



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
Second Session

Select Special Committee
on Electoral Boundaries

Wednesday, October 28, 2026
10:30 a.m.

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Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries

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Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)*
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Shannon Dean, KC	Clerk
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Vani Govindarajan	Parliamentary Counsel
Philip Massolin	Clerk Assistant and Executive Director of Parliamentary Services
Nancy Robert	Clerk of <i>Journals</i> and Committees
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10:30 a.m.

Wednesday, October 28, 2026

[Mr. Lundy in the chair]

The Chair: All right. Good morning, everyone. I'd like to call this meeting of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries to order and welcome everyone in attendance.

My name is Brandon Lundy, MLA for Leduc-Beaumont and chair of the committee. I will now ask that members and those joining the committee at the table introduce themselves for the record. We'll begin to my right.

Mr. Wiebe: Good morning, everyone. My name is Ron Wiebe. I'm the MLA for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Rowswell: Garth Rowswell, MLA, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

Ms de Jonge: Good morning. Chantelle de Jonge, MLA for Chestermere-Strathmore.

Ms Ganley: Good morning. Kathleen Ganley, Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Gray: Good morning, everyone. Christina Gray, MLA for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Ms Govindarajan: Good morning. Vani Govindarajan, Parliamentary Counsel.

Ms Robert: Good morning. Nancy Robert, clerk of *Journals* and committees.

Mr. Roth: Good morning. Aaron Roth, committee clerk.

The Chair: All right. Thank you, everyone.

For the record I will note the following substitution. MLA Garth Rowswell is substituting for the Hon. Tara Sawyer.

Before we begin, I do have a few housekeeping items. Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard*, so you don't need to turn them on or off. We are not joined by anyone online this morning, but committee proceedings are being live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. As always, please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

With those notes out of the way we can move on to approval of the agenda. Are there any changes or additions to the draft agenda? MLA Gray, please go ahead.

Ms Gray: Hello, Mr. Chair. Not necessarily a change to the agenda, but I was looking at the agenda, and we are curious about some of the information around costs incurred by the panel and if that information will be shared with this committee or another committee. I just wanted to ask if I should be asking those questions under other business or if there's a better place for that.

The Chair: Just give a second to chat with the table here.

Ms Gray: Of course.

The Chair: Yeah. That would certainly be up for discussion in other business, so we'll make sure to note that.

All right. Any other changes or additions? Seeing none.

Ms Ganley: Sorry, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: MLA Ganley, go ahead.

Ms Ganley: At the June 30 meeting of the committee requests were received in terms of, like, different sorts of external experts to advise the panel, including legal counsel, report writer, political science pollster. Is there a time when we can ask about which of these people were ultimately engaged by the panel, how much they were remunerated, and what their names were? Will that be provided? Will it be in the report? Should we ask about it?

The Chair: Yeah. I've just been advised by the table. You know, that could be part of our discussions under 4(b).

Ms Ganley: Under 4(b)?

The Chair: Yeah.

Ms Ganley: Thank you.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

Any other changes or questions or additions to our agenda? All right. Seeing none, is anyone prepared to make a motion to adopt the draft agenda? MLA Wiebe. Moved by MLA Wiebe that the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries approve the proposed agenda as distributed for its October 28, 2026, meeting. All right. Any discussion? All those in favour, please say aye. Any opposed? That motion is carried.

We can move on to our next agenda item, approval of minutes from the previous meeting. Are there any errors or omissions to note in the draft minutes? Seeing none, is anyone prepared to move approval of the minutes? MLA Rowswell. So moved by MLA Rowswell that the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries approve the draft minutes as distributed for its June 30, 2026, meeting. Any further discussion? All right. All those in favour, please say aye. Any opposed? All right. That motion is carried.

We can continue on our agenda to agenda item 4(a), which is receiving the report of the independent advisory panel. Hon. members, the committee has received the report of the independent advisory panel to the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries. The report was provided to committee members on October 22, 2026, in accordance with clause C(e)(iv) of Government Motion 37. By providing the report to the committee, in accordance with C(e)(v) of that same government motion the independent advisory panel's mandate has concluded. On behalf of the committee I would like to thank the members of the panel for their work.

At this time do members have any questions, comments, or motions in regard to this item of business?

Mr. Wiebe: Is that 4(b)?

The Chair: Do you have a motion for this?

Mr. Wiebe: I have a motion. Yeah.

The Chair: You might have one under 4(b), MLA Wiebe.

Mr. Wiebe: Oh, okay. Sorry.

The Chair: MLA Gray, please go ahead.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much. Receiving the report on October 22 – thank you to the Legislative Assembly Office, who helped us with some of the tech challenges and delivery challenges, especially with members in multiple cities – one of the things that has been clear from the beginning is that our responsibility as members and the privilege we are working under means we need to keep things confidential, so at this point, of course, only the members of this

committee and the two staff people from either caucus have had the opportunity to review the report that we've received, which is, you know, 200-plus pages. Honestly, I would describe it as a report that is at war with itself in many places, and I think it's got a lot of things in it that will be of interest to Albertans, particularly given that the UCP-appointed majority went well beyond its mandate and disregarded recommendation 5, that originally set out what this panel should have been looking at.

The public interest in this process has been immense. We saw some of the highest degree of public participation in any electoral redistribution in Alberta's history during the official and more standard process that precipitated this one. Given that and given that the interest is at an all-time high because people are eager to know what is happening in this report – I think they'll be very interested to know that the panel is recommending changes that go beyond not just recommendation 5 but change things that the chair of the previous commission specifically suggested should not be changed – I think it's in the public interest to try and get this report out as quickly as possible. We don't know how long the process might take once we offer our thoughts on this as part of this committee process. The legislative process: like, I just don't know if it will go fast or slow and how much time the public will have to weigh in on it.

So I have submitted a motion. I believe it's motion 5 from the NDP-submitted motions. While the clerk is pulling that up, I'll just quickly speak to the fact that I think that the public should have an opportunity to see the report for themselves as soon as possible, again, recognizing that there is a privilege argument to be made that Members of the Legislative Assembly should be able to see these things prior to the public. The motion as drafted – and I will read it and then just speak to it really quickly – is that the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries shall provide a copy of the report of the independent advisory panel to all Members of the Legislative Assembly and publicly post the report online at the earliest possible opportunity.

I've worded it that way simply to say: let's get it in the hands of the MLAs and then get it in the hands of the public because we are getting questions about this report.

Ms Ganley: Boy, are we.

Ms Gray: One or two, right?

So that is the motion that I've drafted. We know this report is going to become public. It needs to be tabled in the Legislature by November 2. I would hope that all members might agree to make this public sooner because of the high public interest.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Gray. I appreciate your comments and some of the impetus behind what you're speaking to here in your motion.

I have conferred with the table, and it's based on their advice that this motion is likely out of order because of Government Motion 37, that we are mandated to adhere to. You did mention some of the timelines laid out in that motion. We know that if we follow that procedure, as you commented, this report will be made public, and we want to make sure that we are respecting the parliamentary tradition of all MLAs getting a chance to look at that. While I'm not taking any umbrage with your impetus, I do think that at this time this motion is out of order.

MLA Ganley, go ahead.

10:40

Ms Ganley: Yes, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the advice you're receiving from the table, and I appreciate that read. I think that in light of the fact that the panel itself wildly exceeds the bounds of

Motion 37 and wildly exceeds the bounds of the judge's addendum and recommendation 5 – Lethbridge being in four ridings, the things that are done in Calgary, the recommendation for the Legislature to rewrite northeast Calgary, which isn't even northeast Calgary, the ridings that are mentioned: I think that is all very problematic. I think it goes far beyond the bounds of Government Motion 37 and of recommendation 5.

Now, it's certainly been the case that we have argued all along that the entire process is illegitimate. We have a job to do, so we are here to defend the rights of Albertans and their right to know what the government is doing. I think, Mr. Chair, my concern here is that we are ruling this out of order using the argument that it is outside of Government Motion 37. The difficulty is that the majority of the UCP-appointed panel has wildly exceeded the government motion already. They have done exactly what people fear in terms of carving up Lethbridge into four random shapes.

I think the public deserves to know. I think the concern is that this will trot into the House and something like what we saw a year ago yesterday will be used to jam it through the House by the UCP majority in the hopes that the public never gets the opportunity to see it and weigh in in advance of it going through.

I think these are the public's rights that we are talking about. The argument "Oh, we didn't gerrymander quite as much as the minority wanted us to" is not a particularly compelling one to me, and I think that the public just deserves to see it. The MLAs deserve to see it.

Like, the suggestion, which appears to only appear in half of the report, that MLAs should redraw the eastern boundaries of Calgary live in the House is very troubling to me because we don't know where it came from, why it, quote, arrived at the panel late. Arrived from where? They didn't take any public submissions.

I'm really worried that what's going to happen here is that this won't be made public, our MLAs and most of our team and most of the public will get to see it when it goes into the House, and then the UCP will mysteriously find themselves prepared with a gerrymandering of northeast Calgary, drawing everything out into the county, that we and the public are unprepared to respond to.

The Chair: Thank you for those comments.

MLA Gray, do you have anything to add?

Ms Gray: Just one final comment, which is that I want to make clear to the public and to this committee that the NDP committee members have worked really hard to make sure that we've maintained privilege on these documents. Last night a UCP candidate and a former UCP MLA were overheard discussing the details of this report at a public event. That is not something that you as committee members can answer for. I'm not asking you to answer for it, but I am concerned that the privilege of this document hasn't been respected in all the ways that it should have been.

That will be my final comment under this agenda item.

The Chair: All right. Thank you for those comments. Always great to get a chance to allow people to weigh in.

I'm going to uphold the ruling that this is out of order at this time.

With that, is there any other discussion or motions under 4(a)?

All right. Seeing none, I am prepared to move us on to 4(b), which is a review and consideration of any observations in respect of the report. I'd like to award keeners. MLA Wiebe was so excited to move his motion, I think I'll give him the opportunity here. Go ahead, MLA Wiebe.

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you, Chair. I'd like to move that the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries (a) acknowledge that the independent advisory panel has submitted its report in accordance with Government Motion 37, thereby

concluding its mandate, and (b) conclude its review of the report of the independent advisory panel.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Wiebe. Is that your motion on the screen? Do you just want to confirm?

Mr. Wiebe: That's correct.

The Chair: All right. Would you like a chance to speak to your motion?

Mr. Wiebe: Yeah, for sure. Thank you, Chair.

The committee was not appointed to draw the electoral boundaries. An independent advisory panel was tasked with that work and the appropriate place for members to debate its recommendations is in the Legislative Assembly. Because the IAP report is embargoed until it's tabled in the Chamber, we believe that it would be inappropriate to make any comments or observations until all Albertans have had the chance to see the IAP's final report.

Then I'd also like to say that once the IAP report is tabled in the Chamber on or before November 2, all the MLAs and Albertans have a chance to read the report for themselves. The appropriate place to make observations and comments on the IAP report is in the Chamber once the report has been fully tabled.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Wiebe.

MLA Gray, please go ahead.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much.

In Government Motion 37 this committee is specifically tasked to make observations in respect to the report and then submit those observations to the Legislature. I will ask the table to correct me if I'm wrong, but we, in reviewing the motions you submitted – so each caucus gets to submit the motions they're interested in making – then get the chance to amend them. We saw this motion coming forward and we asked Parliamentary Counsel: if this government motion should pass, which, historically, all the government motions do, would we still be able to make our motions of observance for consideration? And the answer is no. So by moving this motion we will not be able to move any of the – we submitted 15 motions. I think we weren't planning to move all of them today, but it's circumventing that opportunity for us to have a discussion on and potentially add observations to this panel going to the Legislature.

I will say that this continues a trend we've seen from the government. Twenty-eight times at this committee Kathleen Ganley or myself have moved motions to increase transparency, to add checks and balances, to clarify what is happening at this committee and what is happening with the panel. Twenty-eight times those motions were declined, and now we're at this point, and by moving this motion 1, I can only suspect that Parliamentary Counsel may have given the government the same advice they gave us. We're now not even being able to pass or discuss the motions that we were interested in making. As part of the debate of your main motion 1, because this is now going to be our only opportunity to make any observations, I think in debate of this motion my colleague and I would like to talk about some of the observations that this motion is going to prevent us from putting forward.

I will just double-check and make sure that I'm not incorrect as to the facts.

The Chair: No. I think you've laid it out accurately, MLA Gray, so happy to hear from you and all committee members on some of your observations.

MLA Ganley, please go ahead.

Ms Ganley: Yes. In exactly that vein because this motion prevents us from moving other motions, I would like to talk a little bit about, you know, what we see in this report because we have had the report – it got to us in a bit of a painstaking manner, but, I mean, I think it is the duty of the panel to review the reports. It's quite long for something to be reviewed in four days, but here we are anyway.

The first thing I wanted to talk about is, like, diluting voter parity. Arguably the entire point of this exercise – and by the exercise I mean the redrawing of the maps – is to increase voter parity, right? Like, that's the whole point. The population grows. It grows differentially in different places; therefore, we have to redraw the maps to reflect that.

10:50

Now, I actually think that the commission's report itself was, as I understand it, the sort of, like, worst example in history of voter parity already. Then the chair's addendum makes that a bit worse, and this panel report makes it even worse. I think it's worth sort of looking at those. It creates massive population variances, including two rural ridings that are more than 40 per cent smaller than the average, despite proposing several urban electoral divisions representing a population of more than 10 per cent larger than average. It exacerbates the underrepresentation of Alberta's four largest cities, essentially, in the Legislature, and it would decrease relative parity of voting power for Albertans living in Calgary, Edmonton, and Lethbridge, which the previous Electoral Boundaries Commission already cautioned against.

Yeah. Like I said, it's sort of gone from bad to worse over the course of this process. So we get this Government Motion 37 to implement this addendum. Now the addendum, I will reiterate for probably the 11th time, was not the view of the majority of the commission. There's the commission's report, which recommended maps: that has been thrown out by a UCP majority. They have struck up this process, arguably under Government Motion 37, and in that process, you know, they repeatedly said – the Premier, the House leader, the Minister of Justice – they all rose over and over again to say the equivalent of, "Don't worry; all we're doing is implementing recommendation 5," but that absolutely isn't what we see before us today.

The argument that this UCP majority panel report doesn't do as bad or the gerrymandering isn't as extreme as what was recommended by the UCP minority on the independent commission: like, it's not a very good argument. It should be rejected. You can't violate a right only a little. You either are or you aren't. So those are my major concerns. At the end of the day voters are meant to pick their politicians, not politicians their voters, but what we see in this report is politicians picking their voters.

What we also see in this report is a report that absolutely does not respect what the Premier, what the House leader, what the UCP Justice minister had to say, which is that they're going to stay within the bounds of Motion 37 and recommendation 5. The UCP-appointed panel, the majority of the panel, basically rejects that immediately. They wildly exceed their mandate. They went beyond Justice Miller's recommendation 5.

The document contains long arguments on both sides. I agree with the minority for the reasons set out, but also because of what the Premier said over and over and over again, which is exactly the opposite of what Mr. O'Ferrall and the UCP majority ultimately do. Essentially, as is laid out incredibly clearly by the minority, Government Motion 37 and recommendation 5 suggest reconsideration in order to insert two additional rural seats, which would impact parity. We don't agree with that, but what the UCP majority on this panel does is reinsert three rural seats, which impacts parity even more and massively exceeds the mandate.

This entire process is meant to be done with public input, and the commission process was. The commission made decisions based on input from the public, they drew maps, then they got feedback from the public, then they made decisions. We also had a minority who agreed with the majority until from nowhere, some mysterious place apparently, suddenly maps fell out of the sky that had no resemblance to the public record that they put in, which was the whole impetus for needing to do this in the first place.

Then this UCP majority of the panel went to redraw the maps without public input, and they exceeded recommendation 5, which was at least based on public input, even though I don't agree with it, and they did so without giving the public a chance for additional input. Now, I understand that the government motion prevented them from getting that additional input, but what that is is just an argument on why they weren't meant to exceed the bounds of recommendation 5 by Justice Miller. This was not *carte blanche* for this UCP majority panel to redraw the boundaries based on "I said so" while disregarding the input of the public.

The arguments that are made by the UCP majority of the panel are internally contradictory to say the least. They almost resemble like someone wrote the report and then received instruction but failed to, like, weave it through the report in the appropriate way.

Ultimately, the majority of the panel did exactly what the public should want to avoid. They drew the maps on the basis of believing that they knew better, the information reaching them from we know not where rather than on the basis of a public input that is on the record and transparent and where everyone has an equal opportunity to participate.

The minority puts it very well, saying at paragraph 75: "unnecessarily revisiting these findings further restricts the public from participating after the public was able to participate in the ABEBC" – that's the commission process – "and improperly gives dissatisfied advocates of greater hybridization in these cities a second bite at the cherry. This offends the basic principles of fair play. One does not get a do-over if one is unhappy with the commission's recommendations by instead opting into a less independent, less consultative process." That's the end of the quote.

What really worries me about this less independent process is that there are multiple instances in the document of, "this argument reached us late," you know, "some would argue that," or where it appears that an argument is reaching the panel but we know not from where because there's no public input. The panel was locked down. I think that that's problematic. But then where were they getting the input from? Where did the arguments reach them from?

Put more simply, the UCP and their friends didn't like the results of the independent public process, so they opted for another. They claimed they were merely implementing Justice Miller's recommendation 5, and that is what a reading of Government Motion 37 would say as well, yet somehow the UCP majority panel appointees came to the conclusion that they were not bound by recommendation 5 in an argument that reads as strained, in my view, to reach a particular conclusion.

I just want to talk about a couple, like, really obvious instances of this. In a bad process possibly what I would say is the worst outcome is that Lethbridge is divided into four ridings. This is a result that the commission didn't reach. They didn't reach it because it is opposed by the large majority of submissions, which the minority points out here. Basically what we have in Lethbridge is one central riding that has a large majority of the population, so it's over the expected. As the minority points out, this is basically a result of the majority of the UCP-appointed panel wanting to add in three rural ridings instead of two, which is, again, not what's stipulated in recommendation 5, which is clearly outside, in my view, the scope of Government Motion 37.

11:00

The minority of the panel ably argues for why Government Motion 37 should be read as restricting the panel to recommendation 5, but I will point out again what the mover and the Premier said, which is that they were going to stay bounded by recommendation 5.

What I would say is that, especially with respect to Lethbridge – I think it is the prime example of this – the outcome is bad, the process is bad, and the comments of the majority of the panel on these ridings are deeply troubling. The panel refers to the Lethbridgeans that it doesn't pack into this central riding as, quote, spare population and dilutes their voices by spreading it across three other ridings. In effect, their right to effective representation is stripped, and they are treated as widgets to fill in three rural ridings that were created for reasons that are strained at best and deeply unclear.

These people who live in Lethbridge, they're people with rights. The commission process at its most fundamental is meant to respect those rights. That's why we're here, but the panel disregards them as superfluous and ignores them entirely. It talks about these people like they are interchangeable and part of a process, not the point of the process. I would like to quote this one. Mr. O'Ferrall and the majority, the UCP majority, refer to the three hybrid electoral divisions, quote, borrowing population from the perimeters of the city. In addressing the problem that they created by reinstating an extra rural riding, they say, quote, our recommendation to solve the problem is to have Lethbridge lend a little population to Cardston. Lethbridge already has population to spare. These are people, and the fact that the UCP majority of the panel talks about them like this is very problematic.

This troubling thread runs through the entire thing, and I won't belabour it. Perhaps I already have, but, like, what we are left to wonder is why. Why does the majority of the UCP-appointed commission feel the need to draw these three rural ridings and then utilize people living in Lethbridge as though they are spare population to be redistributed to support the greater aim of these three ridings?

I will say that it's very interesting to me that the results of drawing these three ridings, which was apparently necessary despite exceeding the boundaries of recommendation 5 and Government Motion 37, has the impact of making the case that the UCP minister of economic development and the UCP minister of environment don't have to run against each other in a nomination. I'll just leave that there because the panel is essentially asking us to look at hoofbeats and see zebras, so I would like to place the horses on the record because I think they are the far more obvious reason.

Northwest Calgary: the majority also argues that changes need to be made to northwest Calgary. This is to rebalance problems that, again, the panel creates, and that's what runs through this entire UCP majority of the panel. They create problems and then claim that they have to do things that dilute vote in order to solve the problem they created. One of the arguments they make is that they need to draw three hybrids – three, not one; three – on the northwest edge of Calgary in Calgary-North West, Calgary-Bow, and Calgary-West.

They insist that they need to split Springbank into two so that they can gerrymander two different ridings, essentially because they claim that the communities of interest are driven basically by golf courses in an extremely odd way. I'm not really sure why they are so driven by the placement of golf courses as to suggest that Springbank absolutely must go into Calgary, leaving Cochrane wildly underpopulated and increasing the problems with population disparity between the cities, to create these three hybrid ridings. I

think it is an incredibly clear – an incredibly clear – instance in which it seems that a really strained argument is being used to support an untenable argument. And, confusingly, when the majority of this UCP panel argues for hybrids generally and what they do to Lethbridge, they cite Cochrane needing to have surrounding population with them as a reason to support their argument for hybridization, and then they proceed to argue that Cochrane needs to be on its own because it needs its own riding. Apparently, the same argument does not apply to voters in Calgary, whose votes are already far more diluted. It's convoluted and strained.

Northeast Calgary: the majority also suggests that either a committee review the northeast before the next commission or, more troublingly, that the Legislature review it before approvals. The majority states that, quote, the northeast Calgary challenge reached the panel late, which severely leaves open the question: like, where did it reach the panel from? The panel didn't take public submissions. They refused to rely on the record that was before the commission, stating that they were doing something like a hearing de novo. They disregard all the evidence, arguments, submissions that were before the commission. They don't have any new evidence, so where is it coming from, Mr. Chair? I think that's incredibly problematic. Who rushed in at the late hour to raise this for the panel's consideration?

Second, the point of an independent process is to avoid a government using its legislative majority to ram through changes with severe partisan impacts. Asking the Legislature to redraw these maps is exactly the opposite of that. It completely disregards the independence of the process and has MLAs draw the maps.

Third, I think it's worth noting that the northeast Calgary problem – like, yes, it's absolutely true that many submissions were received by the commission talking about the speed and intensity of growth in northeast Calgary. Those ridings are Calgary-North East, Calgary-Falconridge, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall. And this refers to the northeast of Calgary as Calgary-Cross, which is in the northeast of Calgary; Calgary-Klein, which spans the northeast and the northwest; Calgary-East, which is the northeast and the southeast; and Calgary-Confluence, which is primarily in the southeast of Calgary.

Boy, I have a lot to say. I'm going to cut myself off there and just say that I think it's very clear from these specific instances and from the comments of the panel that generally they not only wildly exceeded their mandate in a way that creates an increased problem in terms of the dilution of votes in major cities but the argument is strained and internally contradictory in such a way that it highly suggests that the conclusions were not driven by the facts before the panel but that the facts were cherry-picked in order to support conclusions that came from we know not where.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Ganley.

MLA Gray, please go ahead.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much. I'm going to pick up on some of the comments from my colleague, starting off just around that voter parity. In Alberta we've had a decades-long trend in our redistricting towards greater population parity between electoral districts. This is tied to the 1994 reference where the Alberta Court of Appeal expected that the variance in population between urban and rural electoral divisions would inevitably decrease over time. This trend is changing and it was changing with the Alberta commission report, the majority report. One of the things we didn't expect to see was for it to get so much worse because they've removed an urban riding in Lethbridge. What does this mean? It

means somebody's vote in one riding is worth more than a vote in another riding. It exacerbates the underrepresentation of our four largest cities.

11:10

I'll quote from the minority report page 38, section 153: before we tell an Albertan that their vote should be worth less than another's, we must have a very good reason, ideally a nonpartisan one that almost all people of goodwill will accept as reasonable. I would submit to you that's not what we're getting in this report and in this recommendation from the UCP majority, to a really concerning degree. Essentially, votes in one place are worth more than votes in another.

The majority says on page 111.3: voter parity or relative voter parity is the most important consideration in determining electoral division boundaries. It's not the only empirically measurable consideration. Then it goes on to say that that doesn't prevent gerrymandering.

Here we are seeing that gerrymandering. The removal of the urban riding in Lethbridge quite specifically brings into practice a gerrymandering Republican practice called packing and cracking.

I'm going to quote from the minority again, page 34, section 134. Finally, we must respectfully observe that this map of the Lethbridge area bears all the hallmarks of a practice called packing. Packing means that the electoral boundaries of a city and its surrounding area are drawn to make one electoral division contain most of the voters of one party, normally the opposition party, by creating a packed electoral division which will have an overwhelming number of voters for the opposition party. The rest of the electoral divisions in the city and surrounding areas will have fewer opposition voters. This makes it easy for the party who drew the boundaries to win additional seats. End quote.

That's exactly what we see in Lethbridge, and the outcome of doing that is that the average number of vote parity between urban and rural is made even worse in this report than we saw in the original commission report. The most populated riding is more than double the population of the lowest populated riding. Truly, this has a significant impact on Albertans, and it also doesn't match what the majority of the submissions to the boundary commission heard about what's important to Albertans and what they were expecting from this commission's work.

This only happened because this panel with the UCP majority chose to not follow Government Motion 37, not follow recommendation 5, and started making changes in southern Alberta that they were specifically advised not to by Justice Miller when he did recommendation 5.

I will remind this panel that we passed motions here trying to clarify what was in scope and what wasn't. The chair declined to comment in this room, but outside of this room to media the chair said that Government Motion 37 and recommendation 5 will be followed. In the House and to media the Premier said that recommendation 5 would be followed.

To receive this report and to realize that that got thrown out and that the UCP members of this panel decided that they could just grab a pen and start redrawing things that they weren't supposed to be touching in a way that – and I will quote again from the minority report: most of our colleagues' proposed boundaries were also clearly opposed by the vast majority of submissions that the ABEC received. While we take it that our colleagues genuinely believe that this is in the best interest of creating the most effective representation for Alberta, the consequence is either partisan outcomes they ignore or favour.

I think that the minority panel members have been very generous in their characterization of what the majority has done in this report,

but there is a clear partisan tilt to the changes that have come through in this report.

Quote again: given the obvious partisan implications of the restoration of the two rural electoral divisions, he, Justice Miller, imposed strict conditions on their restoration to stem further boundary changes that may create partisan advantage, notably by prohibiting, quote, impact on any electoral division in Airdrie or containing territory south of Airdrie's southernmost border. End quote.

They've done exactly that, packing and cracking in Lethbridge, taking away an urban riding, and diluting votes, particularly impacting Calgary, Edmonton, and other urban voters. It's incredibly frustrating to see as we are reviewing this document and one of the reasons why we moved to make this document available to the public even sooner so that people can have a chance to see what this is.

When the public has access to this document, I highly recommend turning to page 113, which begins, "The minority opinion of the two independent advisory panel members," which I submit to you does a really good job of reasonably breaking down the arguments and pointing out that what the majority UCP panel appointees have done here opens up real constitutional challenge and is likely completely unconstitutional given how they got there and the impacts that it has to the Charter rights of Albertans in this scenario.

I really wanted to emphasize some of what has happened with Lethbridge and with voter parity. Emphasizing those things, I think, is of clear importance because Albertans expect their votes to be relatively worth the same regardless of where they are.

Mr. Chair, with that, I'll conclude my remarks at this point. I see another caucus colleague has joined to enter into the debate. As my caucus colleague begins, I will remind members that under Standing Order 15(9), I believe it is, MLAs are able to verbally discuss with colleagues information and debates that are happening in a committee and in confidence. So as my caucus colleague and leader joins us, I will simply say that no other members of our caucus have seen the report but we have had discussions with them.

The Chair: All right. Thank you, MLA Gray. As noted by yourself, we have been joined by one of our colleagues. If we could have that member introduce themselves, please.

Mr. Nenshi: Hello. I'm Naheed Nenshi, the MLA for Edmonton-Strathcona, Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition, and I'd love to be added to the speakers list, please.

The Chair: All right. That sounds great. Thank you for introducing yourself, and please proceed.

Mr. Nenshi: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I don't often come to committee meetings. In fact, this is the first time I've come to one of these committee meetings, because what is happening here is so shameless. It is so upsetting. It is so illegal, and it is important that our colleagues opposite understand the gravity of what is before them.

I think the best way for us to understand all of that is to understand where we've come from. In a few short days Albertans will finally see the new electoral boundaries report that was put forward by the panel appointed by this illegitimate committee, and what they will see will shock them. People of Lethbridge will find that they've been wiped off the map. Incumbent ministers, UCP ministers in northwest Calgary will find that they're protected by the hybridizing of their ridings with neighbourhood communities, with no thought to the people who live in those communities, the tiny community of Springbank split up so that the voters can help

two different UCP cabinet ministers. In short, what they will see is that a line has been crossed. Not just a line we've never seen in Alberta before, but a line we've never seen in Canada before.

In the spring we had lots of conversations in the House about why we were doing this, and the Premier swore up and down and left and right that the only thing she wanted to do was preserve two rural ridings for her two rural colleagues, but she would follow recommendation number 5, Justice Miller's recommendation number 5, which said specifically: do not touch anything south of Airdrie. Yet here we are. This government, in their effort to dodge accountability, has engineered the single worst case of gerrymandering in Alberta history. In Canada we don't cheat to rig elections. That is a MAGA practice. That is something we have never allowed to cross the border. That is something that no one has allowed to cross the border. No politician has even tried until this moment.

11:20

But, frankly, no one should be surprised. This has been a long time coming. In late 2024 the Premier made the first move. Her Justice minister amended the electoral boundaries act to make two critical changes. The Electoral Boundaries Commission was no longer required to take two crucial points into consideration when drawing maps. Number one, the existing community boundaries within the cities of Edmonton and Calgary and, wherever possible, the existing municipal boundaries. They removed both of those things. As you all know, I have a lot of experience in municipal government, and I can tell you that the people who live outside of Calgary live outside of Calgary for a reason. They don't think of themselves as Calgarians. They made that choice for whatever reason. At that time we knew what was coming because those changes forecasted the Premier's intentions.

You'll remember that in the spring of 2025 the Electoral Boundaries Commission was appointed. My colleague to my left was then Leader of the Opposition, and she appointed two nonpartisan members as opposition representatives, Greg Clark, the former leader of the Alberta Party, and Susan Samson, the former mayor of Sylvan Lake. The Premier appointed three people, including the chair, now retired Justice Dallas Miller, and what followed was the normal process. There's a public hearing process, a public hearing process that received more submissions, I think, than any public hearing process – correct? – in Alberta's history. Many, many hundreds of Albertans came out to express their points of view, and then there was an interim report.

I remember the day the interim report was being introduced in the House. The Justice minister was asked before the introduction, "Are you going to mess with this report?" and he said: "No, no, no. It's an independent commission. We will do whatever the independent commission says." Then the report was tabled in the House. He had clearly not seen it. I watched him reading the report and being shocked that it wasn't a gerrymandered report, and suddenly the tune changed. That interim report was unanimous. It was the first unanimous report of an Electoral Boundaries Commission in Alberta. The UCP appointees, the chair, and the Official Opposition appointees all agreed with it.

Then we went to a second set of public hearings. In those public hearings something extraordinary happened which I've never really seen before. Hundreds of Albertans came out and said: "You guys did a good job. You did it right. Thank you for listening to us." Usually people don't come to public hearings to say they're happy about something.

But something else weird happened in those public hearings. A very small number of people showed up with different maps. They were, theoretically, members of the public who just had opinions,

yet all the maps looked the same. They were in the same font, they were in the same style, and – oh, oops – one of them forgot to take the government document identifier off of the page. These maps were created by the government to interfere in a supposedly independent process.

The UCP members said nothing during those public hearings, but three days before the publication of a report that was essentially the same as the one they had already voted for, they suddenly came up with a minority report. For the first time ever a minority report that had its own maps in it – surprise, surprise – in the same font, in the same style as the supposedly independent maps. How stupid does this government think Albertans are that they thought that they could get away with that?

Now there is a very significant reason to worry. On March 28 the final report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission was tabled and promptly thrown out by the government in an antidemocratic act that shocked the province. Never before had our democratic norms been so violently shattered by this government, by any government. Never before had the naked ambition of politicians resulted in such an overt display of cheating. I asked the Premier over and over again, “Why are you doing this?” and she said, “No; we’re just taking recommendation 5.”

But this government couldn’t help itself. Instead of just taking recommendation 5, that we would have been very grumpy about but probably could have lived with, this committee, this illegitimate committee, is now throwing out electoral maps developed by a legislated, independent Electoral Boundaries Commission and drawing their own maps so they can pick their own voters. This is a shocking and ongoing assault on our democracy.

Government Motion 37 was rammed through the Legislature. This illegitimate committee was formed. My caucus members Ms Gray and Ms Ganley have been thwarted in every attempt in this committee to open it up to transparency, to ask for public hearings, to disclose the expenses of the committee, to figure out who’s being paid for this period of undemocratic disaster, and this committee has said no every single time. Soon Albertans will see the result, a map drawn by the UCP themselves that protects incumbents, that strips Lethbridge and Calgary of their effective representation, that is a page straight out of the Trump, U.S.-style gerrymandering book. In fact, the government violates its own motion because it was written so quickly to pave the way for its ability to cheat.

I’m looking at my colleagues opposite and saying: you’ve got a choice right now. You can keep listening to this undemocratic thing, you can make this your legacy, that you were so scared that you felt the need to be part of a government that needs to cheat to win, or today just one of you at this committee can say: “You know what? We’ve gone too far. We’re going to listen to the independent commission. Heck, we’ll even listen to recommendation 5, which the Premier said we were supposed to do, and we’re going to turn this back.” That is your choice.

Let’s be clear, Mr. Chair. We elected a new MLA in Calgary-Shaw. We flipped a Conservative seat for the first time in 60 years to the Alberta NDP, and nobody in Alberta thinks that didn’t impact what this government is trying to do. They know they can’t win, so they want to cheat to win. Last week the Premier suffered a further defeat at the hands of 2.1 million Albertans who rejected her political agenda, who rejected five of her 10 questions, who took the other five from an 85 per cent yes in polling to just barely passing. Albertans are very angry at this government, and they have every right to be because they deserve better and they want better.

Yes, we’ve been distracted by the referendum. All Albertans have. But I guarantee you that if we go forward with this, this will be the legacy of this government, that they cared about power so

much that they didn’t want fair elections, that they wanted to cheat to win. Separatism will be the Premier’s legacy, will be Ms Smith’s legacy, but cheating will be an even bigger legacy. It will stain the brand of this party and this government forever.

Now we’re in a situation where the Premier and her ministers are dodging accountability at the ballot box because they’re drawing maps to allow their government to stay in power. They’re picking voters when voters should have the right to pick their representatives. Albertans will see this for what it is, cheating, and they won’t stand for it, just like they didn’t stand for the divisive referendum.

Mr. Chair, Albertans are hard-working people. They deserve better than this government, and if we go forward with this, the UCP’s days in office are numbered.

Thank you.

The Chair: All right. Thank you for your opinions on the matter.

Is there anyone else looking to join the debate? MLA Ganley, go ahead.

Ms Ganley: Yes. Mr. Chair, I appreciate that we’ve been on this item for a while although I think that this item is kind of the job of the committee and we are being prevented from moving motions on it.

There are just a couple of things that I want to highlight that were raised for me by my colleague’s comments. One of them is that when we’re talking about sort of how the majority of the UCP panel redraws these boundaries using arguments – well, they aren’t arguments, right? They’re just statements. They just assert facts which are not facts. I just want to quote from the minority report, which reads: “Moreover, there was an overwhelming desire for Okotoks and Diamond Valley to be paired in the same electoral division after the ABEC interim report.” That’s the interim report of the commission; that’s just how they talk about it in the minority of the panel. “Not a single submission, to our knowledge, asked for Diamond Valley to be paired with Banff.” I think that’s just one very clear example of the ways in which the panel kind of just goes out and draws things, much like their assertion that Springbank has nothing in common with Cochrane but everything in common with Calgary, which is just not reflected at all in the record.

I would also like to point out that Calgary and Edmonton in this UCP panel majority wind up with about 7,000 more people per riding than those outside. That’s a 14 per cent increase. When we’re talking about overall parity – and, unfortunately, the UCP majority of the panel has a tendency to, like, count these things in various different ways in order to sort of hide this number – we’re talking about the votes of people inside Edmonton and Calgary. Like, those ridings are 14 per cent bigger, so all of those votes are underrepresented by that amount while the UCP majority of the panel also tries to make arguments for why we need three ridings on the northwest edge of Calgary that protect three UCP cabinet ministers. That’s incredibly problematic.

11:30

The final thing that I just want to draw out from the report, just because I really think it’s extremely concerning or troubling to me, is just the number of comments made by the majority of the UCP panel in defence of the minority of the commission. I think the majority of the commission was rightly skeptical of the minority of the commission. The minority of the commission – the whole commission agrees; everyone is unanimous. They have a unanimous interim report, and normally a final report looks much like an interim report with some small deviations. That has historically been the case for the commission, and that is because

they're all based on the same public record, and then they get a second set of feedback.

In this instance the minority had maps that fell out of the clear, blue sky. They were reflected nowhere on the record. Yeah, I mean, it certainly is the case that myself and my colleagues have referred to these maps as partisan interests, as gerrymandering because there is no other credible argument for where they came from. For some reason the UCP majority on the panel goes to great lengths to defend this on behalf of the minority of the commission, and that, I think, is suggestive. As the chair of the panel said: intent, you know, can be demonstrated through maps and in other ways. Yeah. I just think it's suggestive of something very, very problematic going on here.

With that, I will end my comments because I know that we have other agenda items.

The Chair: Thank you.

MLA Gray.

Ms Gray: Thank you. Just jumping off of my colleague's last point, I will just say for those when they receive this report: page 1. It's the acknowledgments page. What possible political message or information could we glean here? Surely, they're just acknowledging everyone who contributed to this, except paragraph 2 reads: "The advisory panel was also assisted by the recommendations of the much-maligned minority commissioners. They gave the advisory panel much to consider in terms of whether effective representation involves a reconciliation of diverse interests or advocating for a specific community of interests."

Within the report we also see the UCP majority appointees continue to praise the minority commissioners, who, again, signed on to the interim report wholeheartedly and then changed their mind and did something that all Albertans called gerrymandering. That thread runs through this report.

My leader was talking about the Alberta referendum. I just want to flag that, as people are looking at the referendum results, he spoke Alberta-wide that the government lost on five of the questions, but if you look in urban areas, no to the nine was what happened in the majority of urban ridings. Yet when we're talking about voter parity, the votes of those who live in Edmonton and Calgary are being devalued in this, again, reversing a historical trend of 30 years ever since the 1994 Court of Appeal decision. Not only is it making it worse; this report, by creating an extra rural riding in Lethbridge, is going far beyond what we saw any time previous. I think that's really important.

And on that note, the removing of the urban riding in Lethbridge, I'm going to quote from the minority report. This is page 30, section 117: "Lethbridge is a city of approximately 110,000 people. Its residents and leaders clearly want two MLAs who are drawn together with Lethbridge concerns regarding schools, busing, infrastructure, roads, et cetera, all of which are delivered in markedly different manners from the county of Forty Mile, the Siksika reserve, or even Taber or Cardston. Unlike Medicine Hat, the population math is near perfect for Lethbridge to get its desire. By our estimates residents of Lethbridge sought to preserve the city's boundaries to the extent possible by an over 5 to 1 margin in their submissions to the ABECB. We need very good reasons to be discarding that view, which would disrupt a status quo that has existed for 55 years."

I would submit to this panel, our committee here, that the reason is packing and cracking, the Republican gerrymandering practice. They are looking to engineer a permanent UCP government majority by, again, diluting urban votes and taking away ridings that would otherwise be winnable by other parties. There is a

partisan lens that has been applied here, and the partisan outcomes, as the minority commissioners had suggested in another quote, are either ignored or were the intent, so there is more than enough for us to be, really, really concerned.

I'm not from Calgary and I can see how absolutely out of left field the Springbank changes are and how it specifically goes to serve three UCP cabinet ministers. It also wasn't something that I think they should have calculated or considered as they go forward.

I opened at the start by saying that this report is at war with itself. I also just want to emphasize that in creating this, the UCP majority on this panel obviously were not consulting with Albertans. It's not clear to me that they were reviewing the submissions from the commission, which, again, as my leader and others have noted, had the highest number of submissions and public engagement that we've seen in a very, very long time. I truly believe that this is an attempt by the government to try to win and maintain their power through loopholes and skulduggery and gerrymandering.

They failed to build hospitals and schools in Calgary-Shaw; they lost the seat in Calgary-Shaw. They want to make sure that even when urban voters are disaffected and don't agree with them, like we saw in the referendum results, they still can't change their government, and that is incredibly shameful.

The idea that we have the UCP majority appointees sitting in a room making these decisions on behalf of Albertans without ever having to talk to those Albertans is just one of the reasons why this entire process has absolutely offended me and my sense of democracy.

Albertans are not happy about this. It is a ridiculous thing that we are now dealing with, and I continue to be disappointed that Albertans won't even see this report and the maps and get a chance to read some of these key quotes and consider for themselves whether this represents them and reflects their interest until it's tabled in the Legislature on or before November 2.

These are the reasons why I am not supportive of motion 1 that was moved by my colleague, Ron Wiebe. I believe that the government should be adopting the majority report from the original Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission.

Just like the referendum, we're now seeing a huge waste of time and money and a disregarding of Albertans' wishes with what process has gone on here. It's deeply disappointing.

As we've said from the beginning, my colleague and I are here specifically to raise awareness as to what's happening in this unconstitutional and illegitimate process.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Gray.

MLA Ganley.

Ms Ganley: I will just echo my colleague's comments because I actually don't think I said it before. I am also of the view that the right thing to do here is to take the majority report of the commission. We should have just left it at that. I think Government Motion 37 was bad.

As is said by the minority of the panel: quote, there is no precedent for redrawing an entire province after an independent commission has completed the task in at least the past three decades in Canadian history. As the Nova Scotia reference in particular notes, interference in an independent redistricting process is constitutionally perilous.

In light of those comments, I think that this entire process is perilous, but I think that at minimum the panel ought to have stayed within the bounds of Motion 37, and they absolutely did not.

Thank you.

11:40

The Chair: All right. Thank you, MLA.

All right. Seeing no other hands, we are prepared to call the vote on this motion. With that, all those in favour of the motion please say aye. Any opposed to the motion please say no. All right.

That motion is carried.

Ms Gray: If we could record the vote, please.

The Chair: A recorded vote has been requested. Those in the room who are in favour of the motion, please raise your hands.

Mr. Huffman: Mr. Wiebe, Mr. Rowswell, and Ms de Jonge.

The Chair: All right.

For those in the room who are opposed to the motion, please raise your hands.

Mr. Huffman: Hon. Ms Gray and hon. Ms Ganley.

For the motion:

de Jonge Rowswell Wiebe

Against the motion:

Gray Ganley

Totals: For – 3 Against – 2

The Chair: All right.

That motion has been carried.

All right. Moving on to our next agenda item, which is agenda item 5, next steps. We have 5(a), which is, providing the panel report and any observations of the committee to the Legislative Assembly. Hon. members, clause (C)(i)(ii) of Government Motion 37 specifies that the committee must submit the report of the independent advisory panel “to the Legislative Assembly no later than November 2, 2026.” As the committee has now had an opportunity to review the independent advisory panel’s report, I’d like to now open the floor to any comments or questions with respect to providing the panel’s report to the Assembly.

MLA Roswell, I see your hand. Please go ahead.

Mr. Rowswell: I’d like to make a motion.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Rowswell: I’d like to move that

the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries direct the Legislative Assembly Office to prepare a draft report regarding the committee’s review of the independent advisory panel’s report and distribute it to the committee members for their review.

The Chair: All right. We have that up on the screen. I think that’s MLA Wiebe’s motion. We’ll just wait to see if we can – oh, okay. Sorry.

MLA Rowswell, is that the right motion?

Mr. Rowswell: That is.

The Chair: That is correct. Okay. Would you like a chance to speak to it?

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. Following its receipt and review of the independent advisory panel’s final report, the committee must formally report the outcome of its work to the Legislative Assembly in accordance with Government Motion 37. The motion authorizes the Legislative Assembly Office to prepare a draft committee report

that accurately reflects the committee’s review of the panel’s report. Distributing the draft to all committee members will provide an opportunity to examine the report, identify any necessary corrections, and ensure the final document accurately reflects the committee’s proceedings before it is approved and presented to the Assembly.

The Chair: All right. Thank you, MLA Rowswell.

Is there anyone else wishing to speak to this motion? MLA Gray, go ahead.

Ms Gray: Just to clarify, as Mr. Rowswell has described, to reflect any observations made by the committee. There were no observations made because the government members passed a motion that would stop the making of observations and observation motions. Would that be accurate, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: I’ll confer with the table. But I would think that, as that motion was passed, that would be reflected in what got reported.

All right. Is there anyone else wishing to weigh in on this? MLA Ganley.

Ms Ganley: Yes. I mean, I guess I would like to reiterate my sadness that the whole point of this committee was sort of to comment on this report, and we haven’t really heard, in particular, any comments coming from the other side. I wonder whether reflected in that draft will be the comments that were made on the motions that ultimately couldn’t be moved or, you know, what the intention is in terms of summarizing.

I mean, the report is extremely long. I think it is difficult for Albertans to read it unassisted, and I think there are a number of instances in which the UCP-appointed majority makes assertions which are entirely unsupported by evidence. You know, for instance, with respect to Springbank, they talk on page 68 about Springbank belonging in Calgary because of the fact that an 18-hole golf course, a 27-hole golf course, a 45-hole golf course, are located in south Springbank. I think those things are problematic. I guess I’m just wondering, you know: what is going to be highlighted with respect to the fact that my colleagues haven’t really made any comments on the report?

The Chair: Thank you for those comments, MLA Ganley. I think the motion and the previous motion under 4(b) are what are going to be included in the report unless I hear something different from the table.

Ms Robert: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Unless there are more motions passed – like, this instructive motion would not be included. Directing us to draft a report would not be in the report, but the motion just passed previously would form the bulk of the report, I would think, the bulk of the main committee’s report, unless there are other motions agreed to with respect to, say, the content of the report.

The Chair: Thank you to the table.

All right. Is there any other discussion on this motion, then?

Seeing none, I’m prepared to call the vote. All those in favour, please say aye. Any opposed? All right.

That motion is carried.

All right. We will continue on this agenda item. Any other discussion or motions in relation? MLA Gray, please go ahead.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I’d like to move motion 17, as submitted by our caucus. The motion should read that the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries include in its report to the Legislative Assembly the following: (a) all records of payments made to the chair and members of the

independent advisory panel, (b) a list of payments made to all external experts, consultants, contractors, and legal advisers engaged by the independent advisory panel.

I see it up on screen as I have read it.

Albertans have already paid quite a bit for the original Electoral Boundaries Commission to do its work last fall, which delivered a detailed, nonpartisan, fair report and boundaries. Now the government is forcing taxpayers to pay again for this report that not only doesn't follow Government Motion 37 and recommendation 5 but also alludes to information coming to it from different sources, that paired with the fact that the panel asked for access to pollsters who understood voting behaviour and other special contractors, including legal advisers.

I know that I and members of the public, members of the media, my colleague Kathleen, and many others would be interested in knowing who was involved in this work, how much money was used on behalf of taxpayers, and through this, I think, it's important to just increase the transparency. It's really critical background detail, so I make this motion because I think it should be included in the report.

The Chair: All right. Thank you, MLA Gray.

Are there any other members wishing to – go ahead, MLA Ganley.

Ms Ganley: Yeah. I would just like to argue in favour of my colleague's motion. This is a matter of transparency. This work was done. It was done well. It was done by an independent commission, and the UCP has chosen to overthrow that, basically, in order to have this panel come forward and deliver what, to my view, appear to be extremely strained arguments to support a conclusion that was reached by we know not whom.

I think Albertans deserve to know how much it cost. This is a government that has already run a referendum to keep their party together and for no other good reason that cost hundreds of millions of dollars, essentially, again, spending public money to achieve their own aims. So once again we see the spending of public money to achieve the government's own partisan aims, which is entirely inappropriate. The panel goes well outside the boundaries of Motion 37, which is also entirely inappropriate.

11:50

Then, on top of that, we have suggestions of things coming from various places – we know not where – and that just leaves me deeply curious. Like, what was the mapping software that was used in light of the fact that we know that there is software that is used specifically to gerrymander in the U.S.? We've wound up with Lethbridge looking exactly like the packing and cracking that is described in that context. We have a contract made with the chair of the independent advisory panel, the UCP chair, that looks nothing like any contract previously made. He gets paid the normal remuneration for a panel member for the half days and full days plus an extra \$5,000 a month. I'm curious – I'm curious – why we agreed to that, why the chair agreed to that, particularly in light of the results that we now see and their impact on UCP cabinet ministers.

I will leave it there, but this is public money and the public deserves to know how it was spent, and that should go in the report.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

Are any other – oh, MLA Rowswell, please go ahead.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. The committee previously approved a budget for the independent advisory panel. You know, it's a bunch of qualified individuals and the chair, Justice O'Ferrall, was

eminently qualified, and everyone has agreed to that. Government Motion 37 is clear in clause C(f)(iii) that the panel may "request any person to provide the independent advisory panel with advice that the independent panel considers advisable or necessary." The committee was not appointed to draw electoral boundaries; an independent advisory panel was. We gave them a budget, and they operated within that and called the people that they found necessary. Our job was to provide the resources to enable them to do that. So I don't think we would want to support this motion.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Rowswell.

Is there anyone else wishing to join the debate? MLA Ganley, go ahead.

Ms Ganley: Yes. Just to clarify, my comments here weren't to suggest that Mr. O'Ferrall was not qualified. They were to suggest that now that we know how much the committee has spent, the public ought to know, too. Like, we don't personally know as members of the opposition. I don't know if the government members know, but the public certainly doesn't know, and I think that it's relevant.

The Chair: Is there any other member looking to continue debate on this motion?

All right. Seeing none, I'm prepared to call the vote. All those in favour of the motion, please say aye. Any opposed?

That motion is defeated.

Ms Ganley: A recorded vote, please.

The Chair: A recorded vote. Okay. All right. A recorded vote has been requested. Those in the room who are in favour of the motion, please raise your hands.

Mr. Huffman: Hon. Ms Gray, hon. Ms Ganley.

The Chair: All right. Those in the room who are opposed to the motion, please raise your hands.

Mr. Huffman: Mr. Wiebe, Mr. Rowswell, and Ms de Jonge.

For the motion:

Gray	Ganley
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Against the motion:

de Jonge	Rowswell	Wiebe
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Totals:	For – 2	Against – 3
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The Chair: All right. Thank you.

That motion is defeated.

Are there any other comments or motions in relation to this agenda item? MLA Ganley, please go ahead.

Ms Ganley: Yes, Mr. Chair. I would like to move what I believe has been referred to as motion 18. The motion reads as follows, that the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries (a) request the former independent advisory panel members provide no later than November 2, 2026, a list of all individuals, organizations, legal advisors, and, in particular, any government Members of the Legislative Assembly with which the independent advisory panel consulted or otherwise had contact during the course of its review of Alberta's electoral boundaries, including (i) the names of individuals and organizations, (ii) the meeting locations, and (iii) all records of communications, and (b) include the information provided under clause (a) in the final report of the committee to the Assembly.

I see that it is up on the screen.

Essentially, the reason for this is that the panel wasn't empowered to consult on its own. I had honestly anticipated – and we, in fact, moved a motion to attempt to bind them to the submissions that the public provided to the commission. That motion was rejected. I had still hoped that the panel would refer to the record because that's how this process is supposed to work. Albertans are supposed to have input. But the panel didn't.

They, in fact, go on to say, you know, that they essentially consider it a hearing *de novo*, so they won't refer to the submissions, and in fact in multiple instances, including the arguments about where Springbank belongs, that protect UCP cabinet ministers, including the arguments that protect UCP cabinet ministers near Lethbridge by essentially using Lethbridge's population as spare to be dumped into other ridings that also protect cabinet ministers – yeah. It's troubling. It's troubling because rather than the record of what actually is the case, we wind up with these assertions.

I will quote specifically at page 57 from the UCP majority of the panel which says that, quote, the northeast Calgary challenge reached this panel late. End quote. I know I've quoted this before, but I just think it's incredibly problematic that the panel refused to use the record before the commission, which is how the independent process is supposed to work. They were not empowered by the government to do their own consultation. We don't know who they spoke to. In fact, we don't even know how much it costs. We can't even read off those costs, whether there's a disparity somewhere.

I think that the public deserves to know who this independent – and I say that in air quotes because it's the title it was given; it's certainly not descriptive of the outcome – panel talked to, who they saw.

Like, in light of the fact that the results very transparently protect certain UCP cabinet ministers and that result is based on some really strained arguments with the panel kind of trying to suggest that they need to fix problems that they themselves created that go well outside the mandate of recommendation 5 and of Motion 37, that adds three rural seats instead of two, that defies what the Premier said, it's very, very problematic. That is one huge piece.

I think that that is really all I have to say about that, just that the public deserves to know in that particular instance about northeast Calgary, where they're recommending that the Legislature redraw boundaries, which is, again, politicians picking their voters. Where did the argument come from? How did it reach them late? There are a number of instances in which they reference arguments coming to them. We would like to know from where.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

Is there anyone else? MLA de Jonge, please go ahead.

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to Member Ganley for the motion. I think we discussed this at length in previous committee meetings. I believe I've spoken to it as well, you know, previously at this committee. It's inappropriate to compel disclosure of privileged legal advice and compromising the panel's independence. We've asked them to be independent. Now directing the panel to disclose all meetings and who they met with would be the opposite of that. For that reason, I'll not be supporting the motion.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA de Jonge.

Is there anyone else who'd like to weigh in? Oh, MLA Ganley, go ahead.

Ms Ganley: Yeah. If the concern is genuinely just about privileged legal information, I would be happy to take an amendment from the

member redrafting the motion to exclude privileged documents or to strike off legal advisers, Mr. Chair, if the member who made that argument would like to make such a motion.

12:00

The Chair: All right. Thank you for those comments. I don't see an amendment forthcoming, but I will continue our conversation on this.

Go ahead, MLA Gray.

Ms Gray: Thank you. I would be happy to make the amendment. Let's remove the barriers for transparency. Now, I did not submit this amendment motion to my colleagues in advance, so I believe, Mr. Chair, I would need to seek permission to be able to do this amendment.

The Chair: We have a request that requires majority consent, to make an amendment, so I want to be clear on how I word this to make sure I get it right. I will call a vote asking for majority consent to add an amendment. All those in favour of that, please say aye. All those opposed, please say no. All right. That request has been defeated.

We can return back to the discussion on the motion. Go ahead, MLA Gray.

Ms Gray: Thank you. Just to be very clear for anyone watching the committee, the concern was raised as we won't support this motion because we couldn't possibly disclose privileged information. I've offered to amend the motion, and the government members have declined to even allow me to move that amendment. I only summarize it because it just doesn't make sense on the face of it, so I wanted to spell it out.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: All right. Is there any other debate on this motion? I don't see any, so I am prepared to call the question. All those in favour of the motion as presented, please say aye. All right. All those opposed to the motion, please say no.

That motion has been defeated.

All right. We can continue on with this portion of the agenda item. Is there anyone, any members wishing to make any further motions? MLA Rowswell, please go ahead.

Mr. Rowswell: I'd like to make a motion. I'd like to move that the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries authorize the chair to approve the report regarding the committee's review of the independent advisory panel's report no later than 12 p.m., October 31, 2026.

The Chair: All right, MLA Rowswell. I think that's up on the screen. Is that your motion?

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah.

The Chair: If you'd like a chance to speak to it, please go ahead.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. Just that Government Motion 37 provides no flexibility on the deadline to table the independent advisory panel's report in the Chamber. This motion authorizes the chair to approve the committee's report once members have had an opportunity to review the draft prepared by the Legislative Assembly Office. Establishing a firm deadline will ensure that the report is finalized and transmitted to the Legislative Assembly promptly, allowing the committee to complete its responsibilities under Government Motion 37 without requiring an additional meeting solely for final approval.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, MLA Rowswell.

Is there anyone wishing to join? MLA Gray, please go ahead.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I and my colleague, we're very eager to have this report and document made public and in to the Legislature, so I'm supportive of this. My question is: we would like the opportunity to add a minority opinion report, and I would need to understand at what time we'd have to have that submitted because these are tight timelines, and if I'm not mistaken, you're now approving the final version on a Saturday. At what time could we submit a minority to be included?

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Gray. Just to confirm with our table here. The deadline for any minority report would be noon on Sunday, November 1.

Ms Gray: Okay. Thank you for that, Mr. Chair. And, yes, you can expect a minority report from the opposition members of this committee, just to continue to outline the process that we've been through and, honestly, outline the sham that this has been, where government members will come and make statements and then act contrary to them, as we just saw with the previous motion. We'll be sure to document that and submit it as a minority.

The Chair: Thank you.

Is there any other debate on the motion as presented by MLA Rowswell? I don't see any, so I am prepared to call the question. All those in favour of this motion, please say aye. All right. Are there any opposed?

That motion is carried.

Last call on any motions under 5(a). Is this for 5(a), MLA Rowswell?

Mr. Rowswell: No. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

The Chair: Okay. Seeing none, I can move – oh, sorry.

Ms Gray: Just a final observation.

Ms Ganley: Yeah. Sorry. Just in terms of final observations – I apologize. It's not a motion; just sort of reading back through my – it's very weighty, and we don't have time to cover it, obviously, entirely in this meeting. I am sad that the report will not be public until later, but I just did want to note, because I spoke extensively about Springbank, with respect to Calgary-North West and Bears paw, which is the Minister of Indigenous Relations, that, essentially, what is being used here as the tie are the recreational areas nearby: two busy golf courses, riding arenas, Haskayne legacy park, and Glenbow Ranch provincial park, where thousands of Calgary residents recreate on a regular basis.

To say nothing of farmers' markets along highway 1A, I guess my concern here is just the disregarding of the enormous record before the commission in favour of a series of arguments about golf courses, which just really seems extremely strained to me. It really feels like the conclusion went before the argument, rather than the other way about. I think that is a very serious concern for me. It is a reason to reject, in my view, this UCP panel report in its entirety.

I think that the minority does an extremely good job of laying out other reasons why Motion 37 ought to be read as bounding this panel within recommendation 5 from Justice Miller. Mr. O'Ferrall and the majority clearly do not think that they are bound by that recommendation. I think that that is a clear overreading, and the consequence of that overreading is badly drawn maps which are themselves highly problematic. And, as Mr. O'Ferrall himself notes, the way the maps are drawn in and of themselves can be some evidence of gerrymandering. I would argue that in this case that is

very clear, but I think comments like this make it even clearer that that's what we're dealing with. We're dealing with a government, a UCP government, who is interested in cheating because they didn't like the results of the independent process.

Might I just point out that the UCP-appointed a majority on the commission as well, so it's not because the NDP got a majority on the commission. It's because fairness and independence ruled the day on the commission whereas the panel appears to have been ruled by outside forces that caused them to wander outside the bounds of Government Motion 37, which was itself, I believe, excessive.

The Chair: With that, we can move on to 5(b), which is approval of final minutes of the committee. Members, as the committee completes its mandate, there will be no need for an additional meeting to approve the minutes. The committee will therefore authorize the chair to approve the minutes after they've been circulated to and reviewed by committee members.

MLA Rowswell, I see your hand on this one. Go ahead.

12:10

Mr. Rowswell: I'd like to make a motion. I move that the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries authorize the chair to approve the draft minutes of the October 28, 2026, meeting of the committee after they have been circulated to committee members for review.

The Chair: All right. Is that your motion on the screen?

Mr. Rowswell: Yes.

The Chair: All right. If you'd like a brief opportunity to speak to it, go ahead.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. I just think the motion authorizes the chair to approve the minutes after they have been circulated to all committee members for review and allows the official record to be finalized promptly without having a special meeting to do that.

The Chair: Is there anyone else looking to weigh in on this motion? MLA Ganley, go ahead.

Ms Ganley: Yes. I just wanted to ask, Mr. Chair – so the minutes will be circulated to all committee members. We will have the opportunity to comment, and then you will finalize them. I'm just wondering, like, how long between when we are sent and when we are – just because we are all travelling now. Some of us will be on the highway for long periods of time. Three hours might seem like a reasonable amount of time to respond to an e-mail, but if one is driving the entire time, it's challenging.

The Chair: The table has just advised that we're usually looking at a couple of days for something like that.

Ms Ganley: Okay. I think that is useful because I think we are at a committee where things which seem straightforward are surprisingly contentious.

The Chair: Thank you.

Any other discussion on this? All right. I'm prepared to call that vote. All those in favour of this motion please say aye. Any opposed?

That motion is carried.

I think that concludes 5(b).

I'm going to go on to agenda item 6, other business, and ask MLA Gray: I wonder if some of your issues that you raised at the beginning of the meeting were addressed in 5(a), or is there anything else that you would like to raise?

Ms Gray: No. Thank you very much. I appreciate that, Mr. Chair. We were able to address those issues.

I do have a question that I wonder if the table can just answer, which is: which company was hired to provide the GIS modelling and other mapping services?

Ms Robert: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That work was done by Elections Alberta.

Ms Gray: Okay. That's great to know. Thank you very much for that.

And then the other two items that Kathleen and I talked about, when we were talking about the agenda, we've kind of touched on through the motions we proposed. Thank you very much for the circle back.

The Chair: All right.

MLA Ganley, go ahead.

Ms Ganley: I'm so sorry. When that came up – I'm really surprised to hear that the work was done by Elections Alberta in light of the fact that they were simultaneously running this sort of gong show

of a multiquestion referendum situation, which we all know was a bit challenging. Do we know if there was any subcontracting?

Ms Robert: I have no idea. I just know that in Government Motion 37 it indicated that Elections Alberta and the LAO would be providing administrative support to the panel. Elections Alberta provided the maps, but I don't know anything further than that.

Ms Ganley: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you to the table, as always.

Any other items under other business?

Seeing none, I'll go to agenda item 7, date of the next meeting. There will not be another meeting as the committee's work, once concluded, has fulfilled its mandate under Government Motion 37.

With that, we'll go to agenda item 8, which is adjournment. Is there a motion to adjourn? Made enthusiastically by both members Wiebe and Rowswell. All those in favour of adjournment, please say aye. Any opposed? That motion is carried, and we are adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 12:14 p.m.]

