



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Discussion of Members of the
Legislative Assembly

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

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Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings

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[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to our afternoon session of Wednesday, January 21, of the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission, the tail end of our public hearings. We completed truly the public hearings yesterday, and today we reserved for those members of the Legislature that wish to address our commission.

Very quickly, we are an independent commission appointed by the Speaker of the Legislature, and our website has all the backgrounds of the five of us as commissioners. Our task is to redraw the electoral boundaries of Alberta for the next provincial election dealing with two issues, basically, the increase in the number of seats from 87 electoral divisions to 89, and of course it is the voters in each electoral division that elect the member that they want to represent them in the Legislature. So while we deal with the increase in the number of seats, we're also dealing with the significant increase in Alberta's population.

To put some context to this situation, if we look back at the time of the last Electoral Boundaries Commission report, which was 2017, that commission dealt with a population of just over 4 million people in Alberta. Based on that population they had an average of 46,697 individuals per electoral division. That average is not the target in Alberta, and in Canada we deal with the term of effective representation, not representation by population. Our target is the range of minus 25 per cent to plus 25 per cent of that average, so that ranges from 35,000 to 58,000. At least, that's what the Electoral Boundaries Commission of 2017 had to deal with.

For our commission we have settled on a population figure of 4.8 million, which is based on the 2021 decennial census, which is updated and streamlined by the Office of Statistics and Information of Alberta Treasury Board. That population figure divided by the new number of ridings then reveals an average for each electoral division of 54,929 or 55,000. Again, that's not the target for each electoral division; rather, the target for effective representation is the range of minus 25, which is 41,000, to plus 25, just over 68,000. Our task as an Electoral Boundaries Commission is to comprise a map of 89 electoral divisions that provide effective representation to Albertans.

Since our appointment as a commission in early April of last year we have done several things. First of all, we met and discussed fully the basis for our population and demographics. We had an agreement as a commission that we would, as I said, use the 2021 federal census, which is required by legislation and that is updated by the Alberta Treasury Board Office of Statistics and Information.

After our formation we received many submissions, written submissions, to our website and by mail as to how we should go about our work. We reviewed those presentations. Then in late May we started a public tour of the province. We started in Pincher Creek, and we went across the province. We had sittings in Fort McMurray, Peace River, Grande Prairie, down to Medicine Hat and all points in between. That occupied our time in late May and throughout June. After we reviewed those submissions, heard the public input, we met with the good staff at Elections Alberta and their map people, and they assisted us in drawing maps and allocating boundaries that would best fit our goal of effective representation.

That all led up to the preparation and finalization of our interim report. We were pleased to provide that to the Speaker of the Legislature in late October, and he immediately tabled that report and provided a hard copy of the report to each of the Members of the Legislative Assembly. That report was put on our website, and

we then opened it up for public submissions. We drafted the report considering all the factors outlined in the legislation: sparsity and density of population, considering natural boundaries, roadways, means of transportation, and all those various factors. Our ultimate goal was to provide boundaries that provided 89 electoral divisions that could provide effective representation, and those boundaries needed to be understandable and clear.

Shortly after the submission of our interim report we provided a portal to the public on our website to receive public input and information, and that took place from November 3 to December 19, and we did receive input. In excess of 1,100 written submissions were provided to us, and we're wading through all those submissions now and in the days ahead. We did open it up, as well, for in-person presentations, and that started last Monday, January 12. We spent two and a half days in person in Calgary. Then we went across the province virtually on Thursday and Friday, and this week we have been in Edmonton hearing from the public for the last two days. Today, Wednesday the 21st, is specially reserved for Members of the Legislative Assembly. We've had a full morning, and we've got a full afternoon as well.

I'll turn it over to our first presenter, Ms Christina Gray of Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much to the commission and everyone for doing this work. I'll just start with that. This is my second opportunity to present, so thank you for letting me come back around to follow up and give feedback on the interim report. I want to start by saying that I was so surprised and impressed that a consensus report was delivered, so kudos to the team for that. I thought that was really, really fantastic because in talking to people about the process, especially in kind of the political times that we're in, I often heard skepticism or: how will this work? Being able to talk about a nonpartisan, consensus approach has really helped to settle people down and to buy into the process, so thank you for that.

I also wanted to say that I appreciated that the interim report reflected the growth in cities with added ridings in Edmonton and Calgary. Southeast Edmonton is my area of location and expertise, and I agree with the commission that going from three ridings to four ridings in southeast Edmonton is really important given the massive amount of growth, particularly in the Meadows area as well as the Ellerslie area, which are the current riding names, so thank you for that. The interim report also, I think, did a really good job of respecting municipal boundaries. From all those perspectives, I think that you've done really excellent work.

1:40

I do think that the interim report still shows a lot of ridings in Edmonton starting above average, and knowing that Edmonton and population growth is still surging, that is a potential concern for me. We have our Mill Woods map up. I'm going to focus my comments now more on specifically the changes to Edmonton-Mill Woods, the area I represent. In Edmonton-Mill Woods in the draft map the one thing I wanted to start by pointing out, to begin with, is that the Edmonton-Mill Woods development concept and what Mill Woods is is a really defined square. The draft Edmonton-Mill Woods map that the boundary commission has come up with goes outside of the boundaries of Mill Woods to include a neighbourhood from Meadows called Larkspur. My first bit of feedback to the commission is that I don't think that it makes sense to include any communities that are outside of the Mill Woods area in the riding called Edmonton-Mill Woods. I think that it makes it less clear, less understandable for someone as to where they are.

Just as a reminder, Mill Woods' borders are – and this is not the riding but the city neighbourhood, the city development – Whitemud, 34th Street, Gateway, and then the Anthony Henday. There are essentially nine community leagues and 27 neighbourhoods within that square, and then Larkspur is outside of that in Meadows. Larkspur is one of three communities that make up the Meadows Community League. They have a lot of commonalities in that they are all named after local flora and fauna – they have Larkspur, Wild Rose, Silver Berry – and have their own community league. One of the original recommendations that I made to the commission and I think I heard other presenters make is that in Edmonton being aware of and respecting community leagues would be my recommendation. When we talked about that last, you had talked about maybe your GIS people could put in a layer that shows you community leagues. I don't know if they were able to do that, but I want to draw your attention back to that because not breaking up the Meadows Community League would be my recommendation.

I mentioned the average size of various ridings. Your draft Edmonton-Mill Woods has Edmonton-Mill Woods at plus – where are my notes? I've got it somewhere – 8.6, so even larger than what was done in the last boundary commission report. My looking at this and knowing that if I'm going to suggest you do a change, you're going to say, "Well, what does this also impact?" my recommendation for Edmonton-Mill Woods is: don't include Larkspur. That will put Edmonton-Mill Woods at, I think – my math tells me it'll be plus .4, so essentially dead average. We know that Mill Woods from last report to this has grown at exactly provincial average, and I suspect that Mill Woods is going to grow slightly faster because we now have the LRT. We know we've got the Mill Woods Town Centre development that is expected to begin in the next couple of years. It's a 22-storey tower planned by McLeod Development Group, and it's going to be a multiphase project where they're eventually hoping to bring 6,000 to 8,000 homes onto that site. It fits with the city of Edmonton's plan to do more transit-oriented development.

I'm saying that I know Mill Woods is going to grow. There are development plans as well as the infill and what's happening with the huge number of building permits. My recommendation is: do not include the neighbourhood of Larkspur, and leave Mill Woods at the average size so that it has some of that growth. I agree with what the commission had done with the other three southeast ridings – Edmonton-Meadows, Edmonton-Ellerslie, and Edmonton-South East – where it was negative, because their growth is likely to be more. But there's still a lot of growth in Mill Woods.

Removing Larkspur from Edmonton-Mill Woods likely makes Edmonton-Meadows too big, so you will have to adjust a little bit around the edges there. Without the mapping tools I don't have an exact map for you. Really, my concern is more around that understandability. Mill Woods means something in Edmonton, and having only neighbourhoods that exist in Mill Woods in the Edmonton-Mill Woods riding makes the most sense to me.

The other comment I will have in the southeast is that the new riding you've created you've named Edmonton-South East, but I wanted to flag that that matches a federal riding name and I think an alternate name would be better. I am not that creative of a thinker, but I ran into a community stakeholder. She used to work for the Leefield Community League for many, many years, long-term Mill Woods area resident, and I think she's now working for city councillor Jo-Anne Wright. Her name is Jackie, and she told me, at one of the Christmas events where I saw her, that she thought Edmonton-South East could be named Decoteau. I hope that that recommendation has come to you from another way. I think that makes some sense. There's a community there, and I know from

the interim report that using communities with the largest population as electoral names is something you've tried to do in places. That might make sense there just to avoid the overlap between Edmonton Southeast federal and Edmonton-South East provincial.

The Chair: So Edmonton-Decoteau?

Ms Gray: Potentially.

The Chair: How do you spell that?

Ms Gray: D-e-c-o-t-e-a-u, maybe. I can send that to Aaron and find that for you.

Mrs. Samson: Is that the name of a district?

Ms Gray: Yeah, it is. Now, this is in part of the city that I don't know as well. It's outside of my Mill Woods area, but I've heard this suggestion from community. It's from someone who knows the area really well. It made sense to me, so I thought I would mention it here as well.

Let me look at my quick notes. I think I've hit the main parts of what I'd hoped to say.

The Chair: Greg, have you got the population for Larkspur?

Mr. Clark: I do.

The Chair: Okay. I'll turn it to you right away, then.

Mr. Clark: You bet.

Ms Gray: I think maybe I might leave my comments there. Let's do conversation. That's great.

The Chair: Yeah. We have not suffered from lack of conversation with presenters like you.

Mr. Clark, pose the problem to this presenter.

Ms Gray: Please.

Mr. Clark: The southeast of Edmonton – and much of this is elegant, and I'm sure you would agree for lots of reasons – one of the reasons it's somewhat elegant from our perspective is that 220,000 people divides very neatly into four; 220,000 by four is 55,000, so that works out really nicely. The question, though, is: how do we divvy that up? I can tell you the rationale, including Larkspur, as one of my only shortcomings is not being from Edmonton, so I don't have that on-the-ground knowledge. I know Mill Woods is a meaningful area. I didn't realize 34th was. I think we tried to keep community league boundaries together, not recognizing Larkspur maybe looks east instead of west, so that's a very useful bit of feedback.

I think the upshot of it is that what you're saying, then, is keep Edmonton-Mill Woods basically on average but overpopulate Edmonton-Meadows. Our thinking was that there's more net new development in Tamarack and Aster likely in Meadows, so let's keep that a little smaller to create a bit of headroom. At the end of the day, you know, it may become a little bit unbalanced, but – and I think your MLA colleague from Meadows yesterday was advocating to keep Larkspur, interestingly enough. That's what I wrote down, anyway.

The Chair: Yeah. I think so, even though . . .

Ms Gray: To keep it in Meadows?

Mr. Clark: To keep it in Meadows, yeah. I'm just looking here. There's a written submission. I can look that up. Maybe the two of you can have an arm wrestle and decide. Like, it would actually be quite useful if the two of you . . .

Ms Gray: We did talk.

Mr. Clark: You did? Okay.

Ms Gray: Certainly, because my colleagues: we work together to represent the southeast in many ways. I often get people from Meadows who come to the Mill Woods office looking for service because lots of people get confused who is the representative, so we do try to work together. Having Larkspur stay in Meadows I think makes sense because of the Meadows Community League, because it is Larkspur, Wild Rose, and Silver Berry all together. And then I also agree with what the commission was trying to do, which is to put Edmonton-Meadows under the average because of the expected growth there. Like, I support that.

1:50

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Sorry; I misspoke. It's Laurel, which is not Larkspur. Those are different places.

Ms Gray: Yes, Laurel is different.

Mr. Clark: Makes sense. Yeah.

Sorry. Just to be clear, the trade-off, then – if you were to advise us, would you say to put Larkspur into Edmonton-Meadows even though it's going to overpopulate it now and likely quite a bit in the future or keep Larkspur with Edmonton-Mill Woods and sort of offend that 34th Street kind of issue?

Ms Gray: For clarity, for where people live as well as if Larkspur becomes part of Edmonton-Mill Woods – essentially, what that does, lengthening the riding, brings in another kind of major street, 17th Street. As well, the people who live in that neighbourhood of Larkspur are using lots of different – they're more likely to go to the Meadows Rec Centre than the Mill Woods Rec Centre. The schools and districts are over on that side. I think that would cause confusion.

My suggestion is to include Larkspur in Edmonton-Meadows and perhaps cut out some of the population on one of the other edges so that Edmonton-Meadows still stays under. Where exactly that line would go, I'm not sure. I know right now Laurel is cut in half. Like, Laurel is not completely in one riding or the other, so perhaps moving that line a little bit just to adjust the population numbers may make some sense. Yeah. Chop more of Laurel into Edmonton-South East so that Edmonton-Meadows still has room for growth.

Mr. Clark: I will look at what that will mean. Thank you very much. That's all.

The Chair: Okay. Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. Thank you. I'm looking at the map now in quite some detail. My colleague is correct. We did take your advice very seriously, when we spoke to you in the spring, about keeping mature and existing community league boundaries together as best we can. Certainly, to the west of 34th I think we've achieved that, not only in your riding but in the Summerside riding, so to speak, which continues to leave us with juggling problems with places like Pollard Meadows, Crawford, areas down there immediately north of the Henday and have been, I think, in the past in Ellerslie as it then was called. We're left with the problem of not only that area but also the fact that Summerside is growing extremely rapidly.

Although my colleague says that, you know, it's 220,000 as a group, no, it's probably 235,000 before you blink. So those are the dilemmas we face, right?

Ms Gray: If your assessment is that Edmonton-Mill Woods should have a higher than average population, my . . .

Dr. Martin: Well, that might be a conclusion, but it isn't our initial position.

Ms Gray: Well, in your current map right now Edmonton-Mill Woods has a higher than average population by 8.6, including Larkspur. If you want to maintain that higher population for Edmonton-Mill Woods, my suggestion would be, instead of giving one neighbourhood from Meadows, to include a different neighbourhood that is in Mill Woods. Along the ends here there are the neighbourhoods that are part of Southwood or the neighbourhoods that are part of Millhurst or the neighbourhoods that are part of Knottwood. I just think . . .

The Chair: Okay. Sorry; what electoral division is that? Edmonton-Ellerslie?

Ms Gray: Across both of them. Sorry; I'm going to take this.

The Chair: Yeah, take the mic.

Ms Gray: Let me take this.

The square that is Mill Woods comes down, and then this is Knottwood, this is Millhurst, this is Southwood, and all of those are community league names, not neighbourhood names. All of that is Mill Woods in Edmonton. If you took one neighbourhood from in there – because I imagine as a community league the numbers are way too big there to do all of it. So if the concession is that we can't keep every community league whole because the math doesn't work – and I can understand that – give Edmonton-Mill Woods a neighbourhood in the Mill Woods area rather than out of . . .

The Chair: Move south.

Ms Gray: Yeah.

The Chair: Okay. That makes sense.

Dr. Martin: So that's 23rd Ave, where we put it now, but you would suggest finding some more room on what is your side of the boundary and add – no; take . . .

Ms Gray: Take Larkspur away and then add in a neighbourhood like Meyokumin or Ekota. Again, there will be some . . .

The Chair: I know all those are south of 23rd.

Ms Gray: That's correct. Yeah, those are all along that south. That puts them still in the city district of Mill Woods.

Dr. Martin: It's also consistent with your notion of mature and recognized community leagues of Mill Woods as a whole. So if we pick up another one there rather than keep Larkspur, it has some consistency with the overall concept. I see. Thank you.

Ms Gray: Yeah. In case anyone who's living in Larkspur is watching or reading *Hansard* later, I will say that if I become the MLA who represents Larkspur, that's great. Love Larkspur. I'm worried about the confusion. That's all.

I appreciate that the commission has been doing a lot of really tricky math and design and so on, and I really appreciate the work that you're doing and the challenges that you face.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

Have I opened it up for questions already? Yes, and you're both done. Okay. Mrs. Samson.

Mrs. Samson: No. Thank you for coming out, but I have no questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: Nor do I. Thank you.

The Chair: Could you just list the ones you know, the community leagues below 23rd Avenue? Just list them for us.

Ms Gray: Sure. Yeah. Just give me one second. I will start from the west and go across. On the west we've got the community league of Knottwood, made up of three neighbourhoods: Satoo, Menisa, and Ekota. Those three community leagues are all part of my current Mill Woods today. Then going over just a little bit east is the community league of Millhurst, made up of the neighbourhoods Meyokumin and Sakaw. Then east once more is the community league of Southwood, made up of the three neighbourhoods of Pollard Meadows, Daly Grove, and Crawford Plains. Those are all the Mill Woods neighbourhoods that we have.

The Chair: Good. Okay. That gives us something to work with, some flexibility, then.

Ms Gray: Absolutely.

The Chair: Yeah.

Okay. Mr. Evans, did I ask you?

Mr. Evans: You did.

The Chair: Sorry; I'm losing track here, the last afternoon.

Okay. Ms Gray, thank you very much. Much appreciated.

Ms Gray: Thank you.

The Chair: Martin Long is not here. Janis Irwin is not here.

Ms Gray: Here she comes.

Member Irwin: Right now? Aren't I up at 2:30?

Mrs. Samson: Right now.

The Chair: Oh, we're prompt. We are prompt.

Member Irwin: I swear it said 2:30 in my calendar, and here I thought I was super early.

Mr. Roth: The 2:10 is not here yet.

Member Irwin: Okay. Can I, like, get a second to catch my breath?

The Chair: Ms Irwin, we've not complied with the time schedule much during this whole process, so why should we start now?

Member Irwin: Holy. Well, I'm glad I didn't stop for a coffee as I was going to.

The Chair: Yes. You would have got kicked right off the list.

Member Irwin: Okay. Well, give me a second.

The Chair: Take a moment. Relax.

Member Irwin: Aaron, I wasn't wrong, then. It was at 2:30, right?

Mr. Roth: It was.

Member Irwin: Good to see everybody in person. I was one of the few people watching last night – well, listening as I was preparing.

The Chair: What did you think?

Member Irwin: You guys did great. Unfortunately, there's not video; it's just audio.

The Chair: Better than Netflix?

Member Irwin: I don't have Netflix, so 0yeah, way better.

The Chair: Okay. Whenever you're ready to proceed, identify yourself and commence your presentation, but no rush.

Member Irwin: Perfect. Well, thank you very much to all of you for your work, and I'm grateful to everyone who has presented virtually and in person so far. It's always an honour to be here on Treaty 6 territory with all of you.

As many of you know, I'm quite honoured to be the MLA for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, a privilege that I've had since 2019. You know, while I've only been in that role for six or so years, I've had the honour of living in the area that I represent for almost 15 years. Although I've spent many of the last years in the core area of our city, my life prior was mostly in rural Alberta. I grew up in Barrhead, and I taught in Bawlf, Alberta, and Forestburg, Alberta, so I believe that I bring a pretty good lens to this conversation. But today I really want to focus mostly on my constituency of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood and on Edmonton overall.

2:00

In my time as an MLA and even prior I've really had a chance to learn a lot about the communities that I'm so proud to represent. You know, I have a bit of a reputation for being everywhere in my riding, so I'm always happy to talk about the neighbourhoods that I represent, the folks who live there, and all the gems that make Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood one of the best places in the province.

I want to just touch on the proposed map and just say that I am pleased with where it lands. You know, it makes sense to keep the riding relatively the same. I'm fine with the addition of the Westwood neighbourhood, which will move the riding to include more communities west of 97th Street, which is a bit of a change because as it stands it's primarily 97th Street which is the western boundary with a slight area where it juts out throughout Chinatown for a few blocks to 101st Street, but generally it's the 97th Street boundary.

I want to touch on the fact that some might argue that a riding like mine should take on additional neighbourhoods due to its current population. I actually think that that's fairly unwise because we predict additional population growth in our area.

Firstly, we will see growth in the core neighbourhoods that I represent through a massive development project within the neighbourhood, and that's the Exhibition Lands redevelopment. At 200 acres Exhibition Lands is Edmonton's second-largest urban infill site. For folks who might be watching at home and not sure where or what I'm talking about, this is the area that encompasses the old Coliseum arena, the Expo Centre, the Northlands racetrack area, and Borden Park. That project, once under way, would add potentially thousands of new residents to our area.

Secondly, the city of Edmonton's focus on densification and infill means that the core communities I represent will surely see

increases in population as we see more and more multifamily housing, garden suites, and other creative forms of housing.

Those arguments make a pretty good case for keeping Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood relatively the same, but I do worry greatly about the proposed combination of two other ridings that represent more core, older neighbourhoods, those being Edmonton-Glenora and Edmonton-Riverview. While adding an additional seat to Edmonton's suburban area is reasonable, I don't think it should come at the expense of a loss of a core riding. If anything, we should be adding in another additional seat to Edmonton.

As the Official Opposition housing shadow minister, we can actually look at the data of housing starts as an indicator of where population is headed in Edmonton. In fact, just this morning I spoke with the media about housing starts. You know, I'm always okay with giving credit to the government where it's due, and in fact, I think Albertans like it when we show collaboration. We in the Alberta NDP do try to support the UCP when we can, when we agree with their legislation and whatnot. I can acknowledge that it's positive to see those housing starts, but we have to look at the impacts of that, so that's where I would hold the government accountable when it comes to affordable housing, as an example.

Those housing starts being record numbers in Edmonton and Calgary: that's more than just a house. A house represents a person, represents a family. So taking into consideration those housing start numbers, taking into consideration interprovincial migration – in fact, Edmonton and Calgary are leading the way with the largest net gains in interprovincial migration. In fact, Edmonton is actually leading Calgary on that one, which is a surprising statistic to some. It's clear that folks are coming in droves to our fair city of Edmonton, and we're seeing multiple indicators showing that Edmonton will just continue to grow. In fact, Edmonton grew by over 10 per cent, more than 100,000 people, from 2022 to 2024. You can imagine, honestly, like, the whole city of Red Deer basically coming into Edmonton, which is huge.

You know, I can say that I love nothing more than having new folks in my community, in our constituency. I knock on a lot of doors in my riding, and every time, you know, I'm blown away by the diversity of folks that I meet, the number of languages spoken and so on. I very much agree that we are strengthened by having so many folks choosing Edmonton as their home, but we need to make sure that those folks have a voice in the Alberta Legislature. I worry deeply that without an additional Edmonton seat not only do we risk underrepresentation; we lose out on an opportunity to plan wisely for the unprecedented growth that we're already seeing.

Furthermore, as you all know, the commission's interim report shows three proposed Edmonton constituencies – the aforementioned Edmonton-Glenora-Riverview, Edmonton-West Heday, and Edmonton-McClung – that would have more than 12 per cent population than the provincial average. Again, I think that's concerning given what I noted earlier with the expected increased population, particularly in core areas.

I just want to end on one more thing, which I do think is worth a mention as I haven't heard anyone speak, really, to this issue in these meetings. My area of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is the second-lowest income riding in the province. I represent a lot of folks who are precariously housed and unhoused, and in the past six years in Edmonton we've seen homelessness numbers triple, with the latest count showing upwards of 5,000 folks on our streets without a home. While I know that houselessness affects all ridings across Edmonton and, of course, across the province, too – rural homelessness is certainly an issue – it has the most significant impact on core urban neighbourhoods that I represent, where we have the bulk of social service agencies.

While this isn't a typical community of interest, it's a community that demands recognition and attention. These are Albertans, these are my constituents, and they deserve, you know, adequate representation and access to constituency services. Often they require it more than perhaps their housed or securely housed counterparts. The reduction of Edmonton's core ridings from six to five has the potential to make accessing those constituency services more difficult and adds more barriers to a community that already struggles greatly.

All that to say – I said a lot there – that we really do need an additional riding in Edmonton. It just makes sense to add one.

I want to again thank you all for considering my submission, and I'm happy to take any questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Irwin.

Mrs. Samson, questions?

Mrs. Samson: Just two items. You know we were only given two ridings, to go from 87 to 89?

Member Irwin: I know. You're in a tough spot.

Mrs. Samson: Edmonton got one, and Calgary got the other, but the other ridings came from the reduction in the rural, and man, are we hearing about it now, just so you know. There were no more. That's something to keep in mind as you stay in politics and in your political life: you have to keep up with the growth in Alberta to give proper representation to the people. If you can comment on that.

Also, just a quick question. When is the Exhibition Lands starting up?

Member Irwin: On the first piece, yeah, I totally agree that you're in a tricky spot. I know that. I believe – was it Bill 31? Christina is still here. One of the bills that came through the Alberta Legislature where the suggestion was 87 to 89. Obviously, as you all know – it's not a partisan point; it just is a fact – we do all we can in the opposition to try to amend and make bills that we disagree with a little bit better, but we're often unsuccessful. Certainly, had it been a different government in power, perhaps we could look at the number of seats, but it's something we can take back, too. You know, I know it was discussed last night with I think it was Scott Sinclair you were talking to – right? – and you mentioned that. So perhaps it's something that you could recommend, saying: we were only given the two additional, so where does that give-and-take take place? Yeah.

On the Exhibition Lands it is primarily city. I know the groundbreaking hasn't happened, for instance. You know, in my office we get questions about the Coliseum, the arena, wondering what's going to be happening there. There hasn't been the movement on the demolition yet, but I can get back to you on the specific timelines. Like I said, it's mostly been city, but I'm someone who's pretty connected to it because it's not only my riding, but it's also close to where I live. As far as the explicit timelines, I'll get back to you on that one.

Mrs. Samson: Okay. Great. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: Yeah. Two things. You mentioned the development project. I think you just touched on it now. Where is it at in terms of being permitted? It sounds to me like this is a ways off.

Member Irwin: Yeah. That's a totally fair point, and I should have acknowledged that. Like, the development, especially the housing

development, is not happening right now, but I just think building for that – and even though . . .

Mr. Evans: Has it even been planned?

Member Irwin: Yeah. The planning stages are absolutely happening. Again, it's primarily the city, so I'll be full disclosure: I'm not at the table for those conversations. But, yeah, they're certainly in the planning stages. I'll come back to you. In fact, maybe I can submit in a written form to you just around the timelines, and I can double-check with our city councillor, too, to see if there have been any updates.

2:10

Mr. Evans: The other question is: you mentioned housing starts, and then you quickly moved to housing starts for all of Edmonton and then into Calgary. I want to know if you can tell me the housing starts for your riding.

Member Irwin: Good question. I'll look at Katie. I don't think they break it down – yeah. I'd have to look into that. I don't think they break it down per riding.

Mr. Evans: They'll have development permits per riding.

Member Irwin: Oh, I guess. Okay. Yeah. Good point. Now I'm curious.

Mr. Evans: Me, too.

Member Irwin: Especially because it would be interesting to contrast, right? The core versus suburban. Great question.

Mr. Evans: Just a follow-up on that one. You were talking about new housing starts, but there is a growth plan. It was a bylaw that they amended to allow infills, backyard houses, et cetera. Are you talking about that being applicable to your area?

Member Irwin: Yeah. Absolutely. We're seeing that in my area, in the core neighbourhoods that I represent. You know, we're seeing a lot more. Again, I'd have to pull out the specific numbers, but we're seeing a lot more when it comes to what would have been an older home, one-family home, in a neighbourhood like Bellevue, which is close to the Exhibition Lands, that now there's a fourplex on that lot because, just like where I live in the Parkdale area, a lot of our lots are really large.

A great example is when I moved into my house in 2016, the house behind me was a very old, tall, dilapidated home that only had one family, and now it houses five humans. That's pretty cool, right? I mean, that kind of thing where you might not see it necessarily visually just when walking down the street, but especially when you door-knock, you realize: oh, that's a garden suite; that's a basement suite. We have a lot of folks in my riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood who've upgraded or renovated so that they have legal basement suites as well. You know, that's great for folks who are moving to Edmonton, looking for something affordable, right? It might not be their forever home, but kind of that starter home.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much. I'm staring at the map. We have a screen here, so I'm staring at that.

Member Irwin: Okay.

Dr. Martin: I have a couple of questions about the footprint and the character of the residential areas. Am I right to think that the area they call Highlands, all the stuff that's east of Gretzky Drive, is more middle-class and affluent developments? You know, the lots just are bigger. It's been developed a very, very long time ago for the most part, so the parcels are with a presumption of bigger homes. Is that still the case?

Member Irwin: Yeah. That's certainly the case when you – am I allowed to get up and point?

The Chair: Oh, sure. Take the microphone with you.

Member Irwin: Oh, wow. I can use this?

The Chair: Oh, yeah.

Dr. Martin: For a while.

Member Irwin: Does that work, Aaron? That works.

Okay. Wow. The teacher in me is really excited by this opportunity. This is great. I didn't even realize we had a map up there. I was so focused on you all.

This area in here is kind of like Ada Boulevard, where you'll see, like, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has mansions, right? That's what people will say to me, like, "Oh, you've got such a wealthy riding," and then I can point to the fact that actually we're the second-lowest income in the province.

So this area here is kind of what we call Highlands – this is me being short – but north of 118 you have neighbourhoods like Montrose and Newton where it remains a lot lower income. But even in this area, even in the Highlands area where it is historically larger homes, some of those homes are coming down, and some of those homes are being replaced by multifamily residences, right? You are seeing a bit of a shift. You know, I want younger families to be able to afford homes in our area. That's one way that they're able to do so.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. If I could follow on with that. Classically Norwood was a very working-class neighbourhood, and the land parcels and the housing stock reflected those needs, so I would expect there's a lot of renovation and redevelopment in that area. So you have quite a contrast throughout the riding is where I'm really going.

Member Irwin: Absolutely. Yeah.

Dr. Martin: At present, then, the redevelopments are relatively low scale. You don't have high-rises going in, do you?

Member Irwin: No, we do. In fact, we're very lucky to have sort of – people often think I don't represent downtown, but I represent the east part of downtown, right? We have the east end of Jasper Avenue, where actually we've seen a number of newer high-rises in the last decade or so come up. We're talking hundreds of units. So we do have some of that. Not so much, though – you're right – like, say, for instance, in the Highlands area or where I live in the Alberta Avenue, Parkdale area.

Dr. Martin: My final question, if I might, Mr. Chair, and that is that some presenter – I was looking back through my notes. It wasn't your colleague Mr. Shepherd; somebody else was here presenting. This gentleman suggested that we consider putting the Spruce Avenue neighbourhood into your riding, so the whole area immediately north of the Queen Alex campus. I mean, obviously it's a bit of poaching, but his idea was that it

would help with balance and his estimate of growth in the city centre in the near future.

Member Irwin: Yeah. You know what? I would be totally fine with that. Spruce Avenue area is very similar. A lot of the young, you know, families and whatnot live in Spruce Ave. Their kids go to school in my area. For folks who don't know what I'm talking about, Spruce Ave is just this area right here. Yeah. If we were moving westward, before I saw the interim maps I thought that you might have included Spruce Ave as opposed to Westwood. This is kind of Westwood here. That's NAIT. Spruce Ave is very similar in comparison to Alberta Avenue, or Norwood as it's historically called. Like, those neighbourhoods are almost indistinguishable. So yeah, I'd be totally fine with that as well.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.
Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: No. No questions for me, but thank you so much.

Member Irwin: Aw.

Mr. Clark: I know. We have a big agenda here today.

Member Irwin: Appreciate it.

The Chair: Ms Irwin, thank you for being so flexible.

Member Irwin: Yeah. Thank you. What's the best way to get back? In my haste of sitting down I didn't even have Internet to fill you in on some answers.

The Chair: Check with that young man, Mr. Aaron Roth.

Member Irwin: Mr. Aaron Roth. Okay. We'll talk to him just because I would like to get you those specifics around the Exhibition Lands.

The Chair: Now, I'm not sure if you're a gambling person at all, but I wouldn't put a lot of money on Edmonton getting another riding realistically. You know, we've got huge pressure. I don't want to leave you with unwarranted optimism.

Member Irwin: No. Like, again, I appreciate what you're up against. It's just, you know, seeing this unprecedented growth and seeing the growth in the core areas, I worry deeply about representation for those folks. I don't envy what you're having to balance.

The Chair: We will be assisting you in likely giving a recommendation that, you know, two seats was not enough. Plain and simple, it was not enough. It probably should have been more.

Member Irwin: Yeah. Appreciate that. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Is Martin Long present? Oh, switched. Okay.
Mr. Joseph Schow, have a seat. Make yourself comfortable.

Mr. Schow: I always do.

Well, I hate to disappoint, but I thought you'd be happy to see me. It's not Martin Long today; it's me. You'll see Minister Long at probably 4:10 today.

The Chair: Okay. That is our proposed map. We have changed the figure eight. Okay. Yes.

Mr. Schow: Is there a time limit on my presentation?

The Chair: I think we've been allowing 10 minutes for MLAs. Yeah.

Mr. Schow: Okay. Lovely. Just go ahead and start?

The Chair: Please.

Mr. Schow: Excellent. Well, thank you very much, and thank you for accommodating the switch in rotation. Minister Long will be joining you later this afternoon. I also want to thank all the members of the committee. This is a difficult job, going around the province and consulting members of the public about their representation and the importance of, you know, having proper representation, proportional representation, and something that is, of course, important to all of us, feeling like our voices are being heard in Alberta's Legislature. So the work you've done so far has been great. Much appreciated, but there's more to do yet before we see, I think, hopefully some variations and changes in the maps, and that's what you'll hear from me today.

2:20

So as a resident of southern Alberta I do want to offer some perspective on the electoral boundary design that prioritizes shared regional identity and common interests over strict adherence to existing municipal borders. I respectfully suggest that an electoral district including areas of the city of Lethbridge, the Crownsnest Pass, Waterton Lakes national park, and the communities of Cardston, Magrath, Raymond, and Stirling would align well with the concept of effective representation as outlined in the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. In section 14 of the act it instructs the commission to pursue effective representation and explicitly permits consideration of communities of interest, including economic, social, and regional interests as well as geography, including natural boundaries and patterns of human activity.

Now, in practice the southern Alberta region described above operates as a single integrated community of interest across many aspects of daily life. Social and family ties in southern Alberta are routinely extended across municipal lines. Over multiple generations residents have lived in different towns within the region while maintaining close relationships with relatives, faith communities, and cultural organizations everywhere in southern Alberta, and I'm an example of that as fifth-generation southern Albertan. It is common for individuals to grow up in one community and later settle in another, marrying someone from a different community, often in or around Lethbridge, without losing those long-standing connections. This shared social landscape reflects the type of social and regional cohesion contemplated by the act in my opinion.

The region is also strongly connected through economic activity. Lethbridge serves as a cultural hub for employment – or rather central; not cultural; also cultural, though, I would say – and essential services in southern Alberta, particularly in sectors such as health care, postsecondary education, retail, agriculture, and professional services. Many residents in Cardston, Magrath, Raymond, Stirling, and nearby areas in rural travel regularly to Lethbridge for work while remaining rooted in their home communities, so what happens in one affects the other. This degree of economic interdependence illustrates a clear regional community of interest under section 14(a).

Now, education further links this region together. Students from across southern Alberta attend the University of Lethbridge and Lethbridge Polytechnic, sharing academic, social, and professional experiences that transcend municipal boundaries. These institutions

play an important regional role, fostering long-term connections between Lethbridge and surrounding communities.

Cultural and faith-based relationships also contribute to regional unity. Many of the churches have long-standing presence throughout southern Alberta, particularly in Cardston, Magrath, Raymond, Stirling, and Lethbridge. This shared cultural and historical background has encouraged co-operation, volunteerism, and civic engagement across communities, reinforcing a strong sense of regional identity.

Geographic features and patterns of movement further support a regional approach to electoral boundaries. Waterton Lakes national park and the Crownsnest Pass are integral to the recreational, cultural, and historical experiences of residents throughout southern Alberta. Just to name one, for example, would be Scouts. They used to be administered through the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and southern Alberta has been a great place for training. These areas are commonly accessed by families, schools, and community organizations from across the region, reflecting shared use of natural spaces consistent with section 14(c) of the act.

Now, the Electoral Boundaries Commission does not require electoral districts to replicate municipal boundaries. Instead, it provides the commission with flexibility to balance population equally with communities of interest and geographic considerations in pursuit of effective representation. Now, in southern Alberta districts shaped around how residents actually live, how they work, learn, worship, and recreate would more accurately reflect this goal than one based primarily on municipal divisions.

So I respectfully urge the commission to consider a regional model for southern Alberta that acknowledges these shared interests and lived connections, and offers representation grounded in genuine common regional identity. I'd also just like to highlight that when you're looking at the third-largest city in the province, it is one that needs effective representation. I think more MLAs representing that area is a good thing.

The new boundaries of 2019 – that was the year that I was elected – if I'm not mistaken, I believe there were two constituencies that were removed from rural Alberta and put into the urban centres. This was a problem that I heard consistently through the election but also I've heard since I was elected in 2019. Concern about representation is likely something you've heard in every presentation and every submission as you travelled around this province, and you're going to obviously hear it from me again because as a city grows, it is important to have a perspective on what that city needs but also the surrounding areas that are dependent on that city. That's why I think that having what you consider a bit of a mix between the city and the rural areas is important because, as I noted in my remarks, a number of my constituents commute into Lethbridge daily for work, for errands, for sports practices, club meetings, and the list goes on and on and on.

I'd also like to say, you know, a riding that makes sense: I think sometimes we look at boundaries in a vacuum and we look at, as I mentioned earlier in my remarks, municipal boundaries explicitly, which then creates some constituencies that maybe follow this letter of the act but not necessarily the intent, which goes back to the purpose of representation. If you live in a constituency, like you're in Calgary, the distance for your constituents to travel to a constituent office or MLA to travel out would be maybe a matter of 15, 20 minutes, but for me my constituency is about three hours tip to tip, north to south, and I actually travel through other constituencies to get to other parts of my own. I love Cardston-Siksika. It's a fantastic riding, and it's been one of the greatest honours of my life to represent it for the last seven years, but I also understand that it's important that the residents of any constituency

in the province feel as though they have access to their MLA, their MLA has access to them within a reasonable time frame.

I'll give you an example. For me to go from Cardston to the northern part of my constituency, it's about two and a half hours and then the same distance back. That is a long way to go that I'm more than happy and I do often, but sometimes I look at effective representation. I know that some of those travel distances aren't going to change, particularly in the north, where my colleagues have to travel much greater distances. I am sympathetic to that, but I would say where possible to take into consideration travel time for constituents to reach their MLA office and also the MLA to reach them. I think that a hybrid of Lethbridge with more MLAs representing that city but also representing the areas that surround that city would be an effective way of doing it.

I also know it's important that the Blood Tribe would have access to Lethbridge. Blood Tribe is a part of my constituency that I represent, and it's been a tremendous honour. There are a lot of services that are relied upon by members of the Blood Tribe in Lethbridge, so having shared interest between those two regions would also be important.

I know that I have about a minute and a half left, but what I'd just simply say is: please take into consideration more than just the letter of the act and understanding the spirit of responsible, effective representation in adding two constituencies where we're putting those. I suspect some of my colleagues in the urban centres are going to be, as I've already heard, advocating for more in the city, but I can tell you that rural Alberta has always and will always punch well above its weight, has always provided for the rest of the province, particularly in the agriculture sector and oil and gas. If we don't have effective representation, we don't have proper services in those areas, people will not live in rural Alberta. We need rural Alberta to thrive in this province because this province not only feeds and powers the rest of the country but in many cases other parts of the world. We need rural Alberta to continue on that legacy.

As a fifth-generation southern Albertan I can tell you that I ran to represent that area and make sure it's effectively represented. I'm here today to make sure that stays the case through the new boundary redistribution.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Schow.

Mr. Clark, any questions?

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you very much for being here. It's something we say to a lot of members. It's really important to get that local, you know, on-the-ground perspective, so thank you very much for being here.

I just wanted to ask a bit about communities of interest. You talked about members in your community commuting to Lethbridge, which is about an hour drive, my friend Google Maps tells me. It might be slightly less.

2:30

Mr. Schow: Depends on how fast you're driving.

Mr. Clark: It depends on your perspective.

Mr. Schow: I, of course, always go the speed limit.

Mr. Clark: Undeniably. Yeah.

I guess I'm just curious. We had a presenter speaking about the proposed Calgary-Okotoks hybrid. His point was that people live in Okotoks because they don't live in Calgary. That's why they live in Okotoks. And they live in Beaumont because they don't live in

Edmonton, and they live in Sherwood Park because they don't live in Edmonton.

I guess I'm just curious: why don't you live in Lethbridge? Why do you live in Cardston? What's special about Cardston? It feels like they're, you know, different places, I guess. I'm just kind of curious about why you feel like those things could be blended.

Mr. Schow: Well, I'll begin by giving you an open invitation, Mr. Clark, to come and visit Cardston.

Mr. Clark: I have been there. Beautiful place.

Mr. Schow: You've been there? Well, then you know exactly why I live in Cardston. I went to high school in Magrath. My mom's a Harker from Magrath. My dad's a Schow from Cardston. People say that I should live in Spring Cooley because it's a town right between the two. Mr. Evans would understand that joke probably as well as anybody.

I live in Cardston because it is a great place to live, but I also understand the interdependence of the two communities, and that's why I think it's important that there are shared interests, both from a representation standpoint but also from a constituency where people who work in Cardston, who work in Magrath, will commute to Lethbridge, they'll buy their products in Lethbridge, so what happens in Lethbridge does affect rural Alberta and vice versa.

Having those two together is not to say that I should just be living in Lethbridge. That would also run contrary to the point that I made, that southern Alberta needs to continue to thrive with residents who stay in those areas; otherwise, you'd be living in Lethbridge and commuting to Cardston, and that town would cease to exist without the population we have.

To that exact point, I live in Cardston because I want to be there, but I think it's important that Cardston understands Lethbridge and vice versa. That's why I think a hybrid constituency would be an effective way to represent the area.

Mr. Clark: Can I ask? We recognize that the Cardston-Siksika constituency was awkward, and you've mentioned something about a figure eight.

The Chair: It's not too late to change the figure eight.

Mr. Clark: That's right. Yeah.

Mr. Schow: Was that a common turn of phrase in the last boundary commission?

The Chair: One of the presenters from I think the county said that.

Mr. Clark: I think so. Yeah. Perhaps it should have been in the last boundary commission. But my question is: what do you think about the proposed Taber-Warner?

Mr. Schow: Sorry. I think I missed the question. The proposed what; sorry?

Mr. Clark: Oh, sorry. Cardston-Taber-Warner.

The Chair: The proposal we have.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. The current one.

Mr. Schow: Well, I think that when you look at that constituency, you are beginning to bring together communities of interest but not necessarily of common historic and religious and communal backgrounds. That line kind of drops off around your Raymond,

Stirling line, so I think your shared interests actually go from that Raymond, Stirling line west, not from the Blood Tribe area east.

I think Cardston-Taber-Warner would be a difficult constituency because you have a lot of different interests. Like, the current constituency I represent, I believe, has 28 or 29 Hutterite colonies, has a large population of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a large Netherlands reformed Dutch congregation community, and then different kinds of agriculture. So, you know, I'm going to hear a whole swath of interests, and it's important to hear those, but I think, where possible, bringing community interests and aligning them so that they are being brought to the table, whether it's the cabinet table or the Legislature.

Now, in terms of the figure eight, I wouldn't be able to speak to the nature or the thought process. That's probably actually a better question for some of the members behind me, you know, who helped put that one together, or at least who were in government at the time, but what I would say is that right now I think that this current iteration would probably be best served if the boundaries moved further to the west. I also look at this and, as far as I can see, it does remove a constituency out of southern Alberta.

Mr. Clark: I don't know if it does. I don't think so.

Mr. Schow: Well, it depends on how you define southern Alberta.

The Chair: Yeah. Okay. In Calgary south.

Mr. Schow: Yes. I have heard nonstop about this map, about the lack of representation and the removal of representation, so, you know, I will filter some of those comments as they come to you and just let you know that the people that I represent feel strongly that this map would not help grant them effective representation. We'll leave it at that.

The Chair: Okay. Dr. Martin?

Dr. Martin: Thank you, and thank you for being here as the MLA for the big hourglass, the figure eight. You certainly travel a lot, but I'm not going there because then we have to compare and contrast with the far north, where the travel is spectacular.

I want to focus on something we've discussed with several presenters, both this week and previously, and that is the economic activities in this area, which is something you pointed out. You suggested that southern Alberta is a single community of interest. Presumably you mean economically as well as culturally when you speak of that, and I want to drill down into the economic piece.

I had a discussion with someone this morning about commuter patterns. It had been put to us some time ago that, gosh, you know, it's not just people going into Lethbridge; it's people coming out of Lethbridge to go to work sites, to the extent that Lethbridge becomes very dynamic for commuters. Maybe even 25 per cent of the daily population, at noon on a Friday, are people that, you know, live elsewhere. So the point about Lethbridge being a significant economic hub and magnet I think is well established.

Historically, the railway lines tied the whole region together, for obvious reasons. This was a way to transport bulk goods, particularly grain; Cardston being a terminal, as it were, the butt end of a railway line. I don't think it goes south or west from there, to speak of. You're bringing grain and bulk freight up to more central hubs, as it were. That must be true for Taber, Coaldale, Fort Macleod, and Pincher Creek as well. All those things are connected by the railway, and for good reason, I think.

Now, railways aside, do you feel that the commuter traffic going in and out of Lethbridge, you know, that comes from Picture Butte, Fort Macleod, Pincher Creek, Cardston, Magrath, Raymond, that

all of those places are participating in the daily throb of commuters in and out?

Mr. Schow: The short answer is yes. But I'm a politician, so I never give a short answer. I can tell you that often I have to go into Lethbridge or travel through Lethbridge to get to other parts of my constituency. But there are a lot of professionals who have their offices – doctors, dentists, teachers – who drive into Lethbridge from the surrounding communities. As an example, a bit of an abstract one, Waterton Lakes national park is actually one of the biggest employers of high school and university students in southern Alberta in the summertime. It is, unfortunately, though, because of the workforce and the nature of the school term, really most populated throughout April into kind of late August, mid-September. A lot of those students coming back will live in, you know, Cardston, Magrath, or a lot of them in Lethbridge, and then commute down to work every day into Waterton.

So it doesn't just go out to the surrounding areas into Lethbridge for commerce; it's also the opposite of going into the outside areas. Many of the residents in Lethbridge will live there in Lethbridge and then work on farms or feedlots, ranches in southern Alberta, in the Picture Butte area, Magrath, Cardston. So I think, as I mentioned in my remarks, it goes both ways.

We have a couple of main highways that all lead into Lethbridge. It really is the end point. There's an airport there. There's also rail. Now, the rail access doesn't go quite as far as Cardston anymore. But I can say that the commerce lines are all still there through roads and trucking. You'll see all kinds of trucks going up and down that highway all the time, just because it is the nature of southern Alberta. They're all going to Lethbridge. Then they're coming back into rural Alberta to pick up more, be it livestock or grains or what have you.

Dr. Martin: I have one last question if I might, and that is that in order to go from north to south in your current riding, you travel through the Blood reserve, right?

Mr. Schow: Correct.

Dr. Martin: Is it your impression that they have a strong linkage, commuter traffic or whatnot, with Lethbridge?

Mr. Schow: Yes, I agree. There are a couple of access points into Lethbridge from the Blood Tribe, and those are important from a commerce perspective but also for access to health. Some will come into Cardston; some will go to Lethbridge. There are a number of access points into Lethbridge from the Blood Tribe. I wouldn't be able to see them on this map, but if you looked at a road map, you can see that it is . . .

Dr. Martin: You have to go into west Lethbridge.

2:40

Mr. Schow: Yeah. I go into west Lethbridge, whether it's for seeing a physician, grabbing groceries. It is very much dependent upon Lethbridge.

Dr. Martin: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Schow: Thank you.

The Chair: Mrs. Samson, questions?

Mrs. Samson: Yes. Thank you for your time today. I appreciate your comments. You know, when I look at the current riding that you're in, and I look at the proposed riding that we're offering up,

am I correct in interpreting what you're saying, that you have a disconnect between what we're proposing, including the Cardston, Magrath, Raymond, Stirling linkage into what was previously Taber-Warner? Like, you yourself don't have a connection? You don't see the communities of interest between that portion of your riding and the existing Taber-Warner?

Mr. Schow: Well, I think there's a connection across southern Alberta. As I've mentioned, you know, we grow up, go to high school, strong rivals playing sports and football or basketball, and we say we'll never talk to someone from a different town. Then we graduate high school and go to university and then end up marrying someone from another town, and then you move to the other town. But if you're looking at the current map here as it is on the screen: if you were to divide it up along what I would say are traditional cultural lines and you want to break it into something that is more of a homogeneous group, I would argue that the Magrath, Raymond, Stirling area probably would be better suited going west than it would be going east.

This riding here effectively, with the exception of probably, with my MLA math, maybe – what? – 15, 20 per cent of the entire Alberta border, like, that is spanning a long way east to west. I would say that you'd probably want to cut that in half and, as I mentioned, just go with that Raymond, Stirling, Cardston, Magrath line towards the west, and make Taber-Warner, with some other iterations, part of a hybrid Lethbridge riding of its own.

Mrs. Samson: I just want to make one other comment because when we first started off, we heard very directly from people who live in Lethbridge that they wanted it to stay the same, and they told us why. It was not until the end of our public presentations that it came out very clear that there is a group of people who want us to consider the economic agricorridor and to consider dividing it into four, or any other possibility. I heard that loud and clear, too, and then the interim maps came out, and we didn't show that connection of hybrids, yet what I heard loud and clear again was that the people of Lethbridge want to be the people of Lethbridge. They always will be. They want to stay. They don't want to mix it up. So can you comment on that for me?

Mr. Schow: Sure. Change is hard. Not everybody likes change, and it takes some time to adapt to it, but what happens in Lethbridge doesn't happen in isolation. It is an economic hub. It's an economic corridor. It's one of the reasons that we've invested over a billion dollars in irrigation infrastructure, because we want to make that Lethbridge east-west corridor and north-south a place that is an attractive jurisdiction or region to do business in southern Alberta, with access to water, rail, roads, air. As the Minister of Trade, I can tell you that it is vitally important for us, as I travel around the world and talk about not just the major city centres but the rural parts of the province that are an attractive place to invest in. Not just for small businesses, which are an integral part of southern Alberta, but I'm talking new, large-scale manufacturing plants.

I can understand that people in Lethbridge want to be just Lethbridge, but what happens in Lethbridge doesn't happen in isolation. I think that is the entire reason that I've talked about hybrid ridings. Having two MLAs in that area who, regardless of political stripe, have done a good job representing their constituents, but I think that going forward Lethbridge would be well served with more MLAs. This is one way of doing it: having hybrid ridings where there are more than just two MLAs representing the third-largest city in the province.

Mrs. Samson: Thanks for your time today.

Mr. Schow: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Evans?

Mr. Evans: Yeah. Aaron, could you put up the proposed Cardston-Taber-Warner? Thank you.

We heard from Minister Hunter this morning, and he made a good point with respect to Livingstone-Macleod including Coaldale and the lack of connectivity between Coaldale and the balance of what's in the proposed Livingstone-Macleod. I agree with his assessment on that. With respect to the proposed Cardston-Taber-Warner electoral district – you can see where Foremost is – at the point of Foremost would you agree that the corridor of flow, so people in Foremost: some would gravitate to Medicine Hat, some would gravitate to Lethbridge?

Mr. Schow: Yeah. You're probably looking at half and half. I don't know a lot about the community of Foremost, but what I could say is that the surrounding area that you're looking at, where we have Warner, Stirling kind of on that line all the way down to Coutts on the highway line, further west of that would all for sure go to Lethbridge, and I think east of that you'd be looking at Medicine Hat, depending upon road conditions.

Also have to take this into consideration, something that a rural MLA would probably understand as well as anybody, that you need to get to your constituents. Sometimes the conditions are less than ideal, so you're going to take the path of least resistance. Weather patterns actually come into play when you're talking about this and how Cardston won't get all the snow that other parts will; sometimes it gets more. You take main highways. If your best access is a longer one but it's a better road and you're going to go to Medicine Hat, they have to take into consideration how you're going to drive those main highways. Traffic patterns to me are actually quite important because it's really just ease of access to your constituents.

Mr. Evans: If you look at our boundaries, we've used counties. You can see the county of Forty Mile is what divides up – for example, why Bow Island doesn't go into Medicine Hat-Cypress. Then over on the west side of the proposed constituency we have the MD of Taber boundary, and then we have the county of Warner boundary. How important are those counties or those municipality boundaries in your mind? Are they dividing boundaries between communities of interest?

Mr. Schow: Well, I'll use my own constituency as it stands, Cardston-Siksika, where I have parts of the MD of Taber but not all of it. Some of the interests of the MD of Taber probably better align with others and would be more of a cohesive group. I don't think it's uncommon to break constituencies up even if you're drawing lines across county or municipal boundaries, but when you look at the makeup of southern Alberta in the area that I live, cultural boundaries I think would supersede your municipal boundaries. I would find that you get a lot more cohesion and interest in those cultural areas, not so much just upon municipal lines.

Now, I live in Cardston. You know, I identify as a resident of Cardston, but I went to high school in Magrath. I have family from all around the area. To me, when it comes to high school sports rivalries, those boundaries matter, but when it comes to local dances, everyone is going to each other's dances. Everyone is going to each other's community events. Everyone is going to go visit each other's families at different times of the year, Thanksgiving, Christmas.

An overemphasis on municipal boundaries I think is the wrong approach. You can't just completely disregard it, but I think

exclusively looking at that or just looking at population sizes – again, you need to have effective representation, and sometimes that requires the ability to travel a reasonable distance to get your constituencies, northern Alberta excluded, because I know that they do have some very, very large ones. If I was to counsel the committee, it's to focus on cultural boundaries particularly and the groups that would be of interest with each other and then have greater effect. Like, I don't think what happens in Lethbridge, you know, just anecdotally, has as big effect on Foremost as something in, say, Medicine Hat.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Schow, we've got a bit more time. I'm going to jump in here. Well, yeah, you probably know the pressures. There's huge opposition to hybrids in some, especially in Calgary. You know, it's just a campaign against hybrids. They're a legitimate tool. Someone cautioned us this morning: don't overuse them. That person was right, but we've underused them, in my view, historically. So that's a big pressure point for your proposal.

2:50

Also, the population: no matter how you – I've tried to discourage people from focusing on the average because that's not our goal. Our goal is to meet the target of minus 25 per cent to plus 25 per cent. But even then, if you use that rather large target, it's hard if not near impossible to justify putting a seat in the rural, you know; all the extra seats have to go into the urban areas. What I find, quite frankly, frustrating with what your colleague has termed, which I like the term, the “quad hybrid model” for Lethbridge is that all it does is give us another problem. It doesn't give us a solution. In other words, I have no map; I have a proposal as to, those of you who propose this quad hybrid, how we do it. Do you understand my frustration?

Mr. Schow: I can see it, and I think . . .

The Chair: And your response is going to be: well, that's your job; do it.

Mr. Schow: No. I think my response would be, you know, that you kind of understand the nature of even drafting legislation, right? Like, somebody will ultimately be unhappy depending on the size of the group, but you have to make decisions that you think best fit the spirit of the problem you're trying to solve. In this situation, this quad hybrid model, you're looking at growth patterns as well. Our population is growing at the fastest rate of any jurisdiction in the world, with the exception of South Sudan, at about 4.4 per cent in 2024. So you have to look at those things, the growth patterns.

I'd also go back to the conversation about effective representation. If you're living in a city centre, you could be representing a large number of people that may even exceed, not saying it should, your plus/minus 25 per cent, but access to that MLA is usually a matter of minutes depending upon traffic patterns. But if you're looking at rural Alberta, access to that MLA is either a Zoom call, a phone call, or you're driving several hours potentially in bad weather – actually, most likely in bad weather, which is how we do it.

I think it's important to note – and I've acknowledged this as well – that your job is an impossible one as a committee because you have to draw lines based on what you believe the intent of the legislation is, the intent of what you're trying to accomplish. People will ultimately be upset. I understand that. You know, we can overcome, we can adapt, but I believe that the province is best served and the regions that I've referenced in my presentation are

best served with what would be considered, you know, a rural-urban hybrid model in southern Alberta.

The Chair: Okay. Well, then let me show you the stakes or illustrate, I think, the stakes we're at. When it was first presented to us by – I'm not sure – you know, someone in our Lethbridge hearing back in late May, he gave us a good demonstration. He said: look, consider the south as a band. Cypress-Medicine Hat and Brooks-Medicine Hat are kind of a good match. I could be wrong, but I thought he even acknowledged that there might be pressure to take a riding out of the south. So he said: move from seven ridings in the south to six; you've got the two in the southeast corner, and then create four, the quad hybrid model for Lethbridge. Do you acknowledge that if we were able to accede and create a quad hybrid model for Lethbridge, that means taking a riding out of this region; in other words, moving from seven to six?

Mr. Schow: I'd have to look at a map or a breakdown on that, but I'd go back to my original point, which is: do you have effective representation for the city of Lethbridge and the surrounding areas that are dependent upon that city? If you do, then you've accomplished your job. If it doesn't, then either I have failed to articulate myself well enough, or we have all failed to understand each other. But you talk to the good people of Cardston-Siksika and the surrounding areas, and they'll tell you how important Lethbridge is to them but how important living in a small community is to them as well.

The Chair: Okay. Good. Well, we've kept you a while, Mr. Schow. Thank you. You're excused. Feel free to remain to hear other presentations.

Mr. Schow: Thank you very much to the committee members. I wish you all the best.

The Chair: Martin Long is coming later, right?
Rakhi . . .

Ms Pancholi: Rakhi.

The Chair: Rakhi?
Rakhi Pancholi. How's that?

Ms Pancholi: I like the way you said it, actually.

The Chair: Welcome again.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you very much. Let me know when you're ready. I'm going to guess you're going to pull up the constituency there.

The Chair: We're ready. Is it Edmonton-Whitemud specifically you wanted to deal with?

Ms Pancholi: Correct. Edmonton-Whitemud. Yes.

The Chair: Okay. Please proceed.

Ms Pancholi: Okay. Well, good afternoon. My name is Rakhi Pancholi. I'm very proud to serve the constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud as MLA, and I appreciate the opportunity to present once again to the commission today on behalf of the people in my riding in my city of Edmonton and, of course, on behalf of our province. I want to begin by thanking all of you as commissioners for the work that you've done and that you're still doing to develop an electoral boundary map for the province of Alberta that ensures the principles of effective representation are respected and met.

I'll begin by noting that the changes proposed in the interim report to my constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud reflect my expectations and, frankly, what makes sense given the geographic boundaries of the riding – Whitemud Creek, the North Saskatchewan River, and the Anthony Henday – the communities of interest in the riding, and the stated population target. The addition of the communities of Magrath and Mactaggart, currently part of Edmonton-South, to Edmonton-Whitemud also makes sense as historically these communities actually were part of the riding of Edmonton-Whitemud. Overall, I believe the proposed boundaries for Edmonton-Whitemud are reasonable and will serve the people in the riding well.

However, as a proud Edmontonian I feel compelled to make a few other submissions for the commission's consideration. The first is that, given the rate of population growth in Alberta since the last boundary review, there is no doubt that Alberta's electoral map requires more seats. As members of the Official Opposition myself and my colleagues raised concerns and voted against the government's Bill 31, which only allocated two new seats to the electoral map, on the basis that Alberta's population growth warranted much more than that. The city of Edmonton alone grew by 200,000 people since the last time a boundary review was done, and the city of Calgary grew by over 400,000 people since then. Given the population average of around 55,000 that the commission is working with, that population growth in those two cities alone could be argued to be warranting at least 11 new seats.

However, the provincial government only allocated two additional seats to the map, so the commission . . .

The Chair: How many did you propose?

Ms Pancholi: Sorry. How many did we propose?

The Chair: Yeah.

Ms Pancholi: Specifically on behalf of Edmonton-Whitemud?

The Chair: No, the opposition. What did you recommend for a number of seats?

Ms Pancholi: I can't remember exactly. Well, sorry; we didn't propose a number. What we did argue was that that was not adequate to reflect the population growth.

The Chair: You're speaking to the converted here.

Ms Pancholi: Yeah.

As the provincial government only allocated two, the commission had the challenging job of determining how to best redraw the boundaries to account for that degree of population increase with so few additional seats.

It's my view that the proposed boundaries in the interim report correctly identified that new seats must go to the parts of the province that have seen the most significant and rapid population growth, that being the cities of Edmonton and Calgary. While population is not the only indicator of effective representation, the commission's report states that it is a key and objective starting point and states that "having electoral divisions of relatively similar population is sensible, indicating the equality of voters."

I appreciate the commission's efforts to bring most ridings closer to the provincial population average than they exist right now. However, I will note that under the proposed boundaries in the interim report the city of Edmonton continues to be an outlier with an average variance 3.5 per cent higher than the provincial population average while other parts of the province are closer to or still well below the provincial average. Seven Edmonton ridings are

more than 8 per cent above the provincial average, and four of those are more than 11 per cent higher than the average.

3:00

You only have to turn on the news right now to see how the provincial government's failure to plan, fund, and deliver public services to account for population growth has affected the people of Edmonton. From a state of crisis in our emergency rooms to overcrowded schools and inadequate infrastructure, Edmontonians are rightly concerned about whether their voices are effectively represented with the appropriate number of MLAs to reflect the growing population of the city of Edmonton. For this reason I believe the commission should give consideration to adding at least one more seat to the city of Edmonton given the limitations on your parameters.

Secondly, in my review of the interim report I noted that in the reasons for the commission's recommendations on page 26, the commission took consideration of the challenges and concerns in representing rural and northern communities. I'll admit that what I found interesting is that those concerns primarily focused on the challenges that MLAs face in rural and northern communities in representing their ridings, not the challenges of the people they represent. The report highlighted the difficulties in the MLA having to travel long distances between communities to attend events and meet constituents, and this is undoubtedly a significant challenge that affects representation and makes it more difficult for the MLA. But there are also unique challenges that arise in urban, densely populated ridings that affect an urban MLAs ability to effectively represent their constituents and their constituents' ability to connect to their representative.

I remember a conversation that I once had with the now MLA for Central Peace-Notley, where we swapped stories about how long it took for us to each to drive across our constituencies. For him it was four hours. I told him how I could do the same thing in my riding in under 15 minutes, truly a different experience, I acknowledge. However, I also represent almost twice as many Albertans as he does, people who may be new to the city, to the province, or the country; people of diverse cultural, heritage, and language backgrounds; people competing for limited access to housing, schools, and health care; people who may have just moved into the riding or will move out before the next election even takes place: twice as many people who expect me to be accessible and present.

The interim report noted that the typical rural constituent may be older and place greater demand on their representatives, but I can tell you that in a densely, highly populated riding like mine, constituents also have high demands. For example, they expect their representatives like me to physically knock on their door multiple times between elections. As someone who has knocked on doors in rural ridings and seen the surprise when you turn up unexpectedly at the farmhouse door, I can tell you that is a different expectation than what some rural or northern MLAs face.

I believe the commission should not just consider the challenges placed on MLAs to represent rural and northern ridings but also the challenges placed on constituents trying to be heard by an urban MLA who is serving a much larger number of people with highly diverse needs. This cannot be addressed, as suggested in the interim report, by simply hiring more staff. Urban constituency budgets are stretched thin to serve a larger number of constituents, and office costs, especially rent, are much more expensive in urban areas.

I do not in any way want to disregard the challenges faced by my colleagues outside of major urban centres, but I encourage the commission to know that there are challenges inherent in effectively representing constituents in urban ridings as well, and

those challenges are faced not just by the MLA but by the constituents themselves.

Third, I know that the commission continues to consider and hear submissions on the issue of hybrid ridings. I want to highlight the importance of considering communities of interest when determining the boundaries for ridings on the edges of cities and to argue in favour of respecting municipal boundaries to minimize hybrid ridings. While Edmonton-Whitemud is not itself on the edge of the city, we do border two of the largest ridings in south Edmonton that are right on the edges, Edmonton-South and Edmonton-South West. So in Whitemud we have a front-row seat to see which communities the people of those ridings are most connected to. Although they may have geographic proximity to some municipalities south of Edmonton, the people of Edmonton-South or Edmonton-South West travel north into the city of Edmonton for many of their connections.

Many of those kids in those ridings attend schools in my constituency. They attend Lillian Osborne, Riverbend junior high, George H. Luck, Monsignor William Irwin, and Brander Gardens schools. These families are part of the school community in my riding. The community leagues of Blackmud Creek and Heritage Point from Edmonton-South are part of the southwest area advisory council with community leagues in Edmonton-Whitemud and Edmonton-Rutherford. The community league of Windermere in Edmonton-South West is part of the Terwillegar Riverbend Advisory Council in Edmonton-Whitemud. People from those southern ridings shop at the grocery stores and farmers markets in my riding. They bring their kids to play hockey and to attend swimming lessons at the Terwillegar rec centre in my riding, and they attend church in my riding. Their commute to work and home relies heavily on the Anthony Henday and Terwillegar Drive that go through Edmonton-Whitemud.

I raise these examples to show that while many of the people living in the ridings on the southern edge of Edmonton may have close proximities outside of Edmonton, their connections, their communities, and their services are in the city. They travel into the city more so than out. In other words, their community of interest lies within the city of Edmonton, and that is where they should remain connected through their electoral riding and their representation. I've used south Edmonton as my example because, of course, it's where I see most, but I'm certain that this is applicable to many other communities on the boundaries of urban centres and that the commission should continue to try to minimize hybrid ridings as much as possible.

Lastly, I would also like to take a moment to address an issue that I understand has been raised in written and oral submissions to the commission, and this is the suggestion that riding numbers should be based on the number of eligible voters in the riding or based on voter turnout rather than population. I believe that both of these suggestions undermine the principles of fair representation and democracy.

In our democratic system the right to vote also includes the right not to vote. Now, let me be the first to say that I will always push everyone to vote in all the elections that they are eligible to vote in, and it is one of the hardest things for me to hear when a constituent tells me they don't vote. I usually can't resist taking the time to try to persuade them about why voting is so important. Regardless of whether I convince them or not, I always respond to those constituents by saying: even if you don't vote and if you didn't vote for me, I represent you and I serve you.

Voter turnout is a fluctuating measure that is affected by many factors: accessibility of voting information, how easy it is to vote, the weather, availability of advance voting, how pressing certain issues are, how effective political parties or candidates are on communicating their positions, and how engaged the public is at a

given moment in time. Citizens have the right to express also that no candidate or political party has earned their vote. None of these justify diluting or limiting that person's representation in the Legislature. That person is still a resident of the community accessing public services and deserving of full representation. In my view this is equally the case for those who are ineligible to vote.

In Edmonton-Whitemud over 10,000 of the people that I'm proud to represent are ineligible to vote for one specific reason. Why? Because they're kids. The absolute best part of my job, the part I get the most joy out of, is speaking to students, especially grade 6 students, about provincial government and my role as an MLA. Over the almost seven years I've been an MLA, I've spoken to thousands of students, and every single time I do, I walk them through how many of my constituents are ineligible to vote. I ask them who they think makes up the majority of that group of that people. They always yell: kids. And I ask them: do you think that I represent you even though you don't vote? And the best part is that they always yell: yes. I tell them that, in fact, kids in our community are the most important people I represent because everything I do in the Legislature affects them, from health care to education, clean air and water, making sure they're safe and have the skills they need to be successful in jobs and as citizens. And, of course, the choices we make today will affect them long into the future, when they'll be the ones making the decisions.

I represent all people in my riding: those who didn't vote for me, those who did, those who chose not to vote, and those who can't vote. That includes children and, yes, that includes permanent residents who may not be eligible to vote but are still entitled by law and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to access provincial services. All of the people who live in my constituency deserve representation because they all live, work, learn, contribute, volunteer, seek support, make connections, spend their money, and are neighbours in our community, and they have ideas about how to make that community better and how to make our province better. I urge the commission not to consider any recommendations that would codify the creation of classes of Albertans, those who deserve representation and those who do not.

Thank you for your time this afternoon and for all the work you're doing to make Alberta's electoral map a more fair place, and thank you for serving the people of Alberta. I'm happy to take your questions.

The Chair: Thank you for that presentation.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

Mr. Evans: No, I don't have any questions.

The Chair: Mrs. Samson.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for coming out today. I appreciate your time again.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: I just wanted to share this with you, that we have been asked numerous times, particularly by Edmontonians and Calgaryans, for another riding. I agree with that, and we talked about how we only had two, but I think what makes it even harder for us is that the extra riding that Calgary got came at the expense of the rural, and the heat from that is very great. Because of the context of your presentation today – you talked about a variety of things – I think that that would be something that I would like you to continue to talk about. That decision made to only give us two: the cost of that was a lot greater than I recognized until I got down to this stage.

3:10

Ms Pancholi: Yes. I think, as I said, as an MLA my colleagues and I spoke very clearly about the fact that two additional ridings given the significant population increase we've seen in this province was simply just inadequate. That does force, I think, the commission into a position where they are looking at how you accommodate for an enormous increase in population not just in Edmonton and Calgary but in various parts of the province, but really significantly in the cities. There's no way to make that math work without taking away seats from other parts of the province.

Now, I certainly don't want to see, you know, other parts of the province feel underrepresented either. It's not a great position for anybody. That kind of change is difficult whenever we see boundaries change, but we have seen an extraordinary degree of growth, as Alberta has in the past before, but this is really remarkable, and we have to I think begin from that objective standing point which the commission identified in its report. You begin with population because that is objective. That is the most extraordinary factor that I believe has changed since the last time the boundary review happened, and that's where we see that you have to make some difficult decisions.

I believe strongly that there could have been many more seats added to the electoral map that would have more fairly provided that distribution of population, which would have allowed for some rural ridings to not be changed or to be eliminated, but unfortunately the government made a choice of only two, which puts the very large cities competing with each other for a limited extra seat.

Mrs. Samson: Exactly.

The Chair: Dr. Martin, any questions?

Dr. Martin: Yeah. Just a comment. I think you make a straw man argument when you're talking about eligible voters and saying we don't want to have classes of voters. That has nowhere occurred in the discussions that we have heard.

Ms Pancholi: Okay. Thank you.

Dr. Martin: I mean, I think your thought experiment is taken to a place that the facts haven't.

Ms. Pancholi: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: This is ideal, so thank you. We've been at this for a while.

The interim report is based on population, our numbers based on population, and I agree with your broad point that population, exactly as your point said – how many kids did you say there were in your constituency?

Ms Pancholi: Just over 10,000.

Mr. Clark: So 10,000. If I look at Whitemud, it's a little over 53,000, so 20 per cent.

Ms Pancholi: Well, that 10,000 is based on the previous 2021. That was based on 45,000. I actually think that it's probably higher than 10,000.

Mr. Clark: So it's probably higher. I think it's an essential point, and I don't want it to get lost. I agree with you, and I think we do need to make sure that we are accounting for – and I believe we are. When you look at that number, 56,752, in the proposed draft,

Whitemud includes the population, like you say, whether they vote for you or not. I just wanted to get that point down. Thank you very much for being here.

The Chair: Let me do something really bizarre and tell you that, you know, I don't like going to the dentist. In fact, for a while there, I thought that I went to the dentist too often.

Ms Pancholi: Too often.

The Chair: So I slowed down. I stopped going twice a year. I was just there a little while ago, and that wasn't a bright idea. Nobody likes to go to the dentist, and very few people like hybrids, but hybrids are the electoral dentist in our world, and we have to make use of them.

Ms Pancholi: That's why I said in my position to minimize it to the extent possible. Right? Because I recognize . . .

The Chair: And that's why I said I stopped going to the dentist, and it didn't work.

Ms Pancholi: I think it's to avoid, and I think the interim report has shown that. To the greatest extent, you know, I think probably I would disagree about a couple of other pieces, but overall I think it recognized the need to keep municipal boundaries together where it made sense, right? Obviously, when you get into the smaller cities and smaller urban centres, you're going to have to look at things like also looking at that population number that you're trying to meet, that provincial average, also looking at maybe the fluidity between certain communities that takes place a little bit more. I think my argument was that when you look at – I can't speak for Calgary, although I spent a fair bit of time there, but I will say that in Edmonton . . .

The Chair: Don't worry. There's a lot of people who have spoken in Calgary on that.

Ms Pancholi: I'm sure there's lots of people who will speak for Calgary. I will say that in Edmonton, you know, there is some fluidity between, obviously, the city of Edmonton and some of its metro areas around, for sure, but to do some sort of artificial boundaries when we have enough population, quite frankly, within the city of Edmonton, there's no need to kind of create a hybrid where it's – I look at south Edmonton as a perfect example of that, too, right now, Edmonton-South and Edmonton-South West being very large constituencies. With only the creation of one new riding there would be no need to then take one of those ridings and stretch it into, you know, another community, another municipality because there's simply enough population and community of interest within the city to keep those boundaries together.

The Chair: Right. That's one way to look at it. But if we, you know, have a riding in the south of Edmonton or we create one that's well below the average and we can lop a place like Devon into it, or something like that, I mean, that's a natural and not unrealistic or unjustifiable creation. Would you agree?

Ms Pancholi: I mean, you're going to be looking at a map as a whole, right? I don't need to tell you the cascading thing that you do, right?

The Chair: You use a word that we use a lot.

Ms Pancholi: It's easy to say in isolation, "Yeah; Devon can fit more with there, or Devon could be . . ." but I know the effect that

that has when you change that and you move into something else. I guess my submission is that as much as possible keep the city, at least in southern Edmonton – I look at those communities, knowing those communities, knowing the people in those communities as I do, and I know that they see more connection within the city. They're not likely going to Devon for their services. They're coming further into the city, which is sort of the argument I was trying to make.

Absolutely, there may be times where that makes sense, but to the extent possible. I think you've done that with the city of Edmonton to really show that it is possible to keep the greater city boundaries and respect those boundaries and keep those communities together.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, and thank you for the give-and-take and for your gracious . . .

Mr. Evans: I have one question.

Ms Pancholi: Yes.

The Chair: Oh, Mr. Evans woke up.

Mr. Evans: Exactly.

I want to know about the population growth in your riding. The proposed would have you at 56,000. Are there development projects that are taking place? Are there slated ones? Is there something on the horizon?

Ms Pancholi: I think the population increased by including the communities of Magrath and Mactaggart.

Mr. Evans: I just want to know if there are developments.

Ms Pancholi: No, actually. Not a whole lot. One of the things about – and I presented at the previous submission . . .

Mr. Evans: What about infills?

Ms Pancholi: Infills are going to happen at some point. It has not become a major challenge in my riding as of yet. We do have some older neighbourhoods where that may be taking place. You know, obviously infills are a major discussion in both Calgary and Edmonton. I do think that there are parts of the community – I think about Brander Gardens in particular, Rhatigan – where we might start to see that. It's not really happening much right now.

We don't have a lot of free land open for development either in Edmonton-Whitemud. Almost all of it is already, you know – already the residential areas are coming up. It would be infill where growth would happen. I anticipate that, without being an expert in this area, is happening sometime in the future and not quite having hit our community yet. I imagine the next time a boundary review comes along, we might be having a different discussion and saying, "Yes, we're seeing some of that infill happen," because we do have a lot of families as well. We are seeing sort of just that age of the population in the riding that, you know, some empty nesters and some of those big homes might start to be sold off and maybe we'd be looking at infill. I could see that happening for sure.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Pancholi.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you.

The Chair: I believe that takes us to Jasvir Deol.

Good afternoon, sir. We were just speaking of you, actually, about an hour and a half ago. Make yourself comfortable.

Mr. Deol: Thank you.

The Chair: Edmonton-Meadows is right next to Mill Woods, right?

Mr. Deol: It is. Southeast.

The Chair: Yeah. Okay.

Okay. As soon as we get the map up there, then feel free to tell us – obviously, you’re going to speak on Edmonton-Meadows and anything else you wish to tell us about the map as well.

Mr. Deol: Yeah. A little bit about the general process. City of Edmonton, maybe.

Ready?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Deol: Thank you, sir. Good afternoon. It’s my pleasure to have the opportunity to provide feedback to the Alberta boundaries commission. I would like to begin by sincerely thanking the commissioners and staff for taking on this important and complex task. This work requires careful judgment, extensive consultation, and strong commitment to fairness, and I appreciate your efforts to listen to Albertans across the province while striving to create fair and effective boundary maps.

3:20

I commend the commission for recognizing rapid population growth in many regions of Alberta, particularly in the city of Edmonton. The proposal to add an additional seat in Edmonton south to account for this growth demonstrates a clear commitment to fair and effective representation in our democratic system. At the same time, it’s important to note that Edmonton has also lost the Edmonton-Riverview riding. According to the census metropolitan area data Edmonton is now the sixth-largest city in Canada, and its population growth shows no signs of slowing. This reality is especially evident in areas such as Edmonton-Meadows. To ensure fair representation, Edmonton’s representation in this Legislature must keep pace with the city’s continued growth. Even without requesting the restoration of the Edmonton-Riverview riding, CMA data clearly supports room for an additional riding in the city of Edmonton to reflect these demographic realities.

As the commission has noted, representation by population is fundamental to ensure that citizens’ voices are heard democratically. Population balances directly affect the ability of elected representatives to advocate effectively for their constituents on critical issues such as education, funding, transportation, infrastructure, health care access, public safety, and other essential public services.

Historically Edmonton-Meadows has exceeded the provincial average. In 2017 the riding’s population was approximately about 11 per cent higher than the provincial average. Since then the growth has accelerated significantly. By 2025 the population of Edmonton-Meadows had increased to approximately 67,736, the latest figures available, placing it more than 23 per cent above the new provincial average of 54,929. These figures clearly demonstrate the scale and pace of growth in the area and the challenge of keeping the riding closer to the provincial average to ensure fair and equitable representation.

I recognize that the commission’s proposed boundary changes in southeast Edmonton were particularly challenging. Growth in this part of the city has been rapid and concentrated, making it difficult to balance current population pressure with future growth projections. The proposal to create a new riding in southeast

Edmonton reflects careful consideration and a genuine effort to address both present imbalances and anticipated growth. Under the proposed boundaries the population of Edmonton-Meadows would be reduced to approximately 53,318, allowing room for future growth.

While I understand the rationale behind this approach, I have concerns about one specific aspect of the proposal, the removal of Larkspur community from the Edmonton-Meadows riding. I know you have heard about this a lot. Removing Larkspur results in Meadows Community League being split between two ridings, which undermines the principle of keeping communities of interest intact. Larkspur is closely connected to Edmonton-Meadows socially, geographically, and practically. Residents share schools, transportation routes, shopping areas, recreational facilities, and community services, and they strongly identify with Edmonton-Meadows. Moreover, Larkspur does not naturally align with the demographic, cultural, and community composition of the Mill Woods based riding to which it has been assigned. The historical and community ties of Larkspur are far more consistent with Edmonton-Meadows. I have heard clear feedback from residents expressing concerns about this change and a strong preference to remain within Edmonton-Meadows.

For those reasons, I respectfully request that the commission reconsider this specific boundary adjustment and allow the Larkspur community to remain within the Edmonton-Meadows riding. I believe this modest change would better preserve community cohesion while still supporting the commission’s broader objectives of population balance and effective representation.

Thank you again for your time, your service, and your commitment to a boundaries review process that reflects the democratic values of fairness, inclusivity, and respect for communities across Alberta.

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

We need to have a break because of technical issues. Can we do at least the questions first? Okay.

Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you so much. Your colleague, who was great, was here earlier today and made exactly the same case. I guess if the only thing we change is moving Larkspur into Edmonton-Meadows, what effectively we do is that we flip the two constituencies. Currently Edmonton-Mill Woods is set at 59,673; Edmonton-Meadows is currently set at 53,318, the idea there being there’d be a lot of growth near the Henday or the boundary, which is the same thing. That was the theory. We’re sort of trying to overpopulate a bit of Edmonton-Mill Woods because it was a bit more built out, underpopulate Edmonton-Meadows because it’s a little less built out. However, it’s kind of a distinction without a difference. It means that you would have Larkspur and additional population, Mill Woods would have lesser population, but we still have two constituencies. I guess that’s really the question. If we were to just put Larkspur in, are you okay at 59,000 constituents with likely, you know, significant growth? By the time we do this again in eight years, not us, it’ll be quite a bit over. Is that okay?

Mr. Deol: Yeah. As it was framed many times – you know, I understand it’s a bit challenging. I look at this issue two ways, you know, from my own riding perspective and the feedback from the constituents. Also, I don’t know which way the boundaries commission wanted to look at it. The city has grown, actually. Specifically, I know lots of growth is on the outskirts of the city and from the north. The majority of the growth is in the south part of the city. When we see the population variance, like, the one argument I would probably have – I don’t know how strong that is.

The average population per riding is higher, actually, in the city of Edmonton when you compare it to all other regions of the province. So that is one way to look at the issues.

I mean, I tried to give a nice argument in my presentation. You know, there is still room for another riding, and there's a way to create it. I know when the new boundaries proposed Edmonton-Meadows – a significant part of Laurel, actually a big chunk of that, is becoming a heavily dense population area. So that's one way of looking at the issue when addressing your broader goals and maybe bringing in another seat. But if there is nothing else – there's nothing else, probably – and that is the last resort, I would prefer to do that.

Mr. Clark: Yeah, Laurel is challenging because all of Laurel is 24,000 people, and then the area that we've got in Edmonton-Meadows: that portion is 16,000.

Mr. Deol: Half of the riding.

Mr. Clark: You know, again, we've tried to leave southeast relatively slightly underpopulated. A lot of growth down there. So it's a bit of a puzzle, frankly.

I think I have an answer to my question. Thank you.

Mr. Deol: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.
Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: No. That was my question, too. We've had this conversation with your constituency manager, if I recall, as well as MLA Gray, so I've heard the to and fro on Larkspur. Thank you.

Mr. Deol: Thank you.

The Chair: Mrs. Samson.

Mrs. Samson: No questions, but thank you so much for coming out this afternoon. I appreciate your time.

Mr. Deol: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: No questions. Thank you.

The Chair: You know, Edmonton MLAs often say, "We need another seat," but nobody wants to give up any of their district, so what good would it be?

3:30

Mr. Evans: It would be the empty seat.

Mr. Deol: In this case, yeah. Very good question, Justice Miller. You know, it's very hard to ask, first of all. In my case, yes, there was room. If there are new seats coming in, I don't know which way the adjustment will come in. But as Mr. Clark has mentioned, Laurel itself, like, with a population of 24,000 people. Oh, my God. I tried to help my colleague in the by-election. We three of us were stuck all three weeks in the Laurel community only, just reaching out to people.

There are two ways, you know, maybe that would help. One extra seat would probably help chalk down the fairness around boundary redistribution in Edmonton-South East. The second solution is, as Mr. Clark asked: I don't know; 59,000 in Edmonton-Mill Woods, or 59,000 in Edmonton-Meadows? One or the other.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you.

We're going to take a break. Normally we kind of soldier on through, but for technical reasons we'll break for 10 minutes.

Mr. Deol: Thank you, sir.

The Chair: Thank you. Thank you for presenting.

[The hearing adjourned from 3:31 p.m. to 3:41 p.m.]

The Chair: Peggy Wright.

Ms Wright: Yes. That is me.

The Chair: Okay. Let's reconvene, ladies and gentlemen and commissioners.

Mrs. Samson: We're missing two yet.

The Chair: Thanks for coming up at my request. I don't know where you are on the time sheet here.

Ms Wright: I was scheduled for 3:50.

The Chair: Oh, so you're five minutes early.

Mr. Clark: You have 60 per cent of the commissioners.

Ms Wright: And 1 per cent of the tech folks.

Mr. Clark: We could ask 100 per cent of the questions.

Ms Wright: There you go.

The Chair: Appreciate that we are about an hour and a half from closing or maybe two hours from closing, so if we're a little punchy or rushed . . .

Ms Wright: It's okay. No, no. That's fine. It's like the end of a school day. I taught for 23 years, so I get it.

The Chair: Yeah. I was going to use that.

Ms Wright: It's when you bring out the games.

The Chair: That's right. Dodge ball, anyone?

Okay. I am assuming the commissioners can hear us.

Mrs. Samson: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. We have Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview up. Ms Peggy Wright, you're here to present, so please proceed.

Ms Wright: Thank you very much. I appreciate that. I'm here today to follow up on several observations from the interim report and to offer some additional context that I hope will be a help to you as you make all your deliberations over the next few months. First of all, I wanted to express my appreciation for the consideration given to the proposed redraw. Expanding the riding by moving north rather than taking a piece here and a piece there from several different areas creates a much more cohesive result.

The proposed boundaries, at least to me, feel very natural as well as intuitive. Using the railway on the west, 167th Avenue to the north, and the river and city limits along the west and southern edges ensures the lines reflect existing geographical features as well as significant transportation corridors. This matters because boundaries that follow residents' lived experiences better reflect how those communities actually function. Adding part of what is currently Edmonton-Manning, the neighbourhoods of Fraser and Kirkness, also makes sense because these neighbourhoods already

have clear ties to the community leagues, just as one example, within Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

When I presented to you almost a year ago now, I stressed the importance of maintaining communities of interest, and this remains paramount. I'm reminded of my colleague MLA Deol's remarks, which are quoted on page 22 of the interim report, when he said: "Those communities share deep cultural ties, family networks, and social cohesion. It is crucial that these bonds are preserved and not fragmented by boundary changes." I believe that the proposed boundary changes for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview do indeed support that.

The additions also reflect and help sustain the strong diversity of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. As I noted also in the first round of hearings, diversity is indeed a defining feature of this constituency. Over one-third of the residents identify as visible minorities, and I have no doubt that that number will do nothing but continue to grow over the next decade. Recognizing that diversity and the complexities it can present is essential. In my view we must avoid decisions that risk marginalizing communities that are already underrepresented. I also believe that Quarry Ridge, while a relatively new area, is a good fit and a welcome addition.

Residents of all three of these communities are already part of the rhythm of life in northeast Edmonton, whether that's shopping at the Belmont Sobeys, visiting the Clareview rec centre, or spending time at the Beverly farmers' market, or even Kuhlmann's. Given Quarry Ridge's proximity to the new Northeast River Valley park, it aligns well with the central and southern portions of the riding that also include Hermitage and Rundle parks.

As you all know, and I know you've heard this a lot, Edmonton is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Canada. Our population increased 18.3 per cent over the last five years, bringing an average of 3.38 per cent growth per year, and while this pace may moderate, it's clear that Edmonton will continue to grow. Even at a more modest 2.5 per cent annual rate, that would see us reach a population of 1.5 million around 2035. Given this reality I strongly encourage the commission to consider future-proofing by adding an additional seat to Edmonton. I'm sure that's not a surprise to you. I know you've heard it lots. The proposed redraw of central Edmonton, specifically the amalgamation of Glenora and Riverview, might offer a logical starting point.

Turning specifically, though, to Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, the interim report projects a population of 54,440, as noted on page 51, based on expected development, and certainly I expect the riding will exceed that estimate within the next decade. Several developments are already under construction or in advanced planning stages while others are at an earlier point. Like MLA Hoffman I've brought some pictures for you that highlight some of the current and upcoming development. I don't know if you've got the appendix that I provided or not.

Aaron, do we have the extra pictures? Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Wright: Yeah. What I've done is I provided a picture and then an idea of where it was actually taken from. That first example on the very first page is Victoria Trail and Hermitage Road, two major intersecting roads within the community. When this apartment complex started, I thought it was going to be sort of three or four stories. It clearly is not, and I would expect that there could be easily about 700 people in this particular apartment complex on its own.

On the second page what you have there is Hermitage Road, which is an old Domtar site. It's been rezoned at the moment, and certainly at some point there will be some developer, I'm sure, that

comes in and snaps it up. Again, you could have as many as a few thousand folks there.

On the third page is an example of some condo developments that have happened in Clareview Town Centre just really behind the Clareview rec centre. It's really in the Kirkness area.

On the fourth page from that same area, just about a half block away, you have both apartment buildings as well as multifamily units similar to townhomes.

On page 5 I've given you an area that's actually very, very massive, and over the last number of years it's been developed. It's hard to see, but in there are some newer homes. This area, as you can see, is in the process of being sold, and I have no doubt there will be some development there. This is just off of 50th Street right before the Yellowhead. That's where that one is.

And then Beverly is also seeing a new seniors' residence as well. We expect that there will be somewhere between 300 and 400 folks living there. One of the things that I can say as well is that this particular area is not particularly well-served if you are a senior and you do need a residence as you age. So I would expect that in addition to what we're seeing in Beverly, at some point in the next decade we will see something similar happen in Clareview as well.

Then the last page is simply an example of the many infills that are currently happening in Beverly itself. The picture that I've given you is a picture of a sixplex that's going in. There are many, many, many skinny homes. There are many of the sort of, four- and sixplex developments happening as well, which is interesting because Beverly certainly is one of those neighbourhoods where those old 1940s war houses are. It's fascinating that on what I would consider to be a relatively tiny lot, you can actually put a four- or sixplex. So certainly the population will continue to grow in both the Beverly and the Clareview sides of the riding.

In addition to that, there were two recently awarded school surplus sites which will add around 270 new housing units. These particular surplus sites are everything from a one-bedroom to a four-bedroom either townhouse or apartment. So they expect that families will be moving in. It could be over 400 people. It could be a few 100 more than that as well. West of the Hermitage Road Domtar site that I talked about is also an expanding development of single-family homes and row houses. Every time I go over there, it seems like there's another house or another 10 houses that have been built in the interim. Together, that Domtar site, which is now vacant, along with this other site, I would imagine, will be seeing thousands of people in the next decade for sure.

3:50

As both presenters and commissioners have noted, much of Edmonton's newest population growth is indeed occurring outside the Henday. However, I also believe it's important to consider that along with current and future new development, densification has arrived in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. Growth might not be as rapid right now in the northeast as it is in the southwest particularly. However, it is steady, and I believe it will do nothing but increase. The proposed riding of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview is well positioned for continued development and a corresponding population increase over the next decade.

As I finish, I really just want to convey to all of you a very deep appreciation for the work. I know it's an incredibly complex job. I've been listening to the hearings over the last couple of days, and to balance all of the disparate needs of all of the different folks you've heard from is quite the mammoth task. I do very much want you to know that your work is very much appreciated, and we are all very much grateful that you are sitting there and we are sitting here.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comments? Well, maybe that's unfair because you missed part of it.

Mr. Evans: No, I'm ready to go.

The Chair: Okay; go. That energy drink helped.

Mr. Evans: It doesn't hurt. School surplus sites. I don't really understand that concept. Maybe if you could tell me that, and then if you could show me where that is going to be in your constituency.

Ms Wright: Sure. This one?

Mr. Evans: Yeah.

Ms Wright: Okay. Right now the ones that have just been allocated are . . .

Mr. Evans: When you say allocated, what does that . . .

Ms Wright: They've been given over already to housing developers, and they're kind of in the later stages of consultation within the community. There's one in Belmont and one in Overlanders, which is very close to where our office is. This is the Henday here, I think. The Overlanders is somewhere around here, and then Belmont is in this area over here. Soon there will also be a couple of surplus sites in the Beverly side as well. We've got some school modernization as well as consolidation that's occurring right now. So there will soon be two Catholic schools that will be sitting empty. At some point infrastructure will decide when it's time to let those go and, I'm sure, work with the city of Edmonton much like they have with the two on the Clareview side right now.

Mr. Evans: But if there's going to be all this growth, don't the kids have to go to school?

Ms Wright: Well, they do. Because it's a consolidation of schools, what they're doing is taking a junior high and two smaller elementaries and making one big K to 9 school in the Beverly side. They're doing it right now on the St. Jerome school site. St. Jerome will now have an old building, and I don't know what the new name of the school will be, but there will be a new school on that same site, which also means that St. Bernadette's, which right now is a junior high, and St. Nick's, which is an elementary, will soon be vacant.

The Chair: Okay. School allocation sites: that's the term to deal with old schools.

Ms Wright: I think so. Yeah. Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Samson.

Mrs. Samson: Your presentation was very clear, so I don't have any questions on that. I just want your observation on when you saw the interim report: did you look at the whole thing, like, cover to cover?

Ms Wright: I did, and I will confess that I skimmed it. Certainly, you know, the loss of the riding around Slave Lake and that sort of thing to make the bigger Mackenzie, that's an incredibly tough decision to have made in terms of all the balanced work that you have to do.

Mrs. Samson: You know, I hear you, and that's been a pressure point for us. I think what I want to hear, and I heard it from a few presenters but probably not enough: did you think, because one of the biggest things we heard was hybrids versus no hybrids, that the interim report was good, bad, fair, balanced? Specifically on that.

Ms Wright: I thought it was as fair as it possibly could be. I know, having listened to my colleague earlier, that because you were only given those two extra ridings to work with, there are many, many limitations. You know, you're not quite as free to maintain some of those rural areas or to add all of the seats that we as Edmonton MLAs would like to have for the capital city. I believe that it's as balanced as it could have been.

I also know that there are people in some communities that were – distraught isn't the word, but they would certainly like to see some changes made and would like you to consider other factors. I certainly do understand that. Given all of those complexities and the needs of everyone the work that you're all doing is really to balance the needs right now that exist in the province but also to think about the future over the next decade and what may or may not occur. You know, it's making sure that there is fair and as equal as possible representation available to each and every resident of Alberta over the coming years, and it's an exceptionally difficult task.

Yeah. I thought it was as fair as it could be, but of course, speaking as an Edmontonian, I would like one more riding in the city. But I understand. I do understand.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. I appreciate your comments even though I had to fish for them.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much, and thank you for your presentation and your handouts. I wanted to direct your attention to the areas in the north of this interim proposal, the area north of 153 inside the Henday and then the area north and outside. I mean, both of those areas are a bit of a mixed bag. Historically there's been sort of small farming, and then in the bigger area in the north it's really a mixed bag. You've still got quarries. You've got a couple of golf courses. You've got greenhouses. You've got a bit of suburban-style development. It's a real mixed bag. Do you anticipate rapid residential pods going up in both of those areas?

Ms Wright: Certainly that area that's closer to 167th, Quarry Ridge: I know that not all of the lots have houses on them at the moment, but my understanding is most, if not all, of those lots have indeed been sold. Right now I think the eastern sort of part is like the older part of Quarry Ridge, and I know that there have been some new houses kind of as you come towards Meridian, I think it is. So there is this massive kind of open area at the moment, and I would suspect, certainly within the next two or three years, we will see additional housing development there since those lots have indeed been sold.

In terms of the two communities that are south of 153rd, and that's Fraser and Kirkness . . .

Dr. Martin: No. Just north of 153rd.

Ms Wright: Oh, just north of there?

Dr. Martin: That little triangle.

Ms Wright: Oh, okay. Yeah. I would think it would be very, very similar. Certainly, one of the advantages – although there are parts

of Quarry Ridge that don't really hold true in terms of what it is I'm about to say. In the northeast of Edmonton, for the most part – there are exceptions – housing is a wee bit cheaper than it is in some areas of the city. When I was looking at those lot sizes, for instance, they are no longer the mammoth lot sizes that you see in that older part. They tend to be much more narrow, kind of your standard rectangle. So I would suspect that they will be a little bit easier for folks to afford, and that's one of the reasons why I have no doubt that soon that population in that area north of 153rd will increase.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Ms Wright: You're welcome.

The Chair: Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: I don't have any questions for you, no. But I have to say I very much appreciate the handout materials. That really does help, you know, focus our mind.

I was going to ask you, but I looked it up and I figured out that everything south of the river is not people. It's geography. It's . . .

Ms Wright: Gravel and the garbage dump. Yeah.

Dr. Martin: A city has to have those.

Ms Wright: A city does, in order to function. It's important infrastructure. It is. Yeah.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

Ms Wright: You're most welcome.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you for presenting.

Ms Wright: You're most welcome. Thank you so much.

4:00

The Chair: Please remain to hear other presenters.

Our next presenter is a little earlier according to the schedule, but I think you're the only one here, so please come forward. Oh, no. Right. Okay. Flip a coin. Who wants to come first?

Ms Sweet: I got up to Peggy, so it depends. Do you want to keep going northeast, or do you want to go Hinton, Edson, and things?

The Chair: West Yellowhead. You were scheduled at 2:10. You don't get penalized for being late, but Mr. Schow filled your spot.

Mr. Long: And many more spots.

The Chair: Good. Okay. Identify yourself and tell us what we need to know about West Yellowhead.

Mr. Long: Oh, that could go on for days. It's a beautiful riding. I am the MLA for West Yellowhead, Martin Long, and I thank you hon. members of the commission for your service and for the opportunity to speak today.

I wish today to highlight the deep-rooted connections between the communities of Jasper, Hinton, and Grande Cache in particular. These communities are not simply geographic neighbours; they are linked by essential transportation routes, shared economic interests, service dependencies, and common cultural and historical ties. I would like to echo many other submissions that you have received which stress the importance of keeping these three communities together. The voices of residents, local leaders, and stakeholders all point to the same

conclusion. Fragmenting these communities would weaken effective representation and disrupt regional cohesion.

These communities have transportation corridors and arteries of connection like the Yellowhead highway, highway 16, that links Jasper and Hinton. It's essential to travel, commerce, health care access, education, emergency services, and MLA accessibility. In fact, Personally, I live in Woodlands county on highway 43 but, recognizing this essential corridor, my office is on highway 16 in Edson actually because this is the natural progression for folks in my riding inevitably when they need to the services in Edmonton even. Again, I recognized that right away and, hence, put my office in on that corridor.

The driving distance from Hinton to Jasper is 77 kilometres. It is the main lifeline connecting daily life, services, and economic activity. Jasper to Grande Cache is 209 kilometres via highway 40. It's the only reliable northern connection supporting resource, tourism, and social links. Highway 40 and the Yellowhead highway corridors are critical to the movement of goods, of people, and of services.

An important concern I would note is the proposed Jasper-Banff riding relies solely on highway 93 for connectivity. This highway is dangerous. It's mountainous and prone to seasonal closures. One just happened recently. I believe it was a five-day closure due to weather, and there are wildlife and avalanche risks in the winter months in particular. Closures are common, leaving Jasper isolated from Banff and other parts of Alberta.

Personally speaking, I was in southern Alberta doing some work and had to get back to an event in my own riding. It was during the fall months, and I went to use the highway 93 corridor, and inevitably it was closed. There was a traffic accident which closed lanes in both directions. So I've been privy to the issues with 93 closures personally. This reality does underscore the impracticality of grouping Jasper with Banff for electoral representation.

The communities have shared interest and shared challenges. The geographical and social cohesion: Jasper, Hinton, and Grande Cache form a distinct region oriented westward into the Rockies, geographically and socially distinct from other parts of Alberta. Residents routinely travel through Hinton for groceries, specialized medical care, and government services. Travel and service patterns confirm that these communities function as a single interdependent region. In fact, Community Futures West Yellowhead services all three of those communities and Edson as well. The housing provider Evergreens Foundation is servicing those communities also.

Jasper and Hinton: you know, tourism drives Jasper's economy, and along with CN access, obviously, Hinton supports industrial activity, including forestry. Both communities share labour pools, infrastructure, and regional services. Many folks working in the community of Jasper will choose to live in Hinton and travel. Grande Cache is historically mining based, now economically tied to regional corridors and tourism gateways. Bus services linking Grande Cache to Hinton highlight the practical interdependence of these communities.

The shared services, medical access, and remoteness of these communities sees medical and specialist care often requiring travel through Hinton. Education, social services, and emergency response similarly rely on these corridors. Jasper and Grande Cache are remote from other urban centres. Splitting them from Hinton would disrupt essential access.

There are three distinct regions along the mountains: Jasper and Hinton; Banff, Rocky Mountain House, Sundre; and Canmore, Kananaskis. Jasper and Grande Cache cannot stand alone. Their connectivity through Hinton is essential. Hinton acts as the northern gateway town to the mountains and to the national park. Natural

subregions, forest reserve areas, and transportation corridors naturally divide three areas along the mountains: Jasper, Hinton in the north; Banff, Rocky Mountain House, Sundre in the central; and Canmore, Kananaskis to the south. Holding Jasper and Hinton together with the rest of the north is critical for the effective representation of the people in all three regions of the mountains.

For historical and cultural context: shared settlement history, rail development, logging, tourism, and Indigenous heritage bind these communities. Electoral boundaries should respect historical, social, and economic cohesion, not merely geography.

The recommended position that I have would be to maintain Jasper, Hinton, and Grande Cache within the same electoral division, reflecting the shared transportation corridors and practical travel patterns; the integrated economies, tourism, resources, and services that depend on Hinton for medical, educational, and administrative access; the cultural, historical, and social communities of interest; the safety and reliability of transportation routes, avoiding dangerous reliance on highway 93. This would ensure effective representation and aligns with the principles set out in the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act.

In closing, I do thank you for your careful consideration. I commend the commission for keeping the Yellowhead corridor intact and for respecting the commercial, industrial, cultural, and historical ties with these communities. I urge you to listen to these submissions and maintain these communities together. Fragmenting them would not only ignore their interdependence but also create practical challenges for representation, safety, and access to essential services.

Thank you again for your time.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much. I really appreciate you being here, and I appreciate and respect the challenge that's presented by being an MLA for such a vast area. I guess I'm curious on a couple of things. Jasper council wrote us and said that they would prefer to be connected with Banff and Canmore because they felt that connection in the national park was really important.

I went and looked up B.C.'s most recent electoral boundaries report from 2023, I think, and they have a similar set up in the Revelstoke and then Columbia – I can't remember the exact name – where they deliberately tried to put national parks together. [interjection] Yeah, Yoho. Yeah, exactly. There are a number of them for that reason, that rationale, that one representative would be able to understand that national park kind of dynamic.

I guess I've got a couple of questions, but I'll just start there. Do you feel that Jasper – just to be clear, Hinton, Grande Cache, and Edson are currently together in West Yellowhead. We had heard that feedback and wanted to make sure that we respected that route, but drawing a line at the national park felt, notwithstanding this distance, like it made a logical connection back to Banff. I just wanted to get your perspective on that.

Mr. Long: Well, thank you. I would hesitate to speak for the council, obviously. That's their purview. I do know that numerous community members and organizations shared an opposite perspective. I would say that I myself believe that the more advocates you can have for the national park communities, the better it is for the appeal to the federal government.

4:10

I would also offer that, you know, in six years of representing the community, the feedback consistently has been that Jasper is not like Banff. They do share a common interest with tourism. However, if you have spent time in both communities, I will say

that I have a particular fondness for Jasper due to the fact, mainly, that it is not overly commercialized. It is a small community with a small feel and, obviously, welcomes two and a half million visitors annually, who come back because you feel like you're at home while you're on a holiday, basically. I do know that has been a sentiment that I've received numerous times from community members, that they are not striving to become another Banff. They are happy being their unique community.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. You know, undeniably, we have received various feedback, and it's fairly balanced. There's a lot of pro and a lot of con, so definitely something we're weighing.

I just want to get an understanding of how as an MLA you handle the geography that you have to serve. Presumably you do as much as you can in person, but that's just not practical to actually meet everybody all the time in person. Do you find that you're using, like, Zoom meetings and cellphone calls and things to sort of set up or just have conversations and connect and then arrange to meet at a critical time in person? I mean, how do you kind of handle all that?

Mr. Long: Actually, the primary activity is in person for my riding. It's rural communities. It's better received. Again, I did actually purposely put my office on the highway 16 corridor because it is so frequently used for folks who travel to Edmonton in my riding. You know, I know that the Banff area, they would travel to Calgary, for instance, right? But no, we use Edmonton, so when folks are using services in Edmonton, they have ease of access to my office through that. Primarily I get in my car and I go to those communities myself because that is how I show my respect to my constituents, meeting them in their own homes and in their own communities.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you, and thank you. I have had some experience of working with the superintendent and his research staff over the years, and I can endorse your view that they have not fully embraced tourism at the level of their colleague in Banff and that they want to maintain a much more wilderness feel for Jasper national park.

I really want to dwell on the connectivity between the town of Jasper and Hinton in terms of the economic relationships. Obviously, historically it always was true, not least because of the railway, but now, much more importantly for tourism and for economic reasons and exacerbated by the fire, people are living in Hinton, working in Jasper, and vice versa. I wonder if you could talk about that, those layers of connectivity.

Mr. Long: Yeah. Thank you for that. It is multilayered, obviously. You know, in all of the aftermath of the fire I had a lot on my plate advocating for this community and the people who were devastated by the disaster. And one of those things I advocated for was a regional service between Jasper and Banff for busing because so many people were going to be relying on the Hinton community for housing temporarily while maintaining their work in Jasper. That's one element.

The CN service: the hub is Jasper, obviously, and many of the employees of that service do make their home in Hinton and go back and forth between those communities. Actually, for the future of the region I'm aware that there are numerous considerations being made for tourism development further in the Hinton area, which will actually further intertie those two communities.

Dr. Martin: A supplemental. I take you north on 40, speaking of tourism. You've got several provincial parks. They're starting to, I think – there's a lot of tourism there. People go fishing at Switzer. I've gone fishing in Pierre Greys Lakes. Then there are these enormous wilderness parks. So there's huge potential for growth there quite apart from where it's located, Hinton or Grande Cache. I think you're sitting on high tourism potential. It's my personal view. What's yours?

Mr. Long: I could take your entire day boasting about my riding and not only the beauty that exists but the untapped potential. Actually, again, I've been part of so many conversations about the tourism opportunities. There's an incredible Indigenous group in Grande Cache that is working on expanding their tourism capabilities. In fact, if we want to talk a little bit of the history, the people who moved to Grande Cache were . . .

Dr. Martin: "Moved" is quite the verb.

Mr. Long: Yes. Sorry. They were forced out of Jasper Park, you know, a hundred and something years ago, the Indigenous community, so they made their way to Grande Cache and made their home there.

Yeah. The untapped potential is starting to unfold. You're right. That corridor: I mean, if you haven't been, you need to. That is one of those life-changing trips that you take, driving that highway 40 corridor north to Grande Cache. Then you have the peaks of – I don't think there's a community like it in this province or anywhere that I've lived. You are surrounded in that community by the mountains, like, on all sides. Yeah. It's an exciting future ahead, especially on that tourism development piece.

Dr. Martin: Thank you, sir.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for your time today. I appreciate your insight into this very unique area. I am interested in the Banff, Jasper connection because of the national park. Not that Jasper wants to become the next Banff, but because there must be challenges in staffing, housing, tourism, marketing, you know, wildfire prevention, all those kinds of things – like, the list goes on – would Jasper benefit by a connection into Banff in terms of a learning situation where the people of Banff or whoever it is could say, "Well, we've done this, and this really works" or "We're going to do this kind of marketing program, and this is really going to help the region to attract employees"? Would we be doing Jasper a disservice by not letting them have that opportunity to hook up to Banff?

Mr. Long: I would say that Jasper, because of their remoteness, is used to figuring it out Jasper's way, frankly. They do have an incredible team at Tourism Jasper, and historically they have figured it out. Again, the uniqueness of Jasper compared to Banff, where you're within driving distance to Calgary in, you know, that whole corridor – we're four hours away from Edmonton. We are very remote. I would say personally that Jasper forges ahead. That's their outlook. They are so unique compared to Banff, in particular, that I don't believe that connecting them like this would actually be a huge benefit.

Mrs. Samson: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Evans?

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

Mr. Long: Thank you, John.

The Chair: Mr. Long, I reflect back to when we first started working on our interim report, and I can tell you that – obviously, it's unanimous – I was a big fan of the Banff-Jasper proposed riding. Increasingly, maybe it's a little unfair to use the term "balkanization." I thought: well, it's basically a federal riding almost. But as we heard feedback, we heard significant feedback from what I would call alpiners in the industry. An individual in Calgary was very strongly opposed to it and explained the difficulties in dealing with the federal park. Then we heard someone from your constituency – his name escapes me – and I think he was from Hinton.

4:20

Mr. Evans: Scholz.

The Chair: Mr. Scholz? Yeah. Something like that.

He said: "Look, we want to mirror the success of Banff, Canmore. Hinton wants to be the new Canmore to Jasper." He made a fairly powerful argument for keeping that together. You've added Grande Cache. I should know my geography better, but Grande Cache is a significant factor in your existing riding. Tell me about Hinton becoming Canmore.

Mr. Long: Again, I would say that, similar to Jasper saying they don't want to be Banff, most Hintonites would say that they don't want to be Canmore, but they want to reach their potential.

The Chair: Their what?

Mr. Long: They want to reach their potential.

The Chair: Yes. Okay. Good.

Mr. Long: You know, historically Hinton has been well serviced by conventional industries. Like, they've had mining and forestry, and tourism is sort of starting to unleash.

The Chair: A different type of tourism. A wilderness tourism.

Mr. Long: Yeah. They don't have, I would say, some of the regulation that you would find in the national park, for instance. Like, you can do off-highway vehicle usage in the Hinton region. We have sandhills in the Hinton region and, yeah, a lot of fishing. What will be interesting is the development as some of the old coal mines, the historical lands are actually reclaimed. I often think – I've spent a lot of time going around the province, but there's a one old coal mine in the province that got turned into a golf course, actually, and it would be interesting to see if those sorts of ideas come forward in the coming years for the Hinton area.

Yeah. It'll be an interesting path forward given that a lot of the uses that, again, are restricted in certain areas of the province might not have the same barriers in that Hinton corridor.

The Chair: Okay. Anything else from any of the commissioners?

Okay. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Long. Much appreciated.

Mr. Long: Thank you so much for your time.

The Chair: Thanks for your flexibility with your colleagues.

We have five minutes till the scheduled appointment of Heather Sweet unless she wants to come up earlier.

Okay. Ms Sweet, please proceed and tell us what your suggested name change is, first of all.

Ms Sweet: Okay. Great. Thank you. My proposed changes. I'll be honest, when I received the interim report, I wasn't surprised by your recommendations. My population is quite high in my riding. My population will be substantially high in the next eight years in

my riding to the point where I believe it will be a new riding, and it will become two in eight years. I'm not saying today. I know that many of my Edmonton colleagues have been talking about the fact that we do need more seats in Edmonton, and I would agree with that. The reason that I say that is that I do think we need to be forward thinking – which I believe you have been, and thank you for your work – in the population growth.

The north side has always been the slower side when it has come to Edmonton's structural plan. They very much focused on the south side, getting out to the airport, doing all of that work. They've run out of space, so now we're on the north side.

I brought the Horse Hill area structural plan with me, which was approved in February 2025 by city council. This is just Horse Hill, so I just want to be clear that this is only on the outside of the Anthony Henday in the northeast corridor of my riding currently. It does not include the Pilot Sound growth that is already happening within McConachie and Cy Becker on the 167th piece on the west side of my riding. This is just the east.

What I can tell you is that since 2025, so in the last year, just in this one neighbourhood of Horse Hill we've already had 791 units built in one neighbourhood, which is 2,250 new people, and then in another neighbourhood I've already had 205 homes started, which is 574 people, for a total of 2,789 in just one neighbourhood of the Horse Hill piece. The McConachie side, which is my west side of my riding, is 12,172 new people, and then Ebbers, which is my little sliver around my CN Rail line, has a growth of 1,612 people, so I am growing quickly. Project Ebbers: it's just below the commercial area. There are tons of apartments and condos that are being built in that corridor right now on the rail line that don't have people in them as of yet. The projection based on this structural plan for Horse Hill alone is a projected population growth – and this makes me shake just thinking about it – of 73,882 people.

Mr. Evans: In Ebbers and Horse Hill?

Ms Sweet: In Horse Hill alone, just this part that you can see on the screen right now.

Mr. Evans: Seventy-three thousand.

Ms Sweet: It's 73,882 people is what the projected growth will be in the next eight years. That's what that area is supposed to be built into. I don't think it's going to be longer than eight, but your adjustments – I'm just validating all of your work – are 100 per cent accurate. That 167th Avenue build-out will be a brand new Edmonton riding in the next cycle if not just outside of the next cycle.

The reason I'm saying this is that this is why having another Edmonton riding on the south side is going to be so important, because the north side is going to face the exact same population crunch that the south side is facing now, my hope being that I'll be able to advocate for more structural foresight and maybe not as much congestion as the south side, but we are building outside of the ring road now.

I'm sad. I have to put it on the record. I am sad that Fraser and Kirkness will be moved into my amazing colleague's riding in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, but sustainabilitywise you just can't. My population, even with your adjustments, is still going to be 59,000, and I'm growing so quickly that even after this next election cycle I'll be over 60-whatever again. Like, we're just growing. We're building four new schools in my area because we're recognizing the population growth. My schools are full. We are bursting at the seams already.

I would, if you had any further questions – like, this structural plan has been done very, very well and I can get deeper into it. This,

which is page 32 of the structural plan, actually gives you those numbers populationwise based on high-density, low-density breakdown if you're nerdy and actually curious about it. I just saw the number and was like: oh, okay; well, that's good.

The Chair: Can you maybe exit out of that and put your riding back up?

Ms Sweet: Aaron can probably do it.

The Chair: Would you mind going up and taking the mic and just describing where that area is for us?

Ms Sweet: Actually, do you want, specifically, the Horse Hill area that you want to look at?

The Chair: Yeah. Just start with that for now.

Ms Sweet: Actually, if we can go to page 30 on the structural plan, they give us a neighbourhood breakdown, and this is probably easier to look at unless you want to see the whole riding map as well.

Oh, thanks, Aaron. That's so great. You passed it.

Mr. Roth: Oh, did I?

Ms Sweet: Yeah. Go up one more. Keep going.

Mr. Roth: You said 30, right?

Ms Sweet: Yeah. Aren't you at 34?

Mr. Roth: No, I'm at 25.

Mrs. Samson: I think that one there.

Ms Sweet: Oh, I'm looking at the wrong numbers. There it is. So these are the neighbourhoods that are projected right now, and I will go up because there was the one question about Quarry Ridge, which is actually going to go to Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

4:30

The Chair: Okay. So if we took this map and just started at my right-hand, top spot and drew a line, that would encompass your riding and then bring it down.

Dr. Martin: No. Only half of it.

Ms Sweet: No. So this is just the northeast. This right here is 153 Avenue. This is where you're talking about Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview going all the way up to, which actually splits a little bit of Quarry Ridge off.

The Chair: That's 167?

Ms Sweet: This is 167 Ave right here. So this is where Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview will be with the changes, and then you go all the way over here and down here. This is the corner of McConachie. This is the rail line.

Mr. Evans: That's where Ebbers is?

Ms Sweet: Ebbers is like, yeah, kind of down in here. This would be Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview as well. Ebbers is along here. This is the CN Rail line that goes up, so there are a ton of condos and apartment buildings being built along here as well, and then the Anthony Henday is right here. So this is all housing and, like, some industrial and this commercial area, and Costco is going in here. I shouldn't put that on

the record, but Costco is going in here. This intersection is going to be interesting. Then this all will stay the same, but with potential . . .

The Chair: That's 66 Street?

Ms Sweet: No, 66 is still like all the way over here.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Sweet: Like, this is this is all new, new. This is my prime agricultural land. That's all my farmers.

The Chair: Okay. Could I get you to repeat yourself saying that that area structure plan? You're projecting that area alone to be 73,000 in eight years?

Ms Sweet: Seventy-three thousand eight-hundred and eighty-two. That's what the structural plan projection is.

The Chair: And there's no one there now?

Ms Sweet: Oh, no. There are houses in there. It's just that they're building. So Marquis right now is actively being built up.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Sweet: They have builders in there working on all of that stuff. Quarry Ridge is primarily finished. It's all zero-lot lines now. Lots of that's going on. Neighbourhood 1 is a question because that's where Alberta Hospital is and where the agriculture university research projects are, so it's kind of weird to be listed as a neighbourhood. I think it's more that bottom piece under Quarry, which is Gorman's neighbourhood, that's already built.

So I think part of it is that it's 73,000 in total. There are houses that are built already.

The Chair: And are accounted for in our numbers?

Ms Sweet: Yes.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Sweet: What I can tell you is that the ones that probably aren't are just those 2,789 that have just been counted in the last little bit that just finished off this year, 2025.

Mr. Evans: The ones in Ebbers?

Ms Sweet: No. The 2,789 are counted in Horse Hill. Those are just these last sixish months. Those houses all sold and a ton of people came in, and then Ebbers is 1,612, which is apartments, primarily high-density.

The Chair: Okay. I don't know if I cut you off or were you finished your presentation?

Ms Sweet: No. I'm going to nudge you little bit about the name change again, though.

The Chair: Oh. Well, sure. Yeah.

Mr. Evans: That's easy.

The Chair: That's the fun part of our job.

Ms Sweet: Yeah. It's really confusing for people when we have two ridings that are named exactly the same.

The Chair: Because the feds messed it up.

Ms Sweet: Yeah.

Mr. Evans: What do you think about every riding being called "Strathcona" something else?

Ms Sweet: Right?

Mr. Evans: Because we love Strathcona, in and out of the city.

Ms Sweet: No. We're north-siders. Like, you've got to be really careful about bringing up Strathcona.

Mr. Evans: Is there a history there?

Dr. Martin: Oh yeah.

Ms Sweet: We're north side. There's a history there.

Mr. Evans: Really? Like, gang signs and the whole thing?

The Chair: So what's your suggestion?

Ms Sweet: So we did a fun, like, engagement poll just to see what people would think. We did bring up Horse Hill because there was a recommendation from the panel. It didn't get a huge response. I would caution, if you were thinking about using the Horse Hill name, around the history of what Horse Hill actually means from a colonial perspective, the fact that it was primarily used to keep horses from the fort away, so there is some tension around that title and the history of the land.

Mrs. Samson: Keep horses away from the fort?

Ms Sweet: Well, they penned the horses up in that area, the settlers did, so that the Indigenous people wouldn't have access to some of the horses. There is some colonial stuff that has some negative connotation in our community around Horse Hill. It's been recommended not to use it by some folk.

Northeast Edmonton: I mean, I say I'm northeast Edmonton anyway. It's the easiest way to explain it, but the thing is that this riding is not going to be northeast for very long, I don't think, because there will be a northeast. So, I mean, Pilot Sound was floated around. As I have said, I don't particularly think it should have a name attached to it as an individual. More demographically I think it would just be nice to keep it somehow connected back to community somehow.

Mr. Evans: Like, go back to Strathcona?

Ms Sweet: No comment.

Mr. Evans: I guess that's a no, right?

The Chair: What were the results of your poll?

Ms Sweet: I mean, northeast won, but I don't think it will actually – I mean, we could do it. I just know that there will be another one, that I will eventually end up not being the northeast east of that.

The Chair: We've had some of that criticism of the whole directional naming too. Okay. Thank you.

Questions, Mr. Evans?

Mr. Evans: Yeah. What are your thoughts if, in order to give your riding some more breathing room, because I think it's at 59 . . .

Ms Sweet: Yeah. We're high already.

Mr. Evans: If we moved, well, where Ebbers is – instead of following the rail line, we follow Anthony Henday?

Ms Sweet: The Henday side of 167th?

Mr. Evans: Yeah, and just move that for sure to just . . .

The Chair: To Decore and Clareview.

Ms Sweet: Yeah, 167th is interesting on that side because the Anthony Henday makes it not a straight line. It's a weird, like . . .

Mr. Evans: And how far up could you go?

Ms Sweet: I mean, you could put Ebbers in. It would align with Fraser and Kirkness because it only goes up to 153rd, because north of 153rd is the Manning shopping centre, so it just takes up that big section of land.

Mr. Evans: What's on the other side of Anthony Henday when you get past the cloverleaf?

Ms Sweet: Oh. North, you mean?

Mr. Evans: Yeah. Northeast.

Ms Sweet: So that's Alberta Hospital. Well, Alberta Hospital is just below it. Henwood is there.

Mr. Evans: Are there developments around it? There's Evergreen.

Ms Sweet: Evergreen is there. The trailer park is there. That's Kuhlmann's greenhouse, primarily, like, agriculture land. That's my nursery land. That's a lot of agriculture, specifically zoned ag land. The nursery is not going anywhere. Kuhlmann's is, as far as I know, not going anywhere, and then Alberta Hospital and the University of Alberta agriculture land is all in there, so it won't be developed. That's research land. It is actually going to be a really interesting dynamic. It's going to be a little bit like the south, where we have all these houses around prime ag research.

Mr. Evans: One last question. Between Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview and Edmonton-Manning, which one is growing the fastest and has the most projects in place, development projects in place?

Ms Sweet: I know MLA Wright was talking about, like, her surplus spots for the schools. Just to clarify that, that's their school-owned land that goes back to the city. The city decides. I actually have some, too, that are turning into – I have a WIN House that's being built, so a shelter.

Mr. Evans: A what?

Ms Sweet: It's called WIN house. It's one of our service deliveries. They're building a shelter in one of my neighbourhoods, so I haven't counted that population because it's an infill for a school lot, but if we're just talking about, like, single dwelling, high density, I am outpacing Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview is more infill, regentrification, like, spotty. No offence, Pegs.

Mr. Evans: So similar growth. Yeah.

Ms Sweet: And I'm, like, big, massive neighbourhood development.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Yeah, that's helpful. Thank you very much.

4:40

The Chair: Mrs. Samson.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for your presentation, but I don't have any questions. Thanks.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Yes. Thank you. As it stands, even considering the area structure plan that you showed us in your spreadsheets, your handout, as it were, the area to the west of Manning freeway remains agricultural?

Ms Sweet: Like, outside the ring road, you mean?

Dr. Martin: Yes.

Ms Sweet: Yeah.

Dr. Martin: Given the area structure plan and the anticipated density, although area structure plans are often overly optimistic but it's good that you have structure plans, what would you say to not using 167 Ave but using the creek along the railway lines?

Ms Sweet: So that would be the top of Quarry and that would be the trailer park, mostly.

Dr. Martin: Yeah, because you alluded to the fact that this line awkwardly divides a community.

Ms Sweet: It divides Quarry Ridge just at the top where the new piece is. I mean, populationwise I don't know how much of an impact it'll have because the trailer park, I mean – well, let me do quick math in my head. It's about 1,000 people, give or take.

Dr. Martin: We think in lumps of 1,000.

Ms Sweet: Yeah, I think 1,000. It sounds right. I mean, you could. It would be the trailer park. It would be just the top of Quarry Ridge that's left. But then, I mean, the problem with the creek is that they're also building Marquis, which will be on both sides of it. I think the avenue is just a clean cut, because it's easy to say to people, "Where are you The MLA?" I'm like, "167 south or 167 north," and people get that part. Then outside the ring road on the north side, on that west side, it's Edmonton's industrial park, agriculture, gurdwara. I have the federal penitentiary. I get all the fun stuff.

Mr. Evans: Do you count those?

Ms Sweet: Do I count them? Well, technically they can vote for me if they want.

Dr. Martin: Yes. They can.

Ms Sweet: I visit them sometimes.

The Chair: You don't have the military prison, do you?

Ms Sweet: No. Sorry. That's Castle Downs. I had to think about that for a sec.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. This is very interesting. Ebbers is about 2,800 people. What we're saying is use highway 15, which is called highway 15. Or is it called something else?

Dr. Martin: Manning freeway.

Ms Sweet: It's okay. It just changes when you hit the city.

Mr. Clark: Don't ever trust Google.

Use that as our boundary all the way up to the Henday and that little wedge which is Ebbers? It looks like there's some stuff right in the southeast corner there, but that's not houses or people.

Ms Sweet: Actually, I think, like, what makes sense about it is that if you look, because the rail line goes really narrow, it creates that point. That's the LRT station, and then it's all high density to Ebbers with some of those smaller zero-lot lines. Manning freeway is a clean divide, and it's connected to the Hairsine community league, which is already Peg's.

Mr. Clark: So that would reduce you down to about 57,000 from almost 60,000, and it would take Beverly-Clareview up to 57,240.

Ms Sweet: Sure.

Mr. Clark: You don't have to tell me that you don't want Ebbers. We can be the ones to make that. We can be bad cop on this.

Ms Sweet: I'll be honest with you. The numbers between 57,000 and 60,000 is like . . .

Mr. Clark: It's immaterial?

Ms Sweet: Yeah. We're northeast. North-siders. We spend a lot of time together. They're all going to be stuck hanging out with me whether they like it or not. I'm their neighbour.

Mr. Evans: Spend that time together in the penitentiary.

Ms Sweet: That's right. North side. You're picturing it. That's why we have prisons.

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

The Chair: There's a story that not all of us know on this side of the table about your part of Edmonton, and I'm not sure we have time.

Mr. Clark: I want to hear the Strathcona war.

Ms Sweet: I'll tell you one day.

The Chair: Okay. According to my schedule we have one more presenter. Do we have enough energy, commissioners?

Mr. Clark: What a place to finish, too.

The Chair: Yeah. We've never heard anything from Beaumont this round.

Mr. Lundy, please come forward and have a seat. You know, you're distinguished to the extent that you are the last presenter in the history of this Electoral Boundaries Commission.

Mr. Lundy: The clerk just let me know that. Talk about the ultimate before-lunch conference presenter, right? Certainly happy to have that role.

I wanted to let you know that I actually just submitted a letter to the clerk on behalf of MLA McDougall. He hoped to come in person, but he submitted in writing, so I was able to walk that in to the clerk. I'm not speaking to it, but he assured me that he would be able to make sure that that would be shared with you guys. Wanted to get that clerical piece out of the way.

More than happy to chat a little bit about Leduc-Beaumont. Just want to make sure I'm on the right process. Do I just jump in?

The Chair: Yeah, jump in. We're curious to know: do you like the fact we cut Beaumont in half? Start with something positive.

Mr. Lundy: Yeah. First off, thank you for your hard work. It's an incredibly important and, I'm sure, at times challenging job. To answer the question, I think I wasn't super supportive when I saw it. To be fair, I'm sure – I've been reading some of the transcripts – that's been the majority of the feedback, that maybe that didn't quite hit the mark in terms of, you know, Beaumont always having a shared history as a community, obviously one of our francophone communities in the province, no real sort of natural history with Strathcona county, always been part of the Leduc county world. When I was talking to people from Beaumont, there was concern about splitting Beaumont, and I certainly shared those concerns.

That said, it really then begs the question of: what with Beaumont, then? Just when I was taking a look at that . . .

The Chair: Sorry.

Mr. Lundy: Yeah, go ahead.

The Chair: Maybe tell us where you live.

Mr. Lundy: Oh, sure. I live in Leduc.

The Chair: Okay. The city?

Mr. Lundy: The city of Leduc, yeah. This is relevant.

When I sort of look at some of these stats, the riding of Leduc-Beaumont in terms of where the voters live, the vast majority is either in the city of Leduc or in the city of Beaumont. There is a sliver of voters in Leduc county between, and then there is a growing community just west of Beaumont in the Vistas, but right now the majority of the voters are in either those two cities proper.

I live in the city of Leduc. I love both communities. They're both great, amazing, vibrant communities, and as I'll lay out, they're both growing incredibly fast. I think that's a really key point to all of this. You know, moving on the assumption that – I would never presuppose the work of the committee, but if the decision to split Beaumont was reversed and we were to leave Beaumont as a community, I think it would actually make a lot of sense to have Beaumont in a riding with other communities in the southeast of Edmonton, and I'll lay out a couple of reasons for that.

Just talking to people from Beaumont, I would say that the majority of Beaumont people who live in Beaumont work in Edmonton, so we know there's a ton of economic integration. There's a natural transportation corridor, that being 50th Street. The reality is that geographically these communities are currently adjacent to one another right now. We also have recreation opportunities that get shared between Beaumont and Edmonton. I talk to people all the time who are living in Beaumont, go on 50th Street, and their kids are playing sports in Edmonton or they're participating in cultural or religious or worship events in Edmonton and coming from Beaumont. That's a very common occurrence and a very strong community connection between that. So I think it would actually make some sense to sort of include Beaumont into that community because they're already so integrated.

4:50

The other side to that coin was just the growth in the population. I was doing some research. This is all according to the Alberta regional dashboard. Beaumont is currently at 26,305 people; Leduc, 39,996, four people away from 40,000. You put those together, and you're at 66,265 people. That doesn't include any of Leduc county. I haven't been able to peel that. I know Leduc county has about

16,000 people in the county now. I'm guessing that at least 2,000 of those people actually are in the Leduc-Beaumont riding, just between the two communities and the Vistas.

East Vistas is a community just beside Beaumont. I was speaking to their community president. Their goal is to have 20,000 people in the East Vistas by 2035. You could argue whether that's ambitious or not. My comment to him was, "Well, that's another Beaumont beside Beaumont in very short order," right?

I don't think it's out of the realm of possibility to say that we're probably looking at 70,000 people in this riding. Certainly, it would be 70,000 by the time these new boundaries came into effect. Then you add on the population growth. The five-year population growth for Beaumont is 19.7 per cent. The five-year population growth for Leduc is 17.1 per cent. That's 6 and 4 per cent, respectively, year over year. I see no reason why those numbers would slow dramatically. The reality is that both of those communities are seen, deservedly so, as great places to live and to raise your family. To think that those numbers would slow down: I just don't see that happening. Now you're looking at a riding that would be well – well – above what we look at for the population.

I think that when you add those two things in combination, the existing integration between Beaumont and Edmonton and the population and population growth of the riding proper, that probably makes the most sense when you look at how this riding might shake out.

The Chair: Okay. Good. Thank you.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

Mr. Evans: You mentioned that you were possibly going to give us some suggestions on Beaumont going into Edmonton. I'm looking at the map. Edmonton-Ellerslie as proposed would be an option. Edmonton-South East as proposed would be an option.

Mr. Lundy: Maybe Summerside as well, perhaps.

Mr. Evans: I think those are the two, Edmonton-South East, Edmonton-Ellerslie. Yeah, those two for certain. Can you speak to that?

Mr. Lundy: Sure. Not in great detail, to be honest with you, at least from a statistical perspective, population perspective. I can speak to it in terms of, again, the integration that I see from Beaumont in terms of pursuing these recreational and cultural and religious opportunities. For demographics I haven't sort of peeled back the numbers.

Mr. Evans: If you're in Beaumont and you're going to drive into Edmonton for work or religious worshipping or sporting activities, what's your corridor, your pathway?

Mr. Lundy: The vast majority would take 50th Street.

Mr. Evans: So 50th would put us into Edmonton-South East.

Mr. Lundy: I think it's Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Evans: Is it Edmonton-Ellerslie? Okay. Yes. Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: Because Edmonton has some population challenges, would it be the same uproar if half of Beaumont stayed in Leduc and half went to Edmonton-Ellerslie?

Mr. Lundy: I mean, I can't speak to – I can just say that I think when people were talking to me, the concern was more that Beaumont was split necessarily than how it was split.

Mrs. Samson: Oh, I see. Okay.

Mr. Lundy: They really appreciated – again, with the history of the community and the size of the community, they felt that they would, you know, like to remain as a group.

Mrs. Samson: One other option – and I'm just throwing spitballs, I guess, because you're the last one. What about into Camrose as a whole, complete entity? Like, Camrose touches the bottom southeast corner of Beaumont. That's where the ridings touch.

Mr. Lundy: Okay. I thought it was Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin that touched Beaumont.

Mrs. Samson: Right here, 55. Yeah. Instead of Strathcona, which was more up, right below that is Camrose. It would still be contiguous. Is that something?

Mr. Lundy: Yeah. I mean, it's something I honestly haven't given a thought to. I would just say that in terms of – I stand to be corrected. I don't think a large portion of Beaumont would work in Camrose or travel into Camrose like they do to Edmonton. Like, almost daily they're going into Edmonton. I don't want to, you know, say that that doesn't happen between Beaumont and Camrose, but it's certainly not as prevalent, or there's not as much natural integration between Beaumont and Camrose as you would see between Beaumont and Edmonton.

Mrs. Samson: Who's travelling up highway 814? Is it not the people from . . .

Mr. Evans: That's 50th Street.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah. But down here, when you're paralleling the electoral district of Camrose, are people from Camrose – is that how they're getting up into Edmonton if they wanted to go? Or are they going across . . .

Mr. Lundy: I think most people take highway 21 to highway 14 and then onto Henday. I grew up near Camrose. That's how I would go.

Mrs. Samson: Okay. This is my last one. What if we kept Beaumont and Leduc together? Could you live with 65,000 people?

Mr. Lundy: Well, again, it's probably closer to 70,000. Maybe if the population growth wasn't as strong as it was. I just think that when you factor that in, you really, really would be pushing the growth, considering the growth of the population under section 14, part 2.

Mrs. Samson: I knew that was the answer, but I had to try.

The Chair: Just to refresh my memory, I think you said that the population of Beaumont is . . .

Mr. Lundy: This is according to the Alberta regional dashboard. In 2025 Beaumont was 26,305.

The Chair: Okay. So let's say that it's – you said 23,000?

Mr. Lundy: Sorry; 26,305.

The Chair: So lets say that there are only 10,000 on that side or 12,000. If we bring it back in, we're at 59,000. Yeah, you're over the – okay.

Mr. Lundy: The Leduc county one is, again, the wild card to me. I think there are a couple thousand in that Vistas community or more. Like I said, they told me that 20,000 is their goal. That's right beside Beaumont.

The Chair: Okay. We heard a lot about Beaumont wanting to stay together and stay with Leduc. It may be a little bit of a stretch to say that they were all saying, "Stay with Leduc," but it's not a stretch to say: we want to stay together. Is it your view that Beaumont may be a little flexible as to where they end up but they have to end up together?

Mr. Lundy: Well, I certainly can't speak to – again, I think the biggest thing I heard was: stay together. Sure, you're definitely going to get two voices. If you ask Beaumont – you know, there are people who see the integration that I was talking about with Edmonton, and there are certainly people who would say: well, let's stay where we are. To be fair, I don't think – you know, people aren't doing a deep dive into these population projections and targets and such. When you look at something like a boundary commission, you're going to get different views on a lot of these things for sure.

The Chair: Okay. Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you, and thank you. The numbers are staggering. Congratulations to you and your colleagues in this riding.

I wanted to complexify it even further with several points. Number one is Calmar. I have driven down there. It just feels to me that west Leduc and Calmar are growing together along that highway. The notion that it – you know, in our tentative map it's kept in the other riding, but it's a bit of a tease because there really are pretty strong linkages between the two.

Mr. Lundy: Sure.

5:00

Dr. Martin: Secondly is the airport, which not only is a huge economic driver for the entire district, but its connection with all of the Nisku area is very, very strong. One presumes that there's going to be an increased rhythm of commuters out of Edmonton to go into the Nisku area. Some of them may decide to stay in the fine town of Leduc. But as for the rest of it, as the grid of roads implies, this is a pretty classic rural area for the most part. I mean, to the immediate west of the airport it's grain farming and the like. So, too, with much of the area around the city.

Mr. Lundy: Sure.

Dr. Martin: You know, personally, frankly, this footprint is too big, and I have no idea how to deal with it. We have heard, of course, a lot about keeping Beaumont together. We've heard from – gosh, was it the reeve of the county saying, "Well, give us all the stuff that's actually in the county boundaries as well"? We told her: you know, Madam Mayor, that would be 75,000 people at least. She was quite appalled. So there are some difficulties here because of the large growth that's occurring here.

I mean, the interim map marries classic rural farmland, not suburbs, classic rural guys baling hay, with a growing town and an industrial zone of huge potential growth. This is a very difficult situation to deal with. I'm not going to ask you to decide where to

draw these boundaries. That's our job. But it seems clear that something significant has to give here.

Mr. Lundy: Yeah. Thank you for your comments. I would humbly say that you probably just described the history of Leduc, right? I know we've been talking about Beaumont a lot. I live in Leduc. It is a split history, right? They are proud of sort of the rural roots. You go to the, you know, coffee shops in Leduc, and they are farmers from around the area. They go to the Co-op; they buy their farm supplies. There is a proud rural heritage in Leduc married up with what you were talking about in terms of also having the airport in Nisku and the economic development. I think Leduc would take pride in being able to say that they have traditionally supported and catered to those numerous aspects. Again, there is a lot of synergy between the rural areas around Leduc with the city proper of Leduc itself. I would think a lot of people in Calmar, you know, if it came down to it, would be more than happy to be in a riding with the city.

Dr. Martin: Which, as I say, makes things more complex.

Mr. Lundy: Sure. Yeah.

Dr. Martin: But it seems like there's a historic and, actually, growing linkage there as well.

Mr. Lundy: Yeah.

The Chair: What about Millet as well if we needed the space?

Mr. Lundy: It's probably a similar way. I would say that there are a lot of linkages between Millet and Leduc, again, the shared heritage, the similar demographic profile, so that would also make some sense.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you very much. A couple of things just in terms of characterizing, and I want to build a little bit on what Dr. Martin was talking about. I'm really struck by something somebody told us in Okotoks. We proposed blending Okotoks with Calgary. It's a really similar situation. Okotoks is its own sort of city. It's a place. Some would refer to it as a bedroom community. Not Okotokians, by any means. He said: "The fact that so many people commute from Okotoks to Calgary tells you we're not from Calgary. That's how you know we're not Calgary. We may work in Calgary. We may shop there occasionally. We live very directly, specifically, in Okotoks." I guess I put that to you. In your opinion, is that also true of Beaumont? Beaumont is Beaumont because it's not Edmonton, I guess, is really what I'm saying.

Mr. Lundy: Oh, I see. Yeah, I mean, certainly, I see a sense of pride in people from Beaumont. There's no doubt about that. You know, to your point, I guess, I've chosen to live in that community. I would just say that a lot of them, not everyone, of course, in addition to choosing to live in that community, also makes choices to access services in Edmonton or to participate in Edmonton life as a choice. I certainly couldn't speak to every person in Beaumont who has this pride in not living in Edmonton. That certainly could exist. But I do think that people really – this is maybe why there was so much angst over the split, because they are certainly proud to be from Beaumont.

Mr. Clark: So I looked it up. We had both Mayor Tanni Doblanko from Leduc county and Mayor Lisa Vanderkwaak from Beaumont. In particular, of Mayor Vanderkwaak I asked: where would you like to be? Both of them said: we're okay. Right now the numbers, just

so you know: 64,460 as of July 1, 2025. That's our number for everything, and I acknowledge that not just in Leduc and Beaumont lots of growth has happened. But we need to pick a moment in time, and that's the moment in time.

The Chair: If we put Beaumont in completely, it's 64,000?

Mr. Clark: It is 65,460, Leduc-Beaumont, and that's 19.2 per cent over the average, so still within the tolerance but, you know, straining, plus I absolutely agree that there's certainly going to be growth.

Just so you know, I asked both of them: would you be okay with that in terms of sticking together? And they said yes. That was their answer. I asked Mayor Vanderkwaak: if you had to not be with Leduc, would you rather be within Edmonton or somewhere else? And she said: absolutely, somewhere else. That was her answer, just for your reference. I don't know if you've talked with her or talked to the council. I mean, that was their submission to us.

Mr. Lundy: Okay. Yeah. I've had some brief conversations with her. You know, I certainly can't speak for her. I mean, look, I

suspect if Beaumont had their way, they'd be their own riding of 26,000 people. That would be their preferred option, right? As the commission, as I'm sure you guys are aware, sometimes we're dealing with lesser options than what maybe the dream scenario would be.

Mr. Clark: We need the Legislature to give us more seats than two extra.

Okay. Well, that's great. Thank you very, very much. I appreciate your time, and thanks for your patience.

Mr. Lundy: Sure.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Lundy.

Mr. Lundy: Yeah. Thanks, guys.

The Chair: This now concludes the MLA day section of the Alberta 2025-2026 Electoral Boundaries Commission.

[The hearing adjourned at 5:08 p.m.]

