one of them being some of the blending of urban and rural. There's been a lot of push-back on that. I guess maybe I'll just leave you with the question of: how would you square that particular challenge that we have?

Mr. Bishop: The representation in my case as reeve of the county of Wetaskiwin: I have a very close comparable to the city of Wetaskiwin population-wise. Our distance is way greater. Our responsibilities are way greater. When we do a public engagement, for example, to get that effective representation the city could hold one or two and capture everybody that wants to attend. We have to host eight. Just getting that representation out to everybody takes a lot more work, especially when you consider an MLA. The way that I would correct that is what I'm suggesting to the group, increasing those population thresholds as is allowed. These are tools that you have. Allowing that to get to that upper end I think would still allow for that effective representation.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much. I'm musing on your final point. A thought experiment: if you push to the upper range of the allowed variation, is it going to be consistent with effective representation? It's a puzzle that we have to deal with. We're juggling a half dozen factors according to the statute. Also when you consider factors that are mentioned here like communities of interest, that immediately breaks into 10 different ways you could parse that: school boards, where you shop, where you play, where you work, any number of things. It becomes an exercise in careful juggling.

To summarize what you have told us today, we ought to use the variation tool more robustly, not as a last resort? We should use 15(2) more often, which is a consequence of using the variation tool more robustly, and also hybrids. Hybrids have been top throughout our own personal discussions and those of all the submitters and letters of people have come before us. Really, I think to my mind it is – I can't speak for my colleagues here – a function of communities of interest as well. You can't just do it mathematically or just because you can. You need to justify it in the other terms.

Your points are taken. We're aware of them. It's always useful to be reminded that we could weight the factors differently from place to place and we can't have a cookie cutter approach to the weighting of them either because the act warns us against doing such a thing. Welcome to our dilemma.

I wanted to ask you something about Wetaskiwin. What are the economic corridors in the county? Is it a QE II orientated county, or is it east-west, that the major economic corridor is going east-west?

Mr. Bishop: It would be primarily north-south, but a lot of it is through traffic. They're not stopping necessarily in Wetaskiwin. We have very independent, I guess, economic diversification within our own county. Within our own county there'd be a little bit more east-west, but we cover everything from, you know, pasture land, farmland to mountain view, bush. Like, we're a smaller municipality as far as rurals go, but we're an hour and a half wide, so we encompass a lot of different things. Microeconomies across the county is basically what we have.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for your time this morning. I appreciate your comments. I've been really struggling with the hybrids, and I think you touched on it well. They are challenging to work with. What we have been working with are two types of hybrids: the ones where we gather a little bit from the two core cities, Calgary and Edmonton, and then the ones where you have municipalities like Airdrie who are split through the city in half and half is urban and the other half is the rural. Did you want to comment further on those types of hybrids and how you see them fitting in and helping that urban-rural divide, or do you think they're not working that well?

Mr. Bishop: Like, without speaking to a specific one, just in general terms?

Mrs. Samson: Yeah. In general, please.

Mr. Bishop: I would feel that, you know, if you were the fractional part of the city – that is, say, you're 10,000 of the votes and 30,000 are in the rural – those 10,000 would ultimately feel disenfranchised, or the candidate comes from that urban and then the rest of the rural would feel disenfranchised. That's the way that we're looking at it, I think. Especially in those conflict zones with the growth management boards and the way that those have gone over the last couple of years, there's a very clear divide in some of those priorities, which would make it very difficult for an MLA that's split that way, when you have one on each side of it. I mean, they're still going to look at all the facts and make the best decision even if it's against what maybe your specific riding wants because we look at a broad scale. We do that no differently municipally. I think it's just allowing the access to hear that information and to feel that you're represented. It makes a big difference if it's split like that.

Mrs. Samson: In a case maybe closer to home for you, being the reeve of the county of Wetaskiwin, how close is your working relationship with – would I be fair to say that Wetaskiwin is the hub of the county?

Mr. Bishop: For a certain section of it. Like I said, we're an hour and a half wide. For the west end they're going to either Rocky or Drayton Valley. Central oftentimes will go to Leduc or wherever because they're right by highway 2. On the east end, yeah, they go to Wetaskiwin. So, you know, our ties are there, but we have so many competing interests. Within our own municipality residents in various hamlets across the municipality have different priorities, and we have to meet with each one of them individually. It takes an extra amount of time, I think, to get all of that representation effectively.

Mrs. Samson: Right. Thank you. That's most valuable. I appreciate your time today.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

Mr. Evans: Yes.

In carrying out your role as reeve and as any councillor, do I understand that Wetaskiwin the county would be broken up into effectively wards? So each councillor would be coming from a specific area?

Mr. Bishop: Yes.

Mr. Evans: So each councillor would, in effect, based on how you described to me – Wetaskiwin county and the microeconomies I think is the way you characterized it. Each of those would be distinct, identifiable communities of interest?

Mr. Bishop: Absolutely. Within my own division there are probably five distinct areas.

Mr. Evans: So a councillor representing each of those distinct areas would be conveying the voice of that area to the council. Correct?

Mr. Bishop: Yeah. Absolutely.

Mr. Evans: And through the process of politics you guys are able to come to a united voice in terms of representing the county as it relates to, you know, I guess the RMA, for example. Is that correct?

Mr. Bishop: Yeah.

Mr. Evans: So how is that carried out?

Mr. Bishop: Yeah. It's just by getting out into the community. Right? I couldn't imagine if my division was larger and I had to go to that many more subdivisions or some of them have multiple hamlets, so multiple urban areas within. This is at a smaller scale compared to an MLA but just based on that experience and the feedback we get. Like, you know, we host public hearings as well, where people are saying whether or not they're heard. The comments we hear at the door are whether or not they feel that they're being represented. We don't always have to vote the way that they want, but if we're at least available to hear them, I think the ability for us on that smaller scale to get out into all those areas is critical.

9:35

Mr. Evans: Isn't that just politics, though? I mean, regardless of what the constituency is and its makeup, whoever is the elected representative of that constituency has to do the work consistent with representing that constituency. It's no different in terms of your ward system.

My other question that I have for you is that I'm interested in your idea of taking the population and increasing the population density or threshold for urban versus rural. In the report we have the average population over 89 electoral districts for the province of Alberta. It would be 54,929. Then there's a population range that goes from 41,198 on the low end to the high end of 68,662. If I understand, what you're suggesting is that what we would do is we would maximize that population density as much as possible in the urban ridings to 68,000, let's say.

The Chair: Question.

Mr. Evans: Yeah.

Then, on the other hand, in rural ridings we would be using as close as possible to the 41,198, and we would balance things that way. Is that what you're suggesting?

Mr. Bishop: I would prefer to use some variation to it. I'm not saying that we have to go to the extreme in all cases. I know that's just never going to happen. It wouldn't fly. I think there'd be some major backlash. But if we go back to the core tenets and what we're supposed to be looking at, the effective representation, when you compare the ability to get out and do that effective representation outside of the Legislature – you're going to your community halls and to all these things – it's much, much easier to do that in an urban setting than a riding that's six, seven hours wide.

Mr. Evans: Have you guys worked through the numbers? Have you done the densification and the population – just one moment, Chair, please – in terms of the various populations?

Mr. Bishop: We haven't done your work, where we're going around to each one, but, you know, basically what we're looking at is, instead of reducing a rural seat, keeping at least the same amount or adding one. It would be very small percentages to achieve that.

Mr. Evans: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Bishop, can I encapsulate your presentation this way, that we talked a good talk in the early part of our report, but we didn't deliver?

Mr. Bishop: You've done a great job on an impossible thing. We would like some changes.

The Chair: Is that fair, though?

Mr. Bishop: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. And one of the ways we could have done better is utilize 15(2). You're right. We probably made a mistake by reducing our 15(2)s from two down to one when we have the capacity to do four. You're saying: look, be bold; use the target range, and stop taking ridings from outside the large urban centres.

Mr. Bishop: Yes, please.

The Chair: Okay. I'm a little confused on your hybrid position. Do you like them or you don't like them?

Mr. Bishop: Our position is that we're not a fan of the hybrid as much.

The Chair: Okay. Another word for that is "compromise." I mean, we need a lot of compromise. I appreciate the challenges, especially in the large metropolitan areas having hybrids now, but you will note in the report that we've had hybrids for years in multiple areas of the province. It is an option. It is one of only three options we have. One of the options is taking more ridings out of the rural areas. I hope you realize that we do try to delicately craft the hybrid situation.

I'm curious of your offer, and it's a comment I've – it's always bothered me because we get a lot of presentations on this. Economics and manufacturing and industry is not a factor in the legislation, but you've offered to give us data, as I understand it, in terms of the types of economies and economics that are happening in the rural areas. Do we reach out to you for that if we need some information?

Mr. Bishop: Absolutely. You can reach out to our staff or myself.

Part of that extra data that I gave you is just for that effective representation. Those are employers. Those are employees. These are things that really need to be considered by the MLA. Obviously, in the past several governments they've been interested in those figures.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Bishop. We kept you a little longer than normal.

Mr. Bishop: Happy to be here.

The Chair: We'll excuse you from the table. Please remain and hear presentations from other attendees.

Our next presenter is Mr. Yadvinder Bhardwaj.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Good morning, commissioners.

The Chair: Good morning, sir. Please tell us where you live and what electoral division you wish to comment on.

Mr. Bhardwaj: I live in the riding of Edmonton-Meadows. I also serve in the riding of Edmonton-Meadows as the constituency manager for the Edmonton-Meadows riding. I have gone through the report. I'm here to talk about the Edmonton region and also a little bit about my riding.

The Chair: Okay. This is an old-fashioned PowerPoint, is it?

Mr. Bhardwaj: Yes. I'm a bit old fashioned, too.

Good morning, commissioners. My name is Yadvinder Bhardwaj. I serve as the constituency manager of Edmonton-Meadows, a role that I have held since 2019. In this position I work daily with the residents across the riding on issues such as housing stability, immigration and settlement, access to health care, and support to seniors and newcomers. My work brings me into constant contact with families, community organizations, schools, and service providers. Because of this, I see very clearly how electoral boundaries shape people's access to representation. I see when boundaries provide clarity and when they create confusion. I see how cohesive communities strengthen engagement and how arbitrary splits can unintentionally discourage it. I'm here today as a public servant and also a constituent of a riding with lived, on-ground experience offering a community-based perspective in support of the commission's mandate of effective representation.

I would like to begin by sincerely thanking the commission for the depth, care, and transparency reflected in the 2025 interim report. Redistribution in a province experiencing rapid and uneven population growth is extraordinarily complex. The interim report demonstrates the commission's careful effort to balance population parity, geography, communities of interest, and long-term durability, all within the framework of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act and relevant case law.

I also appreciate the commission's effort to respect municipal boundaries, avoid unnecessary disruptions, and ensure Alberta's electoral map remains functional until the next redistribution cycle. My comments today are offered in alignment with those principles. These are intended to build upon the strong foundation you have already established.

The interim report clearly establishes that Edmonton and Calgary together account for nearly three-quarters of Alberta's population growth. The government of Alberta's population data further shows that between 2017 and 2025 Edmonton's population grew at an annual average of approximately 3.8 per cent compared to 2.58 of Calgary's. This tells us something important. Edmonton's growth is not temporary or speculative; it is structural and ongoing.

The interim report also highlights how much the average size of the electoral division has increased since the last distribution. In 2017 with 87 ridings the average population per riding was approximately 46,803 based on a provincial population of 4,071,875 people in our province. Under the current proposal with 85 ridings the average rises to approximately 54,929 people in every riding based on the provincial population of 4.9 million. This is a roughly 17 per cent increase in average constituency size. This matters because redistribution must be judged not only on whether it meets today's legal thresholds but on whether it is durable, whether it will continue to serve Albertans effectively until the next redistribution cycle.

9:45

Appendix E of the interim report shows Edmonton ridings have seven ridings exceeding positive 6 per cent variance above the provincial average compared to three ridings in Calgary, three in

central and rural Alberta, and none in northern Alberta. This concentration of high-variance ridings signals that population pressure in Edmonton is already more intense and less evenly distributed than elsewhere in the province. While the commission is legally permitted to justify variance under the Charter, the interim report itself makes clear that population parity remains a central component of effective representation.

For that reason, adding one additional riding in Edmonton is critical. It is preventative. It will reduce clustered variance, improve parity, and help ensure that today's map does not require early correction in the face of continued growth. This has practical implications for schools, health care access, infrastructure planning, MLA workload, and constituent ability.

The interim report acknowledges the challenges faced by rural MLAs, particularly those related to the long distances and geographical scales. Urban ridings face a different but equally real challenge. In dense and diverse urban ridings like Edmonton-Meadows MLAs regularly confront multiple simultaneous community events, school functions, cultural gatherings, and stakeholder meetings, often occurring within the same evening or weekend. From the constituency operation perspective, this creates intense scheduling pressure and limits an MLA's ability to be physically present across all the parts of the riding. Effective representation requires recognizing both forms of strain, geographical distance in rural Alberta and population intensity and diversity in the urban centres. An additional seat would directly improve MLA accessibility and responsiveness in these high-demand environments.

I would now like to speak about Edmonton-Meadows and the importance of keeping Larkspur within the riding. The commission emphasizes the need to preserve communities of interest, including shared services, transportation networks, cultural ties, and daily patterns of life. Larkspur clearly meets these criteria in Edmonton-Meadows. The neighbourhood shares schools, recreation facilities, commercial corridors, transit routes within the rest of the riding. Residents access the same service hubs, community leagues, and local institutions. Demographically Larkspur reflects the same family-oriented, multicultural, newcomer-rich profile as surrounding Edmonton-Meadows neighbourhoods. From the constituency office perspective, Larkspur residents identify as part of Edmonton-Meadows.

In the closing remarks I would like to thank the commission for the thoughtful work they have done and its commitment of democratic fairness. Based on the commission's own findings regarding population growth, variance, and durability, adding one additional riding would strengthen effective and durable representation. Keeping Larkspur within Edmonton-Meadows would preserve a clear, cohesive community of interest. These recommendations are fully aligned with the principles outlined in the interim report and with the commission's mandate.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to Albertans.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bhardwaj. Quick question: if we are unable to add a further electoral division in Edmonton, do you still want Larkspur?

Mr. Bhardwaj: Yes, I think.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Other questions, starting with Mr. Evans. One question per commissioner, please.

Mr. Evans: You heard the comments of the reeve from Wetaskiwin? Were you here for that?

Mr. Bhardwaj: No.

Mr. Evans: What are your thoughts in terms of the population range that we have to work with of between 41,000 approximately and 68,000 and the concept of densification of urban ridings to that higher threshold of 68,000?

Mr. Bhardwaj: I believe, as to the pattern which we have seen, the loss of consultation is happening in the urban centres, urban ridings, as compared to the rural ridings. While the Alberta government already has been putting efforts to bring in new immigrants to the rural ridings with different immigration programs, it hasn't resulted in any steep, exponential growth in the rural ridings, which we can see from immigration statistics. I closely worked with the immigration files in my ridings, and lots of people are moving from rural Alberta ridings into the urban centres and ridings like Edmonton-Meadows, because immigration draws are not coming up.

There's no liability for immigration in rural Alberta, so I think that from the perspective of working with the population range, I still believe that the Edmonton zone specifically has high variance as compared to – while the commission has tried to sell in other regions, including Calgary and rural Alberta, with the variance which is no further than plus 6 per cent, there's still a concentration of ridings which have 11 per cent, the four ridings which were gathered into positive 12 per cent instead of the five ridings which we had earlier. I'm not saying that we should bring that riding back, but seeing the concentration of the population in Edmonton, adding one more seat makes sense for me.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Samson.

Mrs. Samson: No questions, but thank you for the excellent presentation. I appreciate that information.

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much for your presentation, and I appreciate your remark that density isn't uniform, even in a city like Edmonton or Calgary. I mean, it's lumpy. That adds to the challenges, and your challenges, too, because your colleagues who are constit managers elsewhere in the city will face quite different patterns of density and communities of interest.

I wanted to refer you to the map. There are two areas that are not in your current interim map at the north where you've been speaking, Larkspur, and also at the far south corner. What do you say about that far south chunk just north of the Henday?

Mr. Bhardwaj: From the new boundaries which I've seen, a half portion of the Laurel community has brought in while seven neighbourhoods have been actually proposed to be taken out of Meadows. It's a big shuffle, but population-wise and demographic-wise, cultural ties are all intact. In perspective of Larkspur specifically, these people are all part of Meadows. I have been in the Larkspur neighbourhood of our riding. Specifically, all these people are dominantly South Asian, as compared to when we moved towards 34th street, towards the west. The population gets less concentrated as compared to the South Asian population of our riding, and our riding also happens to be one of the highest populated ridings with minorities in our province.

Dr. Martin: So you want everything east of 50th?

Mr. Bhardwaj: Yes. Let me have a look at it.

Dr. Martin: This bit. Larkspur.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Yes. That's the current riding, but I was talking to the perspective of the new interim proposed riding changes.

Dr. Martin: This is the interim. So you want this to be included with you?

Mr. Bhardwaj: Yes.

Dr. Martin: But you're indifferent about this bit?

Mr. Bhardwaj: I mean, Laurel is a very big sector, and as I see, you have included that in the southeast corner of the riding, which also caters to the consistency with what you guys are trying to do, and I agree with what you have done so far in the bottom end of our riding. Also taking, for example, a neighbourhood like Kiniski Gardens, which I currently live in. It was part of Edmonton-Meadows. I will be part, myself, of Edmonton-Mill Woods now as compared to Meadows, but I still think that Larkspur, which is also very intact with the Tamarack area: it kind of makes sense to have them intact in the Larkspur area.

9:55

Dr. Martin: That'd make you over 60,000 people. Are you okay with that?

Mr. Bhardwaj: I mean, our riding: I don't know if you guys have considered the fact that Maple area is still under construction. We are increasing more people, and I totally understand that you're trying to balance the population, too, but I think while we are seeing the population stress, lots of these people call themselves part of Meadows. They're literally five minutes away from my constit office as compared to having to travel 20 minutes to be represented by the Edmonton-Mill Woods office currently. In the future, if it shifts, that could be a different scenario. But if we are seeing from the perspective of accessibility to the MLAs, there are lots of these people – students, immigrants, temporary foreign workers – who don't have cars. They have to commute for a small question around even health care. If they're travelling 20, 30 minutes in a car as compared on a bus, that's going to take you one and a half hours, as compared to 10 minutes on a bus to my office. It kind of still makes sense.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you.

I think you definitely hit on one of the big challenges that we have, which is trying to keep neighbourhoods together without overpopulating a constituency while also keeping folks together. Then, as I think Mr. Evans referenced, you know, we're also trying to balance out effective representation in all areas of the province and that reflects different challenges.

I guess what I'm curious about because a lot of the discussion we've had for areas outside of the larger centres is the challenge of being an MLA in a really big geographic area with relatively sparse population: you put something in your presentation that I want to hear a little bit more about, which is high MLA workload within a compact geography. So the challenges you face are not driving three hours to a meeting; they're different challenges, but challenges all the same. Can you maybe just tell me a little bit more about what that looks like?

Mr. Bhardwaj: Yes. While I say in my presentation that I have been through the report, there was a very good example of, I think, a previous MLA, Littlewood, while she explains how working in a

rural riding is different than urban ridings. From the urban riding's perspective, due to the concentration and number of community organizations, schools, the community events happening, and due to the multicultural perspective of our ridings like Edmonton-Meadows, we just don't have pancake dinners. We've got Diwali. We've got Holi. We've got Ramadan coming in. Sikhs: we've got Nagar Kirtan coming in. All these are happening in just between 12 months.

For an MLA and his staff, sometimes – not sometimes; on a daily basis – we have to pick and choose between the events we have to go to, and so many people in our ridings, you know, feel that they are being neglected because we have to pick and choose based on urgency, who came first to invite us. Sometimes we have to also push some events back because we have been visiting these communities two times in a year to efficiently represent every constituent of our riding or these community organizations.

There was a line which I was reading through the interim report that in the urban ridings the local MLAs can rely on their colleagues to represent them, which is not the case. Technically speaking, as a staffer, while as southeast ridings – for example Edmonton-Meadows, Ellerslie, and Mill Woods – we all work together, but there's so much overlap between constituents. For example, constituents of Meadows go to Edmonton-Mill Woods because of a merger of the congregations. For example, temples, mosques, and Sikh Temples are concentrated in Mill Woods, but these are all people who live in our riding. So they want MLA Deol from Meadows, they want MLA Christina Gray from Mill Woods, all being present at these events. For example, if colleagues are working together and saying, "This time you go; next time I will go," the communities don't understand that fact, and everybody as an Albertan wants their MLA to be present at their event.

So that being said, it's a high-stress environment in urban ridings. Of course, I acknowledge the fact that in rural ridings the distance, the geographical barriers: these things all play a vital role in, you know, hindering the performance of an MLA, but I think in urban centres it's very important to keep these facts in mind.

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

The Chair: Thank you for your very comprehensive presentation, Mr. Bhardwaj. Most appreciated. I'm going to excuse you from the table, and we'll deal with our next presenter. And thanks for the PowerPoint.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thanks for your time.

The Chair: Mr. Ben Acquaye.
Good morning.

Mr. Acquaye: Good morning.

The Chair: Please identify yourself and tell us what riding you live in or what electoral division you live in and which one you wish to comment on.

Mr. Acquaye: Thank you most kindly. My name is Ben Acquaye, and I will be speaking today about Edmonton-South West and the proposed Edmonton-West-Enoch ridings. I'll just set my little clock here so I'm mindful of the time.

Good morning, commissioners. You sought, you received advice, suggestions, and feedback from Albertans, and you did produce an organized and detailed report. For that I am grateful. As I said earlier, my name is Ben Acquaye. I am a father who lives in the current riding of Edmonton-South West. I'll be speaking today

about Edmonton-South West and the proposed Edmonton-West-Enoch ridings.

First, Edmonton-South West. During the first round, many, many speakers, and you've acknowledged a lot of that in your report, spoke about the rapid rise of the populations that make up Edmonton-South West, probably one of the fastest increases in population, from 45,901 all the way up to 78,000-plus since the previous redistricting. It appears that this above-average growth largely contributed to the decision to carve out Edmonton-West-Enoch.

Now, the Cree name for Enoch is Maskekosihk, and that translates as the people of the land of medicine. Now, within this new proposed riding is the Maskekosihk Trail, which connects to the Anthony Henday highway. To a large extent I agree with this move because of the sheer issue of numbers and the need to make sure ridings are fairly sized.

I wish that members of Enoch Cree Nation would have been able to comment on this development, as in bringing them into this proposed Edmonton-West-Enoch. I also wish that the inclusion was not made up purely because it made sense with the numbers but because it reflected the fact that this First Nation is really very integrated into the Edmonton community. In the absence of their, you know, contributions, I would really suggest that an effort is made to reach out to them so it doesn't feel like an imposition but it feels like: hey, we really need to hear your views on this matter because in our current climate, that really helps.

As a parent, our kids have spent a fair amount of time at Enoch Cree Nation playing hockey at the famous Twin Rinks of River Cree. This First Nation is very integrated into the economy, into the culture, and into the infrastructure of West Edmonton. This new riding will also see a lot of growth because we have a large number of developers currently building family homes of various kinds and a lot of business units. I think this new riding would allow us to work on issues that are common to all the communities, specifically new schools, a new community centre, and health care being top of the agenda. The relation between, you know, Cree Nation and Edmonton is strong, and for that reason, this new riding should work well.

10:05

Ultimately, I believe that these changes would allow for fair and effective representation. The effect on the neighbouring electoral divisions – Edmonton-West Henday, Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, Edmonton-West – will, in my opinion, remain largely minimal. They will continue to retain their numbers and the cohesiveness that they have largely enjoyed over time. Fairness, it appears to me and to you, as judged by your report, is a very important aspect of this process. Overall, I think it's a very careful balancing act. I think the map is fair, and it accommodates a lot of the reasonable suggestions, and your output shows that.

In the end, I want to quote this Cree saying. "Realize that we as human beings have been put on this earth for only a short time and that we must use this time to gain wisdom, knowledge, respect and the understanding for all human beings since we are all relatives." I admire the professionalism and the patience and the understanding you have demonstrated over time, and my hope is that we will continue to work together as one group of people.

I appreciate your time this morning, and thank you for the audience.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir.

Mr. Clark, any questions?

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

I appreciate your thoughtful submission, and thank you very much for being here. I'm curious about southwest Edmonton. Just to be clear, Edmonton-South West: you're generally in favour of the way we've drawn the boundaries. You feel like that's fair and appropriate.

If you've been listening in, I may ask similar questions of most of the presenters, I think. How do you feel about the importance or perhaps opportunity of using the city boundary of Edmonton as a logical boundary with the exception of Enoch Cree, as you've suggested, whereas areas like perhaps Devon or somewhere like that, that potentially could be blended in with Edmonton: do you feel like that's a natural fit, or do you feel like those are different places that probably should be in their own constituencies?

Mr. Acquaye: I agree with the latter view. I think they have a lot of things in common there. Therefore, their challenges and issues will be slightly different, or perhaps in some areas, when it comes to density, schools, and so on, significantly different, from the Edmonton challenges that we face. It would be best that they are left to their own and Edmonton is also left to its own, so that we can hone in on the issues that really affect Edmontonians, especially in the southwest part.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Acquaye: You're welcome, sir.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much.

Thank you for your remarks about the Edmonton-West-Enoch configuration. The former chief recently was making some remarks. Somebody was criticizing him for something outrageous, so he came back with a long story about the success of the Enoch Cree Nation, in particular the casino and entertainment centre, about which he said that there are approximately 200 people employed there that are members of the nation but over 800 who are members and live in Edmonton proper.

Mr. Acquaye: Yes.

Dr. Martin: It speaks directly to your remark about the integration there being a fairly easy and direct one. It's the biggest casino in western Canada. It's one of the best entertainment centres, sports centres, and so on. It's everything that you'd expect from an urban city to provide.

I'd also just like to remark on – I apologize for having not followed Whitemud Creek, but it's a population issue. Also, Edmonton-South is growing even more rapidly than Edmonton-South West, so the next commission will probably have to look at this bit rather carefully if growth patterns continue.

That's it for me. I'm very grateful for you coming to present today.

Mr. Acquaye: Thank you, Dr. Martin. I appreciate your comments.

Mrs. Samson: Mr. Acquaye, it's a pleasure to have you here today. I don't have a question per se but more like a comment. As we travelled around the province to do this work, we didn't have enough input from the Indigenous population, and I'm sorry for that because we certainly can't speak for them. But I can tell you this. We did have a written submission from someone who lived in the Enoch band who wanted to be part of Edmonton. Then, once the interim report came out, we had lots of positive feedback about that

particular inclusion, so I was pleased for that even though the input was minimal.

Mr. Acquaye: Thank you most kindly. I actually have family members who work at the casino, at the River Cree, and this sentiment is common, but there's a difference between a common sentiment and somebody stepping up and making an official presentation, which kind of really adds a lot of value and credibility to the sentiment. But it is noted, absolutely.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

Mr. Acquaye: You're most welcome.

The Chair: Good point.

Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: No questions. Thank you for coming out, though. I appreciate your submissions.

Mr. Acquaye: You're very kind, and I appreciate your time and your efforts here.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Acquaye. I'm going to excuse you from the table, but please remain and listen to the other presentations if you're able.

Mr. Acquaye: Yeah. I just have to get some more money on the parking meter.

I appreciate your time. Merci beaucoup.

The Chair: Okay. Our next presenter is Roger Gunn. Please identify yourself and tell us which riding you live in and which riding or electoral division you wish to comment on.

Mr. Gunn: As you mentioned, my name is Roger Gunn, and I live in Edmonton-Rutherford. I have copies of my one-pager here if you wish to follow along as I speak. First of all, thank you very much, members of the commission, for allowing me to present my thoughts on the boundaries of the riding of Edmonton-Rutherford. I'm impressed with the work of the commission to date and am convinced that your final report will be fair and reasonable.

As I mentioned, my name is Roger Gunn. I've been a resident of Edmonton-Rutherford for over 35 years. I'm now a retiree. Over that period of 35 years I've noticed tremendous growth within Edmonton-Rutherford. There have been numerous developments happening over the years, and the riding has grown in population upwards as opposed to outwards. I've also witnessed growth and changes in diversity of the community of Edmonton-Rutherford, and Edmonton-Rutherford continues to have one of the highest levels of education of any riding within the province.

My proposal to you today is that the electoral boundaries of Edmonton-Rutherford, which were changed, I believe, in 2017 with the addition of Twin Brooks – my question is: do the boundaries need to be expanded again in 2026? I think not.

The current boundaries are Whitemud Drive in the north, Gateway Boulevard in the east, Anthony Henday to the south, and Whitemud Creek to the west. These are natural boundaries, which should not be touched. The interim report of the commission suggested southern boundaries be extended to ELLerslie Road. Part of the rationale, I understand, for suggesting this change was to bring the population of the riding closer to the average.

It's my proposal that the present boundaries do not need to be expanded because of recently proposed new development projects and current development projects within the existing boundaries of Edmonton-Rutherford. These housing units will take the population

of Edmonton-Rutherford, in my view, over the riding average population level. Therefore, the riding is being built up and not out. That's the city's policy. It has been for a number of years, minimizing urban sprawl by looking for opportunities where areas of the community can be further developed with infill, if you will.

10:15

Now, let me give you some examples of what I'm referring to. At 245 Saddleback Road, close to where I live, the city has announced an affordable housing project that will have 158 affordable units. There's another affordable housing project under way near the Keheewin school, and this project by Civida calls for 132 to 136 units, both apartments and town homes. Century Park, near my home, continues to be built up. Two new eight-storey condo buildings have recently been constructed, and they're estimated to house up to 150 new units. Lastly, in the Steinhauer area, a new housing development was announced about six weeks ago. This development, located at 106th Street and 31st Avenue, will amount to two 22-storey buildings, containing 750 units, and another half a dozen four- or six-storey buildings, which will contain roughly 300 units.

In conclusion, the total new units that I've referred to total approximately 1,500 units. That will translate, I believe, into some 3,000 new voters in Edmonton-Rutherford. Because of this new development, Edmonton-Rutherford will reach and perhaps surpass the average level of population within a riding. So with the new development building up, as I mentioned, there will be no need to have changes to the boundaries of the current Edmonton-Rutherford riding.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gunn. That on-the-ground information gives us a picture of what may be happening in the years ahead.

I'll open it up for questions from the panel. Mr. Evans, any questions or comments of Mr. Gunn?

Mr. Evans: Do we have the copy? Just so that we know where the developments are that you're talking about. I think those are new. Thank you.

I don't have any questions. Thank you very much for this new information, and I'll certainly take it under consideration.

Mr. Gunn: Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: Mr. Gunn, thank you for coming out today. That's very important, to hear from people who live right in the area. To our defence, if that would be the right word to use, how this came to be – in a perfect world we would have endeared ourselves to you by keeping it the same. But because the development in the south was so great and the numbers were so high – for example, Edmonton-South was sitting at almost 82,000; population doesn't disappear – we added the riding and moved it around. The cities, both the capital and Calgary, were extremely difficult to manage, I want you to know, but we will give every consideration to your words today, and I thank you for that.

Mr. Gunn: Thank you very much.

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much, Mr. Gunn. One misnomer in your presentation: I agree that 1,500 housing units, roughly speaking, is 3,000 more people; they're not all voters.

Mr. Gunn: No.

Dr. Martin: Edmonton-Rutherford, although it has a large number of academic professors living in it, hence its high academic

qualification rate, also has a very large number of students. We have to distinguish between voters and population because a lot of those students are foreign students, of course.

My colleague's point is really key to our thinking on the matter and why you ended up with Ellerslie as a southern boundary. The population growth is much larger to the south of the Henday than it is to the north of it. Period. That was significant for us.

Your riding, Edmonton-Rutherford, is laced with very major transportation routes, and one of them actually continues down at least as far as Ellerslie Road whereas in this instance, strangely enough, the Henday is a much less permeable barrier. What I'm trying to say is that it's easy to drive underneath the Henday and access the shopping centres that are now clustered all along Ellerslie Road. We thought, both on the population grounds and also on access to services, that this was a reasonable thing to do.

Every part of Edmonton will grow. It's about which grows at what rate. As a previous presenter said, the density of population is lumpy, not uniform.

Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Clark. Or Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: I like that you keep calling me that. That's great. That's fantastic.

Yeah. I'd only add maybe a little bit of statistical context. I think, as you can see, one of our grand challenges with the significant growth in the south part of Edmonton – it's not that Edmonton-Rutherford isn't growing. It's just not growing relatively as quickly as other parts of Edmonton and other parts of Alberta. Edmonton-Rutherford grew 11 per cent from 2017 to our latest data that we're using in 2024. The average in Alberta is 20 per cent. Edmonton-Rutherford did grow; it just didn't grow as quickly. If we were to add 3,000 more population, that's roughly 5 per cent on the 58,000 that we've proposed. That's still probably in accordance with or maybe even less than what you'd see a little south of you.

I would respectfully disagree that voters are the ones that count. I think generally we are looking at population. Even folks who don't vote – kids or a foreign student, new Canadians and new immigrants – would also require representation by their MLA. We'd sort of use that as our relevant data point.

You know, I appreciate your submission very much, and the information is really helpful. I'm sure this isn't the only growth that we will see in Edmonton-Rutherford. It's a relative game as much or more as it is an absolute challenge that we have here. Yeah. I just maybe wanted to give you some statistical background on that as well.

Thank you.

Mr. Gunn: I appreciate that. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Gunn. I'll excuse you from the table, but please remain if you can if you don't need to plug your meter, like the previous person.

Mr. Gunn: Thanks again for the opportunity of being here.

The Chair: Thank you.

Our next presenter is Sandra Houston. Sandra Houston? No. Okay. That's relatively short.

Gale Davy.

Ms Davy: Hon. Justice Miller, Dr. Martin, Mrs. Sampson, Mr. Evans, and Mr. Clark, thank you for the opportunity to be here. My name is Gale Davy. I live in the Edmonton-Gold Bar riding, but I'm not here, actually, to address a specific riding. I'm here to alert the

commission to a problem that I see with the 2021 census data that I believe must be taken into account in order for the commission to meet its objectives of creating electoral divisions that fall into the population parameters and ensure that every Albertan is fairly and proportionally represented in the Legislature.

Now, historically StatsCan censuses have had issues accurately counting postsecondary students in the riding in which they attend school and live. This issue has been recognized by past Alberta electoral boundaries commissions and other provincial commissions. Of course, the timing of the 2021 census, with a snapshot date of May 11, exacerbated this historic issue. It was conducted, of course, during COVID-19 shutdowns, including the on-campus closure of the University of Alberta. The result of this census timing is a significant undercounting of postsecondary students in the provincial ridings of Edmonton-Strathcona and Edmonton-Riverview, undercounting that exceeds the undercounts acknowledged by previous commissions.

10:25

Between the 2011 census and the 2021 census domestic enrolment at the University of Alberta increased by nearly 2,000 students. Domestic enrolment on May 11, 2021, was 29,506. Interestingly, today that figure is 37,902, so that is an even greater increase. Somewhere between 3,000 and 4,000 domestic students typically live on main campus, and that corresponds to census dissemination area 48111319. Now, while these residents are among the most likely to be missed by the census, regardless of COVID, the 2021 census population for this dissemination area dropped dramatically compared to the 2011 count, which was, in fact, down 54 per cent.

But the discrepancies between the expected census and what was recorded for the 2021 census go beyond missing on-campus residents. The neighbourhoods immediately adjacent to the main campus of the University of Alberta – these neighbourhoods include Windsor Park, Garneau, Queen Alexandra, McKernan, and Belgravia – are typically home to thousands of U of A students and their family members. According to the city of Edmonton these neighbourhoods saw significant increases in dwelling units from 2011 to 2021, including basement and garage suites, infills, and construction of multi-unit buildings, including several buildings of six storeys.

Now, census tract 23 includes the immediately adjacent neighbourhood of Garneau. According to the 2021 census this census tract had one of the largest declines in population in Alberta between the 2016 and 2021 census at negative 19.8 per cent, losing 1,200 residents. Yet according to the city of Edmonton Garneau is one of the mature neighbourhoods undergoing the most intense densification in the city. Between the 2016 and 2021 census Garneau added 630 net dwelling units. Given the decline in residential vacancy rates in Edmonton over the past several years with the single exception, of course, being that second quarter of 2021, when those COVID restrictions were in effect and the census was conducted, we would expect the population of census tract 23 to have increased versus the 2016 and 2011 numbers. Instead, as we see, that 2021 census recorded a decline of nearly 20 per cent.

We see the same thing in other neighbourhoods near the University of Alberta main campus as well. Looking at just the immediate neighbourhood surrounding the University of Alberta that is within one kilometre of campus and just including those neighbourhoods south of the North Saskatchewan River, not including on-campus housing, city of Edmonton data shows more than 1,000 dwelling units added between the 2011 and the 2021 censuses, yet the 2021 data shows fewer residents compared to 2011.

The impact of the COVID census timing on the undercount of postsecondary students can also be seen, albeit with smaller numbers, in the dissemination areas including the U of A's Campus Saint-Jean and The King's University, which are both within the Edmonton-Gold Bar electoral district. Those are dissemination areas 48111312 and 48112107.

Given the historic issue StatsCan and the electoral boundary commissions have already acknowledged previously with counting postsecondary students, given the increase in enrolment at the University of Alberta, given the intense densification increase in dwelling units seen in the neighbourhoods immediately surrounding the University of Alberta main campus over the past decade, the only rational explanation for the decrease in populations in these neighbourhoods is the timing of the census.

The discrepancy between the expected population based on enrolment numbers and densification versus the 2021 census numbers far exceeds any undercount of postsecondary students acknowledged by previous commissions. I estimate the actual population of the Edmonton-Riverview and Edmonton-Strathcona ridings under the current boundaries, not proposed boundaries, to be anywhere between 2,500 to 4,000 more than what was recorded in that snapshot, and for Edmonton-Gold Bar maybe somewhere around 500 more than what was recorded.

Now, I'm sure this commission employs excellent geographers and demographers, and I'm sure if they closely examine the dwelling unit data compiled by the city of Edmonton versus the census data, they will reach the same conclusion that I did. I did not look at neighbourhoods around other campuses in the province, but I would urge the professionals working with this commission to take this into account looking at those as well. We've heard a bit about how the census showed urban areas losing population, sort of the hollowing out or what they call the doughnut effect, but I believe that this is at least in part a mirage created by the unique timing of the 2021 census.

Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much. It's perfect timing. You're right under the wire. You bring to our attention a very novel point we've not had addressed to us yet, but you will know that we have not relied exclusively on 2021 StatsCan data. You didn't mention anything about the work of the Office of Statistics and Information that works to if not quarterly, monthly update Stats Canada's numbers. Would they have not caught the anomaly that you've just described to us?

Ms Davy: I don't know the answer to that. I know that when I first looked at this, there was nothing from StatsCan about this, which surprised me, but I don't know, if you look currently at the current numbers compared to the StatsCan numbers from 2021, whether this population discrepancy is that obvious.

The Chair: Yeah. Okay. Well, we'll be sure to follow up with OSI.
Mr. Clark, any questions?

Mr. Clark: No, but thank you very much.

Ms Davy: You're welcome.

Dr. Martin: We're comfortable with our numbers. We don't rely on the 2021 census. We rely on, as the judge said, quarterly updates by the Office of Statistics and Information, and it's done at the dissemination area level. There are over 6,000 of those in the province. Those people stay busy. It's quite clear that any census is a lagging indicator. It's not bleeding-edge empirical data by any stretch. It never can be. Not only have the provincial figures been

updated very regularly, but they're constantly updating the estimates that originally surrounded not only the '21 census but their own estimates. So we're relying on better numbers than, you know, is ostensibly the case. The variation that you point to is probably true if we were relying entirely on the very difficult circumstances during the census collection year of 2021, but we're not.

Ms Davy: So my question would be: how are those updates – are they missing students as well? This is a fairly acknowledged issue.

Dr. Martin: No. Universities, as you well know, keep very good records on their students and where they live, and it's an easy task. It has long been the norm in university administrative management at the registrar level to track their students by postal code, so that gives you a very good idea right down to the block of where those people are.

Ms Davy: So those additional 8,000 students would be accounted for in the data that you're looking at right now, that you're using right now?

Dr. Martin: Yes.

Ms Davy: Okay.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. It's a marvellous and thankless task that census people engage in, and we recognize that, but we've chosen a data set and a timing of it that is high probabilistic rather than low and queasy probable, all right?

Thank you.

Ms Davy: Sure.

The Chair: Okay.

Mrs. Samson.

Mrs. Samson: No questions, but thanks for that alert to us. We'll follow it up.

The Chair: Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: No questions, but thank you. You know what? I'm gladdened by the fact that you read the report and scrutinized it and you felt compelled to provide input on it. Thank you. I appreciate that.

Ms Davy: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. You're excused, Ms Davy. Thank you.

We're just going to have a very brief five-, 10-minute break, and we'll be back here at 10:45.

[The hearing adjourned from 10:34 a.m. to 10:41 a.m.]

The Chair: Okay. Ladies and gentlemen, we have a fairly full second half of the morning, so we'll reconvene.

Our next presenter is Mr. Kyle Kasawski, MLA for – I should know it.

Mr. Kasawski: Sherwood Park.

The Chair: Sherwood Park. The mighty hamlet.

Mr. Kasawski: That's right. All roads lead there.

Sorry; I wasn't queued up. I'll be ready, though.

Justice Miller, I appreciate you wearing the Alberta tartan tie.

The Chair: Not everybody recognizes that. Being in the capital, I thought I should dress appropriately.

Mr. Kasawski: Well done.

Well, I think I'll just take this in an esoteric, theoretical way of going. I don't know if I have a lot of data. You guys have crunched a great deal of data, so I thank the panel for its continued work. I've reviewed the interim report. By my assessment you've taken your role and your mandate for the Electoral Boundaries Commission very seriously. I thank you for your service to Albertans through this independent electoral boundary review process.

I'd probably like to use my time to talk about the context that you operate within and bring it back to a discussion on the electoral boundaries connected to the community of Sherwood Park in the specialized municipality of Strathcona county. In my opinion, here is important context since the electoral boundaries were last updated in 2017; in fact, context since the start of the time period that this electoral boundaries commission held hearings, collected input, and created its interim report. I feel our democracy is under threat in Alberta. You're part of the operation that protects and facilitates our democracy. The independent offices of the Legislature that keep our democracy alive in Alberta have been weakened, pummelled, and watered down by the current government and its representatives.

Since 2017 the election office found fault with the way the UCP leadership contest was run; the elections officer was replaced. The Ethics Commissioner found a Premier had breached the ethics rules, and the Ethics Commissioner was replaced. The Legislature's rules for gifts were found to be inconvenient to the government; the rules of gifts were changed. Instead of having the Ethics Commissioner determine what is an acceptable gift for an MLA to receive, the government assigned that role to the Premier's chief of staff, a political appointee. The Auditor General has asked for an extension on his contract to complete his investigation into the health care procurement scandal. His request was denied by this government, and resources to the Auditor General office were slashed.

The Chair: Mr. Kasawski, we have enough challenges in this commission. I'm not sure the relevance of a lot of that.

Mr. Kasawski: It's very relevant in my opinion. The independent elections office of the government: you're an extension of that. I just want to urge you to continue the good work you have done.

The Chair: Yeah. We're an independent commission.

Mr. Kasawski: And you have done good work, and you've taken your role very seriously. My urging is for you to continue to take that role very seriously. You've been asked in the role to recommend the electoral boundaries for Albertans that will provide Albertans with the opportunity to elect their provincial representative. You're part of the independent operations that preserve and protect and facilitate our democracy. You've taken this role very seriously, and I urge you to continue to do so.

Specific to Sherwood Park my recommendation and perspective that I presented previously has not changed since the creation of your interim report. I presented my thoughts to you previously. Sherwood Park is a unique community that deserves its own representative. The last time I was before you, I brought up the experience of the federal electoral boundaries commission. It drafted an interim report recommending a Sherwood Park-Beaumont riding. It was met with push-back from the community of Sherwood Park. You have effectively created a Sherwood Park-Beaumont electoral district in your interim report. I expect you will again receive push-back from the people of Sherwood Park. I do maintain my position that there should be only one riding called

Sherwood Park. You've recognized in the interim report that it is a growing community and adjusted its electoral boundaries accordingly.

I welcome questions or discussion with the commission. Thank you.

The Chair: So you like what we did?

Mr. Kasawski: I feel that in the context of Sherwood Park you . . .

The Chair: I mean with regard to Sherwood Park.

Mr. Kasawski: Yeah. I think you really understood where we have growth going in the community, and there are good ways to grow it into the north. I feel that was good. Then I think the neighbourhood of Hillshire is also being added. I think that's a good addition. There's always going to be the question of why Heritage Hills gets cut into it, which you can see on the map is just kind of a little block that comes off Clover Bar Road, but it's still a part of Sherwood Park. I would encourage you to go all the way to highway 21 and call it Sherwood Park, but I understand that you have to spread some of the good people of Sherwood Park to other ridings.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

Mr. Evans: No, no questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Mrs. Samson.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah.

Thank you for coming today. We got a lot of comments on Heritage Hills. I'm not familiar with your fine community. I'm from Sylvan Lake. What are your thoughts on Heritage Hills? Take it? Put it back in?

Mr. Kasawski: Yeah. I mean, within Sherwood Park on the eastern border there's a boundary. Clover Bar Road has been sort of a clean delineation in the previous, 27th iteration of the boundary. On the east side of Clover Bar Road are neighbourhoods that go all the way to highway 21. It's fully urbanized. The neighbourhoods are maybe slightly distinguishable between each other because they were developed at different times as subdivisions. I don't think the character of each neighbourhood is unique in any way from the other that dramatically, that it would say that, you know, Heritage Hills is definitely a part of Sherwood Park but not a part of Strathcona-Sherwood Park. I imagine it was moving population around and just finding a spot.

Mrs. Samson: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Kasawski: Yeah.

Dr. Martin: You nailed it. That's exactly how the Heritage Hills bit came. I'm ashamed to admit it. It wasn't a particularly intellectually sound manoeuvre, but it was late in the day. Of course, you know, the population figures are a significant issue, and as you well know, it's not paramount necessarily, but it's certainly one of them. I'm encouraged by your remarks about what we're suggesting as we go further north. I went and I've driven around the new neighbourhood north of the greenhouses, and I'm shocked by how rapidly that neighbourhood has grown. When I went there in September, there were actually people watering their brand new turf in front of their houses, which is a sure sign of home ownership pride, but it's growing very, very fast. Could you comment on your expectations for its further growth?

Mr. Kasawski: I've also been very surprised by the growth of that. If you look at one neighbourhood of Cambrian, I think there was a show home or two and seven houses in the last election. Now I think there are over 400 homes in that neighbourhood. Then if we go north into the Mattamy development, it's also growing very widely. There's a nice delineation to the north with the township road that builds on that bridge that connects into the city of Edmonton, so it seems like a nice growth in addition to Sherwood Park. I expect, if the growth continues at this rate, you know, by the time this commission sits again, it'll be fully developed neighbourhoods in that area.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Wright – or Mr. . . .

Mrs. Samson: Mr. Right? I want to be called that.

The Chair: I don't know what – sorry.

Mr. Clark: It's been a long couple of weeks. That's all right. It's all right.

Yeah. I think my question on Heritage Hills has been asked and answered, so I won't ask that. I mean, one of the struggles we have – I'm curious. I know there is, it sounds like, a lot of growth happening. If you were here earlier this morning, a lot of the question is not absolute growth but relative growth. How quickly are you growing relative to other parts of the province or other parts even just of Edmonton or a region? Part of the struggle with Sherwood Park and Strathcona-Sherwood Park is that while they have grown in absolute terms, relative to the rest of the province they're growing at about half the rate, sort of 7 or 10 per cent versus about 20 for the rest of the province. I guess the real question I have is: do you feel like that is about to change and the Sherwood Park area in Strathcona county will start to grow at a greater rate than the rest of the province or the rest of Edmonton, or is that sort of relative ratio, in your opinion, likely to continue as it has in the last seven or eight years?

10:50

Mr. Kasawski: Yeah, and I think that's going to be a question about the density of the development going in the areas that have been zoned for development, and I don't have the answer to that question. I would look at the type of houses that are being built in the new neighbourhoods to the north. I don't think we would reach the 20 per cent. I don't think that would be – if that's what the growth rate you're seeing in other neighbourhoods is.

Mr. Clark: So the type of growth in Strathcona county, Sherwood Park tends to be somewhat, not exclusively, single family. But is it fair to say that it's generally a little lower density than you might see in Edmonton?

Mr. Kasawski: I would say that, and I would say that the current mayor is very fond of that, too, so the council has kind of a unified support on that.

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

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Kasawski: Just one question for me then: how did Beaumont end up in this? I forewarned you. How did Beaumont end up in Strathcona-Sherwood Park?

Mr. Clark: Cascading. I mean, yeah.

The Chair: Dominoes, cascade.

Mr. Clark: Every change you make has a ripple effect. So then as you try to solve one, you look and you go, “Oops, we’ve just created this enormous – okay, well, that doesn’t work,” and then you move something and you go, “Wait a minute; now that’s too small,” or “These things don’t belong together.” So you’re dealing with a series of imperfect options, and you try to choose the least worst. But fair to say that we did receive a significant amount of feedback on Beaumont, so we’ll certainly consider.

Mr. Kasawski: Sure.

Dr. Martin: Of the 1,100 submissions we received in response to the interim report, we had over 150 say, “Don’t split Beaumont” and/or “We don’t want Beaumont in the county.” So we heard that part loud and clear. It’s thrust back in our lap.

The Chair: Mr. Kasawski, just looking at the numbers, you should be happy with Sherwood Park. We’re less than 300 over the average. I mean, you’re right almost in the sweet spot, but I want to address something: your opening comments about reminding us of our independent status. We’ve heard similar submissions in Calgary and in southwestern Alberta, Edmonton: yeah, you got it kind of right. But we’ve heard lots of submissions that we didn’t, and that we haven’t used our legislative authority in many ways to make the changes and to try to meet the disparity. So I don’t want you to say, if our final report is different from the interim, that we’re not independent. We have had to wrestle with tons of issues. I just want you to have that message back.

Mr. Kasawski: I receive that.

The Chair: Okay. Somebody in Calgary described our job as hugging a cactus. I would like to go plural on that: hugging cacti.

Mr. Kasawski: That’s good.

The Chair: Yeah. Thanks for your commendation on the one we did get right.

Mr. Kasawski: Good. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. I’ll excuse you, but please remain to hear the other submissions if you’re able.

Mr. Kasawski: Yeah. Cheers.

The Chair: Priya Usman? Hello again.

Ms Usman: Hello.

The Chair: You presented last time.

Ms Usman: Yes, I did.

The Chair: Please tell us again what electoral division you are in and which one you’d like to speak to.

Ms Usman: Well, I live in Edmonton-Decore, but I’m speaking for all of Edmonton today.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Usman: Thank you.

All right. Good morning. My name is Priya Usman. I’m a 20-year-old university student, and I was born and raised here in Edmonton, amiskwaciwāskahikan, Treaty 6 territory. I’m here today presenting in front of the commission for the second time

because I believe in democracy. Specifically, I believe in creating a sustainable democracy for the years to come.

I’d like to start by recognizing the work that this commission has already done with the new proposed electoral map. In the first round of public consultations, myself and many others urged the commission to respect city limits and keep like communities together. In the case of Edmonton, the municipal boundaries were for the most part respected. So thank you for that. I believe this is one of the many steps on the path to ensuring that we can create and maintain a healthy democracy for ourselves and for the future of this province.

I would now like to take a moment to share my perspective as a university student. I am so thrilled to have the opportunity to study in my home city; however, this is not the case for many people. Whether it’s to take a one-of-a-kind program at NAIT, to attend the only francophone campus in western Canada, or to enrol in one of the many programs that place the University of Alberta among the top universities in the country, many young adults and families are choosing to move to Edmonton for the exceptional educational opportunities. It is, therefore, without a doubt that a new electoral map must take into consideration the growing number of students coming here to make Edmonton their home.

Next I would like to speak to the ongoing population growth and densification efforts all over Edmonton. Overall, it is clear that Edmonton is experiencing a continuous increase in population. As such, the municipality is responding with rezoning bylaws, housing projects, and more. This is allowing for densification, especially in more mature neighbourhoods. As someone who has lived in Edmonton their whole life and who travels all over the city, I can truly say that there is nowhere in Edmonton that is untouched by the steady stream of newcomers. Whether it is the new apartment complexes in the field behind my uncle’s house in Clareview, the ongoing infill in Bonnie Doon that I see on my way to school every day, the progressing construction popping up every week when I grab groceries in the northwest corner of the city, or the new duplexes on the way to my brother’s soccer on the south side, I see our growth, I see our evolution, and I know that this is just the beginning.

So with all that in mind I therefore strongly believe that it would be in the best interest of all Edmontonians and in the best interest of a sustainable representative democracy to have another seat accorded to Edmonton on the new electoral boundaries map. As it is, the populations of most Edmonton ridings are above the provincial average. And with the aforementioned density and housing projects, I believe it is more than reasonable to expect these numbers to continue to increase rather than stabilize or even fade out in the next eight to 10 years. Thus, an additional Edmonton riding would prove to be a logical choice for maintaining a healthy representative democracy.

All in all, I would like to thank the commission for the work they’ve done thus far for our democracy. Moving forward, I would request that the commission allot Edmonton an additional seat so as to better reflect the ongoing population growth that will continue to rise between now and the next redrawing of the map.

In closing, my presentation today is not just about drawing a map for the next election. This presentation is about shaping our democracy for the next decade and building a strong, sustainable, democratic legacy that we can be proud of. I appreciate your time and consideration. Thank you. Hay-hay. Merci.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Usman. Where should we take that riding from?

Ms Usman: Outside of Edmonton.

The Chair: Calgary?

Ms Usman: I don't know about Calgary. I'm not familiar with their municipal layouts.

The Chair: Okay. I'm teasing a little bit, but that's our question. Mr. Clark, any questions or comments?

Mr. Clark: Yeah.

That's exactly, I think, the challenge that we face, but I think you make an interesting point, and I've said this a number of times if you've been here this morning. It's far more than just a mathematical exercise. We're not just simply going by, you know – as Justice Miller said, it's not just one person, one vote; it's effective representation. I'll start with a brief statistic, and then I'll ask maybe a more general question. As it stands, Edmonton is somewhat on average, as you say, larger by upwards of about 1,000 people per constituency than the average. The challenge we have is that we're already starting to, as has happened historically, reduce some of the numbers and increase the size of some of the constituencies outside of the major city. But maybe if you can tell me, and you touched on some of it in your presentation: how would you define a community of interest in the city of Edmonton as distinct from other parts of the province? Or do you think they're actually quite similar?

11:00

Ms Usman: I think if we want to talk in terms of, like, you know, maintaining a healthy, representative democracy, it's important to keep Edmontonians together in their communities as best as possible, as is done here in the proposed map. I think that something that distinguishes perhaps Edmontonians from those who are living just outside of Edmonton and those who are living outside of Edmonton, obviously, from those in the city is perhaps access to resources and just the lifestyle.

For example, in Edmonton, you know, we have all the transit and you might be confined to your walkable neighbourhood and similar resources and your school community and your larger community, work community, family communities, et cetera, whereas I do believe that outside of Edmonton, you have a bit more – it's more spread out. People are having to travel more often. I think that just reflects that their needs and their lifestyles are just a bit different than those who are living in the city.

Mr. Clark: Great. Thank you. I appreciate your being here and thanks again for submitting today.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. You mentioned in passing that you yourself live in Edmonton-Decore, and I take it that you take transit to go to the university?

Ms Usman: I drive.

Dr. Martin: Oh. You drive. Well, you're brave because finding a parking spot at the university is almost as bad as going to the hospital, but your point is well taken. You know, students live all over the city and outside the city for that matter. Sherwood Park has a regular bus route that takes it to MacEwan and to the U of A, for example. Of course, then, the students are everywhere across the city, particularly along major transit routes. Do you see the Edmonton-Strathcona riding as too small?

Ms Usman: I'm going to be honest. I know that there are a lot of things that go into how big or small a riding is, so I don't know if I could really speak to that. I think just in general it's important to consider the amount of students that are in that area and that could be coming into that area, not necessarily just in Edmonton-Strathcona around the University of Alberta campus but by MacEwan, by NAIT, and all over the city, actually.

Dr. Martin: Again, I'm dwelling on this point. If we're going to put an extra riding into Edmonton, I mean, the ripple effects of that are going to be very significant. There's no obvious way to answer your plea. Thank you.

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

Mr. Evans: Do you find there's any utility in densifying the population of the inner city ridings? We have a population range of between 41,000 to 68,000. Is there utility in densifying those populations in the urban centres?

Ms Usman: I don't know if I could really speak to that. I'm not exactly someone who has a lot of experience talking about urban planning and those sorts of things.

Mr. Evans: Thank you. Those are my questions.

The Chair: Thank you again for presenting, Ms Usman. Much appreciated.

Ms Usman: Thank you.

The Chair: How's your year going?

Ms Usman: Yeah. It's going well. Thank you.

The Chair: Good. Okay. You're excused. Please remain, if you can, to hear other presenters.

Our next presenter is Irene McDermott. Good morning.

Ms McDermott: Good morning.

The Chair: Please identify yourself and tell us which electoral division you are from and which one you're commenting on.

Ms McDermott: My name is Irene McDermott. I live in Edmonton-Strathcona, but I'm commenting on Edmonton in general with some specifics about Strathcona and the old Riverview.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute. I also have a strong sense of the need for democracy and democratic processes. I submitted a written statement in December to you, and I am going to reiterate some of my points of that in addition.

I grew up in Sherwood Park. I raised my family in Lansdowne, Malmo Plains, lived in Vancouver for about 10 years, came back to a very different city and moved into Ritchie.

I appreciate the work that you've put into the interim report. In my career I undertook a lot of provincial reviews, so I know about hugging a cactus, as you said, and trying to take divergent positions, ideas, all the geographic considerations into account and trying to come up with a coherent report. I also appreciate that you had specifications in legislation, and I appreciate what you did in the interim report. I think the principle of effective representation was recognized and the rapid growth in Edmonton was also recognized. I also like that you respected municipal boundaries. However, I have some points that I wanted to raise about Edmonton.

The first is, I think, the need to recognize overall growth and continued growth in Edmonton. Since 2017 the Edmonton city itself, not metro, has increased by close to 28 per cent, depending on whose figures you use, but it's pretty well that, whereas Alberta overall has raised only by about 15 per cent. We had 20 seats in 2017, and now the interim report gives us 21, and I am concerned about growth.

I also want to talk about voter parity and expected population growth. I noticed in the interim report, on page 22, that there was recognition that there needs to be – I'll take the quote, "urged caution before approaching or exceeding the 25% variance from provincial averages." In the interim report for the ridings four of the ridings in Edmonton are already at 25 per cent variance above the average and three are close to 9 per cent. Another three are at 6 per cent. There are only 10 that are around the actual average and only one that's below, and that has distinct geographic boundaries. That's Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Most ridings in Edmonton still have a lot of potential for growth. Other than Calgary, for the rest of the province except for Red Deer-South, which has around 7 per cent variance above, all other ridings are lower and also have less expected growth. So that is a concern of mine.

Then another point I want to make is kind of to debunk that thing about the core. I've heard other speakers speak about that this morning, but I think the rate of growth – I appreciate that the rate of growth in the core areas of the city has not been as high as in the suburbs, but there has been growth, and there is continued growth. The city allows for density in the core and promotes density, and people want to live in the core.

I have a couple of examples. One is from my neighbourhood alone. In just a two-block area – I live in an infill, by the way, in Ritchie – there were seven residential lots with seven small houses that have been taken out. I know that there was only one person living in each of those houses. They've been replaced by 20 units, and there are 67 people living in those units. So that is an enormous increase. It's actually 857 per cent, and that type of growth is happening everywhere in the core.

Another example I want to draw your attention to, which you may not have known about, is some areas by the university farm basically. There's a big parcel of land in between Grandview Heights and Lansdowne. It was a farm area. I used to snowshoe through there. Now it's going to be the west 240 development, and I think it's completed its approval. It is expected to have 3,200 new units. The Michener Park area has been redeveloped, and there will be an additional 900 units there. The stand-alone Stollery hospital is scheduled to be in that area, and we just have to look at what happened in Calgary with its children's hospital: multiresidential around there. So the total new population in that area is 12,000 to 15,000 people. That is growth.

I feel, given that Edmonton is growing, that some of the ridings are already well above the variance, and the growth in the core continues. I, like some other people here, want to give you a tough suggestion, and that is that another riding be put in Edmonton.

11:10

Personally I have a little ask, and that is that in Edmonton-Strathcona I noticed that Ritchie, which is defined by 82 Avenue on the north, Argyll Road on the south, 99 street on the west, and Mill Creek Ravine, has been carved out and given to Gold Bar. I love the people in Gold Bar. It's a nice community, but like Whitemud Creek that's been used to define the boundary between Rutherford and Whitemud, I think Mill Creek Ravine is a definite boundary. I think all the activity of the Ritchie and Hazeldean people is really to the west and not to the east. So just a consideration about that boundary.

But I appreciate how hard it is to do what you have to do, especially within the confines that you've been given. I thank you for everything you've done, and I look forward to seeing your next report.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms McDermott.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

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

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for your submission. We've been hearing from others that we could afford to use the variances more than we have because they give us plus or minus 25 per cent off the target.

Ms McDermott: Yeah. I understand that.

Mrs. Samson: And we haven't gone to the max, yet we also are constrained by only being given two new ridings. So because we can't get any more this time, I suspect that some of the tweaking will come at the expense of variances going up as opposed to others. We're limited in solutions.

Ms McDermott: Yeah. I understand that, but I also understand that urban areas, large urban areas, are growing much faster than rural areas, and that's not happening just in Alberta. It's not just Edmonton. It is worldwide, and I think that I would just like to see some appreciation of that.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you, and that's an excellent point.

The Chair: Thank you.

Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

I'm very interested to hear that the west 240 at the U of A is going to be slated for development. That's been a long time coming. It's always been their development pod. But, you know, redevelopment isn't uniform either, and it doesn't necessarily mean multiplex or several-storey unit development either.

Let's consider Ritchie. Let's consider the block between 97 and 96 street on 77 Avenue. That's 30 homes, a typical style development; 15 on either side of the street. There are 15 new homes there. They're all single-family dwellings. So redevelopment takes many, many different shapes, and I'm quite sure if it wasn't for the institutional backing, the west 240 would be redeveloped as single-family homes as well.

Ms McDermott: But it will bring 3,200 – it looks like a beautiful community, and it'll be desirable.

Dr. Martin: I'm sure it will be, but I'm just trying to say that discussions about growth: they're not uniform in their character either.

I really just want to ask you a broader question about Ritchie and Hazeldean and Argyll. We moved them, as you mentioned. Do you think we were wrong to do so?

Ms McDermott: Well, I wouldn't say wrong, but as a Ritchie resident I feel that our activity and everything is bound by the Mill Creek Ravine, so any neighbourhood stuff and constituency activity goes to the west and north, not to the east. It just feels like it's right to be in Strathcona, but that's just a picky, personal thing.

Dr. Martin: Well, I lived in Ritchie, so I feel your pain and I respond to your notion that it's orientated west.

Ms McDermott: It is.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much. That sort of on-the-ground, local knowledge, especially for those of us not fortunate enough to be from Edmonton, is really, really helpful. I'm curious. You talked about the big development of the west 240. Can you maybe just show me on a map exactly where that is?

Ms McDermott: Well, I can tell you it's . . .

Mr. Clark: Aaron is going to ask you to grab that microphone.

The Chair: Grab the microphone and just go up there.

Ms McDermott: It's right here. This is Grandview, and this is Lansdowne, so it's right in here, this whole area. This is where Michener Park is going in, and this is where the Stollery road is scheduled to go. Now timing of this: I have no idea. This is almost ready for people to go in. It's a mix of residential and commercial, but 900 units, and then this is a whole neighbourhood. I think it will fill up because it'll be beautiful.

Mr. Clark: In the west 240 have they started scraping dirt and moving earth at that point?

Ms McDermott: Well they haven't, but they've gone through all the necessary community consultations, and it's at the final stage, I think. So it's done, all their consultation, so that they can go ahead. I'm expecting that it will go ahead, but I don't know about timing.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you again, Ms McDermott, for coming. I'll excuse you from the table.

Our next presenter: I'm not sure he's here. Don Ronaghan? Okay. Please come forward, sir. Have a seat, identify yourself, and tell us which electoral division you are from and which ones you want to comment on.

Dr. Ronaghan: Okay. Sure.

My name is Dr. Don Ronaghan. I currently reside in Lewis Estates in the west part of Edmonton. My presentation is not so much about my current constituency but generally as regards fairness and community of interest in Alberta.

I'll give you a little bit of background. I'm a retired large animal veterinarian. During my life I've practised in Drayton Valley, Lacombe, Lethbridge, and then in the county of Beaver. I spent the last 20 years in St. Paul. I was grain farming at that time, and my wife and I currently still own farmland in the county of St. Paul and in the county of Two Hills. I live in Lewis Estates now. During my lifetime we've been in Edmonton, we've been in Meadowlark, in West Henday, and conceivably we'll be changing it again.

I realize that you have a difficult job. You're trying to balance population growth and fairness for voters, so I'm not so much concerned about my own situation, but what I am concerned about is that fairness and community of interest should be your top priority. Farming is an increasingly tough business. The rural areas are depopulating, and at the same time the cities are increasing in population, so I'm a bit concerned that Edmonton and Calgary are in danger of not getting as many MLAs or seats as they should have. I'm especially concerned about something that I would call a – there's probably a good name for it. I call it a dog-bone constituency, where you take a rural area that is short of people and

you extend that far, far, far, and you grab a little chunk of a city or an area.

I mean, an example that comes to mind would be Drayton Valley-Devon and Stony Plain, where you have a large horizontal area just to make the numbers work, whereas when I think of community of interest, I think of, you know: where do people work? How do they make a living? Where do their kids go to school? What hospital do they go to? Where do you get your old-timers' hockey league from? When I look at some of the constituencies, there's a danger that we would be divorced from community of interest just to make the numbers work.

11:20

Sadly, the rural areas are depopulating. I moved out because my kids are in Calgary and Edmonton. That's happening all over Alberta. My concern is just that you try to avoid – there's probably a name for them. It's a hybrid constituency or whatever it might be. But in order to try and make the numbers work, you nibble pieces off the populated areas and join them onto the rural areas.

Now, when I look at the electoral maps, I recognize that, you know, your goal is perhaps 55,000 people per constituency, which is perfectly reasonable, and there has to be a variance, but the variance can be incredibly large. That Central Peace-Notley is 29,000 people versus, say, Calgary-North East at 85,000: that's obviously not fair, and it won't be seen to be fair.

Again, I'm not so much concerned about my local circumstances because in west Edmonton it may shift 10 or 15 blocks and gain 15,000 people, but that's not going to happen in north Peace. Certainly, areas like Lesser Slave Lake are way below the other areas in Edmonton.

I'm sorry. I'm not specifically addressing this small block of land or that one. Fairness and communities of interest or whatever you want to call it, you know, should be your top priority. That's my short presentation.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, sir. You've identified the conundrum that we deal with. I just want to be sure we're talking apples to apples and not apples and oranges. You mentioned that Calgary-North East in our proposal is at 53,000. You may have been looking at the old one. We realigned it and Central Peace-Notley is at 48,000 or almost 49,000. You know, you used two examples that we wrestled with. Thank you very much.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

Mr. Evans: Yeah. I'm going to give you from the legislation what communities of interest are, and then I want to see if that changes what you presented today. Communities of interest include: municipalities, regional and rural communities, Indian reserves and Métis settlements. I point that out because you were talking about things like how communities of interest would include where you bought your hockey equipment, et cetera. So bearing in mind that that's the legislation that we are guided by, would that change your comments today?

Dr. Ronaghan: What I would say is that I lived in the county of Beaver. I was the chairman of the school board and I was on the county council. The items that we were dealing with as municipal councillors and in the school board were just to kind of keep the wheels on. These are different items than people in the cities would have. So when we have these rural-urban, it's really hard for an MLA to ride two horses at one time.

In the farming area we think of Roundup as a useful tool to control the weeds, and I'm a farmer. But the urban people say: oh, cancer. They think herbicides are the same as pesticides, and they don't know. In the school board in the rural areas our chief trouble

is that the bus routes are so long that the little kids fall asleep, you know. The urban areas have different concerns. Some are the same, of course, but they are different concerns than the rural areas. The better farmland is right down the middle of Alberta. Highway 2 separates most of it, and that's where the population is. As a result, many of these constituencies tend to be horizontal, going side to side, and that may have to be the way it is.

As much as you can, I'd just encourage you – you corrected me with regard to the population. I think you've done an excellent job. I've looked at the wrong map. I'm sorry. I'm just concerned that rural areas are shrinking and, as a result, they may have to have larger areas.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for your presentation today. You've absolutely hit the nail on the head. It has been so controversial from the first day. We've had everything from communities of interest to, "I'm not interested in your community," so it cuts both ways, but I appreciate your analogies. They're quite good. I thank you again for reinforcing those concerns.

Dr. Ronaghan: Thank you for hearing me. You've got a difficult job. Take care.

The Chair: Oh, just a minute.

Mrs. Samson: We've got more. You're not done yet.

Dr. Ronaghan: Oh, good. Sure.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

My colleague Mr. Evans recited the act's statement about communities of interest, and in fact we have been much more latitudinous than the act says about what we would consider as communities of interest. For example, we heard a very great deal in the first round from presenters in Edmonton talking about community leagues, which typify Edmonton, and the argument has been: well, these are communities of interest. It's not strictly true, but if you added up a matrix of factors that would constitute the interests of people, whether it's economic or social or cultural or what have you, then you can start to build a picture that looks sort of, kind of like community leagues but not quite.

We have used that consideration in the way we considered the Edmonton boundaries and also to an equal extent the neighbourhoods in Calgary. According to the act this isn't strictly what we should be looking at, but we're prepared to consider that because it's the real life of real people. And to take it to its fullest absurd extent, we should really have 890 ridings, so you can see that the process of aggregating communities of interest into larger groups is never going to be perfect.

The Chair: Are you prepared to recommend that to the Speaker?

Dr. Martin: I am prepared to recommend that, yes. Sure.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

I'll just thank you for coming in. I think you make a good point about communities of interest, and it is inherently subjective. Literally, in our case, where do we literally draw the line, you know? I think your perspective, having lived in rural Alberta,

having been in urban Alberta – equally we don't have 87 or 89 MLAs at large like you'd see in certain municipalities – right? – where they have councillors at large. We also don't do that. So somewhere between 890 and zero we have to draw some lines. I don't have a specific question beyond just saying thank you for your submission. It does help us clarify our thinking around what communities of interest are. So thank you.

The Chair: Thank you again, sir.

Dr. Ronaghan: Thank you very much. Take care.

The Chair: Please remain to hear other presenters if you're able to.

Our next presenter is Mr. Art Lange. Please identify yourself and tell us which electoral division you live in and which one you wish to comment on.

Mr. Lange: Good morning, everyone. My name is Art Lange. I am a resident of Strathcona county and the constituency of Strathcona-Sherwood Park. Just to give a bit of background about myself, I am a professional agrologist and still working part-time in that profession. Not in the actual growing of things; I work with farm finances and contract with the federal government farm debt mediation program. I am a long-time resident of Strathcona county. I've lived there for 40-plus years, and I've taken a keen interest in the politics of the municipality, that is the county, and also at the provincial and federal level. At the federal level we've worked through some really weird alignments. I'm here to talk specifically about Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

11:30

As I understand it, there's a proposal to remove the Heritage Hills part from that constituency, my constituency, and to add parts of Beaumont and Leduc county. Well, gentlemen and lady, that absolutely makes no sense to me, and I'll briefly outline my reasons for saying so.

First of all, I'd like to borrow an old phrase that goes something like this: if it isn't broke, don't fix it. On to my points. Right now our constituency is in the neighbourhood of 51,000 residents, so it's well within the legal range. We have growth occurring both in the hamlet of Ardrossan, and we have a new subdivision that started a couple of years ago and is still growing called Hillshire. Shortly, within a couple of years, we should be up to the 55,000 members – not members. Population. Your jargon is different than mine, so I have to adjust.

Beaumont just doesn't fit in our constituency at all. That is a separate entity. It's some distance away. It's south of Edmonton, and the natural flow patterns there as far as jobs, schools, services just don't align with our constituency at all. Heritage Hills, on the other hand, is an integral part of our constituency, and I believe it should stay there.

As you will know, Strathcona is a specialized municipality which includes urban and rural areas. As the previous speaker said: we've already done this urban and rural dance, I guess you might call it, or combination to achieve the numbers that we're striving for within the ranges that have been identified.

Beaumont has its own town council. They do their own thing over there. Again, I see no commonality with Strathcona county at all. Strathcona residents to a large part work in Edmonton, in the heartland, what we call Refinery Row. Beaumont does their own thing, and they're not part of that particular employment or location mix. The boundaries of our area fortunately have been consistent for many years, and I think making this change would really confuse people. I just think it's unnecessary, and I don't know where these ideas are coming from.

That is the end of my presentation.

The Chair: Well, thank you, Mr. Lange. So you don't want Beaumont.

Mr. Lange: Don't want Beaumont. Right.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

Mr. Evans: No questions. Thank you for your submissions. Appreciate it, Mr. Lange.

Mrs. Samson: Mr. Lange, I just have to smile. Like in my earlier comments, we were overwhelmed by our consideration of putting half of Beaumont into Strathcona-Sherwood Park, and, rest assured, the people of Beaumont said they don't want you either.

Mr. Lange: Hey, we agree. Wonderful.

Mrs. Samson: I don't know what to do with this now. I don't have any questions; I just have a big problem.

Mr. Lange: I know. I'm dumping it on you.

Mrs. Samson: I know you are. Thank you.

Mr. Lange: You're the brains behind this.

The Chair: I'll now turn it over to our local expert from this area. Dr. Martin, go ahead. Any questions?

Dr. Martin: I'm the only member of the commission from north of Red Deer, so I'm the local expert.

I wanted to ask you about Hillshire. You know, I have what I call a Tyvek test.

Mr. Lange: A what?

Dr. Martin: Tyvek.

Mr. Lange: That's the wrap around houses?

Dr. Martin: You bet it is. Until I see that, I'm not willing to believe that it's really a development. I think Hillshire, then, will qualify from that point of view, but I'm interested: is that 500 units? What's your guesstimate there?

Mr. Lange: I don't know. I don't have the specific numbers.

Dr. Martin: I should've asked the MLA.

Mr. Lange: Part of it is already built, and there's still further construction going on there.

Dr. Martin: Right. My Tyvek test, as we've grown to call it, is merely because anyone can make a statement about, "Growth is happening. Honest to God, it's happening. We've got development area plans, we've got good will, and we're going to grow," but you know, the practical reality is that you can't figure out the timing of these things. The Tyvek test is my quick, down-and-dirty way of saying: yeah, it's very imminent. Do you think that that is going to add a lot of people into – well, I guess we've put it into the hamlet of Sherwood Park rather than the county. Do you expect it to add lots of people?

Mr. Lange: Well, I don't know what you mean by a lot. That's kind of a nebulous statement.

The Chair: Putting Beaumont in is a lot of people, right?

Mr. Lange: Yeah. Not as many as Beaumont, no. If I was to grab a number out of the air, I'd say maybe 1,000 people.

Dr. Martin: Can I ask a follow-up? If we don't do Beaumont, should we go north of 16?

Mr. Lange: Well, that would be a logical extension in my view because of all the local factors and movements and where people shop, where they work, and that kind of stuff. [A cellphone rang] Uh-oh. My phone is ringing. Sorry about that. Shut up.

But then I suppose you're opening another can of worms.

Dr. Martin: Inevitably.

Mr. Lange: But again, it's on you guys, not on me. Yeah.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. I guess I just want to build on that line of questioning. If we needed to do something, because, you know, it is a real challenge – I mean, Leduc and Beaumont today are about 65,000 people if you put the two together. That's a large number, so we're really struggling with Beaumont. Haven't had anybody actually come speak to us yet from Beaumont although we certainly received a lot of written submissions; there's no question. I'm curious if, in terms of Strathcona county, we needed to go further east into, say, Beaver county, does that make any sense? You don't sort of head out in that direction.

Mr. Lange: I don't think so, no.

Mr. Clark: I mean, how about north, as Dr. Martin says, above 16?

Mr. Lange: That, to me, is the logical expansion, yes.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Perfect. Thank you.

Mr. Lange: Then the other thing is that Bremner is coming on. That's at least a quarter section of residences. Of course, we're looking 10, 15, 20 years down the road, but that's going to be a huge population there.

Mr. Clark: That's good. Thank you.

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

Mr. Lange: Okay. We're done?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Lange: Goodbye. I've got to go.

The Chair: Okay. You're excused. Feel free to stay, but if you've got to go, that's fine, too.

Our next presenter is David Jackson. Good morning. Tell us what electoral division you live in and which ones you're commenting on.

Mr. Jackson: Good morning, Mr. Commissioner. I live in Edmonton-City Centre, and I'll be speaking of the proposed 35, 48, and 84 constituencies.

Riding 35, Edmonton-Glenora-Riverview. The combination of Edmonton-Glenora and Edmonton-Riverview into 35, Edmonton-Glenora-Riverview, reflects the reality on the ground. A common interest in socioeconomic alignment eliminates the rare and time-consuming river crossing that used to incorporate communities that were less well aligned, university students and rentals. It complements existing political co-operation at the local level between Edmonton-

Glenora and Edmonton-Riverview constituencies. So I salute the commission on this wise decision to combine these neighbourhoods of interest and remove the neighbourhoods nonaligned south and east of the river.

Forty-eight, Edmonton-West-Enoch. The creation of riding 48, Edmonton-West-Enoch, is also an excellent move by the commission. The Enoch Cree Nation reserve is no longer an entity that is out there on its own in the rural west end. It is now an urban reserve with urban services and businesses, and its economy is integrated with that of the city of Edmonton. The River Cree resort is a competitor for the convention traffic that could be going to the downtown Convention Centre. Where the city of Edmonton has policy differences like around cigar bars and shisha lounges, Enoch answers the call to enable commerce. For all intents and purposes Enoch reserve is Edmonton where the corporation of the city does not dictate what happens.

11:40

The constituency is growing, particularly along the highway 628-Whitemud Drive corridor and the highway 627 corridor. This growth is creating infrastructure issues that are shared with the interests of the new constituency 81, Spruce Grove; namely, highway widening, paving, twinning, interchange construction as well as schools and high schools. This will result in two future MLAs working on these issues together.

The rural housing development south of highway 627 and east of highway 60 will need focused representation as the growth from the city encroaches on the rural acreage way of life. This area is a forgotten corner of Parkland county. Given the natural barriers of the river valley, the highway 60 corridor, and highway 627 just south of Enoch the area is quite likely a candidate for future annexation by the city of Edmonton. This area is home to the U of A Botanic Garden, a significant tourism attraction owned by an Edmonton-based entity.

I reject the assertions of the mayor of Edmonton in his letter to the commission reported in the *Edmonton Journal* that an MLA representing Edmonton should not represent any other municipality or an Indian reserve. I question whether the mayor fears that an MLA might find out the true nature of the relationship between the city and its neighbouring municipalities.

As the commission knows, all manner of MLAs represent multiple municipalities. Once upon a time I worked for an MLA that had close to two dozen municipalities to contend with, and it took five hours to drive from end to end of his constituency. I will remind the commission and the mayor of Edmonton that many of those rural residents in the proposed riding 48 use the same capital region water services the city relies on, the same electricity, and the mutual aid agreements are in place. Whomever is chosen MLA here will have to contend with two municipalities and an Indian reserve. No big deal. It is a lot fewer than two dozen municipalities handled by many rural MLAs. I commend the commission for creating riding 48, Edmonton-West-Enoch, and implore the commission to keep the constituency in the final report.

Eighty-four, Stony Plain-Drayton Valley-Devon. I want to turn briefly to this proposed constituency. I believe the commission may have erred in the drafting of the maps. I'm a fan of MLAs not having to drive across . . .

The Chair: Can you maybe give us a second, sir? That was 84.

Mr. Jackson: Stony Plain-Drayton Valley-Devon.

The Chair: Okay. Yeah. Continue.

Mr. Jackson: I'm a fan of MLAs not having to drive across another MLA's constituency to reach their own. I believe two corrections to the boundary may be in order to provide better representation here. First, take a look at the Calmar area. Don't use range road 270 and township road 500 as the dividing line. Use highway 39 and highway 60, or use the railway going into Calmar and range road 263 as the boundary in that area. It's cleaner and contiguous, and the MLA is not driving through riding 68, Leduc-Beaumont, to go from Calmar over to Devon.

The second is Holbom west of the Fifth Meridian. If Stony Plain is now going into this constituency, make the constituency contiguous such that the MLA can drive highway 627 and highway 770 to reach Drayton Valley without having to go through riding 66, Lac Ste Anne-Parkland. Annex the land south of 627 west of range road 10 and east of highway 770 into 84, Stony Plain-Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Chair, commissioners, those conclude my remarks.

The Chair: Have you provided us with a written submission, sir?

Mr. Jackson: No, I have not.

The Chair: Can you leave what you've just recited in terms of the boundaries?

Mr. Jackson: Yes, I can.

The Chair: We're really appreciative of the first two kudos you gave to us, and the correction is more important. We need to take a look at that.

Mr. Clark, any questions of this presenter?

Mr. Clark: No. I don't think so, aside from our thanks for being here.

We've crossed paths in the past. Are you still currently doing what you did before?

Mr. Jackson: No, I'm not.

Mr. Clark: You're off doing your own thing.

Mr. Jackson: No. Looking for new opportunities, Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Well, then, now that's on *Hansard*, and it will be forever.

Thank you for coming.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Jackson. I wanted to dwell on a couple of the specifics that you offered up. Number one, around Calmar. You are presuming that we wish to continue to have it within the Drayton Valley-Devon riding, and you're offering better roadway. Is that what I heard?

Mr. Jackson: Correct. Calmar is in that constituency, but for some mysterious reason the proposed boundary is set north of the eastern end there. Just drop it a quarter section south down to the highway or just even a little further south into the railway so you have a continuous highway corridor over to the traffic circle.

Dr. Martin: Okay. Do you have any comment on the fact that we have subdivided Pigeon Lake? We don't like that. You know, we look back and said: oh, we've drawn a boundary right across the middle of the lake.

Mr. Jackson: No. I have no comments on Pigeon Lake.

Dr. Martin: Thirdly, I want to come back to your more broad point about an MLA tasked with having an Edmonton component and an Enoch Cree First Nation component is under no greater complication than is normal in many parts of the province. Could you say a bit more about that? We've heard a great, great deal: oh, don't confuse us. But your point is that it's not really confusing and certainly not out of the ordinary.

Mr. Jackson: No, it's not out of the ordinary. You have three jurisdictions that are essentially clumped together, and the local economic units are working together. Everyone is shopping at the same grocery stores, using the same services, and travelling back and forth across the two. It's a short travel time and travel distance in order to represent its three units: a county, a city, and a First Nations reserve. It's unlike, let's say, the current Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock constituency, which stretches from Swan Hills all the way over to St. Lina, over five hours to drive across. You've got dozens of municipalities that you're dealing with, and you're lucky to get in front of a village council once every two years. That's the challenges that we're facing here whereas you're dealing with three – you can still get in front of them all in the same week.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Jackson.
Mrs. Samson, any questions?

Mrs. Samson: No. Thank you for your presentation. No questions.

Mr. Evans: Can you give me some more details on the significance of not crossing other constituencies?

Mr. Jackson: It just makes the maps cleaner and grouping of communities of interest together and making it easier to identify where those boundaries are. I found it odd that this little carve-out by a traffic circle, which is in the same trade corridor, was not kept in there, in travelling from Calmar to Devon. The same on the west end, from Stony Plain over to Genesee to cross the bridges there. Rural MLAs and even the urban MLAs have opportunities to play the role of road inspector, and that breaks up the amount of jurisdiction.

11:50

The Chair: Okay. Thank you for your presentation and for the couple of fine points that we can probably tinker with. Thank you so much.

Dr. Martin: Can you give that to Mr. Roth, please?

The Chair: Yeah. Please.

Mr. Jackson: I will.

The Chair: Okay. Our next presenter is Ms Moira Vane. Please identify yourself and tell us what electoral division you live in and which ridings you wish to comment on.

Ms Vane: Good morning. My name is Moira Vane. I live in the riding of Edmonton-Strathcona, which is 47. I would like to speak about it; 36, Edmonton-Gold Bar; and 72, Mackenzie.

The Chair: Okay. Sorry. Can you run those numbers again?

Ms Vane: Yeah. 47, Ritchie; 36, Edmonton-Gold Bar; and 72, Mackenzie.

The Chair: Okay. Please proceed.

Ms Vane: Thank you. I wanted to start by just saying thank you to everyone. I am sure that it's been exciting to visit so many corners of our beautiful province but also, I imagine, exhausting, particularly in the winter. Ultimately, I suspect that this is a job where you will find universal praise for your work perhaps elusive, but nonetheless I'm sure there will be lots of gratitude.

As I mentioned, I live in Edmonton-Strathcona. I have seen and felt the pressures on our city, especially – perhaps it's anecdotal – since we had the Alberta Is Calling campaign, which drew thousands to our city. Over the past 12 years that I've had children, I have felt the intensity of the new arrivals in our city. When my children were first born, if I had to take them to the Stollery, the wait time would be three to four hours. Now it's almost never under 14 hours. When my son broke his arm less than two years ago, it took three days, actually, before we could have surgery. The emergency room was just overflowing with people. So I do appreciate and I do think it's important for Edmonton to get another seat.

Just even anecdotally, I can also say that I have some rental properties in my riding. Certainly, before the Alberta Is Calling campaign when we would advertise it, we would have to have multiple viewings. We would have to wait for enough people to come in. Now we simply put up the ad once; we make one appointment. We have people out the door trying to get the unit. It is wild, the difference in terms of people that have arrived.

In terms of a constructive comment I would like to think of it as, I was a bit sad to see Ritchie leave our riding. With the activities that my children and I do, Ritchie is the community that, I would say, Edmonton-Strathcona sort of pops over into the most. It's where we have Girl Guides and Boy Scouts. Our green shack programs are pretty interchangeable. I can let the kids run to both of those. I would see Ritchie's community league and Strathcona's community league as having very friendly rivalries. Events are often organized and advertised to each other in a way that I don't see Ritchie having that same involvement in Edmonton-Gold Bar. Again, I'm not from Ritchie, so I don't want to speak for them, but I can just say for myself, being in Edmonton-Strathcona, that I've always felt that Ritchie is very much a part of us.

Those are just some comments that I had around my own community and Ritchie, but I also had some comments that I wanted to make about Mackenzie, which I do have some sympathy for. I have a concern around rural and urban votes not diluting one another. I know that some of the rural ridings have complained about the physical size of their ridings, and I wanted to offer a comparison to the commission that you might find useful along with a solution that I do think has worked.

I'm originally from Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories. At a territorial level I'm not sure that this is particularly useful as a comparison because the territorial government operates under a consensus government system. But at the federal level I do think it is a useful comparison perhaps for you to look at in the sense that, of course, the territorial government participates in the federal election and uses a party system. The Western Arctic riding was created in 1979. It remained in its incarnation until Nunavut was created in 1999. It reduced its size; otherwise, it stayed the same along the boundary levels.

The N.W.T. is, of course, huge. If you could drive from the northernmost community of Sachs Harbour all the way to the most southern community of Fort Smith, it would be over 6,000 kilometres. Of course, you can't drive because there aren't roads. When you look at Alberta, the full length of Alberta is 1,200 kilometres, so it's almost five times as large. The N.W.T. is also comprised of, obviously, very different groups of people from many different backgrounds, including both Inuit and First Nations, that

do not share any linguistic characteristics and have very different cultural traditions. But you also can see that they all share one major centre, which is Yellowknife, which is where you find that most of the services are concentrated.

Nonetheless, for the last 50 years the western Arctic has been able to send one representative to Ottawa, and over most of these 50 years the solution that I think has worked very well is that their representatives have come from outside of Yellowknife. We had, for example, Ethel Blondin-Andrew, who hailed from Tulita in the Sahtu. We had Dennis Bevington, who came from the southernmost community of Fort Smith, and we've had Michael McLeod from Fort Providence, which is sort of in the middle.

The boundaries commission, obviously, has no power to select who gets to run as representatives from the various political parties, and I also think you're not expected to solve every problem, but I do think that it is something that should be encouraged by all parties, which is to look to the smaller communities in those ridings to find representatives so that one doesn't dominate the rest. I do think, again, that everyone should be encouraging that, and it is a solution that has worked for the Arctic.

I do think there has to be an element of fairness when boundaries are drawn, and even though some parts, again, of the N.W.T. obviously are wildly different from one another, they are still represented as a community of interest. I realize it can't be perfect, but it can be made as fair as possible.

On that note, I often think of the very famous comment from the U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart when he was talking about obscenity – it reminds me of fairness in this situation – which is that when something is unfair, I know it when I see it, though it might be hard to define.

Those are my comments. Thank you again for your time.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much.

Mr. Clark, any questions?

Mr. Clark: No. That's really helpful. I'm just reflecting a bit because that was a wide-ranging submission. Thank you very much.

Ms Vane: You're welcome.

Mr. Clark: I very much appreciate you spending the time to put that all together.

I'm just thinking a little bit about community leagues and Ritchie and Strathcona. I was frantically trying to align my two different maps to kind of sort myself out around exactly how we've aligned things. We've tried although I think we have not in every case succeeded to follow community league boundaries. In the case of Ritchie, have we split that? Have we respected a community league boundary, or have we managed to slice it?

Ms Vane: I believe you have respected a community league boundary. However, we have the ravine that runs through the middle, and of course there's a swimming pool around where Whyte Avenue is, and there's a bridge that goes over the ravine. I would say that Ritchie and Strathcona: we are up and down the ravine, and you have taken Ritchie and you have put it with the community that's on the other side of the bridge. I know just, again, through my own children's activities, that they go up and down the bike lanes and they go up and down the ravine. We walk our dog up and down. There is a long dog park that is an off-leash area that runs through the ravine. To me, I've always thought of Old Strathcona and Ritchie as one long community, but now, again, what I see from the map is that they've been hived into Edmonton-Gold Bar.

I don't want to speak for Ritchie, but just as an Old Strathcona person I do see us sharing many, many sort of communal properties, I guess you would sort of say: our parks, our splash parks, again, the bike trails, the ravine, the dog park, the pool, those sorts of things.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you. I mean, as you identified, one of the great challenges is both keeping communities of interest together but also not overpopulating or underpopulating certain constituencies. Maybe the best thing we can do is make everybody equally unhappy.

Ms Vane: That may be your reality. I wish more for you, though, to be clear.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

Dr. Martin: Well, thank you for your wishes. The difficulty, it seems to me, with respect to Ritchie and Hazeldean and also Argyll to perhaps some lesser extent is, yes, I don't disagree that there's been a lot of – Ritchie faces west culturally and has done. It faces towards Whyte Avenue. You notice we didn't include west Ritchie, which people from Ritchie still believe to be part of their community league. But if we reverted to the map as it had been, that's 9,000 people. If you want me to put them in Edmonton-Strathcona, the immediate ripple effect, of course, is on Edmonton-Gold Bar because that is minus 9,000 people. We're faced with a dilemma of gross inequalities between two districts that are reasonably – well, they share a boundary no matter how you slice and dice it.

Ms Vane: That's right.

Dr. Martin: There's the lumpiness to growth in the city, and we have geographical features that are quite significant, but in a situation like this we have to squint at Mill Creek.

Ms Vane: That's fair.

Dr. Martin: Well, thanks.

12:00

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for your time today. We have struggled with the north and have had extreme push-back from all Albertans right across the province. You know you really got it wrong when everybody is talking about it. But I did look at some of the other provinces and territories, and everybody treats the north differently because the north shows us unique situations that we have to deal with.

I don't know what our final solution is going to be. We haven't got there yet. We just heard what people don't like. But I think it would be fair to say it will certainly be mentioned in the written report because how many more commissions can go by while we struggle with the same thing?

Do you have any comments, like, relating – I know you did suggest a change.

Ms Vane: I think just being from the north myself, one of our major concerns is that we tend to be overlooked and we're an afterthought. So I do think, you know, having consultations with people, talking to people. I do think that there is a responsibility on all of the parties to make efforts in those communities to encourage people to run and participate – I think sometimes what you see is a kind of apathy that sets in, and it's always the same old people with the same old party with the same old crew – and encouraging more folks, especially from those smaller centres, to represent.

When they run and they come forward – again, you know, when you look at a community like where the hon. Ethel Blondin-Andrew is from, I'm sure they were less than 300 people at certain points, and then she became the representative for the whole of the Northwest Territories at a time when it still included, actually, Nunavut. She did a very excellent job. She was the first Indigenous woman to go into federal cabinet. She was well regarded across the country. Like, she broke many barriers. Again, such a small community that she came from but raised very well and did lots of education and worked so much with communities. Just a very well-respected person.

I think if we had fallen back to the old – you look to Yellowknife, where the major centre is, where all the government offices are, I don't think you would have had somebody who would have such a nuanced understanding. Being from such a small community herself, she understood all the other small communities. I think that's really important.

Again, I respect that it's not your job to encourage people to run, but I do think it's a message that should be shared with the parties, that they should be working more actively in these smaller communities to make people not feel left out. I do think that's the underlying theme that has been my whole life. The north always feels left out.

Mrs. Samson: Right. Thank you.

Ms Vane: You're welcome.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Evans: Hi, Moira. Nice to see you.

Ms Vane: Indeed.

Mr. Evans: Not being from Edmonton, the ravine that you're talking about: is that at 82nd Avenue N.W. along Mill Creek? Is that where that is?

Ms Vane: Yeah. If you look at it, you can kind of see the creek itself. Like, it's a squiggly bit, and then it sort of hits Whyte Avenue and goes straight. If you follow the squiggly bit down, that's where the ravine runs along. That's where, again, the trail systems, the dog off-leash, the swimming pool, all of that runs along there. In fact, if you go all the way down to Hazeldean, that's where the Argyll centre is, and that's where my kids took all their bicycle lessons. You can travel the whole length. I live up near the top, near the river proper. You can make it the whole way down just through the ravine system.

Mr. Evans: Is that where Dr. Martin said there were about 9,000 people?

Ms Vane: That's what I'm understanding. It would be all the way down to – correct me if I'm wrong – 63rd Avenue. That's what you're talking about? Yes. It's a very densely populated area, and I appreciate that. Again, my anecdotal evidence from my rental properties has been that it's just been zany the last two, three years. It reflects the larger issue of the housing shortage, of course, that everyone's suffering from not just in urban centres; rural areas, especially in the north. I can certainly say from the Arctic that we have an absolute crisis when it comes to housing, and it's not unusual to find 14 people living in a one-bedroom or two-bedroom residence. It's a nation-wide issue.

Mr. Evans: Thank you.

Ms Vane: Yeah. You're welcome.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much for your very fine presentation, Ms Vane.

Ms Vane: Thank you so much. I appreciate the time. I appreciate all the work that everyone has done. I feel like it's a bit thankless and the general population might not understand it, but it's really important work, and I really appreciate everyone's hard work, so thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you. Please remain.

We have one more presenter before lunch. We'll call on Laura Paquette.

Mrs. Samson: What a dreadful position to be in.

Ms Paquette: No pressure. Everybody's hungry for lunch.

The Chair: Well, we haven't kept anyone to a time limit yet today, and we won't start with you.

Ms Paquette: It's okay. I came early just in case we were running ahead of schedule, but I sure appreciate listening to everybody.

I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to be here. My name is Laura Paquette, born and raised in north Edmonton. I've been to 25 countries. I love travelling. I've also lived in Beaumont and Tofield, but most of my adult life was spent living in Mill Woods. I work in Sherwood Park, and I was commuting from Tofield. When I was in Beaumont, I was commuting from Beaumont, and now I find myself in Mill Woods again because it's just cheaper. Sherwood Park is not affordable, but my kids both go to school in Sherwood Park. That's my context. I'm happy to take questions about any of those places, but I want to speak about Sherwood Park today, if I may.

First, I think it's so important that everybody is participating in this process. That's the main reason I'm here, just because it's such an important thing to participate. My mom was an *Edmonton Journal* reporter for 40 years, so I think that the nerd in me loves maps and local events and what everybody's up to, and just being a participant in all of this is important to me. I think it's so important to advocate for boundaries that reflect the real, lived community on the ground because this supports fair, effective representation for residents.

I'd like to thank you for considering the feedback that I provided in the first round. I had comments about southeast Edmonton and Mill Woods and Sherwood Park as well, and I love so far what I'm seeing of the maps of southeast Edmonton. I do think it would be great to have an extra riding in Edmonton, but I have no idea how to do that, so I won't touch that one at all today. I appreciate that the interim maps reflect much of what residents across the Edmonton region seem to have been expressing, particularly with the rapid population growth happening in the southeast and in Sherwood Park.

Sherwood Park, as a hamlet, really has a clearly defined urban identity within Strathcona county, and I believe it's important that the electoral map continues to reflect that reality. The community functions as a cohesive urban area with shared services, shared infrastructure, and strong day-to-day connections. My own family experiences this directly. My kids attend school in Sherwood Park. I drive those main corridors every day, and I work there, too. I can't afford to live there, but maybe one day I'll win the lottery. It's all those single family homes, you know. We need more density, perhaps. But from that perspective I think the community is

undeniably interconnected and urban in character in Sherwood Park.

I wanted to point out how that manifests itself in our education system there. Two new schools are popping up. One just opened in September. That's where my daughter goes. Forest Grove school is opening in September 2026. Both of those are French schools. Forest Grove is a French immersion school with Elk Island public, and École Claudette-et-Denis-Tardif is my daughter's school. It's a francophone school that just opened in September 2025. Their capture zone, you call it, is from Fort Saskatchewan all the way out to Tofield. So when we lived in Tofield, she was able to actually bus to school. Now, she was in kindergarten and I worked in Sherwood Park, so I thought maybe an hour long on the bus was too much. But it's a huge catchment area for the francophone school, and 90 per cent or more of the students are bused in from all over Sherwood Park, Fort Saskatchewan, and all the way to Tofield. So a big area for the francophone public school board there.

Both of these are French language schools, and it just shows that there is a lot of growth in young families choosing to live and work and go to school in Sherwood Park. All these families rely on Sherwood Park schools with the recreation facilities, health services, and the transportation network in that urban area, so I'm glad to see the map as it is proposed. I was glad to see that the significant growth south of Wye Road has been included in the Sherwood Park riding. That's where some high-density housing is going up. You mentioned Hillshire, which will be 290 homes. I looked that up real quick while we were talking about it.

Her school is just south of Heritage Hills, so I'm in and out of that area every day, and I think it's fine to add Heritage Hills. I think, like you said, it's neither here nor there. You could throw a dart at the board on that side of things, on Clover Bar Road, and it would be fine. If we weren't under such a crunch, I suppose I would just take all of that urban area west of highway 21 and include it because it really is the urban identity of Sherwood Park that is important. I think that overall the proposed map for Sherwood Park is practical and fair. It aligns with most of the urban boundaries, respects the cohesion of the community, and I look forward to seeing what grows up in Cambrian north of highway 16.

12:10

With that, I just have one suggestion, and it is the fact that there are two ridings called Sherwood Park. I know the other one is Strathcona-Sherwood Park, but it always confuses people when they think – especially if you're adding Beaumont. Maybe not. I would suggest that east of Sherwood Park we have a beautiful UNESCO world heritage site called Beaver Hills, and that whole area east of Sherwood Park is kind of known as Beaver Hills. A lot of people say, "Oh, I live near Ardrossan," or "I live just south of Ardrossan," or "I'm in Beaver county," whatever the case may be. I wouldn't name things after counties, but Beaver Hills is a UNESCO world heritage site, which is near Cooking Lake.

All of those names, those suggestions – Beaver Hills, Cooking Lake, or Ardrossan – would be great alternatives to calling something Strathcona-Sherwood Park to reduce confusion and better reflect the sense of identity for those communities in that division.

Beyond this naming thing I am very satisfied with the interim maps that I talked about, and I thank you for your time today.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. Now your suggestion is Strathcona-Beaver Hills as a name?

Ms Paquette: I would just call it Beaver Hills. Beaumont-Beaver Hills sounds like it's not likely to happen, but I love a little

alliteration. As somebody who lived in Tofield, I would sooner align Tofield with Strathcona county than – I know Camrose wants it, too, but everybody on that corridor through highway 14: they're commuting back and forth across Strathcona county, so Tofield really lines up with that. Beaver Hills is that whole area, and it really is full of beavers. There's a lot of roadkill and complaints from farmers, but a beautiful geographic sort of area name for it. Yeah.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much for that.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

Mr. Evans: No. Thank you for your submissions, though.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. That was valuable, but I'm still hung up on Beaver Hills. I think, in my opinion, because I'm from Sylvan Lake, you have to have a name that people are familiar with the location.

Ms Paquette: Like Ardrossan-Beaver Hills or something like that.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah, but would not Strathcona be the more logical one with our names?

Ms Paquette: Edmonton-Strathcona is a historic source of confusion.

Mrs. Samson: Okay. Right. I get it.

Ms Paquette: There's a Strathcona high school, and Strathcona county really is an amalgamation of lots of urban areas, so I think people align themselves with sort of the geographic parts that they land in.

Mrs. Samson: So Ardrossan would be the next biggest. Let me just mark that down for consideration.

The Chair: Really? How big is Ardrossan?

Ms Paquette: There's a whole neighbourhood called the Kingdom of Ardrossan. Very clever marketing with knights and swords and things, but it's up and coming. They have a huge rec centre where everybody goes for hockey, and the Tofield hockey teams all go to Ardrossan back and forth. It's really, like, that whole area of Cooking Lake. Lindbrook is another big neighbourhood in that area. When I was in Tofield, people would say, "Oh, I live closer to Lindbrook," or "We're on the way to Ardrossan. We're near Antler Lake." There are all these little – and South Cooking Lake is a big community as well. That whole region: they kind of look at geographical landmarks when they're talking to each other.

The Chair: But Beaver Hills would be doable in the name?

Ms Paquette: Yeah. I mean, a UNESCO world heritage site that not a lot of people know about.

The Chair: Well, I didn't until 10 minutes ago.

Ms Paquette: Elk Island is a big landmark, but just south of that we've got Tofield and Beaver Hills.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Dr. Martin: I'm just thinking about Beaver Hills. I was just kind of puzzled about that, frankly. Sherwood Park proper by the hamlet is an urban service area within the county, which is the government of the whole region. You have – I don't know – eight ward councillors in the county government. Do the wards have names?

Ms Paquette: No. They're numbers, unfortunately. Yeah.

Dr. Martin: So we could call this electoral district number 82, perhaps?

Ms Paquette: Sure. *District 9*. The movie.

Dr. Martin: No matter how you slice it, any protocol around naming will be dashed when it comes to this little area.

Ms Paquette: It's so tricky, and I think particularly if you're going to keep Beaumont included, they would take issue with being called Sherwood Park-Strathcona county. I'm sure you heard that.

Dr. Martin: Oh, you can well believe it.

Ms Paquette: When I lived in Beaumont, there was really that dividing line down 50th Street. I understand that, you know, "We live on east of 50th" or "We live on west of 50th," that makes good sense to divide things that way. But namingwise, I think they would be up in arms, especially if they weren't included in the name. It's hard to help – with people googling everything nowadays, when you put in "Sherwood Park MLA," you're going to get Kyle. But everyone living east of Clover Bar Road: that's not their MLA. So it's a real tricky situation.

The Chair: His population is even higher than what we note because everybody mistakes him.

Ms Paquette: Well, he just helps everybody. If they can pronounce his name, they get helped real quick.

The Chair: Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: I don't know if I have any questions. I'm reflecting a little. I'm just trying to do rapid arithmetic on sizes of places. If you've been here for a bit, you know that we're struggling with how to kind of balance everything out and keep it, you know, effective representation. Tofield looks like it's only got maybe 2,500 or so people, and the portion of Beaumont that we've got is 10,000.

Ms Paquette: Sorry. Lindbrook and Tofield are the two most populated areas east of Sherwood Park.

Mr. Clark: Sorry. Did you say you lived in Beaumont at one point?

Ms Paquette: Yes.

Mr. Clark: And 50th is a genuine dividing . . .

Ms Paquette: Yes. I lived on the east side of 50th Street, and sometimes you had to cross the road to visit a friend or something, but it was noteworthy. The church is kind of this landmark on a hill, and you can see that the road goes right down the middle. I found that the people in Sherwood Park and Beaumont align on a lot of things, but they sure don't cross paths. There's no reason to. They wouldn't have the same economic interests in terms of, you know, where they work or where the kids go to school or anything like that. I had a lot more in common with everything east of Sherwood Park.

Mr. Clark: Would you say that they have more in common, then, with Strathcona county and Sherwood Park than they would with, say, like, the south part of Edmonton?

Ms Paquette: I'd say the people in Beaumont have more in common with Edmonton than with Sherwood Park. I don't know if they'd have any reason to visit or to do any business there.

Yeah. Certainly, all the people from Tofield, if they've got to run to Costco or something, they're running into Sherwood Park. It's only 2,000 people, but, you know, if I had to pick – and I lived in Tofield. I did have to pick. The only two French schools were in Camrose or Sherwood Park. I thought we're always driving back and forth into the city, so we'd rather take highway 14.

Dr. Martin: The hamlet.

Ms Paquette: Yes. Going that way, going west from Tofield then driving down into the city of Camrose.

Dr. Martin: Right.

Ms Paquette: It was equidistant. It was 35 minutes either way, whether we drove from our acreage out to Sherwood Park or drove down to Camrose. Camrose had a Peavey Mart, which kind of swayed them. But their French schools: it's a lot of busing either way. The Sherwood Park school won us over, and they do have kids coming from that whole heartland region, it's called. I wouldn't call it that because that's north of Sherwood Park, the Industrial Heartland.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Well, thank you. I know I could google it, but I want to hear from a local. Why is Beaver Hills a UNESCO world heritage site?

Ms Paquette: The thing that beavers do to a landscape, I guess.

The Chair: Oh, is it because of the beavers?

Ms Paquette: It literally has a lot to do with it. They've changed the landscape of it, but the original Indigenous populations, as well, had a name for that area as being significant. As soon as you hit Tofield, it's very flat. You go Ryley, Viking, all the way down to Wainwright: so flat. But there's this really special area that's just rolling hills. You could have five acres but only have one place to put a house on that whole five acres because it is rolling and wet and a lot of moose as well.

12:20

The Chair: Really?

Ms Paquette: It's pretty special. There's a bird sanctuary as well in Miquelon provincial park. Yeah, very special in a science kind of way.

The Chair: Great. Okay. Well, thank you. You're a local, obviously.

Ms Paquette: I was a teacher for 15 years, too, so I get nerdy about a lot of things. But I appreciate that, and I appreciate the work you're doing.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

Okay. That concludes our morning unless someone else has a burning 90-second presentation they want to present.

Okay. Thank you. We'll adjourn till 1:30 this afternoon.

[The hearing adjourned at 12:21 p.m.]

