

9:03 a.m.

Wednesday, May 29, 2002

[Mr. Clark in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. This Edmonton part of the Electoral Boundaries Commission meeting is about to proceed. Despite what you see here today, we're having a very busy day. We have something like I believe 25 individuals who are going to be coming before us during the day. I'm just going to make a very few opening comments and then move on to our first presenter, Al Opstad. Al, you can move into the hot seat there, if you'd be so kind.

I should say that Mr. David Parker is here. Mr. Parker thought he was on at 8:30 this morning, and we thought he was on at 8:30 tonight. So, Mr. Parker, we're going to fit you in right after Mr. Ward. We appreciate your being so understanding. Thank you very much.

The purpose of the meetings. After every two elections under the law in Alberta there's a redrawing of the boundaries in the province, and under the law we use the last 10-year Canadian census figures. Those figures equate to 2.98 million people. The law also says that there'll be 83 constituencies. So if you divide that by 83, the figure comes out to 35,951. Those are the hard figures. There is provision under the law, as you know, for a variance up or down, 25 percent one way or the other. Although the last commission used a variance of 15 percent, only one riding was over the 15 percent. There is provision for at least four ridings where there's a massive area, a very sparse population. Under the present maps, which you can see at the back, the two ridings that fit that description are the ridings of Athabasca-Wabasca and Lesser Slave Lake.

The procedure that I want to use is to ask individuals to speak for up to 10 minutes. Then the chair is going to have to be somewhat challenging and say: thank you very much; now we need to have some questions.

I should introduce the members of the commission. To my left is Mr. Doug Graham, a well-known lawyer in the city of Calgary. To my immediate left is Bauni Mackay, an Edmontonian and the former president of the Alberta Teachers' Association. To my immediate right is Glen Clegg, a former member of the Legislature for the Dunvegan area, which for those of you who may not know the Peace River country all that well is in the Fairview-Spirit River area. To our far right is Mr. Ernie Patterson. Mr. Patterson is a longtime mayor of the community of Claresholm. In fact, would you believe that Mr. Patterson has been mayor of Claresholm for 33 years? That's a great testament to Mr. Patterson or the people of Claresholm or perhaps both.

Okay. I'd like now to ask Mr. Albert Opstad to present to us. Albert, we've got your two e-mails, so have at us, please.

Mr. Opstad: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll just get focused here a bit. As I told you, I have no watch. It broke. I'm semiretired anyways. So give me a signal.

The Chair: I'll yell. How's that?

Mr. Opstad: That sounds fine. Yeah. That's what they do sometimes.

I've got a couple of topics here. They're probably out of your scope, but I'll mention them anyway. I mentioned this last go-around. I tend to feel that we're overgoverned, so we have too many MLAs anyway. Then, of course, this whole act. The main part of my presentation is that I object to this act because I feel that it's unfair. I guess those two are a little out of your scope of work.

My proposal, as you probably already know, is that all divisions

should be equal to a random variance of plus or minus 5 percent maximum. You already know that. I say "random" so that you wouldn't have the convenience of putting all the cities at – what? – say, plus 5 percent and all the rural ridings at minus 5 percent, just to allay that. Of course, you can work out the average, you know. It lies between 34,153 and 37,749.

Now, these are my opinions, so you don't have to agree with them all, but I'll state them the way I see them. In my opinion, you cannot be equal before the law – we all talk about that a lot – until you are electorally equal in creating the law.

Let us look at the act a bit. Even in our redistribution we have polls, so polls are a bit like little communities. I'll just go through briefly a lot of these things that in my opinion don't really matter. You know, we've talked about "effective." Well, of course, that's the law, so nothing wrong with interpreting that as equal. "Sparsity and density" have got nothing to do with this in my opinion. "Common community interests." Well, what the heck. We live in a big community. So what? I'm here in this community. If I move, I'm in another community, and somebody moves here. No big deal. We're a community wherever we're at. Then "community boundaries" and "number of municipalities," all that sort of stuff.

Then we go to the tolerance of plus or minus 25 percent. That's the issue now. I think you alluded to last time your trying to use plus or minus 15. Well, some have suggested plus or minus 15 is okay, some have said plus or minus 10, and I'm saying plus or minus 5. So that's my point.

Perhaps when we're looking at this thing – it's an idea which has not been mentioned here – maybe we want to allow for growth. You know, we can look at some of those – and I picked Calgary. Of course, Edmonton has got an advantage. We haven't grown that much, so we're probably okay where we are as long as we don't get robbed a bit, but Calgary has grown faster than the rest of the province. When you look at some of those subdivisions, particularly some of the outlying ones, you can reasonably expect that they're going to grow. That's where they're building all the houses, so they're going to grow. So my suggestion is to consider future growth too.

9:13

Of course, I'm going to refer to the two extreme cases we have now, Athabasca-Wabasca and Calgary-Shaw. I know that you're well familiar with those. Nothing against those people, but they happen to be the extremes. Now, no one from Athabasca-Wabasca I'm sure is going to walk into any election booth and say: I want two or three ballots. They're not going to do that. That wouldn't be normal. We'd say: "No, no. You can have only one ballot." But the fact is that according to the rules here his vote could turn out to be that. It could be skewed or multiplied so that in effect he could have two and a half votes per person. Of course, if you compare it to Calgary-Shaw right today, he's about 4 to 1. You know, he's getting four votes.

What I'm trying to do here is give you fellows some ideas. I want to commend you for the procedure, which is great. You're coming to listen to us first, before you start redrawing this, and I think that's good. Hopefully we can have some effect on you in redrawing it.

Now, these sparsely populated areas always have their reasons, you know, why they want this and that, so my basic suggestion here is that if that's a problem, give that MLA extra assistance. You know, give him four or five assistants so he can travel around the riding. But still one vote per person, wherever they live. It doesn't matter.

If you take Athabasca-Wabasca, which we're talking about, my suggestion is to divide up Fort McMurray, cut it into two, and you can assign part of that to Athabasca and part to another. That's an

idea for you. You can cut it up. Now, this is not new. Apparently, this is what exists right now in Grande Prairie. From what I can see on the map, they slice her right down. So it's no big deal. Lethbridge and these bigger cities are sliced in two anyway, so there's no real problem in going to these smaller populated areas like Fort McMurray. Slice it in two. There's no big deal. We're just one big global community anyway.

The Chair: You've got about one minute left.

Mr. Opstad: Oh, I've got one minute. Holy, gee. I've got to hurry up then. All right. Well, I'll get right to Calgary then. Calgary is my main focus. They, according to calculations, should get 24 seats, and if you allow for growth, give them 25. Now, where are these seats going to come from? You're going to have to eliminate three or four rural ridings. That's going to be a dicey one, but that's about the only way you can get it.

How did Calgary-Shaw get to where it's at now? It was left at plus 11.2 percent, so obviously anybody who was thinking could have realized it was growing. It started off at plus 11.2; now it's up 129.

I guess that pretty well sums up my thing: one person, one vote; one electoral vote wherever you live. I say "electoral" because we know you all get one ballot, and there's no problem there, but it can be multiplied in the process. So I think that's pretty well my thing. Thanks for your time.

The Chair: I should tell people that I've known Albert for a number of years. He's very active in the engineering community. Albert, would I be out of line if I were to say: a bit of a character too?

Mr. Opstad: Well, a character in the sense that I always march to my own drummer.

The Chair: That's right.

Okay. Any questions? Mr. Patterson.

Mr. Patterson: No. I think Mr. Opstad has presented a very clear and concise presentation.

Mr. Graham: I have one comment. I respect your views, Albert, but by my calculation if we did what you suggested . . . I believe you come from Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Opstad: Edmonton-Glenora.

Mr. Graham: That would maybe be – what? – 10 or 15 square kilometres. If we did what you said, perhaps merging some of these northern ridings, then we could end up with a riding up there that might be up to 300,000 square kilometres, which would be 30,000 times as big as your riding. I just wonder whether in your view that could call for tempering?

Mr. Opstad: No, no. That's perfectly fine.

Mr. Graham: All right.

Mr. Opstad: Give them 300,000 or 500,000, however many you need. The key element, as I've already suggested, is to give that MLA five or six assistants so he can travel around there and visit the people.

Mr. Graham: All right. I understand your view.

Mr. Opstad: So thank you.

The Chair: Albert, just one last question.

Ms Mackay: You said that we have too many MLAs. Do you have a number in mind that would be adequate?

Mr. Opstad: I don't have any number. I haven't pinpointed one, but I would think somewhere around 63. I think it's part of the total thing that we are an overgoverned country. We've got too much government, and that's it. So I would just pick any figure. Any figure is reasonable, but 63 is one which comes to my mind. We had that a few years ago, so that's perfectly okay.

The Chair: Okay, Albert. An interesting suggestion, one we hadn't heard about: splitting Fort McMurray down the middle. That's a novel idea we haven't heard. Thank you very much for your presentation. Appreciate it.

Mr. Opstad: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. John Ward. I understand that Mr. Ward used to be a returning officer here in the city of Edmonton. That's your submission?

Mr. Ward: Uh-huh. I wasn't going to give you a submission, but that's okay.

The Chair: It's your 15 minutes.

Mr. Ward: It's just more paperwork; that's all.

The Chair: Okay. Do you want to speak to your submission then, John, please?

Mr. Ward: I think I'll do it without it.

The Chair: Do you want to sit at the other mike, John? That would work better.

Mr. Ward: Sorry about that.

The Chair: After Mr. Ward we're going to have Mr. Parker.

Mr. Ward: Okay. Basically, for Edmonton-Centre there are only a few changes, and what it amounts to is that we've got a tail on the end of the constituency. They put that in there two elections ago to appease one of the party people. That tail is useless, because for the last two elections there has been nobody in there except for one house. It's an American who owns that house, and he doesn't vote. Now the city has put low-rental people in there. They're building a new complex in that corner, and the thing is that there will probably be 200 units in that area, and that should be turned over to Edmonton-East.

Where we are now is 101st Street and going down to the river, but federally it's 97th Street. The thing is that if we take 101st Street and join it up with Connors Road, which is on the south side, it's more logical. Now, that's the old way we did things. I'm sorry to say it, but they had to help one of the parties out. To appease them, they took that off, and now we should put it back on.

Outside of that, in the constituency we've got 33,000. Well, with the changes that are going to happen – we have now approximately 2,000 units that are being constructed in Edmonton-Centre, so that means there will be approximately 3,000 to 4,000 people moving

into the area. That doesn't take in that cut off the tail part. So that brings us back up to, say, 37,000, which brings us in line at about 3 to 5 percent.

That's basically all I have to say. You know, if we change that, outside of that, the constituency is okay.

9:23

The Chair: Okay. Could I just ask you: where would you suggest we put that little tail?

Mr. Ward: Edmonton east, where it came from.

The Chair: Edmonton east?

Mr. Ward: Yeah. It came from there.

The Chair: Do you mean Edmonton-Gold Bar?

Mr. Ward: Oh, yeah. Edmonton-Gold Bar now. Right. Sorry about that.

The Chair: That's all right. That's not a problem.

Any questions or comments to John?

Well, John, you're succinct and to the point. We've got the message. Thank you very much.

Mr. Ward: Right on. That's four and a half minutes.

The Chair: What a man. Thank you very much.

Mr. Parker.

Mr. Parker: Thanks very much. I'm actually representing the Alberta Green Party, and I would've got the e-mail, except that being an avid member of the green movement throughout the province and the country, I get so many e-mails, and I went away to Ottawa this weekend. So I apologize for that. I'm also going to read my submission.

The Chair: Not a problem. Please go ahead, David.

Mr. Parker: No amount of tampering with the British parliamentary system extant in Alberta will make it as good, as fair, democratic, and equitable as a proportional representation system. Particularly observing the recent history of politics in Canada, it can be clearly shown that the first-past-the-post system is fundamentally undemocratic for the following reasons. The provincial government of Quebec holds a majority of seats with a minority of popular support. The former NDP government of B.C. had a majority of representation from a minority of the popular vote. The present governments of B.C. and Alberta have grossly more representation than is warranted by the size of the votes received. The federal Progressive Conservatives immediately after the Mulroney government were reduced to two seats after having received approximately 19 percent of the popular vote, while the Reform Party, with about the same level of support, became the Official Opposition.

Emerging parties suffer by not having representation in spite of obtaining sizable electoral support. An example of this is the B.C. Green Party, which achieved 12.4 percent support – that's one in eight or more – but had no legislative representation whatsoever. The present situation in federal politics makes it seem that the west is entirely supportive of the Alliance Party, Ontario is completely Liberal, the PC Party is only supported in Atlantic Canada and Quebec, and Quebec is totally sovereigntist due to their support of the Bloc Quebecois. In other words, it is very divisive and polarizing.

These disparities and the propensity of governments with large and false majorities to enact unpopular legislation have created a lack of interest in electoral politics, especially amongst the young. When people know that their vote is useless, they find other things to do on election days. The first-past-the-post system can also have the effect of making the public vote against candidates they find totally unsuitable as opposed to the candidate they truly support. The latter effect has caused the ongoing split in the right-of-centre vote and robbed parties such as the Greens of support, where sympathizers prefer to vote against the right-of-centre parties known to have regressive environmental policies.

In local competitions where two or more candidates of similar proclivities are vying for the same seat, the vote will be split, and the candidate supporting the minority will come through the middle, as the saying goes. The winning candidate in such a competition can win with theoretically no lower percentage of the popular vote if there are sufficient credible candidates in the running. This scenario was played out in several Edmonton constituencies in the last provincial election between Liberal and NDP candidates, resulting in an apparent increase in support for the ruling Tories.

The mandate of your commission is to examine another unfair feature of the first-past-the-post system, that of electoral boundaries. The first-past-the-post system requires the voter to choose a specific person to represent them as opposed to a party. The voter may consider the candidate totally unsuitable for public office but, because he or she strongly supports the party, has to hold their nose and place an X beside the person's name. Of course, the reverse may be the case also: the voter supports the individual but finds the party platform distasteful.

As outlined on the web site of the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission, major population disparities exist between rural and urban constituencies. In the worst case cited on the web site, which is that between Calgary-Shaw and Athabasca-Wabasca, the ratio of vote weight is over 4 to 1. On average the disparity between rural and urban vote weight is about 1.5 to 1. This must not, if we are still to regard our political system as democratic, be allowed to continue. The concept of one person, one vote must be re-established. The proposal to compromise at a plus or minus 25 percent disparity above or below the provincial average is also unacceptable. Using this latter criteria would in the worst case still guarantee the rural voter 1.67 times more vote than an urban dweller.

The general excuse for retaining such disparate constituency populations is that the size of rural constituencies makes it difficult for the representative to adequately represent their constituents. In the 21st century when communication and travel are so refined, fast, and convenient, this excuse does not stand up. All representatives must spend a large proportion of their time traveling to and from Edmonton, but this elicits few complaints. Unlike when the British parliamentary system was first established, an electoral representative can now be instantly in contact with any of their constituencies. Highway and air travel now ensure that their representative can be anywhere in the province within a few hours when electronic communication is deemed inadequate.

The PR system is currently used in most of the democracies of the world, with the notable exception of Britain, Canada, and the U.S.A. The system used in Germany and New Zealand offers a compromise mixture between our local constituency system and total PR system. It's called mixed-member proportional. The voter is allowed two votes, one for a local candidate and another for a party list. Another much used PR system is the single transferable vote, in which the elector is allowed to rank several candidates in order of preference. If a candidate does not obtain a minimum of 51 percent of the popular vote, the second choice is promoted.

PR has allowed a much more diverse spectrum of political

ideology within the government which much more closely represents the political values of the electorate. Normally a single party does not acquire sufficient representation to form a government by itself. This forces the parties to create coalitions in order to govern. The great virtue of the coalition governments is in their ability to mitigate ideological extremes. Examples of such extremes, in which governments enacted legislation and policy contrary to the popular wishes, are plentiful. This type of diversion from stated policy objectives at election time was the very reason New Zealand changed to the PR system in 1995. It is valid to suggest that the present U.S. administration is representative of a minority opinion, and indeed George W. Bush was elected by fewer votes than obtained by his rival.

9:33

There are two major criticisms of proportional representation that I hope to show do not hold water. One is that the government cannot receive a sufficiently high mandate to govern, and the other is that small parties can wield too much influence.

The first one. Governments with a legitimately large representation do not deserve to have the ability to enact legislation beyond the wishes of the population or outside the promises made during election. Democracy is messy, but it can be stated that a higher voter acceptance results more from compromising party ideology than having illegitimate power to enact legislation because one can.

Examples of where Canadian governments acted outside the socially agreed framework of the mandates given to them by the electorate are the NAFTA and the GST. A PR system does not guarantee that a party will not obtain an overwhelming majority, but it does make it considerably less likely. The reverse side of this coin is that elections often produce small and ineffectual oppositions. No party should be allowed to govern without criticism, and well-written constitutions attempt to ensure that no party ends up with an abundance of power.

First-past-the-post systems often relegate as much as 50 percent of the public to having zero effective political representation, the second criteria. Small parties can become a part of government due to the frequent requirement of creating coalitions and consequently have an inordinately large influence on government policy. This happens in countries where the threshold of elector ability is low; i.e., the amount of popular vote required to achieve representation. This is easily resolved by having a high threshold of, for example, more than 5 percent popular support. The country most often cited in relation to this problem is the state of Israel, where the threshold is very low and certain religious parties hold undue sway on government action. If one in 20 people are prepared to give their support to a political party, I believe this confers the legitimacy required to hold office.

Another frequently cited flaw in the PR system is that governments can often be toppled midmandate. If the consent of the population is so narrow that the government does not have the requisite support to continue, then this is a good example of democracy working. The postwar history of Italy has seen much of this governmental instability. However, Italy has always had a very strong Communist movement, and the Cold War influence has been very strongly in opposition of allowing the far left any foothold.

Finally, allowing acceptance of the PR system is still remote in the province of Alberta. I sincerely hope your commission will make it one of your primary recommendations. Failing this, I strongly suggest that electoral boundaries be given equal parity in population regardless of geographical size.

The Chair: Thank you very much, David. I might say that I think

one of your colleagues spoke to us in Calgary.

Mr. Parker: Madelene?

The Chair: Yes, and she was as equally persuasive as you were. In addition to you people, we've had other people who have talked about the proportional representation idea also.

Okay. Who am I calling for a question? Mr. Patterson.

Mr. Patterson: I don't have a question, but I followed your presentation here as you were giving it. One of the things that I am impressed with is that you have presented three very good ideas on overcoming some of the flaws in the PR system that people use against it. So thank you.

Actually, we've had a fair number of people say that we should have some form of proportional representation. It used to be in Alberta at one time and was taken out in the 1950s.

Mr. Parker: Yeah. The B.C. Green Party is making a major effort to push for it at the present time.

Mr. Graham: Mr. Patterson, both you and your colleague have indicated to us and have made the point that the system we now have leads to voter apathy. I wonder if you're aware of what the rate of participation is in some of these European countries and, if you are aware, if you're prepared to share that with us.

Mr. Parker: There is a certain amount of apathy. We saw it recently in France, where voter turnout was very low and allowed a strong right-wing candidate to get in, but generally speaking, I'm not actually sure of the numbers of whether it does actually improve the voter turnout. I suspect it does, because as I said in my presentation, your vote is actually meaningful. It could actually elect the person you want to get elected. But thank you for that, and I will make investigations regarding how it does affect voter turnout.

Mr. Graham: Thank you.

The Chair: If you could just pass that on to Alberta Elections when you get that, that would be great.

Ms Mackay: I'm sure that as an active member of your party you know all of the lobbying techniques and so on. Are you familiar with the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, and do you know the restrictions that are placed on this group in that we can't make the kinds of recommendations that you're asking for? We can include them, I guess, in an appendix, but that won't be part of the actual recommendations. So I guess my comment to you would be that what you're looking for is some changes in the law, and that'll have to come from working through the Legislature.

Mr. Parker: Any effort that we can possibly make to get your commission or any credible organization to put these ideas forward helps the whole issue. I'm quite aware that's not your mandate. I realize that.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, David, and I do apologize for the confusion. I'm glad you're here and that we had a chance to fit you in this morning. Thank you very, very much.

Mr. Parker: Thanks for allowing me and not forcing me to change my plans for the evening.

The Chair: We're going to have a very busy evening. We have

people coming in from 7 o'clock virtually until 9, so this accommodates us too. Thank you very much.

I'd like to welcome Mr. Chris Belke. Chris is from the town of Devon and has handed out a submission for us. Chris, thank you very much for being so accommodating, and we look forward to hearing your recommendations to us. Were you here when I introduced the members?

Mr. Belke: No, I wasn't.

The Chair: Mr. Ernie Patterson, who's the mayor of Claresholm; Mr. Glen Clegg, a former Member of the Legislative Assembly for the Dunvegan area; Bauni Mackay from Edmonton, a former president of the Alberta Teachers' Association; and a prominent lawyer from the city of Calgary, Doug Graham.

Mr. Belke: Good morning. I realize that you haven't had an opportunity to read through the submission that I brought in this morning, but I'll try to be very brief. What we're trying to provide to you is the point of view of the town of Devon and how Devon sees itself and our relationship within the region. In the submission we presented three points, and I'll go over those very quickly.

One of the three points – I believe it's the second one presented – is very simple. It's probably as much an administrative issue as anything else. We're just requesting that all of the area contained within the boundaries of the town of Devon be included in one constituency.

9:43

The Chair: It's not now?

Mr. Belke: At the moment it's not. There's one quarter section of land that was annexed into the town in the mid-90s that would have to be brought in with the rest. That one quarter section of land, which is largely undeveloped at this point, is within the Drayton Valley-Calmar constituency. The population in that area shouldn't be an issue. It's basically a rural portion, but it would be good to have that all within a single constituency.

The Chair: That shouldn't be hard to accommodate, I would think.

Mr. Belke: I don't believe it would be. I hope not.

One of the points that's brought up in the submission – and there are some attachments there to show some relationships that the town of Devon has with many of our neighbouring communities. What we're trying to portray to the commission with that information is the sense of community and the relationships that we have. The town of Devon has in many situations been described as a border town. We're not like the city of Lloydminster, where we're on the edge of the map of the province. Nonetheless, when regions and boundaries are marked out on a map of the province, quite typically the North Saskatchewan River is used as a very convenient boundary. Being located on that, we find ourselves perched on the boundary of several regions. That actually tends to divide the natural community that has developed over the decades.

Currently the town of Devon is located at the far northwest corner of the Leduc constituency, and council's preference at this point is that they would prefer to maintain that relationship in whatever boundaries are proposed by the commission at the end of your review. That's council's preference. They prefer to be grouped with those communities or a similar grouping of communities. However, the information that you'll see in the submission demonstrates that we also have very strong ties and strong relationships with the communities on the other side of the river. Most specifically, just

across the river from Devon there are approximately 5,000 people who live on acreages in that area, in what is the southeast corner of Parkland county, and those residents of Parkland county tend to acquire services from the town of Devon and partake in activities in the town as well. While they're part of a different municipality, there is a very strong sense of community that includes those residents of Parkland county as well. So while council's preference is to remain with the grouping of neighbours that we're currently collected together with in the Leduc constituency, it's recognized that there are some strong ties to the Parkland area, and that would be another grouping that would not be objectionable to the town of Devon. So those are the first two points.

The third point is constituency name, and I guess that would be dependent on what the boundaries that are proposed are, but if Devon is included in a constituency that is in any way similar to the Leduc constituency that we're currently a part of, we're suggesting that a composite name rather than the name of Leduc might be appropriate. The Leduc constituency includes a portion of the city of Leduc, but it also includes the towns of Devon and Beaumont and the villages of New Sarepta and Hay Lakes, and there are over 13,000 people in the Leduc constituency who are residents of neither the city of Leduc nor Leduc county. So we're suggesting that a composite name something of the nature of perhaps Leduc-Devon-Beaumont might be more appropriate, and it might better define the areas that are included. The other point is that over half of the geographic area of Leduc county is not included in Leduc constituency, so it might provide some clarity. The composite names seem to be a lot more popular in recent years, and I think they're quite suitable.

If you have any questions, I'd be happy to address them. That's really our three points. I think we have a good understanding of what the role and the mandate of the commission is, and I personally have a good understanding of the challenges that are involved in playing around with the boundaries. I've done similar things with electoral boundaries with counties through my work with the province, so I recognize the challenges involved in doing that. We're not here to tell you what the boundaries should be. We're just hoping we can give you some information that we think is relevant when you decide where those boundaries should or could fall.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Chris, you're involved with the town in what capacity?

Mr. Belke: I'm a councillor with the town of Devon.

The Chair: Oh, very good. Excellent.

Well, we'll let the mayor of Claresholm, followed by Mr. Clegg, have at you.

Mr. Patterson: Well, I just wanted to say, Mr. Chair, that this is really helpful when you come and tell us about a discrepancy with part of your town not being in, because in our processes it could easily end up not being rectified or being overlooked.

Have you consulted at all with the other communities about this name change?

Mr. Belke: In informal discussions with members of the county council some of their members have been made aware of this, and the town of Beaumont has been, again not through formal correspondence but through informal discussions. They seem, at least initially, amenable to the suggestion.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you.

Mr. Clegg: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Chris, if my memory is right, I think that last time there was a lot of discussion between Stony Plain and Leduc about where Devon would go. You're in Leduc now, but your second choice would be to go to Stony Plain. I haven't got it in front of me right now – I have those statistics – but I believe that both of those areas are a plus. They're probably a little bit too large for what our mandate is. Your third choice would be to go with Drayton Valley. Now, of course Drayton Valley, if my memory is right, is not enough people, but that's not your choice, to go with them. It would be either – and correct me if I'm wrong – to stay where you are or go with Stony Plain. We haven't looked at the boundaries but just generally speaking.

Mr. Belke: Yeah, that would be correct. Council's first preference would be to remain with the grouping we are with. In terms of consistency I think there's a bit of a value there, and quite frankly I think it's one of those situations of: it's not broken, so why fix it? I think that's part of the way it's regarded.

Certainly you're correct, Mr. Clegg, that that would be our first choice. Our second choice would be inclusion in the area that's currently the Parkland area, and our third choice would be Drayton Valley-Calmar. Historically, three elections ago we were part of the Drayton Valley-Calmar constituency, and the boundary changes at that time, when we were moved into the Leduc constituency, were largely regarded quite positively by the population, at least within the town of Devon.

Mr. Clegg: Thank you.

Ms Mackay: In terms of travel and where people go to shop and so on, do people from Devon tend to go to Leduc rather than Spruce Grove and Stony Plain, or is it sort of half and half? That's not a big deal, or is it?

Mr. Belke: In terms of commercial activity, like for shopping patterns, I think you get a split in both directions. I would guess that Leduc probably gets a bit more than Stony Plain in terms of commercial traffic. In terms of employment patterns and commuting patterns for residents of the town of Devon a regional study that was done a few years ago indicates that approximately a third work in the city of Edmonton, which isn't surprising. If anything, it's probably surprising how low the number is for a town in the proximity it is to the city. About a third work in the airport or Nisku area, and about a third work locally in Devon or other areas.

Ms Mackay: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Graham: Thank you very much. It's been very helpful.

Mr. Belke: Okay. I hope so. Thank you.

The Chair: I thought it was a very skillful presentation, and Mr. Clegg picked up on it when he was talking about first preference, second preference, third preference. I think several of us are aware of the discussions that have been back and forth over the years. I appreciate your presentation, Chris, and thank you very much for accommodating us by moving ahead. It's very much appreciated.

Mr. Belke: Not a problem. I hope that helps anyway.

The Chair: It does. Thank you very much.

We're very pleased to welcome Heather Klimchuk. Heather is the president of the Edmonton-Glenora PC Association. Heather, Mayor Ernie Patterson from Claresholm, Glen Clegg from Dunvegan, Bauni

Mackay from Edmonton, and Doug Graham from Calgary.

Thank you very much for coming this morning. We look forward to hearing your presentation, and I'm sure we'll have some questions for you.

9:53

Mrs. Klimchuk: Okay. Great. Thank you very much, and good morning, everyone. Thank you for consenting to see me. I am the president of the Edmonton-Glenora PC Association. The constituency of Edmonton-Glenora consists of a number of cohesive communities. These include Mayfield, High Park, McQueen, North Glenora, Westglen, Glenora, Grovenor, Brightview, Canora, Britannia Youngstown, Westlawn, and Glenwood. Glenora is only one of these communities. The current riding name does not reflect the diversity of the previously mentioned neighbourhoods. These are all well-established, older communities each with its own unique historical characteristics.

It is the board's recommendation that this constituency be renamed Edmonton-Percy Page to acknowledge the legacy of the Hon. J. Percy Page. Mr. Page was a Lieutenant Governor of Alberta from 1959 to 1966. He was a member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta for many years and was also elected to the Edmonton public school board. Mr. Page was a teacher by profession and was a renowned coach of the famous Edmonton Grads basketball team. Mr. Page and his family resided in the constituency of Edmonton-Glenora for many years at 10312 - 133rd Street.

The precedent of using historical figures has been established with constituencies like Edmonton-McClung and Edmonton-Rutherford, and there are probably more that I have not mentioned here. It is our understanding that Mr. Page's contributions have been acknowledged in other ways, and we believe that this further tribute to this remarkable man is necessary. The Edmonton-Glenora Progressive Conservative Association recommends that the constituency of Edmonton-Glenora be renamed Edmonton-Percy Page.

I would just like to add that there are a number of other worthy people or historical figures that we could name. A few come to mind. This is a starting point for us. For a number of years this has been an issue that has kind of niggled at our group. We figure that we want to have a name that is more broadly recognized for the whole riding rather than just one little community, and we think that if it's someone with a recognizable name like Percy Page or even perhaps the hon. Lou Hyndman – I spoke with him, and he is definitely in support of changing our name as well.

So this is our starting point, and if you have any questions, I'd be pleased to answer them. Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much. When I was first sworn in as a member of the Legislature back I'm sure before you were among us, Dr. Page swore me in. He was the Lieutenant Governor of the province.

The Edmonton Grads are rather legendary – aren't they? – in sporting teams around the world.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Yes. Right.

Ms Mackay: Hi. I'm a resident of Edmonton-Glenora, and I sit on the Liberal constituency board, so this is where I'm coming from. I actually think that the name change is kind of a good idea, and I'm fully supportive. I'm more interested, however, in what your association would think in terms of changing any boundaries of that constituency. In other words, if we have to in order to increase the population, what suggestions would your association have?

Mrs. Klimchuk: I guess the most natural suggestion is that of taking back some of the area that we had eight years ago. That would be the areas of Crestview, Laurier, all the way up to the river valley there, then making sure that Riverview stays on the other side of the river, respecting the natural boundary, taking just those communities we used to have. That would be a natural kind of evolution of Glenora, still keeping the current part up to 111th Avenue, 124th Street, 170th Street, but taking Crestview and all that little nook kind of in there around the river valley. To me that would be a natural. You know, we had those before for many years, as I'm sure you're aware. That's something that we're concerned about, the natural boundaries and the community of communities. The communities on this side of the river versus the other side of the river: very different and diverse interests.

As well, it doesn't really affect us, but we know with the Riverview constituency office that access for the people when they want to meet with their MLA is very important, and that can be quite difficult. Certainly our current boundaries are good, and if we took that part that we used to have, it would be a natural evolution there.

Ms Mackay: Okay. Thanks.

The Chair: We have had some representation to us that if rather we were to increase the numbers in the core ridings, we perhaps wouldn't have as many difficulties with the ridings where the growth is so great. I look at Edmonton-Glenora, and it looks like minus 12. Just pulling a figure out of the air, if we were to say that we aim kind of for plus five or plus 10, if your association were interested and if you'd look at that idea and get back to us with some suggestions, that would be really helpful. Not every riding is so fortunate as to have someone sitting on the panel, but it would be really very helpful if you'd do that for us.

Mrs. Klimchuk: I know that within Glenora – and Bauni is probably aware of it as well – there have been a number of infill projects going on. We're getting some condominiums. We're getting some projects like that, but we do not have the growth problems that are happening in Whitemud or some of those areas, and I think that as a board we want to try to take more so that those other constituencies can continue to grow and that four years from now we're not in the position of being so overpopulated in some of those ridings. So we're just trying to take a broad view of this.

I don't know if the name change has been something that has been brought forward before by other groups, but I think it's something where if all political parties could agree on a name, it would be very helpful.

The Chair: Maybe you could take the initiative and consult with your colleagues in the ND Party. It seems to me that you have more than a smidgeon amount of support here from the Liberals, and we could just move on that.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Okay. Great.

The Chair: Any other questions or comments?

Mr. Graham: I'd just like to say that I have quite an athletic daughter, and I think this is a terrific idea.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chair, one of Mr. Page's former players lives in Claresholm. I've met the gentleman, and the term "gentleman" really did apply to him.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Yes, that's what I hear. I'm very involved in the historical component of the Glenora area with Marri-Anne Fedory and a number of people, so when I look at someone that kind of represents all of our area – we just thought he was a good choice. I know that he has been acknowledged in other ways, with buildings and through parks and recreation, but I think this would be the icing on the cake.

The Chair: Good. Any other questions or comments?
Thank you very much, Heather.

Mr. Opstad: Say, Bob, I have . . .

The Chair: We're not having questions from the audience; I'm sorry.

Mr. Opstad: Oh, no. It was just a special request.

The Chair: Well, a special request is a question. I have to be dictatorial and miserable and tough, and I just can't do that. I'm sorry.

Thank you very, very much, Heather. I'm sure you'll take the opportunity to talk to the members, because we're going to have a five-minute break. Thank you very, very much, Heather. Appreciate it.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you for your time.

The Chair: Okay; I see it's 5 to 10. Dr. Ian Reid hasn't sped in yet, so we'll wait until 10 o'clock.

Thank you very much. We'll take a 10-minute break.

[The commission adjourned from 10:02 a.m. to 10:22 a.m.]

The Chair: Okay. Carolyn Machell is here. She was going to make a presentation to us at 11 o'clock, but she's generously agreed to move ahead because one of the presenters hasn't arrived.

Carolyn, Mayor Ernie Patterson from the town of Claresholm; Glen Clegg, who formerly was a member of the Legislature for Dunvegan.

Miss Machell: Yes, I remember.

The Chair: We were talking back there about your knowing the north well.

Miss Machell: Yes.

The Chair: Bauni Mackay, former president of the Alberta Teachers' Association.

Miss Machell: Hi, Bauni.

Ms Mackay: Hi.

The Chair: And Doug Graham is a well-respected lawyer from the city of Calgary.

Miss Machell: Hello, Doug.

The Chair: Carolyn, if you would make your presentation to us, and then I'm sure we'll have some questions or comments.

Miss Machell: Thank you. I most certainly will. In some of my

report, in the middle of it, I'm being a little facetious, so just bear that in mind.

The Chair: We've had others be facetious with us. Go ahead, please.

Miss Machell: Thank you. Electoral boundary reforms. Concerns: number 1, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian Constitution; number 2, commonality; number 3, the conclusion; and number 4, new ridings for the north.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. As the boundaries stand, they are in direct violation of the Charter. We do not have enough representation by population, as guaranteed in the Charter and as encompassed by the Canadian Constitution.

Number 2, commonality. All too often when electoral boundaries are drafted, people are forced into ridiculous situations because someone somewhere decided to divide a pie without realizing the geophysical populace ramifications of what they were doing. An example of this I'm sure is any one of the ridings as they now exist. Again, I'm being a little facetious here, but I do think that all of the ridings need to be looked at, and I'm sure you are in the process of doing that.

In Edmonton-Riverview, for example, a natural boundary is the North Saskatchewan River, which cuts right through the riding now. When you look at the maps, it doesn't necessarily reflect the geophysical properties of the riding. Therefore, this would not be evident to everyone. Rarely do people radiate north-south across the river in this riding. I'm recommending that they divide this riding into two ridings, the river separating them. The people on the north side of the river have more in common with Edmonton-Glenora and Edmonton-Meadowlark. The people on the south side have more in common and radiate to Edmonton-Strathcona and Edmonton-Whitemud. I'm just using Edmonton-Riverview for an example because I worked in there with Linda Sloan when she ran, and there was a lot of good work done in there.

In Grande Prairie-Smoky and Grande Prairie-Wapiti the regional boundaries are unfair geophysically and demographically, as is true of Peace River, Lesser Slave Lake, and Athabasca-Wabasca as well. To get from one end of the riding to another is nearly impossible for an MLA in these northern regions and also for a lot of people.

I'm wondering why Livingstone-Macleod was not combined with Cardston-Taber-Warner. Here is where my facetiousness comes in. Please, I'm just joking. Is it because the Oldman River is flowing between them or because the member of the party in power might have forfeited his seat? I'm being facetious. We did learn how to effectively cut the opposition in half: just combine their ridings. These boundaries cut the Liberal opposition in half in the city of Edmonton when they first were introduced in 1996. Again, you know, it's just me joking on this.

The Chair: We accept it that way. I should tell you, Carolyn, that two of the members of the panel were appointed by the Executive Council, and two of them have been appointed by the Leader of the Opposition with consultation. I thought I'd better tell you that.

Miss Machell: I know. I'm sure that there's good representation all the way around.

The Chair: I can vouch for that.

Miss Machell: There's fairness here; that's for sure.

I think a much fairer system is the one that the city of Edmonton has with the ward system, where two councillors are elected for each ward with the top two candidates going to city council. It means that

the parties have to work together for the common good of the people. Two MLAs per riding is a very fair method of government.

Conclusion. The old boundaries were much more equality-effective and softer on the population. New softer boundaries are needed along with more ridings, not less, and more representation per population. I'm recommending two MLAs per riding and more ridings as befits the population and in accordance with the Canadian Constitution.

Number 4, new ridings. Number one, Edmonton-Riverview north, and number two, Edmonton-Riverview south. Number 3, Athabasca: the 25th baseline to the border of Alberta and Northwest Territories, keeping the existing boundaries east and west. Number 4, Wabasca-Fort McMurray: the 10th baseline to the 25th baseline and the 4th and 5th meridians. Number 5, Lesser Slave Lake: from the 18th baseline to the 27th baseline, the boundaries east and west as are. Number 6, Little Buffalo: a new riding from the 27th baseline to the Northwest Territories border, the boundaries east and west as are. Number 7, Peace River: north to the 27th baseline from the 6th meridian just past the town of High Level. Number 8, Hay River: a new riding formerly belonging to Peace River. The boundary is the B.C. border, the Northwest Territories border along the 27th baseline to the 6th meridian, then north to 28.2 baseline, then east to block 12 between the 5th and 6th meridians, and north to the border. I strongly recommend that they look at all of them. That is my report.

Thank you very much for letting us speak on this. I wish you the very, very best, and if I can help with anything, I certainly will. I haven't looked really at all of the rest of the province yet, but certainly in the city of Edmonton we need to have some changes. Edmonton-Manning should be looked at too, and Edmonton-Whitemud needs it also.

The Chair: While you're looking, you can also look at Sherwood Park, because Sherwood Park is well up there also.

Miss Machell: Yes, it is. Thank you very, very much.

The Chair: Oh, you can't escape that easily.

Miss Machell: All right. Questions; okay.

The Chair: Could I make a comment just to start with? I'm sure Mr. Clegg, who's from the north, will look at your suggestions for the north. The law presently allows us to have four ridings with a 50 percent variance. There are only two at this time: Athabasca-Wabasca and Lesser Slave Lake. So you are the first person to kind of help us redraw the north, if I could put it that way.

Miss Machell: Adjust the boundaries there. Okay.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chair, I'll make a little comment on Livingstone-Macleod and Cardston-Taber-Warner. If you combine the two ridings, it would be over 60,000 people on the statistics. I would like to point out to you that in the last Electoral Boundaries Commission there was Cardston-Chief Mountain, which had about 6,000 people in it. That was eliminated as a special constituency, and part of it went into Livingstone-Macleod and part of it went into Cardston-Taber-Warner. I happen to reside in Livingstone-Macleod, and at the moment we even recognize that it's under in population, as is Cardston-Taber-Warner.

The other thing that I would point out since I'm not from the city of Calgary: Calgary-Shaw is way up at 85,000.

Miss Machell: Yes, it is. It's very high.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you.

Mr. Clegg: Well, thank you, Carolyn, for this brief. It certainly helps me in my job, representing the north. My question is to you. If I'm reading it right, then you're recommending more MLAs.

Miss Machell: Yes, that's true.

Mr. Clegg: We've heard a lot of briefs already in Calgary and Olds and Red Deer, and they're saying that we've got too many now. Can you justify your comments on having more MLAs?

Miss Machell: Oh, yes. I certainly can.

The Chair: Please do.

10:32

Miss Machell: I'm sort of nonpartisan now, but I was with the Liberal opposition when they were effectively cut almost in half when Laurence Decore was in. They had 32 when the boundary changes were made. Of course, that cut them right in half, down to about 18.

I also was one of the people that phoned in in 1989 and recommended to Laurence Decore, when the city of Edmonton was planning to divide up the city and have more wards, that they might twin the wards and have two councillors per ward rather than having 12 wards. They went with it, and we've had very effective municipal government in the city of Edmonton as a result because the parties were working together and the people had a choice. You know, if one person didn't like something, well, they could go to the other person. It works very, very well. It provides a different form of government, but it's more democratic. It's very much more effective.

Because of the population base Alberta has grown in numbers. It's gone up. You may have a small group populacewise, but there are also disparities in the way the area is geographically and geophysically. We have to look at people. We have to look at what caused, for example, Thorsby and Drayton Valley to have problems between them. Can we really unite those two, you know, within a constituency or something? Not that that shouldn't be worked out anyway, but there sometimes can be these little pocket problems that have to be looked at as well.

I'm more concerned with the geography and with more representation per population base. So we have a smaller riding with a smaller number of people. It doesn't mean that they shouldn't have maybe the same kind of representation as well.

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

Mr. Graham: I just want to thank you for a very thoughtful and detailed presentation. These things are very helpful to us.

Miss Machell: Thank you very, very much.

The Chair: You're the first person who has talked about the idea of having two MLAs per constituency. The province of British Columbia used to have that years ago; they don't now. It's an interesting suggestion.

Thank you very, very much, Carolyn. We appreciate your help.

Miss Machell: You're very welcome, and thank you very much.

The Chair: I'd like to welcome Mr. Brian Mason and John Kolkman, representing the ND Party. On my far right is the mayor

of Claresholm for some 33 years, Ernie Patterson; Glen Clegg, whom you both have known and experienced – I think that's a nice way of putting it – as the former MLA for Dunvegan; Bauni Mackay, whom I know you know, the former president of the Alberta Teachers' Association and from Edmonton; and Doug Graham, a lawyer from the city of Calgary.

Brian, we look forward to your presentation, and I know that you'll tell us what you think.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman, and I certainly do appreciate the opportunity to make a presentation on behalf of the Alberta New Democrats. We do appreciate the challenges that are faced by this commission, and in our presentation we try to outline the principles that should guide the commission as it sets about the important task of redrawing the province's electoral map. These principles include reducing existing population variances between electoral divisions to ensure relative equality of votes, setting clear and understandable boundaries, incorporating socioeconomic characteristics when considering effective representation, and options for ensuring effective representation of geographically large constituencies.

It's clear that the growth of the city of Calgary over the past number of years may well require the commission to add additional seats to accommodate its growing population.

The Chair: I see in your brief to us, Brian, that you've said "two." Is that still your view? I guess I'm putting you on the spot awfully; aren't I?

Mr. Mason: It's our opinion on the numbers, and it's based on the calculations that we've done in terms of the growth. We don't want to, I guess, do the commission's work, so we're just using it as a working assumption.

The Chair: We aren't proud. We need all the help we can get.

Mr. Mason: We believe that these seats ought not to come at the expense of Edmonton. The city of Edmonton should maintain its current number of constituencies in the provincial Legislature. The population of the average Edmonton constituency is very close to the provincial average taken as a whole. There are certain constituencies that are very much larger and a larger number of constituencies that are somewhat below. On average if you take the population of all of the seats of Edmonton, you would find that it's only about 2 percent below the provincial average, whereas if Edmonton were to lose a seat, the average population of Edmonton constituencies would then be about 4 percent above the provincial average. So taken as a whole, if Edmonton retains the number of seats it currently has, it is closer to the provincial average than if one seat is lost.

Section 15(1) of Alberta's electoral boundaries legislation allows for variances of up to 25 percent above or below the average population of all electoral divisions, and we believe that constituencies should be as equal as possible in population with due regard for municipal and neighbourhood boundaries. Variances of up to 10 percent above or below average are sufficient to accommodate these community interests. The provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba and the cities of Edmonton and Calgary all restrict variances to 10 percent or less when redrawing electoral boundaries. Allowing variances of close to 25 percent in a significant number of ridings tilts voting power toward some citizens at the expense of others. Population variances close to 25 percent should be very much the exception, in our view, when setting electoral boundaries. We believe that the 10 percent average should

be the rule in all but very exceptional cases.

Edmonton and Calgary have clear neighbourhood boundaries that should be strictly adhered to when setting boundaries for electoral divisions. Moreover, groups of neighbourhoods in these cities form districts such as the historical Strathcona district, which incorporates several neighbourhoods along Whyte Avenue. These historical districts in which several neighbourhoods share a common interest should be adhered to when setting boundaries for electoral divisions. Moreover, the Highlands constituency boundary currently divides the historical district of Beverly in half by following 118th Avenue east to the city boundary. Since Highlands is 10.9 percent below average in population, adding the north Beverly neighbourhoods of Beacon Heights, Bergman, and Abbotsfield to the Highlands constituency would actually enhance their community of interests. The boundaries of Highlands would then follow the Yellowhead Trail CNR right-of-way from 50th Street to Victoria Trail.

The commission should, in correcting population imbalances, look for opportunities to better reflect community of interests when setting electoral boundaries. Section 14 specifically says that the commission is allowed to take other considerations into account and not be restricted to only those listed in the act. If the geographic sizes of some rural constituencies pose challenges for effective representation, then so do high levels of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, and linguistic diversity among urban communities. For example, 31 percent of Edmonton-Norwood residents do not speak English in the home, making communication with their MLA more difficult. Typically, rural constituencies have fewer than 10 percent of residents who do not speak English at home.

Moreover – and we're just using Edmonton-Norwood as an example – residents there have family incomes 38 percent below the provincial average and therefore are more dependent on government services and therefore more dependent on the office of the MLA. By contrast, Edmonton-Whitemud residents have family incomes 56 percent above the provincial average. All other things being equal, it may be more difficult to effectively represent a constituency like Edmonton-Norwood than Edmonton-Whitemud, for example.

10:42

The commission should therefore also take into account ethnic and linguistic diversity as well as the incidence of poverty and unemployment when establishing boundaries for electoral divisions. Section 15(2) allows up to four constituencies to have populations up to 50 percent below the provincial average. The New Democrats believe that there should be as few special consideration constituencies as possible. The previous Electoral Boundaries Commission established only two such constituencies even though four are permitted by the act.

One of the two constituencies created by the previous commission is Athabasca-Wabasca. This constituency completely surrounds the booming community of Fort McMurray, that is now above the provincial average in population. Fort McMurray recently dissolved itself into the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo. An opportunity therefore exists to take some residents from Fort McMurray and add them to the Athabasca-Wabasca constituency, thereby bringing up its population more towards the average. The commission should establish constituencies with populations up to 50 percent below the provincial average only in truly exceptional cases where no other alternative exists.

I'll conclude by making a few brief comments on what Alberta's new electoral map ought to look like. The existing electoral map is based on the 1991 federal census. Alberta's population increased by 428,000 individuals in the 10 years since then. However, the growth has not been evenly distributed. Calgary and its surrounding area grew at a rate above the provincial average. Edmonton and the

regional centres of Red Deer, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Grande Prairie, and Fort McMurray grew at about the provincial average. The rest of Alberta had below average growth rates. Within Edmonton and Calgary suburban areas tended to grow faster than established neighbourhoods, naturally enough.

There is no need to change the number of electoral divisions in the city of Edmonton from the current 19. The existing number of constituencies results in the population of the average Edmonton constituency being closest to the provincial average. Eliminating even one seat would result in the average Edmonton constituency being further from the provincial average. However, after a pause in the early 1990s Edmonton's population is once again growing rapidly, as is evidenced by the number of recent housing starts.

Based on the 2001 census, the 15 smallest constituencies in population are all rural ridings outside the Edmonton/Calgary corridor. Particularly low in population are constituencies in the rural north, except Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray, and in the rural eastern parts of the province. These 15 constituencies range from 14.9 percent to 42.3 percent below the provincial average in population, well below the 10 percent variance which we recommend. To ensure relative equality in voting power, a net loss of two seats in rural Alberta is required to correct the underrepresentation of Calgary in the Legislature. In other words, a number of already large geographic constituencies are likely to get even larger.

We're sympathetic to the difficulty of representing geographically large constituencies. However, we urge the commission to consider alternatives to addressing these challenges other than unduly diluting the voting power of urban voters. We therefore recommend that the MLAs representing large rural constituencies may receive additional funding to pay for satellite constituency offices, additional staff, and to cover travel costs inside the constituency. Also included in the New Democrats' written submission are comments on suggested future revisions to the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act that fall outside the mandate of this commission. I invite you to review those comments as well.

To conclude, your commission has a challenging and difficult task. The New Democrats hope that this presentation has been helpful in that regard, and I'd be pleased to answer any questions that you may have. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Very thought provoking. One thing I appreciated very much is that you didn't beat around the bush. You came forward and said what you think should happen, and that's extremely helpful to the commission.

Glen.

Mr. Clegg: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks, Brian, for the wonderful brief. You did say – and I think it was about Edmonton-Norwood – that 31 percent of the voters do not speak English in their house. We have been talking about this, to give a plus or a minus. Of those 31 percent, what percent of those people that speak languages other than English in their house could in fact speak English if they have to? Now, I can remember when I took over Falher-Donnelly-Girouxville. Most of that area speaks French. I don't speak French, but I got a couple of letters written in French. I quickly wrote back in English and said: don't send me any more French letters, because I can't read them. What percent of that 31 percent – it has been a discussion we've had both in Calgary and different ridings that there is a problem. I know that there is a lot less than the 31 percent that can truly speak English.

Mr. Mason: Well, I think that's true. I don't have exact figures. Obviously, the children are the first to learn the language when

immigrants come. Sometimes the parents take an awful lot longer time to learn English. I know that in Edmonton-Highlands we deal with people who don't have English at all. Often they will get their children to help translate, and we sometimes are able to find volunteers that can help us with that a little bit. I'm making assumptions here, but the French-Canadian population in Alberta goes back a long time, and I think that it's generally thoroughly bilingual. New immigrants are a different situation. It's very dynamic and fluid. They come here and they may not speak English at all, but within a few years they've learned some, and then a new group of immigrants will come, perhaps from a different country. So it's always dynamic, but it's always challenging, and it's not limited to one language. There are actually many languages involved.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you, Brian, for submitting this very thorough overview and not only looking at Edmonton but the rest of the province. That's appreciated.

You say: take socioeconomic factors into account. Could you elaborate a little bit more on the economic aspect of how that may affect your work as an MLA?

Mr. Mason: Certainly. I can contrast it with my work as a city councillor. When I represented northeast Edmonton on city council for a number of years, the primary people I dealt with were homeowners. They wanted their sidewalk fixed or they wanted an improvement to their garbage pickup service or they had some very specific thing, and they also tended to be voters. In Edmonton-Highlands the type of people that my office deals with are very often people who are dependent on provincial services: social services recipients, WCB recipients, AISH recipients. Those tend to be the group, and they are a lower income group than I was used to dealing with at the city. They also are less likely to be voters and in fact sometimes less likely to be citizens. So there's a difference because of the kinds of things that the provincial government does, the services it offers, as well as the geographical location of my constituency. I deal with quite a different group.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you.

The Chair: I'd say to the members of the panel that because of the fact that we only have two more presenters until noon, I'm going to allow Mr. Mason a bit more time. I know that may upset some people, but he does represent a political party. The chair is going to give him an extra opportunity to be persuasive to us. I may get beaten around after, Mr. Mason, but that's the way I'd like to do it.

Mr. Mason: I appreciate the risks you're running for us, Mr. Chairman.

Ms Mackay: Thanks for the presentation, Mr. Mason. I think that you've made some really good points. Edmonton is going to be probably a particular challenge for us, mainly because although we know that Edmonton is continuing to grow at a really high rate now, before the 2001 census that growth wasn't so great. Consequently, there are several constituencies where the population has actually gone down, or at least there are four where it's gone down, and there are certainly several that are minus relative to the provincial average. So I guess I'm looking for some really concrete suggestions from you.

One of the questions I would ask is: were you suggesting that instead of applying sort of a blanket formula to the whole city, we could actually be looking at having a different variance applied to constituencies within the city, just within Edmonton, based on the

nature of the population in that constituency, based on socioeconomic status and immigration and all those things you said?

10:52

Mr. Mason: Our overriding principle is that the constituency should be as close as possible to the average in population. To us that's the main issue, but we were trying to illustrate that as a counterpoint to the well-known difficulties of representing a large rural riding, there are additional internal difficulties to some constituencies, particularly those in inner-city areas. They tend to be areas where the population is static or even declining a little bit, where you've got lots of new immigrants and special problems. So we're not arguing that we should necessarily allow a much wider variance for something like Edmonton-Norwood, only trying to bring to bear some of the special issues that MLAs may be involved with there.

Ms Mackay: I'm sure you're familiar with the matrix that the last commission used if you've read that report of the last commission. You have, John? Okay. There are several variables in there, and that would be my next question. What variables, then, would you make sure were in a matrix that would take care of the concerns that you're talking about in terms of the whole province if we were trying to put this on some kind of a mathematical basis? Maybe, John, since you're familiar with this . . .

Mr. Mason: It's a little bit too technical for me, so I'll ask John.

Mr. Kolkman: Just to maybe illustrate concretely what we may be talking about. We contrasted Edmonton-Norwood with Edmonton-Whitemud for a very good reason. I know that the last commission kind of took the view that the average suburban riding in Edmonton should perhaps be, let's say, 10 percent below average in population whereas a more established neighbourhood should be 10 percent above, based on the belief that a suburban riding like Edmonton-Whitemud was going to grow more quickly than the inner-city riding was going to grow. So maybe at the midpoint of when the new boundaries were in effect, their populations would even out.

I guess that if we're making an argument, perhaps instead of having Edmonton-Whitemud 10 percent below average in population and Edmonton-Norwood 10 percent above, maybe they should be roughly equal in population, you know, to reflect the fact that from a socioeconomic standpoint it's more difficult and more challenging to represent a riding such as Edmonton-Norwood compared to a riding such as Edmonton-Whitemud, which is more socioeconomically affluent than certainly is the case with Edmonton-Norwood and where there are fewer constituents who, for example, rely on government services, where there are fewer people, perhaps, that have language barriers and so on. So I think that's how I would answer the question. Perhaps you should look at making a riding like Edmonton-Norwood pretty much equal in population to Edmonton-Whitemud rather than making Edmonton-Whitemud smaller in population.

Ms Mackay: Okay. I understand that.

Then I have one more if that's okay, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Sure. Yes.

Ms Mackay: If, for example, there was a sort of mathematical limit in either direction put on Calgary ridings, should we then be using the same kind of limitation, whether it's increasing, decreasing, or whatever – with a number in mind of, let's say, 40,000 per constituency – and applying that, then, to Edmonton in

fairness?

The Chair: That's not so technical. You get to answer that one, Brian.

Mr. Mason: Well, it's not that technical, but I may still have a little struggle with it. The question is basically: do you apply sort of a standard population size to constituencies? Generally, I think that's one of our main points, but I think you need to also take a look at populations of cities as a whole as well as individual constituencies. So in taking a look at the population of Edmonton as a whole, if it was set at the provincial average divided by the number of constituencies in Edmonton now, we would be about 2 and a half percent below provincial average per constituency. If a seat was removed from Edmonton, the average Edmonton constituency would be about 4 percent above. So we're closer to the average if we keep our seats in Edmonton, and that's the argument I'm trying to make.

Ms Mackay: Well, thank you for your answers. I wasn't trying to put you on the spot. I just truly want some help here, because it is a really big challenge.

The Chair: Mr. Graham.

Mr. Graham: Thank you. Mr. Mason, you've spoken of the challenges of dealing with inner-city ridings, some of those challenges being socioeconomic, having to do with income levels and language, which makes it more difficult for the MLA to access the constituent. You've given us some figures, for instance, for some of these inner-city ridings. I wonder whether you have had an opportunity or whether you have access to any comparable figures for, I'm thinking, some of these northern ridings on income – in other words, dependence on government services – numbers of people that don't have the same language, poverty levels for some of these far northern ridings, that sort of thing. What are they like?

Mr. Kolkman: I don't actually. I mean, the numbers we're relying on, you know, the source of this information, is information that's put out by Alberta Treasury, and they basically superimpose StatsCan data on provincial electoral divisions. We assume that the information is fairly accurate. The least affluent riding in the province by any measure is Edmonton-Norwood. The second least affluent riding is Edmonton-Highlands. In fact I would say, if my memory serves, that the top half dozen least affluent ridings by these kinds of measures were all in the inner cities of Edmonton and Calgary. There are a couple of Calgary ridings as well that are significantly below average socioeconomically, one of them I recall being Calgary-East. Then you do get into some of the rural ridings in the north. The two that would jump out would be Athabasca-Wabasca and Lesser Slave Lake. They would probably be more in the nine or 10 or something like that. I'm kind of going by memory a little bit.

The other ridings that are in more of the agricultural areas, like in the Peace country, are closer to the provincial average. Looking for two that are a bit below, it probably would be Lesser Slave Lake and Athabasca-Wabasca. Both of those ridings have significant aboriginal populations as well, as do sort of inner-city ridings in Edmonton and Calgary.

The Chair: I'd like to ask a couple of questions. When we get looking at the downtown area in Edmonton, Brian, we have Edmonton-Norwood at minus 14, Edmonton-Highlands at minus 11 – I'll give you this map after so you can tell us – and Edmonton-

Gold Bar at minus 13. Whatever target, whether it's 10 percent or whatever, that we pick, crudely put, we have to find some people to deal with the challenge there. I'm leading to the question of – on the east is Sherwood Park at plus 30 percent. What's your sense or what's the wisdom or what guidance, suggestion, or whatever do you want to pass on to us if we were to include part of Sherwood Park in the east side of Edmonton?

Mr. Mason: Yikes.

The Chair: Do you want to think about it and get back?

Mr. Mason: I might. I know that when I sat on city council and the last commission came forward with 'rurban' ridings . . .

The Chair: We're not amalgamating here.

Mr. Mason: Well, yeah. They came forward with 'rurban,' and the council took a fairly strong position against that. I think that if it's possible to organize within municipal boundaries, it should be done. Only if you have a really perplexing problem that you're dealing with should you consider letting the constituencies cross boundaries of municipalities, particularly some of the larger cities.

The Chair: I appreciate what you're saying. I'm not sure that you've helped us, but I appreciate what you're saying. If you have some time, look at the Norwood-Highlands-Gold Bar area, because we're going to have to find some people for those areas if we take your advice or other advice. I know it's dealing with constituencies of all parties, and it would be nice to have some comfort from somebody other than us giving us some suggestions there, because we're going to be damned if we do and damned if we don't. But we have to do something there, so if you and John and your people have some suggestions in that area, please get back to us.

Mr. Mason: Sure.

The Chair: We'd need to have that before the last week in June.

Mr. Mason: We'll look at that. We have looked at it, and obviously the constituencies of Edmonton-Whitemud, I think some of the Mill Woods constituencies, and I believe Edmonton-Castle Downs are above in population.

The Chair: Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Mason: Edmonton-Manning, yes. So those would be the places to start.

The Chair: Well, if you would finish, that would be great, and give us some suggestions there.

Any other questions of Brian and John? Ernie.

Mr. Patterson: I have just one more, Mr. Chair. You're the first presenter to point out about the sitting of the Legislature, which of course is one of the factors outlined in the act, the distance from the Legislature. But you're the first presenter to point out that the Legislature lasted only 37 days and maybe 12 more days in the fall, and I just thought that is significant because the act we're working under says that this is one of the factors. I just wondered if you wanted to say anything more about that.

Mr. Mason: Well, I guess the shortness of the sittings in Alberta means that people traveling long distances only have to reside in Edmonton for relatively short periods of time. From that point of

view, I can drive to work in 20 minutes, so it's not something that I'm directly familiar with.

Mr. Patterson: I just thought that with the act pointing out the distances and then you're saying this here . . . Thank you.

Mr. Mason: I know that government MLAs have a lot of ongoing committee work as well, but I think it's clear that the preference of many MLAs is for short, intense sessions so that they can spend as much time as possible in their constituencies.

11:02

Mr. Kolkman: Just to maybe supplement that if I may. It is in the act that you consider distance from Edmonton as a possible reason for allowing a variance of up to 50 percent below the provincial average, and we were simply pointing out that we presumed that that's a relevant consideration because of the distance required to travel to Edmonton. We were simply making the point that in Alberta our Legislature sittings tend to be quite short in duration, and perhaps not too much weight should be given to that particular variable as a justification for allowing a variance of up to 50 percent below average.

Mr. Graham: I have just one further question. You don't have to answer if you don't want, but I didn't really hear an answer to Bauni's question. I think the question was: is there any reason that you're aware of that the constituencies in Edmonton should be smaller, bigger, or the same size as constituencies in Calgary?

Mr. Mason: Well, I think I did answer it, and I think our principle is generally that constituencies should be as close to the provincial average as possible, but I think you need to take into account the representation of cities as a whole rather than just look at it as a bunch of individual constituencies. I was making the point that in Edmonton as a whole the constituencies on average will be closer to the provincial average if it retains the seats that it currently has than if one is removed. That was the point I was trying to make.

But in answer to your question, yes, constituencies should as much as possible be the same in population. That's our view.

Mr. Graham: Thank you.

Mr. Clegg: Just a quick comment. I was the MLA for Dunvegan, and there were two weeks in a year that I was not in Edmonton for committee meetings or sittings. I didn't keep track every year, but it would average between 45 and 50 trips to Edmonton every year if you're a government MLA.

The Chair: Could I summarize what you've told us, Brian, in three very quick points? You're really saying that Edmonton shouldn't lose any seats. You can see your way clear to supporting two new seats in Calgary. We should go as close as we possibly can to having a 10 percent kind of deviation across the province. Fourthly, there are two ridings that are in that special category now, and I got a sense that you were cautioning us about having any more. Is that a fair summary, gentlemen?

Mr. Mason: I think that is. And there needs to be some recognition of special needs in urban constituencies.

The Chair: Yes. Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much for your time.

The Chair: Your submission, from my experience working with your party over the years, is of the usual high calibre. Thank you very much.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Mr. Dean Lien from the Farmers' Advocate office. Okay, Dean. Thank you very much. I know that you arrived some time ago, so you've had a chance to hear the introduction of the members. We look forward to your submission.

Mr. Lien: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, members of the commission, I welcome the opportunity today to make a representation to the Electoral Boundaries Commission. I do so not on behalf of any particular constituent or constituency; rather, I'm here representing the interests of rural Albertans generally.

The office of the Farmers' Advocate was created in 1973, and since then we have worked on behalf of the farming population to assist in dispute resolution and to provide timely information to the farming community on matters of concern. Today I seek to provide information to this commission which I hope will be of value to you as you deliberate on the possible electoral boundary changes.

I would like to declare my rural bias up front. I know you would be surprised if my viewpoints were anything to the contrary. I am after all a farmers' advocate, not an urban advocate. I want to relay the importance that rural Alberta weaves throughout the economic and social fabric of this province. In doing so, I hope to emphasize the importance of the rural voice in our Legislature, not just a few voices but a veritable chorus of elected officials who bring a unique and valued perspective to our provincial government.

The importance of rural Alberta. Certainly I have firsthand opportunity to see the value of agriculture to this province. Last year the agricultural industry experienced one of the best economic years ever. Farm cash receipts reached a record \$8.3 billion, led by record livestock receipts of more than \$5 billion, and shipments of food and beverage reached another record, totaling \$9.9 billion. Overall, the value of investment in the province's agrifood industry exceeded \$58 billion in 2001. That's just the agricultural industry. We've seen the benefits too of our forestry, our mining, our crude oil production, and natural gas. These are the industries that literally fuel our cities and provide employment for a substantial segment of our population.

But the importance of rural Alberta can't be measured only by its economic impact. Our rural heritage and our rural future remain firmly entrenched in our idea of what it means to be an Albertan even if we live in an urban environment. The Calgary Stampede is a prime example. It's a world-class event held in a major urban centre and is based on the roots and traditions of our rural heritage.

Population shifts and attitude changes. It's obvious to the commission and to Albertans in general that our population is growing and shifting. Who would have imagined in 1905, when our province was created, that nearly 100 years later two-thirds of our population would dwell in two urban cities? Who would have thought that the vast majority would live in a corridor down the very centre of this province? It's certainly cause for concern that the 2001 federal census shows roughly a 9 percent decline in the number of farms in Alberta since 1996. However, we know that Alberta is faring better than the other provinces in that particular regard.

But while Alberta's rural population shrinks, should its voice proportionately shrink too? My answer is simply no, because along with the decreasing rural population we have witnessed a widening chasm between our urban and rural counterparts. Generations of Albertans no longer have lived even a portion of their lives on a farm. They no longer have the benefits of friends and family who

call rural Alberta their home. They may not even venture out of their urban setting for a walk or a week. As the gap between urban and rural is widening, so is the gap of misunderstanding. Time and time again our office has seen an urban point of view foisted upon a rural initiative. It's not out of malice. It's simply a matter of ignorance combined with the power of population. The balance as I see it has to be maintained within our Legislature. We need disproportionate representation to overcome the sure weight of our urban population. Our rural industries, rural residents, and our rural heritage demand it.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dean. I'm sure that presentation will spark some questions, and perhaps I'd start with the person who you'd think would be most supportive, Mr. Clegg.

Mr. Clegg: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, Dean. It's a pleasure that you're here to give us a real perspective on rural Alberta. You know, I need all the help I can get, and certainly you're here. I think it's a very good brief, and I think there's good information. Of course, I totally agree with you, and one of my real concerns is, you know, the distance from the Legislative Assembly. We just had a brief and somebody said: well, they only sit 38 days a year. I think you were here when I said I come to Edmonton 50 times, and in traveling, I'm not doing too much work. I might read a little bit on the plane, but if I drive, I don't read at all. It's not really safe to drive and read at the same time. Some people kind of frown on that kind of a system. Certainly there is a real disadvantage for a rural MLA, especially when you're talking 350 and 400 miles.

So I appreciate your brief, and it puts it right to the point that this province was in fact developed by rural Albertans. Certainly the fact is that although we have all the people in the two cities and that corridor you talked about, where is the wealth really generated? We in fact look after the pollution.

I have no questions, but I just have to get my two bits' worth in. They're getting ready to shut me off. Thanks for the presentation.

Mr. Graham: I'd just like to respond to Mr. Clegg first. I know that in the city of Calgary there has been considerable discussion as to whether people should be able to talk on their cell phones and drive at the same time. I don't know what they'd think about reading a book and driving at the same time. I should bring that up.

The second point I'd like to make is that I thought your presentation was very good, and as I read through it – it's not really a question; it's just a comment – it kind of mirrors the history of my family, because my grandparents in fact homesteaded in this province. My parents moved to the city sort of halfway through their lives, and I've lived virtually my whole life in the city, so it was particularly interesting and resonated with me.

Ms Mackay: Well, thank you very much for your presentation. I have to add that I too, although I'm an urbanite and have been for many years, have a rural heritage, and the fifth generation of my family lives on the land that my grandparents homesteaded. I'm very sympathetic with what you're saying, believe me, but in spite of that – and I guess I want you to respond to me – if we're going to have democracy and the best interests of a democratic system at heart, how can we justify trying to ignore the fact that the province has become increasingly urbanized and not recognize that by having a reflection of the ratio of urban and rural seats showing the same thing? I'd just be curious. I know where you're coming from. I certainly understand it. But I guess there's another consideration, and I'd be interested in the justification.

11:12

Mr. Lien: Personally, looking at the province and how it's developing and how we're becoming an industrial province, the leader on the North American continent in many respects, we have the population of two cities representing two-thirds of the votes. When we go to the Legislature with MLAs, two-thirds of the MLAs represent urban people, but the fuel that fires this whole province is coming from the other one-third. Things like the environmental concerns, the land use concerns: all of those things could be foisted upon that one-third, and it could affect the industrial power of this province by people that don't understand what it's like in rural Alberta. So maybe the system is not the best for us in this province. Maybe there has to be a new system. You know, this is really philosophical. Maybe we have to look at a different approach.

I see it every day. I work primarily with farmers that are dealing with industry. They're dealing with the oil companies. They're dealing with the seismograph companies, mining, forestry. We find every day that the people that are dealing with those landowners are people that have no understanding of what it is to live in a rural area. You know, the farmer that has the oil pump 200 metres from his house that pumps continuously day after day has a different lifestyle than the man that lives in Glenbow in Calgary, where they don't have those things, and when they do have those things, they have a city council to handle it. In rural Alberta if you have a problem with the oil pump, for example, who do you go to? You have to go to your MLA, and that one MLA is only one-third of the House, so he doesn't have the power to influence. So while it may be based on population, I think a rural Albertan has a half-strength. He doesn't have the power in his vote that the man in Calgary does on that basis, and it's really a concern to me, especially in the area of environment when we were developing this country.

Ms Mackay: Thank you for your answer.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chair – and I don't want any comments from my compatriot Glen on this – I've done everything on the farm from shoveling manure to milking cows, and the reason I had mentioned the shoveling manure first was because I thought my friend here might say something about that. So I understand agriculture, and I come from a rural community, but our problem is – and I'd like your comments on this – that the commission is faced with having to recognize that if we do not recognize the major factor of population in determining constituencies, we could very likely be faced with a court challenge. There have been court challenges in British Columbia, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Alberta, Saskatchewan. The Supreme Court has come down with this rule of the plus 25 percent or minus 25 percent, but in addition to that, it seems that when you look at the legal backgrounds of this – and my friend Doug over here is going to challenge me in a minute on mentioning legal – we're faced with a real hard dilemma here, because when we do our report, we have to recognize those legal precedents. While I appreciate your submission – and you've done a good job of doing that – I just wanted your comments on whether you've considered the legal implications in what we have to do here.

Mr. Lien: Well, I haven't spent too much time thinking about the job you have to do with this.

The Chair: You've got a big enough job yourself; haven't you?

Mr. Lien: I do realize what you're saying, and it may be that we've reached the stage here in this province where we have to have a look at a different system. Maybe we have to look at a different system across the whole country. You know, we had the system of before,

and the system that exists today is good, but maybe there's room for some improvement. We have things like the Senate, and we have a two-House system, and there are all kinds of areas. Maybe we have to go to the extreme of looking at some of those things as the way we govern. I see rural Alberta, really, as being kind of left out of the decision-making.

The Chair: Dean, if I could just follow up on that. I'll make two comments, one I guess coming from either point of view. Everybody else has claimed a rural heritage. I live in Carstairs, in that horrible Calgary/Edmonton corridor. So now we've all got that out. I'm not sure whether my friend has got the barn totally cleaned out or not.

Having said that, two points. One is that I look at an example of the province's recent Financial Management Commission. Every person who's on that commission is either from Edmonton or Calgary. I think that's the kind of thing you're talking about. I watch the Legislature from time to time in the capacity of Ethics Commissioner and watch what's going on a little bit in there, and I seldom see a situation where it's kind of all the rural people against all the urban people. I'm kind of going to extremes here, but that's kind of the dilemma that you're talking about, and I think it's the dilemma that the commission faces too.

Mr. Lien: Yes. I have a good relationship with the rural MLAs, but I also have a good relationship with the city ones. I try to get to know them and try to work with them. At this point in this province I don't think we're doing too badly, but I can see this chasm widening, and I'm getting it from some of the rural people. They say: our vote doesn't count anymore.

The Chair: Well, we had a little sampling of that yesterday, not a lot, but we're going to St. Paul, Wainwright, Drumheller, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and Wetaskiwin next week.

Mr. Lien: You'll get some of it there.

The Chair: I suspect we may.

Any further questions?

Dean, thank you for an excellent presentation. We really do appreciate your input. Thank you very much.

I'd like to now ask Marg Stephen to come forward. Marg is the next presenter, to be followed by Mr. Doug King. Marg came to me, and she said that she had a letter she wanted to give to us, so the letter is in front of us. Marg, if you'd speak to us now, please.

Mrs. Stephen: Thank you. Mr. Chairman and members of the commission, I do appreciate the opportunity of speaking to you. You're obviously taking your job very seriously, and I've appreciated listening to the other presentations here this morning.

The population in each electoral division should be within 5 percent of the provincial average, not 25 percent. Any time the population varies more than the 5 percent, there should be a realignment of the boundaries. High-speed Internet, radio, television, and a greater ease of travel have made the larger areas viable for one elected MLA.

The answer to the inequalities in electoral districts does not lie in additional electoral districts. This government could save money if it would reduce the present number of MLAs. Some of the money saved could be used for travel expenses for MLAs elected from the bigger areas.

The present acceptable range of within 25 percent of the provincial average is not acceptable as that means that the vote of an elector in the least populated electoral district would be worth twice

the vote of an elector in the most populated district. In your report to the Legislative Assembly please recommend that the allowable difference be lowered to 5 percent.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. You heard both sides of the argument this morning about why you're here. Do you have any additional words of wisdom for the members?

Mrs. Stephen: Well, I was interested in what the gentleman ahead of me said, but there certainly are industries within the cities that also fuel this province. The arts industry, for instance, I believe was just behind the forest industry in the amount of income that they brought into the province. So it's not just the rural areas that fuel this province.

The Chair: Okay. Any questions or comments to Marg, who thought she was just going to drop off a letter to us? We got her involved in more than that.

Mr. Graham: Just a comment, not a question. I want you to know that we've had this point of view expressed to us on a number of occasions, so it's well represented. You should understand that. So if I don't ask you a question, it's because others have made the very same point that you're making, and of course we've had significant discussion about it.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Clegg.

11:22

Mr. Clegg: Well, thank you, and thanks, Marg. I don't know whether you know this, but in Alberta today there is a difference in the amount of dollars that you can spend as a rural MLA for traveling than you can in an urban centre. There is quite a difference, I might add. I won't say what it is, but there is quite a difference. We've had comments about giving rural MLAs more travel money. Generally speaking, I know that in rural Alberta they want to see the MLA. Somebody said: give them more staff. But they want to see the MLA. They don't want to see an EA or a secretary or somebody.

Your brief is very good. Certainly that 5 percent we've heard before. You know, it's the time that the MLA loses when he's traveling around his constituency and to the city that really is the problem. It's not the dollars. If you don't all know, there are three ridings in Alberta – I believe I'm right – where we can hire planes. For 15 years I never hired a plane, but I know that in Peace River and Lesser Slave Lake they have hired planes. So it does help. But people in those areas want to see their MLA. They always say: "Well, no. I don't want to see anybody. I want to see the MLA." Would you comment on that please?

Mrs. Stephen: I sympathize with that, but I also sympathize with the urban dwellers. As an urban dweller I don't believe that my vote should be one-fourth or one-half of somebody's who lives in a rural area. Certainly with high-speed Internet and with closed-circuit TV, even though you can't see the MLA in person, you could carry on a conversation with the visual image of that MLA.

The Chair: Okay. While we've got sympathy on both sides, that's a good place to – any other questions?

Mr. Patterson: I would just like to thank you for coming and making this presentation.

Mrs. Stephen: Thank you.

The Chair: Thanks very much, Marg. It wasn't that bad now; was it?

Mrs. Stephen: No, not at all.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mrs. Stephen: Thank you for the opportunity.

The Chair: I'd like to introduce you to Mr. Ian Crawford. A bit of important background. If you go over to where the department of agriculture and some other government departments are located, you'll see that it's called the Crawford centre. That's named after the hon. Neil Crawford, and one of his sons is with us today. Maintaining the political interest of the party is Ian Crawford. Ian, welcome, and we look forward to your comments.

Mr. Crawford: Thank you very much. I guess six years ago I came to this very room for this same reason and talked to a panel of folks that looked quite a bit like yourselves. I just thought I'd come back again and give my point of view. I didn't bring a written submission, because I don't really want it to be a submission from anybody other than myself personally.

I'm the Riverbend Community League president, which has a population in my community league, which is part of the greater Riverbend area, of 11,400 people, which probably is larger than a lot of towns in the province. I'm also the elected Capital health representative from ward 5, and I don't come on behalf of Capital health either. I've been watching boundary revisions from the time that it went from 65 seats to 75 seats in '69 or '70, when Calgary had 13 seats and Edmonton had 16 seats, and that got us up to a total of 75 across the province.

There are a lot of different ways, I suppose, that we might think are good ways of revising boundaries. I do know that you are restricted somewhat, so I'm not going to suggest things that you can't do. At the last boundary hearings I suggested that we would prefer if constituencies didn't have to cross the river if there were boundaries more so that were natural boundaries like a river or major traffic routes. Out of 19 constituencies in Edmonton there's really only one that is over the 25 percent variance. It happens to be the one that I live in, so maybe I'll deal more specifically with that.

It would be my view to use as the boundary, as they do for a partial boundary of the federal constituency, the high-voltage power lines sort of toward the southern end of Riverbend and then, as we move over toward Calgary Trail, probably Calgary Trail and 119th or 122nd Street as it goes down. That way we're kind of dividing things up in a way where a couple of constituencies to the north of the power lines would have – obviously, you go as far north as you have to. It would be to the top of Riverbend in one and to about 61st Avenue, I would think, in the other. I think that could probably eliminate having to cross the river in Edmonton-Riverview even and have that almost like the Edmonton-Strathcona constituency used to be. University Avenue used to be that boundary but probably 61st or 72nd Avenue.

I did look over some of the numbers. I don't have the most recent census numbers, so that's why I'm not being more specific, I guess. But kind of blocking off in areas like that, if we're a little bit over the population in the constituencies that have no area for newer construction, then by using the power line as the boundary, most of the area that would have new construction in it would be south of that.

The Chair: I think what I'll ask you to do is that once you're finished . . .

Mr. Crawford: I think I'm finished.

The Chair: I wasn't meaning that. Once you leave, in the next couple of weeks if you could look at a map and kind of draw those out for us and get it back to the elections people.

Mr. Crawford: If I had the 2001 census numbers, which I think I can probably get from somewhere . . .

The Chair: I think you can get them from Mr. Fjeldheim's office.

Mr. Crawford: If I'd had those rather than 1999 numbers that somebody else gave me, I think I probably would have done that.

That's really all that I had to say, other than two other quick comments which don't have anything to do with Edmonton. First of all, I remember the late Ron Tesolin, who was the former member for Fort McMurray. I think they still called it Fort McMurray at that time. He followed – was it? – Dam Bouvier. He had a small aircraft which he flew himself, and it took him three weeks to travel his constituency, the then Fort McMurray constituency, when the House wasn't sitting.

My in-laws, who are farmers in the Huxley area, which is an area that you may well know, also tell me that over the last 30 years sometimes they've been in the Three Hills constituency and sometimes they've been in Innisfail. Previous to that, they were in Olds sometimes, and now they are in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills by a couple of country roads. So they really feel as if they kind of get sawed off and shoveled here and there with every boundary redivision. I'm just going to, I guess, say that in sympathy with people who have spoken before me and have concern about the rural constituencies. I know that two of you represented rural constituencies for some time.

I guess that's really all I've got to say. I don't know if you have any questions for me.

The Chair: Any questions?

Mr. Graham: Mr. Chairman, I've met some of the members of the previous commission, and I can assure you that this is a much better looking group. We don't look the same as them at all.

Mr. Crawford: I stand corrected.

The Chair: Mr. Clegg.

Mr. Clegg: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I certainly agree with the member from Calgary on this one.

The Chair: It may be the only thing.

Mr. Clegg: Yeah, it may be the only thing.

Ian, it's a pleasure to have you here to give us your presentation. As you probably know, I worked with your dad for several years, and he was a fine gentleman. I can only say that I am very privileged to have worked with him.

I want to thank you for your remarks. We're going to need all the help we can have. So, as the chairman said, if you can take your constituency and kind of look at where it could be shrunk or in some cases expanded, it certainly will make our job easier.

Thank you.

Mr. Crawford: That's the sort of thing that I can do just for my own fun and amusement almost. In fact, I could probably redo the whole province.

The Chair: Why don't you just start with your riding in Edmonton?

Mr. Crawford: I'll do it that way.

The Chair: Although we have had some people who have tried to do it with the whole province.

Any other comments? Thank you very much, Ian.

Mr. Crawford: Thanks.

The Chair: Next is Mr. Doug King.

Mr. Olthof: Mr. Chairman, he has yet to arrive. We're a little bit ahead of schedule again.

The Chair: We're a few minutes ahead of time. We'll take a break then. Mr. King is to be here at 11:45.

[The commission adjourned from 11:31 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.]

The Chair: Okay. Ladies and gentlemen, we have with us Doug King, president of the Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan PC Association. He says that he volunteered for that position. He's here speaking on behalf of Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan.

Doug, I should introduce you to the members: Ernie Patterson, the mayor of Claresholm; Glen Clegg, who formerly was a member of the Assembly for the Dunvegan area; Bauni Mackay, former president of the Teachers' Association, from Edmonton; and Doug Graham, who is a well-known, good lawyer in Calgary.

Mr. King: Given our current economic circumstance, you'll have to forgive me; I don't have a written presentation. It's finally our turn up here in the northern part of the province.

Briefly, I'm president of the Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan PC Association, so I guess that in that regard my presentation is on their behalf. It's mainly in respect to the Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan constituency. The information mail-out that came out indicates that we're at roughly over 38,000, 6 percent above average, in terms of population. Very briefly, my presentation here basically is to argue or suggest that the status quo certainly in terms of our constituency would be what we would be looking for or happy with.

As far as the current makeup of the constituency, it's kind of an interesting one. It's fairly diverse. We have an urban area, represented by Fort Saskatchewan. We have basically the rural area of Strathcona county and the estate areas, and we have a fair component of industry represented both in Fort Saskatchewan and in Strathcona county. I think it's certainly a good constituency.

In terms of the boundaries one of the other things that it was suggested you look at is natural boundaries, possibly municipal boundaries and whatnot. Certainly on the north side of Fort Saskatchewan we have the North Saskatchewan River. On the east side we have our smallest national park, Elk Island park. Basically attached to the south of it is the Blackfoot grazing and recreation area. On the south we have the county of Leduc, and on the west we have our larger neighbour, the city of Edmonton. So I guess that in terms of the makeup of the constituency, as I said, in short we like it the way it is. We like the diversity, and I guess that in that regard in a perfect world we would see it staying the same.

However, we also recognize that Sherwood Park currently is

sitting at about 47,000, at plus 30, although I notice that it's within striking distance of the maximum allowable. I guess I would maybe suggest – and I'm not aware of any presentation that they're making at this point – that if there were room for some flexibility in that, you might look at leaving Sherwood Park the way it is. One of the things we certainly get as far as feedback in areas where you have municipalities represented in different constituencies is that it's problematic, and a lot of the folks don't tend to know where to turn for their representation. So in that regard I guess that might be one thing I would suggest, that you might be able to stretch the maximum limits as far as population. Sherwood Park basically is the urban service area of Strathcona county. We really have one member sitting in Sherwood Park, in the urban area, and then Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan sort of wrapped around.

However, if that eventuality wasn't possible, one thing that we've certainly looked at is possibly taking the appropriate population or area in Sherwood Park and moving it into Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, reducing Sherwood Park, increasing Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan. I think that at that point we would both be above average, but we would be within the limits.

The Chair: Did you ever think of a little bit of the east side of Clover Bar going to Vegreville?

Mr. King: Well, the east side of Clover Bar, as I said – and I guess there's a long, long history. If you look at Fort Saskatchewan, there's a history there. A lot of Fort Saskatchewan certainly has been gained from annexations from Strathcona county, so there's sort of a history there. Certainly even north of Elk Island park our east boundary is still Strathcona county. I guess that's why I suggested the point in terms of municipal boundaries tending to make it easier. We do have a portion of some of the estates around the south side of Sherwood Park, so we do have that urban bent in any event, and a lot of the folks that live in our constituency actually work in the city and in Sherwood Park.

The Chair: I was really thinking of Ardrossan, some place like that, moving east.

Mr. King: I guess that Ardrossan, in terms of the village, only has a population of about 90.

The Chair: That's not very significant then; is it?

Mr. King: No. Most of the population actually is on acreages. Sort of within the Ardrossan service area would be about 5,000 people. That's within Clover Bar. I guess we were sort of looking at possibly some of the east side of Sherwood Park adjacent to highway 21, which could be viewed as a boundary, or north of the baseline.

That basically concludes my presentation.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Mackay: I realize that you're Fort Saskatchewan and not Sherwood Park, but do you have any views on moving some of Sherwood Park into an Edmonton constituency?

Mr. King: With a sense of community and as a taxpayer in Strathcona county I guess my preference certainly would be to see Strathcona stay Strathcona as opposed to losing its identity, being absorbed into a portion of the city of Edmonton. There's a history there. I didn't have a chance to contact the mayor, but certainly a number of years ago there was a plebiscite taken in Strathcona

county to have a look at the form of government. At that time, it was confirmed that we wanted to carry on in the current form of county government. We do have an urban services area within Sherwood Park. It's officially a village, but it's basically the urban services area within Strathcona county, and it's governed as a county. I think the total population is a little too small to consider three members, although we would look at that.

Ms Mackay: I'm sure you would.

Mr. Graham: Just a comment, Mr. King. As I understand the law, we cannot have constituencies more than 25 percent over. There are four instances where we can have them more than 25 percent under, but we cannot have them more than 25 percent over. Therefore, Sherwood Park will have to be changed legally. It's going to have to happen.

Mr. King: One way or another.

Mr. Graham: Yeah. We thank you for your input. Some questions were directed in that area already, but if you have any further insights or further input you want to make in that regard, because you border Sherwood Park, it might be helpful.

Mr. King: Sure.

The Chair: You may be a likely suspect to pick up that portion of Sherwood Park. At least, there hasn't been much enthusiasm for Sherwood Park going into Edmonton – has there? – or for Edmonton going out to Sherwood Park.

Mr. King: Well, a lot of that goes to a sense of community, I think, as well.

The Chair: If you want to think about that and if you have some suggestions as to how we might do that, please do it and then get it back to us. That might be very helpful.

Mr. King: All right. Thank you.

The Chair: Any other questions?

Mr. Patterson: I was just going to say thank you very much for your presentation. The questions I was going to ask have been answered. On the idea of Edmonton going out, I think you have said no to that, and I was interested in that. I'd like to re-emphasize what has been said here, that you would look at that and give us some details on what you think would be a portion of Sherwood Park that we might consider, because you'll know it better than we will.

Mr. King: Certainly, but certainly not as well as the Sherwood Park association. Unfortunately, I think their first board meeting was just a matter of days before this hearing, so I wasn't able to even talk to our regional director at that point.

The Chair: Sure. If you two can come back with a suggestion for both, that would be really helpful to us.

Mr. King: Okay.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm remiss in the fact that I have not mentioned that there are a number of the staff from Elections Alberta here. The commission is very grateful for not only the fact that the legislation says that you

people are going to support us and help us and so on but that you go way above and beyond the call of duty to do that. I want to say thank you very much for your help and support.

Very important people from Alberta Finance are here too. They've loaded their hardware so that they can take the last 2001 stats information, and then when we get down to having to move boundaries and things and Mr. Clegg says that we should move it 10 miles this way or 15 kilometers this way, they'll be able to put that in and say, "Mr. Clegg, you just moved 6,212 people" or whatever the numbers are. So to the Alberta Finance people and the people from Elections Alberta: we are deeply indebted. We're pleased you're here. If you, too, have some brain waves, get them in writing to us quickly.

Thank you very much. We're now adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The commission adjourned from 11:55 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.]

The Chair: Okay, ladies and gentlemen. I'd like to call this meeting to order. I'd like to just make a few opening comments. We have nine presentations this afternoon, first of all Jerry Patsula from the Leduc Progressive Conservative Association. We have one break at 1:45, and then we go on until 4:30. Then I think there are eight groups coming in tonight, starting at 7 o'clock.

I'd like to introduce the members of the panel. My name is Robert Clark. I'm the Ethics Commissioner for the provincial Legislature. To my right is Ernie Patterson. Ernie is the mayor of Claresholm. He's been the mayor for 33 years. I don't know what that says about Claresholm or Ernie, but we won't get involved in that. To my immediate right is Glen Clegg, the former member of the Assembly for Dunvegan, in the Spirit River area. To my immediate left is Bauni Mackay, the former president of the Alberta Teachers' Association, from Edmonton, and to my far left Calgary lawyer Doug Graham.

The five of us have been appointed to take on this challenge. I think that when we took it on, we understood that it wasn't going to be the most popular in the province. We're into our third day, and we have two more weeks of these sessions. As we go on, we're learning more indeed that we need the patience of Job and the wisdom of Solomon to deal with the issue which is before us. The issue basically is to look at the population according to the 2001 census, which is 2.98 million. The legislation says that there'll be 83 seats. So you divide that population by 83 and get a figure of 35,951, almost 36,000. That is the average that we'd like ideally to look at across the province. Now, the legislation does permit a variance of up to 25 percent one way or the other, but the last commission had its variance in the vicinity of 15 percent except for one riding. At least, that's perhaps a target that one might look at, but that's all it is.

There is provision, though, in the legislation for four seats that could have up to a 50 percent variance, but those seats have to touch on borders of the province or the States and can't have any more than 4,000 people in one centre. They must be very sparsely populated and in large areas. There presently are two ridings that meet those criteria. One is the riding of Athabasca-Wasbaca in the northeast corner of the province excluding the city of Fort McMurray, and the other is the riding of Lesser Slave Lake.

So the format that we'd like to follow is that we'll ask the person who's making a presentation to us to give us their presentation and then, Jerry, we'll have some questions or comments, I'm sure. So if you'd proceed. Thank you very much for coming, and we're anxious to hear what you have to say.

Mr. Patsula: Thank you. My name is Jerry Patsula. I'm a resident

of Beaumont. My presentation is on behalf of the Leduc Progressive Conservative Constituency Association. I'm presently president of the association. I will be making an oral presentation; however, I have five copies of my presentation, which I will make available to the panel.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Patsula: By way of introduction, the present electoral division of Leduc No. 60 has a population of 37,363. The variance is 3.9 percent above the provincial average, well within the allowable range. However, the present boundaries do not accurately reflect community affiliations and municipal governance boundaries.

A few suggestions for change. The considerations of the commission suggest that wherever possible the existing municipal boundaries should be coterminous with electoral division boundaries. The western portion of the Leduc electoral division encompasses the eastern part of Leduc county, while the eastern portion is the northern part of the county of Camrose. It would be more logical for the electoral division to be coterminous with the boundaries of Leduc county. That's the essence of my presentation. The eastern portion of the electoral division should logically be part of the Wetaskiwin-Camrose electoral division No. 82.

If the Leduc electoral division boundaries were coterminous with Leduc county boundaries, the changes would satisfy another consideration of your commission: common community interests. The county is entirely in the Capital health region for health services. Trading patterns suggest that the communities of Calmar, Thorsby, and Warburg would form a logical part of the new boundaries we are proposing. Social and recreational activities of the residents of the western portion of Leduc county would also favour their inclusion in a revised electoral division. The residents of the eastern portion of the present electoral division do a great deal of their business in Camrose, and most children in the area attend secondary schools in Camrose. Their recreational and social activities frequently take place in Camrose.

It is the belief of our association that changing the present electoral division boundaries to be coterminous with Leduc county makes logical sense and more satisfactorily meets the considerations related to establishment of electoral divisions than do the present boundaries.

I would like to thank the members of the commission for allowing me time to make my presentation. Thank you.

The Chair: Jerry, before my colleagues ask questions, when you're suggesting that the county of Leduc be as one, do you have any sense for us of what change that would make as far as population is concerned? Do you have any idea on that?

Mr. Patsula: You asked me a tough question. I should have asked my colleagues for that.

The Chair: It's something that we can find out.

Mr. Patsula: Yes, this is something that you can certainly find out. I know that the Kingman area plus Hay Lakes only makes up about 17 percent of the population within our boundaries now. That's something that you'd have to look up, Mr. Clark. I'm sorry.

The Chair: We can certainly do that.

Mr. Clegg: Well, thank you, Jerry, for being here. You know, when I saw you here, I thought for sure you were going to give a presentation sticking up for Dunvegan. Jerry was in Fairview for several years and was very active, I might say, in the recreation in

our area, and for many years we missed him.

Really, I haven't got a question. I'm very pleased to see this brief. It certainly gives us as a committee something to really think about, and certainly we can find out the numbers and see if it fits the formula. Thanks, Jerry.

Mr. Patsula: One more point I'd like to add is that you could certainly find out – and I imagine that there are lots of statistics available – the trading patterns. That information is available through the government.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much for coming and making a presentation. Jerry, if we were to extend one of the city ridings out into your area, what would be your feeling about that?

Mr. Patsula: You'll have lots of briefs from the town of Beaumont even this afternoon, and there also could be some from the town of Devon. We certainly disapprove of that. In fact, some of the briefs this afternoon will be indicating to you that we would like the name changed. As a councillor from the town of Beaumont also we'd like to see the name changed to include the towns of Devon and Beaumont. Those are their particular briefs, and they certainly disagree with being affiliated with Edmonton whatsoever.

Mr. Patterson: Yes. Mr. Chair, then that kind of keeps in line with what some other constituencies have said: the same thing. Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Graham.

Mr. Graham: You've asked my questions, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Ms Mackay: I would just ask: would the people who live in the part of the constituency that's actually part of Camrose prefer to be in Camrose?

Mr. Patsula: Well, that's where their trading patterns are right now. You see, for most of them all their shopping and all their recreational activities are pretty well supplied by the Camrose area. Over the years I've certainly put enough signs up in that area. I know the people. I know where they trade, and that's in Camrose, and the children mostly go to school in Camrose. Of course, I'm still including the New Sarepta area in the Leduc county, you see. That's just in regard to Hay Lakes and Kingman and that area which is presently in the county of Camrose, not in the county of Leduc.

1:40

Ms Mackay: New Sarepta is in Leduc county?

Mr. Patsula: Yes.

Ms Mackay: Oh, it is. Okay.

The Chair: Jerry, this morning we heard from the good folks from Devon, and I think it's fair to say that their first choice was to stay where they are. Their second choice was to be in the riding on the north, and they'd like to be part of the name also.

Mr. Patsula: Yes.

The Chair: I should say that I first met Jerry back about 1966-67 when there was a peewee hockey tournament in Fairview. Jerry was one of the pushes behind that tournament. Jerry, it's good to see you again and good to see your continued involvement. Thank you very much.

Mr. Patsula: My pleasure. Thank you very much for having me.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, I'm pleased to introduce you to Liliane Maisonneuve from Guy, Alberta. Liliane is scheduled to make her presentation later on this afternoon, but we have a bit of a break now before the next presenter is here.

Liliane, thank you very much for coming. We look forward to your presentation, and I'm sure we'll have some questions and comments.

Mme Maisonneuve: I want to signal that I live in Edmonton, but I also have a farm at Guy. I work at the French-Canadian Association, l'Association canadienne-française. I thought that maybe I would start with the Edmonton-Gold Bar riding and then the Dunvegan riding.

The Chair: Okay. Good.

Mme Maisonneuve: I'll just go over it. Members of the commission, I'd like to thank you for this opportunity, and I would like to recommend changes to the electoral division of Edmonton-Gold Bar. This division has the natural boundary of the North Saskatchewan River to the north, 34th Street to the east, and Whyte Avenue and part of the Sherwood Park Freeway to the south. The association's regional board from Edmonton is happy with these divisions. It is the western boundary that we recommend be changed from Connors Road to the previous natural division of the Mill Creek ravine. This was changed about five, six years ago.

These are the reasons. Edmonton-Gold Bar is at minus 12.8 percent in population variance and therefore could be increased in population. This division has a common community interest. The French community in the Bonnie Doon area is separated from the French community surrounding Faculte Saint-Jean and La Cite Francophone, the French community centre. This has been known as the French quarter in Edmonton. The population is about 30, 35 percent Francophone, and at this time the association is concerned that the riding boundary cuts between them, being at Connors Road, and that it would be better to be right to the natural boundary of Mill Creek.

Number three, the Mill Creek ravine is a natural and geographical boundary that separates the French community from Edmonton-Strathcona. At this time that little corner is in Edmonton-Strathcona. This proposed change also takes in the Bonnie Doon Community League. Your implementation of this recommendation would enable our community to express common interests. As a citizen that lives also in that area, I support what they propose.

The Chair: Before Liliane goes on and talks about Dunvegan, do we have any questions or comments of Liliane as far as Edmonton-Gold Bar is concerned?

I noticed from the map that Gold Bar is at minus 13 percent, so we'd like to get that up a bit more. How many people would be involved in this?

Mme Maisonneuve: I think that there are six or seven polls. There's quite a community. Then there are two schools in that area, Maurice-Lavallee high school and the Gabrielle-Roy public school. So there are a lot of young families that have moved in during the last five years.

The Chair: Good.

Mr. Patterson.

Mr. Patterson: I'd just like to thank you for coming and pointing

this out. I just finished reading a book on electoral boundary commissions. It talks about it across Canada. One of the interesting points that is made in that book and seems to be recognized by the courts somewhat is the recognition of minority groups, not setting aside a constituency for them necessarily but allowing the possibility of being together and possibly having influence on the electoral process. So thank you.

Mme Maisonneuve: Well, the community is like a small town really, because it's congregated in the area.

I would like to just go over the presentation for the Dunvegan area.

The Chair: Just before you do . . .

Ms Mackay: You say that the change would complete the Bonnie Doon Community League area – is that right? – by bringing that in?

Mme Maisonneuve: Yes, it would.

Ms Mackay: There are obviously other community leagues in Gold Bar; right?

Mme Maisonneuve: Yes, there are.

Ms Mackay: So would all of them be intact if that's all you did? Would there be three community leagues there or five? Or do you know?

Mme Maisonneuve: I'm not sure, but the Bonnie Doon Community League would be intact then.

Ms Mackay: Okay.

The Chair: Then shall we move from Edmonton-Gold Bar to a part of the province that's dear to Mr. Clegg's heart, Dunvegan.

Mme Maisonneuve: Yes. He was our MLA. We farmed near Guy, and I still own land there.

I would like to make a recommendation. This division has the natural boundaries of the province of B.C. to the west and the Little Smoky River to the south. It is the division to the southeast that we recommend be changed, and we recommend that the remainder of the division remain intact. We would like this area to remain. There was an article in our local paper that maybe it would be taken out. This is a trading area. It goes from east to west starting at McLennan and goes past Tangent, if you look on the map.

This division is at minus 31 in population variance, and therefore we recommend the addition of part of the Smoky River ridge region including Marie-Reine and St. Isidore. They are two other little towns. Again, the community is divided. This division has a common community interest and a common trading area. It also encompasses the Francophone community, which extends to Tangent to the west, Whitemud to the south, McLennan to the east, and St. Isidore to the north. The town of High Prairie could also be added to this division. Since the construction of Tolko's strandboard plant in High Prairie, many residents travel to work from Girouxville, Falher, and McLennan.

The municipality of Smoky River is also found in this division and the natural geographic features of the Little Smoky River to the south. This area would be maybe just a little longer and a little bit to the north to take in the communities of Marie-Reine and some of the other ones. Mr. Clegg is familiar with this area.

I would have liked to make a suggestion also as a private citizen.

When I received this, it might have been good to put the percentages, the minus or plus, because with e-mail and fax I'm not sure that distances would count as much. I'm half an hour from my MLA in Edmonton in heavy traffic, and when I'm at the farm in the summertime, I'm probably a little more, but we're able to by phone, fax, e-mail – I think that the rural areas, you know, with the new technologies are not as isolated.

The northern areas I'm not sure. I know that Athabasca-Wabasca also is low in population.

1:50

The Chair: That riding and Lesser Slave Lake are two of those exceptions, so their target is to be less than 50 percent of the target. Certainly the Peace River and Dunvegan ridings are low, unless we make them special ridings, which I guess is a possibility.

Mme Maisonneuve: I think that would be the end of my presentation. I think that the Association canadienne-française will do their presentation in Peace River. You'll be there at the end of the month?

The Chair: Yes, we will.

Mme Maisonneuve: Thank you very much.

Mr. Clegg: Well, thank you, Liliane. It's good to see you again. You know, your recommendation, especially if you take in High Prairie, solves Dunvegan's problems, but by going up to St. Isidore and Marie-Reine, it may cause some problem in the Peace River riding, because that is in Peace River.

High Prairie is in Lesser Slave Lake. I personally talked to a few people in High Prairie, and I would hope that somewhere along the line we're going to get a brief from Lesser Slave Lake. The ones that I talked to wanted to come into Dunvegan, but that's only the few I talked to. I would like somebody to give us something on what their feeling was. It does fit in with Dunvegan, and so do St. Isidore and that area, but we might solve one problem and create two more. That's where we're headed.

Mme Maisonneuve: Well, maybe the three northern ridings could be put into two, you know, down the middle. The High Prairie region – I'm only 20 minutes from High Prairie, and many people from our area come as far as an hour away to work at the Tolko plant now. So it's a real trading area. High Prairie has the hospital, and it also has two large grocery stores, so people are leaving from Falher and Girouxville and going to High Prairie. It's quite a trading area. Between High Prairie and Slave Lake there's an hour and a half, two hours.

I guess I'll leave it up to you.

Mr. Clegg: Just one more comment. You're right, Liliane. A lot of people from Slave Lake do not go to High Prairie.

Mme Maisonneuve: No.

Mr. Clegg: But a lot of people from the French settlement, if I can use that term, do go to High Prairie for services. So, yeah, it is a fit, but we have maybe some other problems.

It's a very good brief. Thank you.

The Chair: Any other questions or comments?

Mr. Graham: One comment. What we've been asking repeatedly is that when people make very specific comments like this, it's

helpful to have a map and, as far as you can, population figures just to make it a little more specific.

The Chair: Would it be possible for you to get a map from Doug back there?

Mme Maisonneuve: These maps that you'd sent us?

Mr. Graham: Just mark it up as you propose, and if you could also indicate, if you could get the information, the population transfer; in other words, make it a little more clear and specific.

Mme Maisonneuve: Okay. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Liliane.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chair, I'd just like to make one brief comment. You do send very handsome, good-humoured people from the Dunvegan area. I've had the opportunity to get to know my friend Glen here.

Mme Maisonneuve: Well, he's always very helpful. Thank you.

Mr. Patterson: Thanks, Liliane.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, we're pleased to now have Mr. John Day, who is going to make a presentation to us. John tells me that he lives in Edmonton-Norwood and that he's a lifelong citizen of the city of Edmonton. John, thank you very much for coming forward. We look forward to your presentation and your suggestions.

Mr. Day: Well, thank you for having me, Mr. Chairman. Most of what I'm going to say today is going to be an oral presentation. There are a couple of written documents that I've added which are, as you may have already noticed, difficult to read.

The Chair: This one or this one?

Mr. Day: Well, the map is the easier part.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

Mr. Day: I can probably expand it by a written presentation later on if that would be helpful to the commission.

I can take this from the most specific to the most general or the most general to the specific. Which way would you prefer?

The Chair: Let's go from the general to the specific, please.

Mr. Day: Okay. A quick preface would be two matters that you necessarily are going to hear about, if you haven't heard about them already, which are outside the terms of the commission's ambit. One is the number of seats in the Legislative Assembly, and the other is the issue of proportional representation.

As to the first, the observation that I'd make – that has to do with the one document you have – is that in fact if you look at all jurisdictions in North America, Alberta's Legislative Assembly is not unduly large. If you were to look at the other jurisdictions in North America which have considerable populations, there would be in fact a good argument for enlarging the Legislature. I might add that those figures are based solely, when we are dealing with the American Legislatures, with their lower houses. All but one of the states of course have two houses, so arguably there are even more representatives per population than that.

The Chair: That median average of 34,625 is not too far from our 35,951; is it?

Mr. Day: Indeed not. We're a little over. The median average for areas with approximately our population is about 28,000.

The second matter which of course you are going to hear about is proportional representation. Two of the members have heard part of this speech, so they can probably doze off.

The Chair: None of these members would do that I'm sure.

Mr. Day: As you will remember, Mr. Chairman, for a period of about 35 years we elected the city members by an electoral model called the single transferrable vote and the alternative vote in the countryside. I believe that in fact you were the last member elected in that manner in 1959. I suppose that if we were to look at it, a fairly easy job would be simply to say: take the 28 constituencies your federal colleagues are going to be coming up with, call it, say, three members per constituency, and then elect by preferential ballot. As I said, it's outside your ambit, but it's going to come up, so I just thought I would make note of that.

The Chair: We've made note of your representation.

2:00

Mr. Day: Okay.

Looking at the job you do have, however, watching what electoral boundaries commissions at all levels have been coming towards, over time they're swimming towards a normal margin of a 10 percent variance. To some extent your predecessors did that. As you noted, Mr. Chairman, the normal variance was about 15 percent, but it is narrowing down. That is partly, I would suspect, simply the increases of transportation and technology. The thought simply is that communications are easier than they used to be when we started our constitutional framework at the turn of the last century. The 25 percent figure is I think a good normal one given that there can be the difficulties of community representation and sparsity that arise, and of course there's the 50 percent issue.

One matter that I thought the commission might want to look at in this, as you will remember from your time in the Legislature, Mr. Chairman – and I think, Mr. Clegg, you may have been in the Legislature at the time as well, although I'm not certain – is that for quite a period of time the Legislature chose to find its numbers by the number of electors on the provincial voters list. The second written item that you have and the most unreadable one was an attempt to put an index, the variation of the voters list from the last provincial election and compare it to the census variation and then to give you an average figure. Most of them are close, but there are some interesting variations.

You're going to find that if you follow that, nearly all of your Edmonton constituencies and Calgary constituencies as they are within the 10 percent. We can go over that in more detail if you like, Mr. Chairman, but I think it's useful. I pointed out some ridings which are particularly affected by times of the year. Banff-Cochrane clearly would be larger at the time of the census. It's in the month of June. Edmonton-Strathcona, Edmonton-Riverview, Lethbridge-West, Calgary-Varsity are all going to be notably lower. So it's a second measure that you might want to bring in in making your decisions.

Coming more specifically to Edmonton and Calgary, you end up of course if you go straight by population with a quota of 24 seats for Calgary. If you go by the electoral lists, I come up with a 23 quota. It's either a gain of two or a gain of three. Edmonton either way ends up with 19. So the argument I would make is that Edmonton should continue to have 19 seats.

In drawing seats for Edmonton, because I heard the magic words

“community leagues,” it would be better if the commission went by the planning department's neighbourhoods, the way they define them. The community leagues tend to cut across those at times, and they don't always make for natural communities of interest surprisingly enough. It was a problem that the Legislative Assembly got into a bit of difficulty with in 1993.

The Chair: So you're suggesting that neighbourhoods . . .

Mr. Day: Neighbourhoods as defined by the planning department are your building blocks.

The Chair: . . . would be better than community leagues?

Mr. Day: Yes.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Day: Some of the community league lines cut across natural arteries and things of that sort. They're closely related, but the differences can sometimes be troublesome.

Finally, we get to Edmonton-Norwood. We come in actually slightly less well on my electors matrix than we do on population I think. We're minus 15 instead of minus 13. We would recognize that it's highly probable that you're going to want to add some territory to us.

There are two areas which we think would fit naturally with the community of Edmonton-Norwood. The first would be the Belvedere subdivision. That's now part of Edmonton-Manning. It's that little triangular wedge of Edmonton-Manning right at the bottom of that constituency: northern boundary 137th Avenue, western boundary 66th Street, eastern boundary the LRT/CNR right-of-way. There were 2,383 electors there in the last provincial election. That would, I would estimate, amount to about 3,300 in population. It would among other things have the interesting effect of reuniting the inhabited parts of the former village of North Edmonton, which was a little municipality unto its own and always has had a sort of little historic character of its own.

The Chair: Did I hear you say that that would add about 3,000 people to Edmonton-Norwood out of Edmonton-Manning?

Mr. Day: Yes, and that's probably the change that you can make that causes the least amount of disruption to everyone else.

If you are going to look at any other alternatives, there is a portion of Edmonton-Highlands which has a fairly close commonality of interest with Edmonton-Norwood, and that would be the McCauley district. That's essentially north of the LRT line, east of 101st Street, south of 112th Avenue. There are about 2,500 electors, so we would estimate about 3,800 population in that area.

I might say that looking at the 50 percent rule since I've I think otherwise covered the bulk of it, I think there's an argument for a couple of seats of that variety, but I think they might be different than the ones that the Legislature looked at in '93. Since the redrafting of all the municipal district boundaries in the northern end of the province, there may be a good argument for two seats within the 25 percent figure based on the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo and Lakeland county, and you may want to look at a revised Lesser Slave Lake that would look rather like the historic Grouard constituency. Municipalities 17, 131, 124, Big Lakes, and 130 might be a possibility. Then I think you might want to consider a successor to Dunvegan and a successor to Peace River as your two that are up to the 50 percent variance.

That's as far as I'm going to go today, Mr. Chairman, so I'm open

to questions and comments.

The Chair: I take it that what you're saying is that you wouldn't have any trouble with using the four, to go up to four constituencies with the variance.

Mr. Day: If there's a need for it. As I said, the difficulty I had with the Athabasca-Wabasca and Lesser Slave Lake ridings was that in fact to meet the criteria, they ended up with ridings with smaller populations and larger areas than their predecessors had, which, you know, did not seem quite to be the object of the exercise.

The Chair: One of the suggestions that you passed on is that you take the municipality of Wood Buffalo, which is the city of Fort McMurray and the adjacent large rural area, and simply have it as a constituency. It wouldn't have to be a special constituency.

Mr. Day: That would be true. Although if you were to do that, I would include improvement district 24, because any of its inhabited areas have an obvious relationship with Fort Chipewyan.

The Chair: Okay. Would you be so kind as to take this map and draw in the suggestion that you have for Edmonton-Norwood? You could do that after, and then leave it with Doug at the back. That would be very helpful for us.

Mr. Day: Yes, I could do that. Certainly.

The Chair: Okay.
Mr. Patterson.

Mr. Patterson: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, John, for coming and giving us a very concrete suggestion on what could happen with Edmonton-Norwood and Edmonton-Manning. I think your idea of neighbourhoods is maybe something else that we can look at.

You've looked at the matrix that was starting to be developed by the last commission. Are you suggesting that maybe the number of electors could be part of that matrix? Is that what you're suggesting?

Mr. Day: Yes, I am. I think that, as I said, it's already come up in discussions involving some specific ridings. I mentioned Edmonton-Strathcona, Edmonton-Riverview, Calgary-Varsity, Lethbridge-West as obvious examples where you've got to account for seasonal movements that the census wouldn't pick up. The census is done in June, which is supposedly when people are at their least mobile, but in terms for instance of areas with large educational institutions and so on, you get interesting results. Banff-Cochrane ends up looking a little larger than it is. It's still oversized, I might say, but it's just an additional thing to bring into it. For the largest part, actually, it tends to confirm what the population figures say. So it doesn't really work against them. It's really something, you know, to judge the population figures by.

2:10

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chair, if I might, just to clarify what I understand you're saying. In the constituencies where you have educational institutions, particularly large educational institutions, the number of electors should then maybe be used as part of the matrix.

Mr. Day: As an example, yes.

Mr. Patterson: As an example.

Mr. Day: At any rate, I gave you the figures so, I mean, you can use them as you like.

Mr. Patterson: That's an interesting concept, Mr. Chair.

Ms Mackay: Hi, John. I have two questions for clarification. When you're talking about using the number of electors as one of the variances on the matrix, is part of your thinking that this would also take into account – and I'm talking now specifically about Edmonton – those constituencies which tend to be drawing cards for the immigrant population? Very often they're not citizens yet and therefore don't vote. Had you considered that as one of the reasons for using the electors, or was that not something that you had thought of?

Mr. Day: I hadn't thought of it when I started doing it. Of course, it's an effect I began noticing. You most dramatically would notice it in Calgary-McCall, which you know is well over the 25 percent figure on population and somewhat under on its electoral list. It's a saw-off either way, because of course for the same reasons that cities attract immigrants who take some time to become citizens, they also tend to have rather higher proportions of adults in their population than the countryside.

Ms Mackay: Okay. My second point of clarification. I'm interested in what you're saying about not using the community league boundaries but instead using the neighbourhoods as they are defined by the planning department. To your knowledge is the commonality of the community protected within the second definition the way it is within a community league? You see, I hadn't even thought of using that as a way to go.

Mr. Day: Generally, but not always. There are a number of things about bargains that community leagues have made, where they seem to go outside what most people in those areas would regard as the regular neighbourhood. The one that comes specifically to mind classically is Glendale, a chunk of which is thrown in with Jasper Park, a chunk of which is thrown in with Meadowlark, and a third is thrown in with Westlawn. But the thing is that it's quite a definite neighbourhood unto itself. In fact, I simply don't understand why they arrived at the community league boundaries, but they were duly incorporated into the boundaries between Edmonton-Glenora and Edmonton-Meadowlark and Edmonton-Mayfield in 1993. As soon as almost anyone that lived in the area looked at it, they said: this is a mistake.

Ms Mackay: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Yes, Doug.

Mr. Graham: I just have one comment. I just didn't know whether I was following you. Were you essentially saying that we should perhaps consider beefing up some of the populations in some of these sparse areas, which would then decrease the population in some of the adjacent ones, and just bite the bullet and recognize that indeed they are special and use the four special cases?

Mr. Day: Yes. Particularly looking at the Peace country.

Mr. Graham: Bring that into sharper focus and say that there are special regions, we should recognize that, and then take some of the population, transfer it south, and we'd get a better result. I don't know whether we would or not, but was that your point?

Mr. Day: That was part of it; yes. I think that you look at the special cases as special cases. You may be able to get away without having them. You might not, but I suspect that you're going to have to. I think that you're looking at Peace River and Dunvegan being your special cases. I think that you can come up with a Slave Lake and a successor to Athabasca-Wabasca that would be smaller in area and larger in population. So to the extent that I defined it at all, it was a trade-off.

Mr. Graham: Yes. All right.

Mr. Day: Maybe that's not the clearest answer, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: There aren't a lot of clear answers in this business. We're finding that out. John, on behalf of my colleagues thank you very much. I appreciate your help and assistance.

Okay. Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to introduce you to Dr. Paul Johnston. Then for the good folks who are waiting, I have to slip out for a telephone call after that. Then we'll come back, and I understand that the next person will be Judith Axelson. Is that okay, Judith?

Ms Axelson: Fine.

The Chair: Okay. Dr. Johnston, welcome. Were you here when I introduced the committee members?

Dr. Johnston: No, I just arrived during Mr. Day's presentation.

The Chair: To my far right is Mr. Ernie Patterson, the mayor of Claresholm for some 33 years. To my immediate right is Glen Clegg, the former Member for Dunvegan, whom you'll notice has been getting all sorts of advice here this afternoon. To my immediate left is Bauni Mackay, the former president of the Alberta Teachers' Association, from Edmonton, and Mr. Doug Graham, a lawyer from the city of Calgary.

Okay. Paul, have at us, please.

Dr. Johnston: Well, good afternoon. My name is J. Paul Johnston. I'm an associate professor of political science at the University of Alberta, where I will be completing my 35th year of service at the end of June. I teach courses on representation in electoral systems, elections and voting behaviour, political parties, Canadian political culture, the mass media, democratic politics, and generally in the field of political psychology. I am the department's sole member in that field, which is why I teach so widely. I think Ms Mackay will understand that exigency. I have also published research in some of these areas, and I have specific expertise regarding Alberta's electoral history, especially the electoral laws and system that prevailed during the period from 1924 to 1955. I'm also a resident of the Edmonton-Rutherford electoral district.

At the outset here I'd like to thank you for allowing me the opportunity to appear before you today and present the views of the organization I represent about these important matters. I am appearing before you today on behalf of the Edmonton chapter of Fair Vote Canada, a national organization that is best known for its efforts to promote the adoption of proportional representation in Canada at both the federal and provincial levels of government. Such a course of action is outside the commission's mandate, of course, although as I've noted, it has come up already; has it not?

Our case for adopting PR is motivated by and grounded in a broader concern that's reflected in the very name of our organization; namely, increasing the fairness of those laws, procedures, and processes we use to implement representative

democracy through holding elections. Of particular concern to us is the unfair manner in which the first-past-the-post electoral system allows a dominant party to obtain a majority of seats with often much less than a majority support from the electorate while freezing out smaller parties that still obtain reasonable measures of voter support. That is of course the reason for our advocacy of proportional representation. It is our view that such unfair outcomes are both facilitated and worsened when single-member electoral districts are allowed to vary widely in the number of people they contain.

2:20

So we are appearing here today in part to urge you to do all that is within your power to create a system of electoral districts that will lessen if not minimize such unfair results. It is first and foremost the matter of fairness that we bring before you. Let me stop to mention that unfairness doesn't stop with simply a malapportionment; for example, Calgary having fewer seats than it's entitled to. It extends also to the differences between particular ridings. The 82,000-plus people who live in Calgary-Shaw are represented by one person. If they were on one side of an issue in the Legislature, they could be outvoted three to one by the members of the three smallest constituencies, who in total would barely have the same number of persons living in their boundaries. That's unfair.

Another source of unfairness has to do with the proportion of the electorate that under our system can control theoretically the Legislature. Previous boundary commissions have made reference to the Dauer-Kelsey index, which measures this. It's a matter of simply ranking the constituencies from the smallest to the largest, adding up the populations contained in the smallest in this case 42 ridings, and computing what portion they represent of the total population in the province. In the case of the 2001 census results in the current situation, that proportion is approximately 42 percent; that is, the remaining 58 percent would be on the minority side if all of those 42 ridings and no more were held by one party. That's just on the representative side.

There are turnout factors too. Turnout hasn't risen above 60 percent more than twice since 1971. If we discount the vote by turnout rates, an average, say, of – well, if we look at the turnout in the 2001 provincial election, it was 58.6 percent, I believe. If we were to further discount that sum of people, if we were to first of all switch to talking about the electorate and not the population so that we know how many voters are involved here, and do the same ranking and summing and so forth there, and the proportion, by the way, is slightly less than 42 percent there, and then if we were to discount that total by turnout, and figure that all the people had to do to win those 42 ridings was to win a bare majority – now, in many cases, they win less than that of the vote; they win a plurality – it turns out that approximately 14 percent to 15 percent of the total electorate could have elected a majority of the seats in our last Legislature under that situation, factoring in turnout and competitive factors and other things. So it's not entirely a function of the electoral arrangements. It's not entirely a function of maldistribution or of wide variations, but that contributes greatly to this.

Of course, if all the ridings were of equal size, which would never happen in our lifetimes or in the future, and even if it did, as it does in the United States, where they require the plus/minus allowance to be within 1 percent, it wouldn't stay that way very long, which is why the court did not entertain the strict equality notion. Even so, when we look at this, we see that very small proportions of the electorate are able to control outcomes, and they're usually people who have resources and organization, much easier when there's a wide disparity of this kind that stretches things out.

Let me give you one last example. When you have a riding like Calgary-Shaw, organizing a campaign costs more money, involves more people, and requires more labour, even though the density might be very high. Anyone who has campaigned in a riding like Edmonton-Centre or the central city ridings in Calgary, filled with high-rise dwellings and typically young people, knows the difficulty of reaching those people, and it's a difficulty that's every bit as great as experienced in many of the rural ridings in maintaining a campaign. So when you have a large urban riding, it brings with it greater costs for organizing campaigns, much more so than one would find in a small riding like Barrhead or Lac La Biche or Dunvegan or any of those, even given their remoteness.

The candidate who ran second in Edmonton-Whitemud, Bruce King, a Liberal candidate, actually polled more votes than the total votes polled by the winners in 28 other ridings, and there were another eight candidates who as second-place runners-up polled more votes than the winners did in 13 of those 28 ridings. So there's a competitiveness factor here that brings unfairness with it.

I've deviated briefly from my prepared text.

The Chair: Doctor, I'm going to have to ask you to move along. My colleagues will want to ask you some questions, and we've allocated 15 minutes for each presentation. I know you would never stretch it much.

Dr. Johnston: Let me move to the highlighted portions of the prepared text. Since you have it there, you can read it. First of all, I say that the concern about effective and even efficient representation has taken precedence over equal representation in recent years in dealing with redistribution matters; however, we feel that this should not cause us to ignore or undermine the need for and the value of fair representation. Fair representation is achieved in large part by having relatively equal populations found in the various ridings and hence by your making every effort you can to keep the variances within a fairly narrow limit.

I notice from Mr. Clark's comments reported in the news that there was a suggestion that we could keep the variances within plus or minus 17 percent, say, in the Edmonton area. Well, we don't know about the validity of those things – do we, Mr. Clark? – but that's what was reported.

The Chair: No, we don't, but I hope we do better than that.

2:30

Dr. Johnston: That would come close to what the last commission did. I would like to urge you to build upon their effort to do this. They made a number of changes. They bit the bullet, so to speak, and they brought Alberta the closest it has ever been to a relatively equal, not strictly equal but relatively equal, apportionment of seats in that regard. Actually, you could keep it smaller than that.

The most authoritative work on the topic of electoral boundary commissions, one just published by Professor John Courtney of the University of Saskatchewan, indicates that in most provinces now the limit in the most recent redistributions have been held within plus or minus 15 percent.

The Chair: Plus or minus 15?

Dr. Johnston: Plus or minus 15 percent.

The Chair: My friend Mr. Patterson has just finished reading the book.

Dr. Johnston: An excellent book; is it not?

The Chair: I met the good professor at a conference in Saskatoon not many months ago.

Dr. Johnston: He has also the experience of being a boundary commissioner at one time.

Saskatchewan of course has mandated by law a plus or minus 5 percent limit and has achieved it in this sort of way. So I think that this should very much be one of your goals: to reduce the magnitude of allowable variances from the quota as much as is possible.

I want to quickly comment on some of the letters that were addressed at the end of Mr. Day's testimony, and here I am expressing personal views.

The Chair: I'll have to ask you to move along quickly.

Dr. Johnston: I have no objection to the idea of special circumstances ridings. I argue in here that one could actually do away with having to create special service ridings in the north by combining several of the less populated districts and creating two or three out of them. I realize that there are problems involved, but delivering effective representation is more than simply overrepresenting people in sparsely populated areas. There are many other things we need to do, and it lets the government off the hook when we take the easy out, if you will, of creating special circumstances districts.

I have in what I gave to you something called the northern Alberta fix. I think you will come under great pressure to perhaps steal a few seats from Edmonton. It could be done very easily by running the average deviation up to about 12 percent, and you could steal two seats from Edmonton. It wouldn't be fair, but you could do it.

The Chair: I think that if that ever happened, there'd be four gentlemen who'd have a lot of scars.

Dr. Johnston: A difficult time attending events in Edmonton.

Let me close by one last comment. The problem here is not just population growth and it's not just rapid urbanization. It's the explosive growth in Calgary which is pushing up the quotient so that even places like Edmonton, which grew at an 8.7 rate – but we're almost only half of Calgary's – end up with negative variances because it didn't grow enough to keep pace with Calgary. That and the growth of the Calgary metropolitan area are I think your main problem. You have to solve that problem first before you can deal with the other problems. I hope you will do that by trying to reach relative parity of population of voting power, which the Supreme Court said was the dominant basis of the necessary condition of effective representation.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Paul. Paul, perhaps that's why we had our first-day meetings in Calgary, so we could meet that challenge head-on and then go from there.

Okay. Who has the first question?

Ms Mackay: I don't have a question. I thank you for the information you've provided. I mean, you've provided an academic look at something that is pretty nitty gritty. We probably have your phone number; do we? I think I personally, because I am from Edmonton, might want to contact you and get some more information.

Dr. Johnston: Yes. You're certainly free to do that.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chair, I just want to make one comment. I'm

glad you referred to that book. It's a very interesting book. It's a little tedious in places, but it gives a lot of good information. Thank you, and I appreciate this today.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Johnston. I think you're going to hear from my colleague from Edmonton in the not-too-distant future. Thank you very much.

We're going to take a short five-minute break, and then when we come back, Judith Axelson will be on the griddle.

[The commission adjourned from 2:36 p.m. to 2:45 p.m.]

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to now welcome to the presentations this afternoon Ms Judith Axelson. Judith, thank you very much for coming, and we look forward to hearing from you. Were you here when I introduced the members?

Ms Axelson: Yes, I was.

The Chair: Okay. Then have at us.

Ms Axelson: Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman, members of the commission, I would like to thank you very much for this opportunity to make a presentation. As mentioned, my name is Judith Axelson, and I'm president of the Edmonton-Mill Woods Liberal Constituency Association. I believe you've got my report to follow along with.

The Chair: Yes, we have.

Ms Axelson: There are some maps included at the back of the presentation.

The Chair: Oh, great. You're ahead of us.

Ms Axelson: One of the most promising developments in boundary decision-making in Alberta was the use of a matrix of factors affecting MLA representation used by the 1995-96 Electoral Boundaries Commission. Constituency area, the number of governing bodies, the transportation network, and other factors have a direct effect on the ability of citizens to interact with each other and their Member of the Legislative Assembly. The matrix holds the possibility for decisions to be made openly, based on a clear set of criteria, and relatively free of personal bias. We believe that additional factors should be considered for inclusion in the matrix and submit that with respect to urban constituencies the notion of community, or the "we," be considered. Various meanings have been ascribed to the term "community." For us community involves a combination of place, belonging, public spirit, ideas, and participation.

The massive shift of Alberta from a rural to an urban society has been dramatic and continues unabated. Eighty point nine percent of Albertans now live in urban areas, with most citizens situated on the north/south highway 2 corridor between Edmonton and Calgary. Historically urbanization was touted in positive terms. The move to cities from small, closed villages into towns resulted in freeing individuals from the constraints and discipline exercised in settings where everyone knew everyone else. This new freedom from social bonds was to allow citizens to be more creative, to reach their potential, and to promote the development of a more reasoned society. The theory has been hard tested in practice. For many urban dwellers anonymity has meant isolation, the lack of family and community pressure, loneliness, and for some freedom has dissolved into fear. One need only drive through communities to see the

security firm decals on windows and posted on property, the gated communities with call boxes to gain entry, apartment and condominium entrances supervised by security guards or guards monitoring banks of cameras in large complexes, or listen to the media attention to fund-raising drives for police helicopters to observe the downside of urbanization and, we would argue, the loss of community.

The constituencies of Edmonton-Mill Woods, Edmonton-Ellerslie, and a portion of Edmonton-Mill Creek serve what is geographically and in common usage considered Mill Woods. Residents of Edmonton consider the area south of Whitemud Drive and east of the Canadian Pacific railway line to be Mill Woods. Conceptually this is the image carried by most residents. Mill Woods is synonymous with planned suburban living, strong community organizations, cultural diversity, and a deep sense of community. No other large section of the city of Edmonton carries such strong associations. The sense of community has developed over the short history of the area.

Mill Woods has been faced with a number of challenges. In the early '70s, when the area was developing, the provincial government had a freeze on school construction. Potential home buyers were warned by signs erected at the entrances to Mill Woods not to expect schools which existed on plans for the area to actually be built. Citizens organized, government and school board policies changed, and neighbourhood schools were eventually built. The unparalleled co-operation of the community, the city, and the two school boards resulted in development of the Mill Woods recreation centre, one complex, flanked on the east by Holy Trinity high school and on the west by J. Percy Page high school. This massive effort to lobby for needed schools drew people together and added to the feeling of "we" in Mill Woods.

The Grey Nuns hospital has been a lightning rod for community action. The struggle for the facility was won in part with the notion that not only the city but Sherwood Park would be served by the hospital. Predictions at the time that the hospital would eventually serve an area larger than that of the city of Red Deer have been realized. However, budget cuts in the mid-1990s downgraded the hospital, taking away the intensive care unit and other services and establishing what was called a community health centre. The change was met with protest unprecedented in the history of the province. Two rallies, one of close to 12,000 citizens and a second of over 17,000, gathered to express outrage at the change and to demand that the full-service hospital be restored, and restored it was, adding to the can-do attitude that pervades the community.

Nowhere is that can-do attitude more apparent than in the recreation and cultural facilities and activities sponsored in Mill Woods. Working through the Mill Woods Cultural and Recreational Facility Association, the community was instrumental in the development of the Mill Woods recreational centre and adjoining schools. MCARFA worked with the city to develop the Mill Woods Golf Course, which houses the Woodvale Community League. The creativity and competence of this group of citizens continues in the most recent project, an imaginative pavilion in the park overlooking the skating pond adjacent to the golf course.

One of the strongest expressions of community in Mill Woods is the neighbourhood community leagues. There are 12 leagues in greater Mill Woods, four in the constituency of Edmonton-Mill Woods. These leagues each boast membership in the several hundreds. They have joined together and meet regularly under the umbrella of the presidents' council. Presidents of the community leagues, elected municipal and provincial representatives for the area, sports representatives, and community services representatives gather monthly to oversee community matters. The council and committees of the council address a wide range of issues and

projects, from the antipoverty round table to the current development of a skateboard park for the area. Police chiefs to politicians have been invited to meet with the council to address problems or help with projects. There is a feeling of authority and accountability to the community in the council's actions that is rarely felt in volunteer organizations. Each month the council publishes the *Mill Woods Newsletter*, a tabloid-style newspaper with news from each of the leagues, cultural and recreation announcements, columns and comments from elected representatives for the area, and limited advertising. The newsletter is delivered to every residence.

A unique opportunity for community building has arisen with the influx of non-Canadians. Edmonton-Mill Woods is home to 9,000 immigrants. The multicultural nature of the community is reflected everywhere: in schools, on the sports fields, in the shopping malls, in religious rites, and in cultural organizations. Immigrants participate in every aspect of community life. Working to ensure that newcomers are able to enjoy the promise of their chosen homeland is a constant in community affairs.

This large immigrant population has meant that community building takes on an added dimension. The two high schools run special programs that focus on respecting human differences. The welcome centre for newcomers helps with everything from obtaining bus passes to completing income tax forms. MLA and MP offices are staffed to provide unique services sometimes required by these new citizens. Nowhere are these new Canadians more evident than in the political life of the area. Citizens of Mill Woods have developed a strong sense of community. That sense is based on place, history, an aggressive civic spirit, and a determination to build a strong social, cultural, and recreational infrastructure.

In the 1986 and '89 provincial elections Mill Woods was part of two constituencies. The constituency of Edmonton-Avonmore straddled Whitemud Drive and contained the northwest quadrant of the Mill Woods area with an area bounded on the north by Whyte Avenue. This area north of Whitemud Drive included Bonnie Doon, King Edward Park, Ritchie, Argyll, and the Whyte Avenue business section. Figure 1, which is on the next page, shows you where this area was. The constituency of Edmonton-Mill Woods included the rest of Mill Woods, and that's shown in figure 2.

Interaction at the community level between these two parts of Edmonton-Avonmore was minimal or nonexistent. This arrangement worked against building a sense of community for those citizens in Mill Woods living in the northwest quadrant; 66th Street and 23rd Avenue cut them off from their neighbours with respect to provincial representation. This unsatisfactory arrangement was changed in 1993. The northern portion of Edmonton-Avonmore was made part of Edmonton-Mill Creek, and the Edmonton-Mill Woods constituency was expanded so as to be located solely in the Mill Woods area of the city. The new boundaries now include four neighbourhoods: Woodvale, North Millbourne, Lee Ridge, and Lakewood. There is a cohesiveness within the constituency that makes sense. Figure 3, which is two pages along, shows this.

2:55

Our recommendations. One, we recommend that the commission consider adding the notion of community to the matrix. Quantifying the concept would be a challenge and require intimate information with respect to the social interactions of neighbourhoods. In some urban areas we suspect that neighbourhoods operate in isolation, with little reference to adjoining areas. In others, such as Edmonton-Mill Woods, there are strong attachments that are worthy of reinforcement, where possible, by political boundaries.

Two, our first choice is that the current constituency boundaries for Edmonton-Mill Woods remain.

Three, at present the constituency of Edmonton-Mill Woods is

slightly below the provincial average in terms of constituency population. We have about 30 percent, and that's about 14.6 percent below provincial average. Bound by the 83-seat rule and given the need to provide fairer representation in constituencies that far exceed the provincial average, expanding the borders of Edmonton-Mill Woods to include more citizens would seem to be a choice the commission must consider.

Should that be the case, we would recommend (a) that Whitemud Drive on the north and the Canadian Pacific railway on the west be considered very powerful community boundaries, not to be breached if possible in any drawing of the electoral map; (b) that new boundaries respect the notion of community that has developed in Edmonton-Mill Woods and where possible enhance the feeling of "we"; (c) that should expansion of the constituency be required, the area east of 50th Street bounded on the north by Mill Creek Ravine, on the east by 34th Street, and on the south by 23rd Avenue be included, and this is outlined in green on the map on the next page. I should point out that this area is currently part of Edmonton-Mill Creek, which is sitting at 17.4 percent above average and does not reflect the massive growth that's taking place in that area immediately to the east of the area outlined in green. There are some housing developments in there that have just mushroomed in the last two years. Then (d): that should further expansion be required, more of the area between Mill Creek Ravine and 23rd Avenue be considered. That would be the area immediately to the north of the green.

In conclusion, the people of Mill Woods carry with them a strong sense of place. That feeling is very positive and somewhat unique with respect to citizens living in a large urban area and a concept that many urban planners seek to reinforce. Fortunately, that feeling has not been accompanied by notions of isolation or exclusiveness. We are first citizens of the city of Edmonton.

We thank the commission for this opportunity to appear before you and listening to our concerns.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That's one of the most complete presentations that we've had from a particular constituency association. You not only tell us about your constituency, but you tell us: we don't want to change, but if we have to change, here are some possibilities and be darn careful what you're doing. I just think it's an excellent presentation.

Ms Axelson: Thank you.

The Chair: Any questions or comments? Doug.

Mr. Graham: I would echo that. I think it's an excellent presentation. I should advise you, perhaps to alleviate anxiety a bit, that one of the recurrent themes we've been hearing is the necessity where at all possible to keep communities together, and it's certainly something we'll be considering. You're certainly not the first person to say this.

With respect to your comment about including the notion of community in the matrix, my concern is that that may be difficult to do in the sense that the matrix is drawn up effectively to list factors that make it hard to represent a community, whereas of course keeping communities together makes it easier for them to be represented. So we'd really have to rethink it and redo it to do that, but of course it's our firm intention to keep communities together insofar as we can. Rest assured that we're going to do that.

Ms Axelson: I think the area that we indicated, outlined by green, has a lot in common with the rest of the constituency of Edmonton-Mill Woods when you look at the age of the area, the type of

housing, the mix of the type of housing, and the blend of the multifamily with the single family, and the people, the people themselves that live there. In fact, I know that the constituency office frequently gets calls from people that live in that portion of Mill Creek thinking that they belong to Edmonton-Mill Woods and that our MLA is their MLA as well. The housing to the north and to the east is all newer, not to say that there's not an ethnic mix there, but there's just not the same sense of community.

The Chair: Bauni.

Ms Mackay: Just to say thanks, Judith. I think this will be very helpful, especially since you just happen to be up against Mill Creek and they are over even though you're under. So that helps a lot.

Ms Axelson: We estimate that it would add about 10,000 people to our constituency, which would put us slightly above instead of almost 15 percent below.

The Chair: But it would get them nicely within too; wouldn't it.

Ms Axelson: It would help. I would think that it would even it out. Like I said, the census doesn't take into account all of that new housing. They're even going to be more above provincial average in reality.

Mr. Clegg: Thank you for the very in-depth work you've done or somebody has done certainly. It's a very good brief.

You know, we've heard two or three times that if you keep changing the borders of a constituency, sometimes you might get to the wrong MLA's office. Personally that doesn't really bother me, because what we're doing as MLAs – and I was there for 15 years – is serving people. So if you happen to get to somebody else's MLA's office, if you've got a problem, that MLA just fixes the problem. As you know, an MLA office, whether you're NDP, Liberal, or Conservative, is not political. So if you do end up at somebody else's office – and I think I know the MLAs we're considering. I think they're Gene Zwozdesky and Don Massey, and I know them both very well. I don't think that either one of them would have any problem helping that resident even though they might be across the border.

Ms Axelson: I'm sure not.

Mr. Patterson: I just wanted to commend your association. You're saying: yes, we'd like to keep what we have, but we are also recognizing that there has to be change. Mr. Chair, that's what I like about this. You are giving us the information, so if we have to make changes, it's going to be very, very helpful. Thank you.

Ms Axelson: Thanks very much.

The Chair: Thanks very much, Judith.

Ms Axelson: Thank you.

3:05

The Chair: Next, we're to hear from the president of the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues. Have we been waiting for you.

Mr. Kuchelyma: You have; have you?

The Chair: The next presenter is Don Kuchelyma, who is the

president of the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues. Don, when I said that we were really waiting for you, one of the things that we've been hearing numerous times is: don't separate our communities; whether it's the community association or the community league, keep them intact. We've asked both major cities to give us maps setting those boundaries for us, so we could take those into consideration. You're about as close as you can get to the right man at the right time in the right place. So we look forward to hearing your presentation, Don.

Mr. Kuchelyma: Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, members of the commission. My name is Don Kuchelyma, and I am the president of the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues. I will be brief in my presentation today.

The federation is the umbrella organization for the 144 community leagues in the city of Edmonton. We are the largest volunteer organization in North America, with over 37,000 volunteers annually. We do the organization, registration, and fundraising for sport, recreation, and social activities in communities in Edmonton. We address local planning, transportation, and political issues. We volunteer on committees such as youth justice, school, and city advisory boards. As well, we are the conduit for recruiting volunteers for prominent events such as the world figure skating and world track championships or planning committees for events such as the city's and province's upcoming centennial.

As you can see, our volunteers serve a wide spectrum of services with their volunteer expertise. These volunteers are recruited, organized, and notified by their local community leagues through their newsletters. Due to this method of addressing league issues and volunteers, the community boundaries must be recognized and protected. The Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, part 2, page 6, section 14 in part states that we "shall take into consideration . . . common community interests and community organizations." As well, 14(d) states: "wherever possible, the existing community boundaries within the cities of Edmonton and Calgary."

In the MGA the community leagues in both Edmonton and Calgary are recognized and receive special consideration of mention. I would hope the commission also recognizes this fact and does not divide communities for the provincial electoral districts.

In the 1995-96 review the original distribution had a number of communities in Edmonton divided. Originally three different provincial ridings divided one particular community. This anomaly was pointed out and corrected. I hope an error such as this will not happen again. I will be leaving with you a map outlining the community league boundaries. This map also outlines with different coloured areas communities that have formed a district structure. These communities by their district structure have a further common goal that the commission may wish to consider in their boundary redistribution.

Thank you for this opportunity to present this information to you today, and I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Great. Thanks, Don. We will be having an interim report early in September. You'll be getting a copy of that, and don't be bashful about coming to us and pointing out to us where we've not been able to accommodate that.

Mr. Kuchelyma: Okay.

The Chair: Mr. Clegg, you had a comment.

Mr. Clegg: Yes. Thank you. The very first presentation we had in Calgary was to make sure that we do keep the community leagues

together, if I could use that term. Obviously, we all ask the question and I'm going to ask you the question. Many people have said that it's more important to keep the community leagues together than it is where the boundary is drawn. You know, a lot of people think you've got to have a river or you've got to have a main road. What's your feeling? Do you think that it's more important to keep the community leagues together than it is a river or a main road?

Mr. Kuchelyma: I can only speak on behalf of the communities in Edmonton, and for us the majority of the community leagues are divided by major arterials or by natural boundaries such as a rail line or a river. I think that in Edmonton, for example, we wouldn't have that type of situation where we're divided by a major arterial road so that you'd have one part of the community on one side and another part of the community on the other side.

Mr. Clegg: Thank you.

Ms Mackay: Thanks, Don. I'm really glad that you are here and that you've brought a map, because we seem to have been having some difficulty finding one. I think the commission will be giving that very serious consideration as they do their deliberations.

I'm one of those 37,000 volunteers, with the North Glenora Community League, and my sense has always been that it has been the community leagues that define the communities, the neighbourhoods. But we've had a suggestion this afternoon that perhaps instead of looking at community league boundaries, we should be looking at the neighbourhoods as they're defined by the planning department of the city of Edmonton. Now, do you have an opinion on that, or can you enlighten me on the differences?

Mr. Kuchelyma: Historically the community leagues were the neighbourhoods. In recent years, probably the last 10 years, as new areas of the city are coming in for development they have different development names. A community league will take into consideration three or four of those development areas. So in the past when your home community league of Glenora was set up, the total development was called Glenora. In the present day that community might be two or three different developments that would be later named the community league of Glenora. So it's just that the developments are to some degree small community leagues or smaller portions of the community. So one community might be for community developments or in one case it might be a community association and a couple of other developments by developers building housing, apartment buildings, condominiums, commercial structures that all make up the community. I think that the map will somewhat point it out.

Ms Mackay: Good. Thank you.

Mr. Graham: Just a comment. An excellent presentation, and be assured that we are going to try to preserve these communities insofar as possible. It's a high-priority consideration for us. However, I would caution you that there are a large number of considerations, particularly population balance. So while we're going to try to do this insofar as we can, there may be certain instances where we find that we just can't because of other considerations, other things that have to be balanced. So I'd just make that comment to you.

Mr. Kuchelyma: I think that one of the things that the commission – and it might be easier for somebody if they reside in the city of Edmonton or the city of Calgary to understand the community league issue. They are virtually small communities in

a large urban setting, and they're somewhat defined by geographical boundaries. They each have their own little structure, and they have a little better understanding as to who their neighbour is, et cetera, et cetera. I think that community leagues – and the average in the city of Edmonton is 5,000. So if you divide a community as in the past – in '95-96 the one community was divided up by three provincial ridings. We were only talking about a movement of approximately 2,000, 3,000 people one way or the other, which isn't a very large movement from one jurisdiction to another. So if there is some substantial reason as to why a community league is divided, then I'm sure that the commission will take a look at it, but if it's solely for the movement of a few thousand people, it might be something that the commission might say is not worth making the transition.

As I mentioned earlier, there are districts. The previous presenter mentioned Mill Woods. The different colours on the map define the different districts in the city that have some common concerns and some common issues. In some cases those are the ones that might be more likely divided up rather than the individual community itself.

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Olthof, perhaps you could arrange to put this up at the back so that we could look at it later on. That'll be great.

3:15

Mr. Patterson: I would just like to commend you, Don, for mentioning that community leagues are recognized in the Municipal Government Act. Being mayor of a small community and having worked with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, I have come to realize that while we may be a smaller town or something, really what makes a city work or become livable are the community leagues. So I would commend you for mentioning that, that they're not only there as kind of – what should we say? – something where people got together but that they're legally recognized, and I thank you for that.

Now, the question I wanted to ask you is: are there any community leagues under the present boundaries that are divided? Can you recall any?

Mr. Kuchelyma: The 1995-96 commission had approximately 10 divided in the preliminary review, and as mentioned, in the preliminary review here we hope that doesn't happen. When we came back and made the presentation after, they redrew the lines to take into consideration the communities that they did take and cut into one or two or three different ridings. It's a consideration that would be no different than taking the community of Edson and dividing it into three ridings. It's somewhat of a difficult situation. I don't think that the residents of Edson would appreciate it. I don't think that the MLAs would appreciate it either, but if it had to happen where a smaller community was divided, if it was the only option, then maybe that's the only one that we could take a look at, but if there was another option, then I think that's something we should look at.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chair, as I understand it, the problems were resolved in the second edition, so I guess we have to take a lesson from this. If we're going to avoid a lot of presentations in the second round, we've got to recognize community leagues.

Mr. Kuchelyma: I think that where the problem originated from was that the access to the maps was from the province rather than from the city and the community leagues, and the community league boundary maps are not readily available from the province, and I

think that causes some of the problems.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Any other questions or comments to Don?

Mr. Graham: Just to alleviate your anxiety a bit again, we have ordered these maps already, because this has been made amply clear to us.

The Chair: But this is the first to arrive.

Thank you very, very much on behalf of my colleagues.

Mr. Kuchelyma: Thank you very much for this opportunity.

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, I am now pleased to introduce to you Mr. Pat Vincent, who's the general manager of the town of Beaumont and who, in addition to being the general manager of the town of Beaumont, tells me he's an ardent golfer. I'll look forward to checking that out and reporting back to my colleagues on the commission some time.

Pat, were you here when I introduced the members of the commission?

Mr. Vincent: No, I wasn't, sir.

The Chair: Ernie Patterson, the mayor of Claresholm; Glen Clegg, the former member of the Legislature for Dunvegan from the Spirit River/Fairview area; Bauni Mackay from Edmonton; Doug Graham, a prominent lawyer from Calgary.

Mr. Vincent: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Pat, if you'll present it to us in whatever form you want, then I'm sure we'll have some questions and comments for you.

Mr. Vincent: Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman and members of the commission, it's a pleasure to be here this afternoon on behalf of His Worship Mayor Ken Kobly, who unavoidably was detained, so I am pinch-hitting on short notice. It is my pleasure to make this submission on behalf of the mayor and council and the residents of the town of Beaumont. Beaumont has approximately 7,000 residents and is currently situated within the Leduc electoral division. If you've read our press clippings recently, Beaumont is the fastest growing municipality in the metro Edmonton area, having exceeded 20 percent growth over the past five years. So it's a very dynamic and viable community.

The council has taken an interest in the past, participating in the public consultation process undertaken in 1995-96 as well as the one previous to that. Considering the impact of the rapidly shifting population we are experiencing as a province, we feel that it is equally important for us to be part of the current electoral boundaries review. The two primary issues identified in the commission's mandate, reviewing the boundaries and the names of the 83 electoral divisions in the province, speak to the heart of the concerns shared by the citizens of Beaumont and recently discussed by the mayor and council.

Given the tremendous growth that the large metropolitan areas have experienced since the last review, there certainly appears to be a need to expand the urban electoral division boundaries in order to provide the balance demanded by the principle of effective representation. Given the parameter that no additional electoral divisions be created, we are fearful that redistribution could result in

our municipality being included within the Edmonton-Ellerslie electoral division. Given the vast differences in the issues and concerns between the residents of Edmonton-Ellerslie and the Leduc constituency, our strong preference is to remain within the less urban electoral division of Leduc.

The above position is one that we expressed during the last review and one that we continue to hold. We appreciate that our past requests were considered and that Beaumont remained within the Leduc electoral division. We hope that we will receive the same consideration in this particular review from this commission.

With regard to the second mandate issue of naming the divisions, we note that the Leduc electoral division is one of the few in the province whose name does not incorporate the names of the major communities within its boundaries. For example, in the Athabasca-Wabasca electoral division both the major centres are mentioned in the electoral division name. The same is true for Cardston-Taber-Warner and Drayton Valley-Calmar. Within the current boundaries of the Leduc electoral division there are three major centres: the city of Leduc, the town of Beaumont, and the town of Devon. In an effort to maintain a consistent approach to the naming of divisions, we propose that the name be changed to Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

We thank you very much for the opportunity this afternoon to sit before you and to submit our concerns. I'd be pleased to answer any questions that you, Mr. Chair, or the members of the commission might have.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Clegg: Well, thank you, Pat. After listening to your brief and reading it at the same time – it helps me read when you're saying it – I'm sure that you have talked to Devon about this, because the presentation that we had this morning from Devon was almost exactly the same as yours. So if we don't do what you want, which I'm not going to guarantee we will or won't, at least we're going to have you and Devon both mad at us, not just one of you. My question is: did you talk to Devon about this name change and what you believe it should be?

Mr. Vincent: Yes, Mr. Clegg. Members of the communities have gotten together both at the administration and elected level to discuss common concerns and checked with one another on the types of presentations that we're about to submit. So those were common issues in those discussions.

Mr. Clegg: Just one comment. Thank you, because we ran into it yesterday when we had one jurisdiction giving us a comment and the other guy was sitting in the crowd and he was going like this. They hadn't talked to each other. It's very good that you do talk to each other before you make presentations, because a lot of time we can't listen to both people, so this is very good.

Mr. Vincent: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Patterson.

3:25

Mr. Patterson: Yes, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Pat, for coming and making the views from your community known. I appreciate that. You're more familiar with the area than I am, and I'm glad you have pointed out . . .

The Chair: We hope so.

Mr. Patterson: See what I have to put up with here.

. . . very strongly that you do not want to be part of the city of Edmonton. Just to get this question answered, in Edmonton-Ellerslie there's still a lot of development taking place and a lot of open area; isn't there?

Mr. Vincent: Yes, there is. There's significant development going on at Ellerslie Crossing, Summerside, and a number of other communities that are developing on the southern boundary of the city of Edmonton. Beaumont is situated only six kilometres south of the city of Edmonton corporate boundaries, so we are the small neighbour right in the shadow cast by the giant city of Edmonton.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much for making that point. One of the past commissions did get into this 'rurban' situation, so thank you.

Mr. Vincent: Thank you very much, sir.

Ms Mackay: I'm interested in the fact that you see yourself as much more affiliated with Leduc and Devon than you do with the city. My experience with Beaumont has always been that the people who live there tend to work in Edmonton and that it's almost an extension of Edmonton. I'm certainly not suggesting anything. It's just that I'm letting you know that as an Edmontonian I've always sort of considered Beaumont as a community in Edmonton. So what do you think would lead me to believe that?

The Chair: Something wrong. Sorry, Bauni.

Mr. Vincent: Certainly, Ms Mackay, with respect to the transportation of residents and the workplace situation approximately 65 percent of Beaumont residents work in the metropolitan area, but they hold very strongly to the tradition of their heritage and roots, the settlement of the community some 107 years ago. There is indeed a very strong identity and pride of the separate community. In terms of enjoying all of the amenities that are here in the city of Edmonton, people certainly afford themselves that opportunity but do maintain a separate vision of themselves in terms of community affairs and the way that they relate in the area. Some of the trading patterns and the intermunicipal relationships are stronger with the county of Leduc, with the city of Leduc, with the towns of Devon and Calmar, et cetera, than the intermunicipal relationship with the city of Edmonton, outside of the Alberta Capital Region Alliance, which of course we're members of and Mayor Kobly is the vice-chair of.

Ms Mackay: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: A comment that was made to us this morning by someone, Pat, was that when we are looking at the Leduc constituency, we might include the whole county of Leduc in that and then drop off that area in the southeast corner of the present constituency, which is the county of Camrose, if I'm not mistaken. Do you have any reaction to that? Does that make any sense to you or not?

Mr. Vincent: It certainly does. Again, it's in terms of the trading patterns. In the rural areas and in the small urban areas there is that strong interrelationship in the way that we relate to one another. I know that with the situation where Calmar is in the Drayton Valley constituency and then a portion of the residents in the New Sarepta area and south are in a different constituency, there is certainly confusion in terms of where people go for services, and we would

certainly support that suggestion.

The Chair: It may have been done for some population reasons as far as one of the adjacent ridings, and we're all subject to that vandal.

Mr. Vincent: Yes.

The Chair: Any further questions, comments?

Well, Pat, thank you very much for your succinct, straightforward presentation, and I look forward to that golf game.

Mr. Vincent: Absolutely. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: We'll take a 10-minute break.

[The commission adjourned from 3:30 p.m. to 3:45 p.m.]

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to reconvene. I'd like to introduce the delegation on behalf of the Edmonton-Whitemud Progressive Conservative Association: Mr. Dave Hancock and Mr. Joe Yurkovich. I would never be so presumptuous, Joe, as to guess who the spokesman is going to be, so I'll leave it up to you.

Mr. Yurkovich: All right. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and members of the commission, for the opportunity to speak today. I think that I'll encapsulate our submission for you rather than read it to you.

Essentially we're here today because Edmonton-Whitemud is one of the constituencies, or electoral divisions, which has exceeded now the 25 percent over average, which is part of your mandate. I believe that in the materials that you have circulated widely within the province, you show Edmonton-Whitemud as being 29.4 percent above average, so it seems as if you have the mandate to reduce the size of Edmonton-Whitemud. We're here just to give you a bit of background as to the makeup of our electoral division and provide some suggestions for you as to how we think that when we do make some reductions in the size of Whitemud, you might best do it in order to respect the natural boundaries of Edmonton-Whitemud and also the community interests.

Edmonton-Whitemud is primarily the Riverbend neighbourhood of Edmonton, and while the Whitemud freeway goes through Riverbend, it doesn't act as a boundary. We have part of the Riverbend community, which is the neighbourhood of Brookside. That community is an integral part of Riverbend, with a common junior high for the public school system, common separate schools, libraries, and all part of the same community league. I think you've had a representation from the Edmonton community league association that would show you that today. So our first point is that we would not want the Whitemud freeway to divide Brookside from the rest of Riverbend.

Really the natural boundary on our eastern border is the Whitemud Creek ravine. If you have the opportunity to take a look at the map of our electoral division, you'll see that on the eastern boundary are four communities. They are polls 1 through 10: Grandview, Lansdowne, Westbrook, and Aspen Gardens.

The Chair: Joe, do you happen to have a map of those?

Mr. Yurkovich: I do.

The Chair: And you'll be able to leave that map with us?

Mr. Yurkovich: Yes, we can do that.

The Chair: Good. That would be helpful. Thanks.

Mr. Yurkovich: So with the map in front of you, you'll see that Whitemud Creek is shown on the map, and polls 1 through 10 are those four communities which are segregated from the communities to the west across the creek really in terms of what happens in schools, community leagues, et cetera.

The other boundary that we have is that there are some communities on the east of Whitemud Creek which are south of 23 Avenue. Those are polls 55 through to 80, I believe. South of 23 Avenue there is another boundary, which is Blackmud Creek. You'll see there that poll 56 is a community called Skyrattler. Again, Skyrattler was developed before what's to its south across Blackmud Creek. Our submission would be that if you still need to take more away from Edmonton-Whitemud after you take polls 1 through 10, then perhaps Skyrattler would be one that has more community interests with the neighbourhood which is directly north of it, which is Blue Quill. In our submission we've pointed out that children from Skyrattler go to school in Blue Quill, which is to their north and which is within Edmonton-Rutherford, and they have the opportunity to be members of that community league as well. They also have the opportunity to be members of the community league to the east of them, Yellowbird. But as Dave informed me today, Yellowbird was developed later, so most of them have tended to join Blue Quill as opposed to Yellowbird.

Finally, to the east of Skyrattler are the communities of Yellowbird as shown on the community league map, which are Keheewin and Bearspaw. Those ones, depending on how much of our territory you need to take, would perhaps be the next ones that we'd want to offer up, again because they're not as integrated with, say, the Riverbend communities. They have their own schools. They've got sports fields for their kids. They've got a community league, the Yellowbird Community League. So, again, they're less interdependent with the rest of the constituency than some of the other areas.

That is our submission in respect of Edmonton-Whitemud. You'll note that we've made some comments in our paper respecting redistribution of some of the other south Edmonton constituencies. You're going to be having a submission made by the Edmonton-Riverview PC Association at 7:30 today. For your information, we have met with the presidents of Edmonton-Riverview and some of the other PC associations in order that our submissions not be inconsistent. We're in agreement with them as to giving up these particular areas if you need them for a reconfiguration of Edmonton. I think that's our submission.

Dave, did you have any further comments?

Mr. Hancock: No. The only thing I would add, of course, is that we're not eager to give up any of the area, so we'd encourage you to only take those communities you actually need, because there is an affinity. It's difficult to draw the boundaries, as you know or will know, but what Joe's outlined are sort of the areas that represent distinct communities. Yellowbird-Bearspaw is a cohesive unit, and it would be very difficult to draw a line anywhere in there to divide that community.

The only suggestion I have for you if you actually needed a population number – first of all, the Skyrattler polls that Joe was referring to are 66, 57, 58, and 59. That's what I would call an isolated community, south of 23rd Avenue and west of 111th Street, and it does trade north to Blue Quill Community League and somewhat east to Yellowbird. So it can align with either of those two. Right now it's aligned in our constituency with Yellowbird.

Poll 60, which is in the Yellowbird area, is another poll which could be considered a transitional poll because it consists of four

apartment buildings which are basically adult communities. In other words, older people have moved in there, so they haven't developed the affinity with the community leagues of the others. I'm not suggesting that you sever that. I'm saying that if there needs to be another population gap, that's really the only poll that's severable in any way from the rest of the community. Other than that, you'd be dividing a community that has common interest.

The Chair: Okay.
Mr. Clegg.

Mr. Clegg: Well, thanks, Mr. Chairman. This is very good information, and we're looking at numbers obviously. If I'm reading this right, there's a possibility to take polls 1 to 10 and then from 56 to 59 and possibly 60. I simplified that pretty good. You haven't got a number there – have you? – on people. I mean, we can get it. I just wondered if you had it.

Mr. Yurkovich: We had only some numbers from the last election relative to polls 1 through 10, and my recollection was – and I don't have it in front of me – that it was in the neighbourhood of 4,000 people that we estimated might be in 1 through 10.

Unidentified Speaker: Polls 1 through 10 are about 3,800.

Mr. Yurkovich: Okay.

Mr. Clegg: And what about the others? One to 10 is 3,800, and the other ones would be roughly . . .

Mr. Yurkovich: The other ones I didn't ask about.

Mr. Clegg: So we're probably looking at 5,000 or 6,000, somewhere in there.

Mr. Hancock: Well, you have the 3,800 in the first 10. You've probably got another 2,000, more or less, in the 56 to 58, 59. I would hazard a guess that at 60 you have about another 300. That sort of comes right to the crunch because the next thing you'd want to do is to pick up some more numbers, and there's no good place to pick them up from. That's the problem. Yellowbird is probably 7,000 people, I think, in terms of numbers. Maybe it's not quite that high.

We were waiting for the Statistics Canada numbers to actually put the numbers submission together and anticipated doing that for the next round if it was necessary. What we found is that the estimates from the last election and the other information we get don't jive with the Statistics Canada numbers. So rather than give you the old numbers that we know don't jibe, we were waiting for the new numbers that will work.

3:55

Mr. Clegg: Dave, don't you worry. When we finish the job, we'll have it all done and everybody will be happy.

The Chair: That would get you down to close to 40,000, I believe, between 39,000 and 40,000. I think that's using the latest from Stats Canada.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much for this type of presentation, because it really does help. I just have one question. Living in the deep south, I'm not familiar with this area, but maybe I should be more familiar with it. There is still a lot of area for development left in Edmonton-Whitemud, so it'll start to grow again in the new areas.

Is that correct?

Mr. Yurkovich: That's certainly correct. On our southern border we've got quite a few communities along 23rd Avenue that are just in the development stage.

Mr. Patterson: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Graham: Just a comment. Thank you for this very excellent presentation. I think what we're going to have to do is take the Statistics Canada number. We have that number; it'll be available to us. We can plot it on here and map what these various alternatives will accomplish. I would just caution you that when we do that, the numbers may not pop out in the same order of priority as you've got them with respect to taking areas out. So that's a possibility.

The second point that I'm getting from your presentation would be that you're not anxious to lose any population and that therefore, if it came down to the crunch, you would be happier to be a little on the high side than a little on the low side. Am I understanding that?

Mr. Hancock: Certainly that would be my suggestion. It does go counter to what I've talked about in earlier redistribution processes, that peripheral constituencies that have growth potential should be smaller rather than larger, but I think you also have to weigh that against the community of interest.

Mr. Graham: The countervailing community of interest argument.

Mr. Hancock: You either take all of Yellowbird or none of Yellowbird, in my humble submission. So Blackmud Creek again becomes the boundary, and if you can justify taking it all or need to take it all, you leave us with a small constituency with lots of growth potential. I'd rather keep Yellowbird in, because it has affinity across the creek to Twin Brooks and south. There are communities of interest there, so I'd rather keep it all together than lose it. So, yes, I would put up with a larger constituency and justify a larger constituency based on the community of interest.

Mr. Graham: Right. That's what I understood you to say. So if you end up a little larger than the quotient rather than a little smaller, I can take it that we're not going to get a challenge on the basis that your equality rights have been violated.

Mr. Hancock: Not from our association.

Mr. Yurkovich: Not from our perspective, no.

Ms Mackay: I'm just trying to figure out where Yellowbird would fit if we took it out of your constituency. Which part of the constituency is it in? Which constituency would it be added to if we took it out of yours?

Mr. Hancock: Well, the next boundary is Edmonton-Rutherford. Yellowbird is polls 60 to 68, so it's bounded on the north by 23rd Avenue and on the east by Calgary Trail. So if it were to come out of the constituency, then logically it would go north into what's now Edmonton-Rutherford because it's aligned with the Duggan and Ermineskin communities. But there's not a natural affinity; 23rd Avenue is a barrier between the communities. Although they all play games together in terms of the community leagues, Yellowbird has a distinct and large community league which relates more closely with Twin Brooks than it would with Ermineskin or Blue Quill.

Ms Mackay: Edmonton-Rutherford actually is only 4 percent below the provincial average, so it's not like it has a lot of room to grow anyway.

The Chair: Any other questions or comments? Okay. Well, thank you, Mr. President and Mr. Hancock, for your presentation. As I'm sure you'll recall, we'll have an initial report in the hands of the Speaker in early September, and then there'll be an opportunity for feedback to that. We'll have another set of hearings in December or early January with the view in mind of having a report in the Speaker's hands in the early part of March. We trust then – I'm saying this for the benefit of the minister – that the Legislature will be as charitable to our recommendations as you were to the last commission's recommendations, when they went through virtually unscathed.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you.

Mr. Yurkovich: Thank you very much.

The Chair: We have now the constituency of St. Albert.

Mrs. O'Neill: Oui, monsieur.

The Chair: Thank you very much. From the Progressive Conservative Association of St. Albert Mrs. Mary O'Neill, a member of the Legislature, and Mr. Lee Danchuk, who is the spokesman. Both will take part in the discussion, I'm sure.

Might I say for the benefit of you good folks who are here that you'll notice that Mr. Fjeldheim was making quite a fuss over Mrs. O'Neill, and you noticed that I went out and shook her hand twice. It's very important, because we're both Leg. officers. We're appointed by a committee of members of both sides of the House, and Mrs. O'Neill is a member of that committee. So with due respect.

Okay. St. Albert, please.

Mr. Danchuk: Thank you very much. We appreciate the opportunity to make our presentation to the commission this afternoon.

Just a little introductory history. In 2001 the average population per electoral division in Alberta was about 35,951, and St. Albert is in that range at the current time. Our average population is 41,001, and 12,000 of our residents of the city of St. Albert are also part of the Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert constituency. It's about one-third of our population. We recognize that growth and population shifts must be accommodated by periodic reviews, and they're essential to the principle of representative democracy. High population growth areas such as the city of Calgary and the continuing trend of migration from rural to urban areas must also be taken into account.

Since the St. Albert electoral division's current population is not excessively above the average-sized electoral division – we're only at 14 percent – we believe that the existing boundaries should be maintained in the upcoming redistribution. To support this position, we note the following reasons. We feel that there's going to be high priority given to Calgary because of the balancing in the Calgary region. Edmonton maybe is going to have a little bit of tweaking and fine-tuning because of their representation. In St. Albert we recognize that the city of St. Albert's population is too small to qualify for two electoral divisions at this time, and the city's population is too large to be fairly included in one electoral division. Because of the average size of the electoral divisions, it would put

us about 50 percent higher than the average size if we were one only.

The northwest portion of the city of St. Albert contributes significantly to the electoral division of Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, about 12,000 of our constituents. At the current time we have good communication and collaboration between the MLAs from the two areas. However, we are aware that some of the northwest quadrant residents are concerned about not being part of the St. Albert electoral division. But given the bigger picture the status quo, we feel, is appropriate at this time.

4:05

Looking to the future, we feel that St. Albert is like the rest of Alberta, growing very significantly. Maybe the next electoral boundaries review must address this to see if there may be two seats warranted for the city of St. Albert. The population and growth rates are by sectors west and east of St. Albert Road, and the population growing in St. Albert is mostly to the north, so it could be split by the St. Albert Trail if there were two electoral divisions.

Given the parameters and the circumstances, we recommend that the boundaries of the St. Albert electoral division remain the same as a result of your review. As noted in our presentation, circumstances in the future may require changes to establish one or two electoral divisions in the city, depending on the number of MLAs and future population growth in the city of St. Albert.

We would like to emphasize that our request to you at this time is to leave us at the status quo.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Lee. The part of St. Albert that's growing most rapidly would be in the other riding?

Mr. Danchuk: Yes. We're growing on the north side of St. Albert almost evenly to the west and the east but more so to the west, which is in Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

The Chair: Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert then.

Mr. Danchuk: That's correct.

The Chair: So growthwise we can leave you, you're suggesting, with a little higher numbers, as you are in St. Albert now. The future growth of St. Albert would go into that other riding, whose numbers aren't quite as high.

Mr. Danchuk: Yes.

Mrs. O'Neill: Mr. Chairman, I just want to say that as Lee indicated, we would really like to respect the municipal boundaries of the city. In a perfect world, even though it is much larger, it would by virtue of its density and compactness be great to have one or, when the numbers warrant, two constituencies respectful of the boundaries of the city of St. Albert. Indeed, there's a certain, if I could say, tidiness – and I don't use that word in retaining the integrity of the boundaries of the community and the community of interest. There will be growth. In fact, there's quite projected growth for the community, and the growth would be in the northwest and the northeast parts as compared to the south of the city.

The Chair: Mr. Clegg.

Mr. Clegg: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hello again, Mary, and hello, Lee. It's too bad we don't get 83 of these briefs. We could go home and make the report, and then it's all finished. Unfortunately, it's not quite that simple. However, we're very happy that you gave us this kind of a brief. It maybe cuts out some of our work.

You know, in some areas of the province we might – and I only use the word “might” because we haven't even looked and won't be looking at any boundaries until after the first round of hearings – in some cases have to take a section of a town or a small city and put it into a rural area. Have you found any difficulty as the Member for St. Albert with some people who say: well, we want to be all in one municipality? The fact is that one person said to me when we were standing here a minute ago: I'd kind of like to have two MLAs, because I can lobby them both. Do you see a problem in taking a chunk of St. Albert and giving it to Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert?

Mrs. O'Neill: Yes, I do. Clearly and simply, yes, I do, the reason being that I've lived with it for – well, this is my second term. In the service area the other MLA's office of course has been in Spruce Grove. Just with the affinity of interest and the way in which things are done, certainly it has been a challenge having a portion of the municipality, the city of St. Albert, be part of another jurisdiction.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much for coming and making this presentation today. Following up on my companion's question here – and I like your answer because you're identifying a problem – would it help in these kind of circumstances if the commission made some recommendations that when we have this kind of a split in population, maybe there could be two offices? Like in the other constituency, you'd have yours, and then there would be in Spruce Grove-Sturgeon an office but also one in this area of St. Albert. I'm just thinking about this because then what it would do is give the people in St. Albert the focus that there are indeed two MLAs representing the area. Just your thoughts on that.

Mrs. O'Neill: Well, certainly the previous and the present MLA for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert did and do work very effectively in response to constituents. What I must tell you, though, is that when we look at the city of St. Albert and we look at the circumstances that are there within the area of St. Albert that is in the Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert constituency, it has only four businesses in it. Okay? Number one, it is by and large totally residential. It does not have any public facilities other than schools and churches, so it doesn't have community facilities in it. It doesn't have any of the public buildings. I mean, St. Albert Place and all of those other focus sites, if you will, of the functioning of the community aren't there. I can certainly tell you that in the calls to my office that I receive, when I explain to them that there are two representatives who are here to serve them, “Yes, but this is St. Albert, Mary,” is the response I get.

Mr. Patterson: Then, Mr. Chair, if I might ask this question. One of our tasks is to enable effective representation, and that's why I'm following up this lead of questions. I don't know what we'd end up doing with this or could do with it, but what about the thought that maybe there should be some recognition that while we are doing this on a population basis in order to avoid, you know, court challenges and that, there should be some provision in this kind of circumstance for some additional office assistance for yourself?

Mrs. O'Neill: Well, as I understand it, the funding formula is per voter or per resident. I think it's per voter; is it not? But the economy of effort, if you will, and also the economy of scale is achieved in the sense that it is – for instance, the MLA for the constituency of St. Albert has one city council to work with; okay? So even though the numbers of voters to serve are larger, which is what is there when you work with one municipal government, there is a compensation made there for the numbers, if you will, because there is the focus of interest, the community of interest. When you

don't have to divide it and share it, you can create economies and efficiencies of scale, of density, I guess you could say.

Ms Mackay: I think I know what your answer is going to be before I ask the question, but I'll give you the opportunity to articulate it anyway. If in the process of our working with the Edmonton constituencies and getting a balance and so on we found it necessary to look at taking part of St. Albert into an Edmonton constituency, what do you suppose would be the reaction?

4:15

Mrs. O'Neill: I'll take a deep breath, Bauni, to respond to this. First of all, the response would be very negative, I can tell you, from my community, major league negative. The reason I say that is because we have just been through two years of a capital region governance review. You've been very much aware of that, Ernie, and you know what has been identified in that process. In that process was the identification to respect the integrity of the community interests by virtue of the delivery of the governance at the municipal level, as that review was involved in, because of the specific interests and the level of governance in responding to citizens' requests, et cetera.

So if there was any suggestion, any breath, any hint of for instance an Edmonton constituency reaching into the municipality of St. Albert, I know that there would be a number of interpretations put on that. One of them would be that at the provincial level the governance issue is allocating that "A" word to the community of interest. I hear this often. I don't have the numbers because I've never tabulated them, but I know the numbers would be large of those who have contacted me and said that they really do not want to be part of the governance part of Edmonton.

Ms Mackay: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Graham: I just have a comment. To me it's interesting that there's a very common theme running between your presentation and the one just preceding you, which is that when we get into a situation where a constituency appears to be a little large, community of interest trumps that. I'm hearing that very strongly from you, and we heard it very strongly from Edmonton-Whitemud as well. It's something we're going to have to wrestle with. So that's my comment.

The Chair: I'd just ask one question: how many people in St. Albert who would be in the other constituency make use of your services? Is it a fairly common thing, Mary?

Mrs. O'Neill: It's fairly common. I can certainly say, though, that the MLA for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, Doug Horner, does attend to their issues. But just to give you an example, sometimes when people call me with a request, so as not to step in somebody else's jurisdiction I will of course ask them which part of town they live in. They will say St. Albert, and I'll say: could I ask you, though, which neighbourhood or which part of St. Albert? "It doesn't matter, you know; I just want you to deal with this issue," and I hear that frequently.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chair, then if I might follow up on my earlier two questions. I wasn't sure whether you said yes or no to my suggestion, because one of the things we've talked about is effective representation, and it seems – and I'm thinking out loud here, which some people tell me is very dangerous for me to do – that you have extra responsibilities, then, because some of these people will not take it very lightly that you are kind of putting them off. So in these kinds of circumstances – because we may have some others when we get finished, in other parts of the province – would it be of

assistance to you as an MLA to have this recognized in whatever financing formulas there are?

Mrs. O'Neill: If it were to be able to service the larger number of constituents, if that's what you're asking, Ernie, absolutely. Yes.

If I may, I'd just like to speak about weighing one consideration against the other, or balancing it. I do believe that when you look at Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, you have virtually a small city, a rural area, and a chunk of one of the five largest cities in the province. So that diversifies and occupies the interest of the MLA for that area, because they respond to everything from farm issues to small town issues to major urban issues, whereas when you have it identified as densely but as focused in community of interest, that weighs against the diversity.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much, Lee, and thank you, Mary. Was there something else you wanted to say?

Mr. Danchuk: No. We just wanted to recognize that the president of our association and the other member of the board that put together this presentation, Bill Shields and Ken Allred, are with us, and we recognize their efforts.

The Chair: Their names will duly appear in the *Hansard* transcript.

Might I say that you're the 19th presentation we've heard today. I think the 20th one has just arrived. Thank you very, very much. Our first report will be out in September. Have a look at it, please. Then we'll be going back for some more hearings. The final report will be in the Speaker's hands in early March.

Mrs. O'Neill: Wonderful. Well, thank you very much for the opportunity to present, and I'm pleased, with Lee. Paul Chalifoux was also one of the authors with the team.

Mr. Danchuk: Yes, our former mayor.

Mrs. O'Neill: Our former mayor. So thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ladies and gentlemen of the commission, I'm pleased to introduce to you Mr. Bruno Binassi. Bruno is the 20th presenter to us today and the final presenter until this evening, Bruno, when I think we have eight or nine more presentations taking place. I once heard that if a person was going to be making a presentation, you should either be towards the front or the end, and you're at the end for the day, so hopefully that'll be a good omen.

Mr. Binassi: Hopefully.

The Chair: Bruno.

Mr. Binassi: Thank you, Mr. Clark and members of the commission. I have a very few concerns that I'd like to present to you this afternoon. As Mrs. O'Neill came before me, it's quite opportune, because I'm also from St. Albert. I am part of the constituency of Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, and my concerns are basically for that one part of St. Albert that is not part of St. Albert constituency but also for the city of St. Albert as a whole.

Basically, it comes down to the belief I have that St. Albert is now at a size where it should merit two MLAs, that the size of the population and the fact that St. Albert is growing at the rate that it is would merit that we would have two Members of the Legislative Assembly. The last census, of 2001, has indicated that the

population of St. Albert now exceeds 53,000, which is basically increasing a little over a thousand people per year.

The other concern I have is that the area that I am in, as Mrs. O'Neill addressed before, as well is part of a constituency that is basically pieced together to fit the description of what we need for a constituency in terms of population, whereas it doesn't really fit the needs of the people who live in that area. By some awkward alignment neighbours who are across the street from one another tend to find themselves in different ridings, which in city ridings tends to be the case because of course you have so many. But that one alignment in St. Albert means that you have people who are now going to be put into largely a rural riding, and their needs, I don't believe, are really being met in that riding as opposed to the people who make up the majority in that one constituency. So my concern is that that should be looked at as one of the considerations that the committee would look at and perhaps change.

I believe there's a natural boundary that we have in the city of St. Albert, which of course is highway 2, which divides our city basically into equal parts, both St. Albert west and east. It seems that most of the time when the city is being divided into areas, that seems to be a natural division line. People are easily able to identify that line as to where they live and what part of the city they would be more a part of, I suppose, in terms of their life and their home and perhaps even their workplace and school, whereas dividing it other ways probably would be a bit awkward because the city tends to be more of a north/south division than an east/west kind of thing.

4:25

Other than the fact that she made recommendations that we would do a division down the middle of the city, basically dividing it into two separate ridings, I think Mrs. O'Neill is addressing the concerns that we had before that. If you have any question, I'd be more than happy to answer them.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much. Mr. Patterson.

Mr. Patterson: Yes, Mr. Chairman. One of our problems is that the average size of constituency is just under 36,000 when you take the total population and divide it by 83, and the Legislature has said that there will be 83 constituencies; they didn't give us the leeway to go one way or the other. Then of course we have also the precedents of court challenges. The decision basically has been to have a variation of minus 25 percent or plus 25 percent. On the other hand, if we get too far away from, say, 10 percent or 12 percent, something of that nature, then our report has to work towards trying to avoid court challenges. Of course, then we've got the problems of the city of Calgary, where one constituency right now has one MLA for 85,000. So it's not a question, I guess, Mr. Chair, but a statement. I didn't know whether you were aware of that or not.

Mr. Binassi: I am aware of the fact that we have constituencies in our province in terms of size that require that some ridings have perhaps less than the average because of the territory that one MLA has to cover, and I appreciate that. I think it's also important to note that the corridor of Edmonton and Calgary now accounts for well over 2 million people of this province, and it accounts for less than half the ridings of the province. So it is interesting to note the fact that the numbers can be looked at in many different ways, but the reality is that Edmonton and Calgary now make up just under 2 million people together, and they are not two-thirds of the Legislative Assembly in terms of representative seats.

The Chair: Bruno, if we took your suggestion, we would have two St. Albert ridings with about 25,000, 26,000 in each, and let's say

10,000 to 12,000 to 13,000 non St. Albertites in each riding.

Mr. Binassi: Yes. There are areas surrounding St. Albert as well – there are hamlets and other areas, for example Morinville and Legal – that could also be part of it. In the area of Sturgeon there is lots of carryover from one to the next. It's not that the boundary ends, for example, at the Sturgeon hospital. Very often the news that's reported in Morinville is reported in St. Albert as well. We're not unaware of other people's issues, and I'm sure they're not unaware of ours as well.

So it's not a huge leap to have people who are 10 minutes down the highway, for example, to be lumped in with the city of St. Albert, and they're not normally that removed from us. So I believe that having people who are in Morinville, being 10 minutes away, as opposed to, let's say, St. Albert, being quite a bit of distance from the constituency office for example in Spruce Grove and quite a bit removed from the different rural areas of Sturgeon, would be a more logical amalgamation of area than perhaps having a hodgepodge of both rural and urban being put together right now under the current system.

The Chair: I guess my kind of quick sense is: are we better to have one area which, to use your term, is hodgepodge as opposed to having two? I guess that's a question of judgment; isn't it?

Mr. Binassi: Yes, it would be.

Mr. Graham: A very good presentation. Thank you.

The Chair: Good. You know, we do have Grande Prairie in the province, where you divide it down the middle and they've got the rural areas surrounding it on all sides that are adjacent to that. I guess Camrose isn't divided down the middle. It's within a riding too.

Mr. Binassi: And Lethbridge is divided east/west.

The Chair: Yes, it is. That's right, although with no rural area around it.

Well, Bruno, thank you very, very much for your presentation and your straightforward approach. I appreciate it.

Mr. Binassi: Well, I know that it has been a long afternoon and it'll be a longer evening, so I didn't want to take too much of your time.

The Chair: Thanks, Bruno.

Mr. Binassi: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Okay. This part of the meeting is concluded until what time tonight, Mr. Olthof?

Mr. Olthof: Until 7 p.m.

The Chair: Until 7 p.m. How many groups do we have?

Mr. Olthof: Six.

The Chair: Six. Okay.

We will adjourn until 7 o'clock tonight. Thank you very much.

[The commission adjourned from 4:30 p.m. to 7 p.m.]

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the third part of the meetings today here in Edmonton. Mr. Dave Purewal is the first presenter this evening. Dave has not been here during the afternoon, so I'd like to take just a minute or two and tell you what we're about. Under the electoral commission legislation there was a commission to be established. The cabinet recommended two individuals, and the leaders of the opposition in consultation recommended two individuals. Then it could be a judge or head of an academic institution or the Auditor General or the Ethics Commissioner. Somehow they decided on the Ethics Commissioner this time around, so that is I.

The four members of the panel and my colleagues are Ernie Patterson, who is the mayor of the town of Claresholm and has been actively involved in municipal politics and mayor for 33 years; Glen Clegg, a former member of the Legislature for the Dunvegan area, the Peace River-Spirit River area. To my left is Bauni Mackay. Bonnie is the former president of the Alberta Teachers' Association and is an Edmontonian. To my far left is Mr. Doug Graham, a lawyer from the city of Calgary.

Our marching orders are rather like this in a very simplified form. We are to use the population in the last 10-year census, which gives us 2.98 million people. The legislation says that there'll be 83 seats, so if you divide those up, you get to 35,951 and a half per constituency. As you know, there's provision for deviation of 25 percent one way or the other, and then there's provision for four ridings that can be above 25 percent, up to 50 percent if they're a long distance away, a very sparse population, and if they touch on the border of the province and so on. Presently in Alberta – I saw you looking at the map back there – there are two ridings that fit into that category: Athabasca-Wabasca and Lesser Slave Lake.

Tonight we will be finishing our hearings for this week. Next week we're out for four days starting in St. Paul and ending up in St. Paul, Wainwright, Drumheller, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, and Wetaskiwin, and in the last week in June we're going up to northern Alberta. Then very early in July we'll be getting together and formulating our recommendations. A first draft, or initial interim report, will be available early in September through the Speaker's office, and anyone like yourself who has made a presentation will get copies. Following that, we'll expect a reaction from people who will read the interim report. Then we'll make ourselves available for some more hearings in December or early January. Then we have to have under the law a final report to the Speaker by early in March of next year.

So in a nutshell, Dave, that's what we're about. These are the people. As my colleagues have mentioned, we haven't drawn any lines. We were in Calgary on Monday, Red Deer and Olds yesterday, and here today, and then we move out across the province after that. So thank you very much for coming, Dave, and we look forward to your submission to us.

Mr. Purewal: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members. As you know, my name is Dave Purewal. I'm a longtime resident of the old Edmonton-Avonmore riding, now Edmonton-Mill Creek. I'm also the president of the Edmonton-Mill Creek PC Association.

You all know that Edmonton is a fast-growing city, probably the fastest one in Canada. We have growth not only in Edmonton but in surrounding areas like Leduc, Beaumont, Sherwood Park, St. Albert, Spruce Grove, et cetera. The growth is constant, consistent, and here to stay for some time longer. In the next few years Edmonton will grow very large in population, and it is very important that Edmonton keep its 19 seats. Basically, it's growing so much that it's very important to do that.

Now, in regard to Edmonton-Mill Creek we're 17.4 percent heavy, and we probably need to shed a little bit.

The Chair: So you're going to tell us how to do that.

Mr. Purewal: Yes, I'm going to give you some ideas in conjunction with your mandate.

Now, in Edmonton-Mill Creek the place where the most appropriate shedding can occur is the northwest corner along Mill Creek ravine, which is a natural boundary coming south, and along 91st Street right to Whitemud Drive, which will then shed about nine or 10 polls, which is about the 4,000 mark in population. That'll also keep your mandate of the natural boundary, because Mill Creek ravine follows down and comes along to Argyll and then past 91st right down to Whitemud Drive.

This will also help Edmonton-Riverview. Edmonton-Riverview right now straddles the river, and Edmonton-Riverview prefers to move to the south of the river. If we shed, we can help Edmonton-Riverview move to the south of the river.

The Chair: Now, am I missing something? Doesn't Edmonton-Strathcona come down in between Edmonton-Mill Creek and Edmonton-Riverview?

Mr. Purewal: Yes, but if Edmonton-Riverview comes south, Edmonton-Strathcona will shed a little bit and will take a little bit from Edmonton-Mill Creek. That'll help Edmonton-Riverview come to the south. Basically that's the most plausible way to shed in Edmonton-Mill Creek. If we shed anything else, we've totally lost the old Edmonton-Avonmore riding, and it'll create a new riding. We prefer that the natural boundary as it comes along Mill Creek right down to 91st will be the best way to do it.

The Chair: One of the suggestions that I think we heard earlier today was that Edmonton-Mill Woods might move east and help that way a bit. Is that not appealing?

Mr. Purewal: I think Edmonton-Mill Woods is . . .

The Chair: They're minus 15, so they need to pick up some people.

Mr. Purewal: Yes, but if you move them to the east, there is a natural boundary there. The ravine comes down again, and 50th Street is a main boundary. So it's not a very good suggestion to move them east. Moving them south would be . . .

The Chair: The challenge of moving them south is that the riding south of them is 10 percent short too.

Mr. Purewal: Right. But Edmonton-Ellerslie is growing a lot to the east as well as to the south.

The Chair: I only raise it, Dave, not to argue with you but just to simply say that it was a proposition that was put to us and one that we thought was worth considering.

Sorry for the interruption.

7:10

Mr. Purewal: No problem.

Again, where would you cut it off if you went east in Mill Woods past 50th Street? Fiftieth Street is a main street there, and also the ravine comes along there. So really I don't see that as a viable option.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Purewal: Basically, that's really all I wanted to say here

unless you have other questions for me.

Ms Mackay: I just want to clarify. So you're saying that you'd have Edmonton-Riverview come down across Edmonton-Strathcona and pick up part of Edmonton-Mill Creek; right?

Mr. Purewal: Edmonton-Riverview will pick up some portion from Edmonton-Whitemud, which is very heavy, 29 percent. It'll pick up some from Edmonton-Rutherford. It'll pick up some from Edmonton-Strathcona. In turn Edmonton-Strathcona will pick up those nine polls from Edmonton-Mill Creek.

The Chair: Can you get a map of the area from Mr. Olthof when he's there and draw that out on a map for us? That would be really very helpful.

Mr. Purewal: For Edmonton-Riverview?

The Chair: For what you're proposing.

Mr. Purewal: Okay. At 7:45 we'll have a presentation, and Edmonton-Riverview will bring that up. At that time, all the questions about Edmonton-Riverview and everything else will be answered.

The Chair: Okay. Good.

Mr. Purewal: I'll be here for further questions if you need me then.

The Chair: Okay. [interjection] We'll give you a chance to make your presentation later.

Mr. Lo: I just want to make a comment about what you folks were talking about. As a matter of fact, Edmonton-Mill Creek has already taken part of Strathcona county, and one of my old friends, Ace Cetinski, used to be from Sherwood Park. Now he's in Edmonton-Mill Creek. You probably know Ace.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Lo: You can't go any further. If you go any further east, you get into the county of Strathcona, and I think the mayor is very concerned about it. I talked to Vern Hartwell today.

The Chair: Okay. Good.
Any other questions of Dave?

Mr. Clegg: Well, no, I have no questions. I'm totally confused, but maybe later it'll be straightened out when we hear from Edmonton-Riverview.

Mr. Lo: Well, the east was divided by highway 14 . . .

The Chair: I'm sorry. We're not having pitches from the audience, as tempting as it might be.

Mr. Clegg: If we have a map to show what you think, then we can talk to Edmonton-Riverview, and then we can maybe get a map there.

Mr. Purewal: We'll talk about Edmonton-Riverview at 7:45. I was only talking about Edmonton-Mill Creek because we are heavy and we have to shed. We're making that suggestion where to shed.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Purewal: That's the option.

The Chair: Good. Any other questions for Dave? Comments?

Dave, I know it's not easy to come and say we have to, to use your term, shed, because you're really saying: here's part of our constituency; go this way or this way. I know that's difficult, but when we've heard the Edmonton-Riverview presentation and we get a map, I'm sure it'll be a lot easier for us to follow.

Mr. Purewal: Yes. We'll have a complete map. Yes.

The Chair: Okay. Great. Thank you very much.

Mr. Purewal: Thank you for hearing me.

The Chair: Thanks for coming.

I'd like to welcome Mr. Tony Ollenberger. When I asked Tony if he'd been here and seen how we were operating, he said he just waltzed in. So, Tony, in a real nutshell I will introduce you to the members of the commission. Under the electoral commission legislation after every two elections there is the need to set up a commission like this. We have to use the last census. That would be the 2001 Stats Canada census. The Leader of the Opposition recommends two people, Executive Council recommends two people, and then the chairman is either a judge or a head of an academic institution or the Auditor General or the Ethics Commissioner. For some reason the Ethics Commissioner got selected, and that's how come I'm here.

What we're doing is hearing from people like yourselves. In fact, you're the 22nd group to meet with us today. We were in Calgary and central Alberta this week. We go into eastern and southern Alberta next and the northern part of the province in the last week in June. Then we immediately get together and try to come to some conclusions with a view to having an interim report available for the Speaker to be made public early in September. You have a chance to look at those again, and then if you've got further comments you want to make to us, we'll have another round of public hearings in those areas where there seems to be a lot of interest in December or early January. We have to have a final report in the Speaker's hands in early March.

That's what we're up to, Tony. Thank you very much for coming. Generally what we do is ask someone to make the presentation to us, and then this group is rather quick at asking questions or making comments. Okay? Thanks, Tony.

Mr. Ollenberger: Okay. If possible, I'd like you to hold your question till the end of my presentation.

The Chair: We will. There aren't many things I can guarantee, but I can guarantee that.

Mr. Ollenberger: Okay. Good, because it's kind of confusing as you go through it. It's better if you hear the whole thing first and then kind of pick at it afterward or support it afterward.

The Chair: Hundred percent.

Mr. Ollenberger: Okay. My presentation deals mainly with a riding around the Edmonton area. I live in the riding of Redwater. That's one of the ridings affected. I looked through the ridings in northern Alberta, and I really didn't see any need to adjust the sort of further north ridings, the big four, I guess, as it were, of

Athabasca-Wabasca, Dunvegan, Peace River, and Lesser Slave Lake.

The first riding I would like to address is the Redwater riding. My proposal would be to eliminate the riding altogether. I know we need a couple of ridings for Calgary anyway, so I'd like to make one for you right now. To me it seems logical both in terms of demographics and geography to eliminate the riding of Redwater and just merge the parts into different ridings around the area.

The first one I'd like to touch on is Barrhead-Westlock. The one way to see the votership increase in Barrhead-Westlock would be to absorb Thorhild county, which is currently part of the Redwater riding. That would bring Barrhead-Westlock into a population range to make it more acceptable. It wouldn't quite be the 36,000, but it would bring it closer to that 36,000 and geographically still wouldn't make it a huge riding, so it would still be coverable.

The Chair: So distancewise it wouldn't be bad.

Mr. Ollenberger: Next, I'd like to take Lac La Biche-St. Paul. I hope you have your maps in front of you so you can follow along.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Ollenberger: With Lac La Biche-St. Paul I'd like to absorb the Smoky Lake portion of the Redwater riding, which is just sort of the northeastern corner of Redwater. It's not a very large part of the current riding. That again, like I say, is just purely for geographical reasons.

Next, I'd like to move into the Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan riding. With this riding, what I'd propose to do is split the riding in two, and then create two new ridings out of it. One would be with the northern half of the riding. If you have your maps in front of you, I would take polls 33 and up of the Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan riding, and I would merge that with Sturgeon county east of highways 28 and 803. So there would be a north/south line drawn along highways 28 and 803, and that eastern part of Sturgeon county would then be merged with that half of Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan and be named Sturgeon-Fort Saskatchewan.

Now, the southern half of the Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan riding – that would be polls 1 through 32 of Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan. I propose that we merge those with polls 69 to 80 of the Sherwood Park riding and rename the riding Strathcona-Clover Bar. This would again balance the population out and also bring down the population of the Sherwood Park riding, because it's currently at 46,000 or so. At any rate, it's over the acceptable range.

Okay. I'd like to move over to St. Albert now. I'd like to eliminate polls 1 through 4 and 15 through 18 of the St. Albert riding itself, and that would shrink the size of the St. Albert riding. Those polls I'd like to take into the Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert riding, which I would again be altering, and create a new riding called St. Albert-North. Now, St. Albert-North would take those seven polls for the St. Albert riding as well as the city of St. Albert section of Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert and all of Sturgeon county north of highway 633 running west along the current boundary of Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert and encompassing the rest of Sturgeon county west of the highways 28 and 803 line.

7:20

Now, this leads to the Spruce Grove section of Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, which I would like to merge into a new riding called Parkland. This riding would encompass Parkland county essentially east of the 5th meridian.

The Chair: Where does the 5th meridian run there?

Mr. Ollenberger: It's just on the west side of Stony Plain.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Ollenberger: In fact, the 5th meridian cuts through part of Stony Plain.

My proposition would be to deviate from the 5th meridian just enough so that we can encompass the town of Stony Plain. We would encompass Stony Plain, Spruce Grove. Our southern boundary would be the North Saskatchewan River, which is currently the southern boundary of the Stony Plain riding, the northern boundary would be highway 633, and the eastern boundary would then be the city of Edmonton.

Now, this only leaves us with the western section of what is now the Stony Plain riding, which could either be absorbed by Drayton Valley-Calmar or Whitecourt-St. Anne. My suggestion would be to be absorbed into Whitecourt-St. Anne because it just makes more sense geographically speaking.

And that's all I have for you.

The Chair: That's a fair load, young man. Well, you've obviously done some serious thinking.

Mr. Clegg.

Mr. Clegg: Well, yeah. This is more than I can comprehend in a short period of time.

Mr. Ollenberger: I didn't mean to throw too much at you.

Mr. Clegg: Well, no. That's fine. I mean, you know, it certainly gives us good ideas.

With all those changes you propose – and certainly we can get the numbers from what you've said – have you done anything on numbers? Are the constituencies that you are creating and removing all within the legislation?

Mr. Ollenberger: They're all within the range. Actually, a lot of them are very close to the 36,000. I based that just on the names on the voters list and tried to extrapolate that by the information you'd given me on populations per riding. So it should be fairly close.

Mr. Clegg: You've taken it from the voters list?

Mr. Ollenberger: Yeah. I have my 2001 election results books, so I just added up the number of voters in each poll and tried to extend it that way.

Mr. Clegg: Okay. Well, we certainly have to look at it; that's all I can say.

Mr. Ollenberger: The number of voters balances out anyway, so the population should be pretty close.

Ms Mackay: In making these combinations and permutations and all that you've done here, have you taken into account sort of communities and commonality of interest?

Mr. Ollenberger: That was actually the basis of it. Yeah.

Ms Mackay: I mean, for example, Parkland. The west part of Parkland is where I grew up, so I'm very familiar with this, and I would say that it would be contrary to everything that that district does to be in combination with either Drayton Valley-Calmar or Whitecourt-St. Anne, because nobody moves that way. They all

move east; right?

Mr. Ollenberger: Right.

Ms Mackay: So they're all moving toward Stony Plain and Spruce Grove and ultimately Edmonton, I guess. Do you have a comment on that? Would you be willing to sacrifice that kind of sense of community that they share at the moment in order to do this kind of splitting?

Mr. Ollenberger: Well, actually the community was the biggest reason I made the changes I made. But of course the old adage goes: you can't please everybody. Right? By population, I guess, if we were still to include the western part of Parkland county, we might end up overpopulating a Parkland riding and then have to snip a corner somewhere else and run into the same problem again. Does that sort of answer your question?

Ms Mackay: Yes. I know why you did it. Okay.

Mr. Graham: You've obviously done a lot of work, and I want to compliment you on that. You're dedicated to this, and you've done a lot of work. But a question I have would be similar to Bauni's. Obviously there's some reason why you were doing all of these things, and I just wanted to know what the general sort of conceptual basis was?

Mr. Ollenberger: Okay. Well, I guess when I looked at it, I knew that there would be at least one or two ridings eliminated from rural Alberta. I know that eliminating my own riding seems like an exercise in foolishness, but when I look at the riding of Redwater, having grown up in that area, there's really very little to no commonality with people who live, say, in Morinville to people who live in Smoky Lake or in Thorhild. People who live even in Bon Accord or Gibbons south toward Edmonton are mainly commuters who work in Edmonton and live in these communities as bedroom communities for instance. So I thought that perhaps by grouping some of these with St. Albert, with a lot of the subdivisions in the Sturgeon Valley there would be more of a common way of thinking, I guess, among the people who live in that area. That was my basis for that riding in particular, and I tried to achieve the same thing with the other ridings I balanced out. I don't know the Parkland county area very well, so there, Bauni, I may end up shooting myself in the foot, but for the most part that's what I tried to do: sort of group the communities with a similar way of thinking into same constituencies.

Mr. Graham: Thanks.

Mr. Patterson: Yes, Mr. Chair. I just would compliment you on the work that you've done here, Tony, but the question I have is: have you talked to anybody else about these? Have you talked to anybody else in Redwater, or is this just totally your own idea?

Mr. Ollenberger: I actually consulted my constituency board on some of the changes I proposed to make and had reactions from "Are you nuts?" to "Yeah, this doesn't sound too bad." So I've just kind of gone ahead that way. Beyond that, other than family and friends, I haven't gone out into as broad a field as you guys are, because that's your job.

Mr. Patterson: The other question, Mr. Chair. I just want to clarify this. You used the number of electors in the polls rather than population figures.

Mr. Ollenberger: Right. Well, actually I e-mailed your office early on in the process to try and get population figures per riding and was told that I needed to contact the Treasury Board for those particular stats. I thought that rather than trying to chase through government office after government office, I would just go about it this way.

The Chair: Well, Tony, I can tell you that one person who I know will be very pleased with what you're suggesting is the Speaker of the Legislature.

Mr. Ollenberger: He can use a few more miles.

The Chair: Seriously, I really like to see someone like yourself come forward the way you have. You've looked at it. You're committed to it. You've done some original thinking, and this province, regardless of whatever party, is well served by people like yourself who take a challenge on and go at it and give it your best shot. We really appreciate it. Thank you very much, Tony.

Mr. Ollenberger: Thank you.

The Chair: Welcome, Mr. Rob Dunseith and Julian Martin. You're the people who are going to help lead us through Edmonton-Riverview and the allocation that Dave talked about earlier; are you? Seriously, thank you very much for coming. We need all the help that we can get.

Mr. Dunseith: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen and Ms Mackay, good evening. I'd like to introduce myself. My name is Robert Dunseith. I'm a member of the board of the Edmonton-Riverview PC Association. To my left is Mr. Julian Martin, who is the president of the Edmonton-Strathcona PC Association. Just to clarify and make very clear the capacity in which I am appearing tonight, I'm appearing at the behest of the Edmonton-Riverview PC Association with the support of a number of other constituency associations in the south and west parts of the city of Edmonton. Several of you on the panel will know that I am the past president of the provincial Progressive Conservative Association.

7:30

The Chair: We won't hold that against you though.

Mr. Dunseith: Thank you.

I'd like to make it very clear that my remarks tonight do not in any way represent the position of the provincial association, which has resolved not to take a position relative to your deliberations and rather to leave it to the individual constituency associations to make representation.

As I mentioned, my particular constituency association asked myself and Mr. Martin to appear tonight to share with you a number of views relative to the situation of the boundaries in the west and south of the city of Edmonton. There were a number of meetings in fact held between the presidents of the various PC associations in this area with a view to developing a consensus position with respect to several points. I'd like to review those I guess to begin with before going to the handout which I've provided to you.

The PC constituency associations which I'm referring to are Edmonton-Glenora, Edmonton-Meadowlark, Edmonton-Riverview, Edmonton-Whitemud, Edmonton-Rutherford, Edmonton-Strathcona, Edmonton-Mill Creek, and Edmonton-Centre. All of the executives of those PC associations have been consulted with respect to this.

The Chair: That's how many ridings, Rob?

Mr. Dunseith: That is eight ridings primarily in the south and west parts of the city of Edmonton.

The PC constituency associations I've referred to agree with the principle of effective representation. The need to ensure the relatively equal representative value of each citizen's vote must be tempered by the recognition of geographical realities. It is clear that in Alberta not all electoral divisions will have an equal population. Generally, urban areas will and should have electoral divisions with a higher average population so as to permit more sparsely populated divisions to cover smaller territories.

The commission should recognize growth centres in the province and anticipate future growth so as to minimize as much as possible the phenomenon of electoral divisions outgrowing their boundaries during the time they are enforced. Population growth in Edmonton between 2000 and 2005 is expected to be 5.4 percent according to the Edmonton Population and Employment Forecast Allocation Study 2000 to 2025. That's a study which was prepared by the city of Edmonton. I have a copy here that I'd be happy to leave with you tonight. Growth to 2010 is projected to be 12 percent. So from 2000 to 2010 12 percent population growth is projected. Given that the boundaries implemented by this commission will govern until 2010, as I understand it – am I correct in that respect? – it is important to take account of these types of projections.

The Chair: For two elections, yes.

Mr. Dunseith: For two elections indeed.

Moreover, the growth which is projected is not predicted to be uniform across the city. The city study predicts that most growth will take place in the outlying suburban areas of the city. The new boundaries can and should reflect that reality.

The south and west Edmonton PC constituency associations believe that given the projected growth in the Edmonton area, the number of seats presently situated in the city should be maintained at the very least. The boundaries in the south and west areas of Edmonton can and should be redrawn to conform to natural and significant man-made barriers as well as established communities within the area of the city.

The Edmonton-Riverview PC Association has since its inception under the last redistribution been particularly concerned about the configuration of the constituency without regard to the single most significant natural barrier in the city, that being the North Saskatchewan River. Patterns of growth in the areas of south and west Edmonton should permit the commission to adjust boundaries in such a way as to respect the river as a natural boundary and the communities of interest which exist on each side of the river. Other significant natural and man-made boundaries which could and should be respected are the Whitemud Ravine, the Blackmud Ravine, 109th Street, Mill Creek, and 83rd Street.

With the assistance of Mr. Martin and a number of other members of the group I described, we have prepared a model of the new boundaries in the area which shows that respecting these boundaries would result in new electoral divisions which fall within a reasonable variance from average. We are prepared to share this model and have in fact shared it with you tonight on the basis that the model itself does not necessarily represent a full consensus of the constituencies but rather is simply a model which is an illustration of how boundaries could be redrawn respecting those barriers and allowing an arrival at a point where there is a reasonable variance from average.

The most important feature of the model you've been provided is the transfer, in effect, of Edmonton-Riverview in its entirety to the south part of the city, south of the river, whether it's called Edmonton-Riverview or some other name. The boundaries that are

proposed in this model in fact substantially encompass the area around the University of Alberta. In fact, it might be appropriate to call the constituency Edmonton-Varsity or Edmonton-University or something of that nature. It is bounded by 109th Street on the east end, which is a significant man-made barrier that separates the communities in that part of the city; at the south end by Whitemud Drive substantially; at the west boundary by Whitemud Creek, which is another significant natural boundary that divides the communities of Grandview Heights, Lansdowne, and Aspen Gardens from the communities to the west, which is Riverbend substantially.

In any event, the model also shows a number of other adjustments which would bring constituencies that are in the area which are over average significantly, such as Edmonton-Whitemud, down to a percentage variance which would be within a reasonable variation. You'll see from the model that the Edmonton-Whitemud population would in fact be reduced below average, and we suggest that given the projected growth in the area, that would be a very appropriate level to arrive at.

I've invited Mr. Martin along as well in case you have any questions specifically about the boundaries developed in the model. They were developed significantly with his assistance, so I guess I would invite your questions.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Dunseith: Oh, I should say, sir – and I apologize – that we do not have a map. I think you were promised a map perhaps in an earlier presentation. We have in fact shown the adjustments that we've suggested in the model by reference to the polls from the 2001 election, based on the boundaries that were in force at that time, and the population numbers there, like the previous presenter's, are in effect based on the gross population inferred from the number of voters on the lists within those polls; in other words, based on an assumption that the number of voters within a poll will be about 70 percent of the total population. So it's an assumed number, and therefore the number should be regarded as being merely an approximation.

The Chair: Did you in the course of your deliberations, gentlemen, put a map together?

Mr. Dunseith: Well, indeed we did, and I was saying to Mr. Martin that it was too bad we didn't bring it along. We thought you would have one, and you do in fact. It's just not in a very convenient location. We would be prepared to in fact draw the model for you and provide it to the commission if you wanted.

The Chair: That would be tremendously helpful to us. Yes, that would be very good.

Mr. Graham: One thing that occurred to me while listening to this, Rob, was that we had Edmonton-Whitemud in earlier and they stressed to us that if a choice came between being smaller or being bigger, they would rather stay bigger, which seems kind of inconsistent.

Mr. Dunseith: Somewhat at variance.

Mr. Graham: I wondered if you had a comment on that.

Mr. Dunseith: I'm afraid I can't speak to the presentation that was made to you earlier, because I wasn't here. I know that the president of Edmonton-Whitemud did participate in our little group, and I certainly understood from our discussions that they were amenable

to accommodating the notion of getting the river back into our boundary scheme.

Mr. Graham: Well, they may be amenable to that, but I'm just pointing out this inconsistency; that's all.

Mr. Dunseith: I guess the point there, Mr. Graham, would be that if Whitemud doesn't get smaller, then the south part of Riverview could not be big enough to justify a whole riding.

The Chair: I guess the issue really centres around: are we going to have Riverview on both sides? Your proposal allows us to have Riverview just on the south side and moves things around on that premise. Is that fair?

7:40

Mr. Dunseith: I think so. I think the main premise is that under the last boundaries I suspect that the previous commission maybe was left with the situation where having drawn the boundaries, they had half a constituency on the north side and half a constituency on the south side of the river and really didn't have a choice but to span the river. Because of the growth patterns, which are substantially to the south end of the city, it is possible to shift the boundaries south and in effect create that constituency wholly within the south side and take the north side of Riverview and distribute it amongst the neighbouring constituencies. That's really what the model was based on.

The Chair: Mr. Patterson.

Mr. Patterson: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much for making your presentation. I think you're to be congratulated in putting all this work together.

Mr. Dunseith: I had a lot of assistance. Thank you.

Mr. Patterson: Well, it's good.

I have a couple of questions. When you did this, did you take into consideration the community leagues?

Mr. Dunseith: Indeed we did, and it wouldn't be surprising, I'm sure, to the commission to know that communities falling on one side of, say, Whitemud Creek would be separate community leagues from those falling on the other side. In fact, it's kind of a natural demarcation line, and to a great extent we've respected those in the model. There are a few places, frankly, where there have been one or two communities that have been split, but again, you know, there's fine-tuning required, and I'm afraid I have to leave it to you to do that.

The Chair: Well, thank you.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chair, I'm wondering why Edmonton-Meadowlark is allowed 14.3 percent over. Have I got that right? Yes. After you've made the changes, compared to the other deviation, Edmonton-Meadowlark is at 14.3 percent.

Mr. Dunseith: Yeah. The reason for that, Mr. Patterson, is that the north portion of Riverview is, of course, split between the neighbouring ridings, which are Edmonton-Glenora on one hand and Edmonton-Meadowlark. The result of that, as you can see, is that Edmonton-Meadowlark goes from being nearly 12 percent below average to being 6, nearly 7 percent over average, because it's taken a piece of the north part of Riverview. Edmonton-Meadowlark goes

from minus 3.6 up to 14.3, which is frankly too high. Undoubtedly, there could be other adjustments relative to Edmonton-Meadowlark's neighbouring constituencies to the north. We just frankly didn't get to that point. I believe that Edmonton-Calder is somewhat under average as well, and therefore some adjustments could be made relative to Edmonton-Calder. A number of the other north-side constituencies are below average. There could be a bit of a shift across the city in that respect.

Mr. Patterson: Then I've just one last question, Mr. Chair. From what I understand, under the act we're not really allowed as a commission to try and project into the future. I kind of wondered if you gentlemen realize that, because it seems to be part of your suggestion here that we try and predict where growth goes in the future.

Mr. Dunseith: Well, indeed I think the point relative to that was simply that if you look at, say, the model, where Edmonton-Whitemud is 7 percent below, one might not wish to see a constituency below average. But I think one can rest relatively assured, based on development plans that are already progressing – and in fact you may have more up-to-date data in this regard than is available to us – that that constituency will grow back and in fact be over average by the time of the next election. Now, whether that's within your mandate to consider or not – I'm sorry that I didn't really weigh the legalities of it completely, but I know that you do have a discretion within a certain range.

Mr. Patterson: Right. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Mr. Clegg.

Mr. Clegg: Thanks. Just a very quick question. Rob and Julian, when you drew up these boundaries, I think you took into consideration natural boundaries a lot more than you did whether the community leagues are together. Am I correct in saying that?

Mr. Martin: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Clegg, we were galvanized by the initial announcement in your public announcements of the kinds of criteria you thought were relevant, certainly natural boundaries and very significant urban roadways and the like, but also some were what you might call intuitive cultural boundaries. Typically neighbourhoods or community league type districts in an old city like ours are intuitively important boundaries, but I think that we would roughly speaking rank them by making the natural boundaries the primary way in which we tried to build this model.

Mr. Clegg: Just following up. Of course, somebody has asked this question before, in Calgary too, and in many cases they said that they would rather get rid of the natural boundaries, but they do not – and this came from a lot of presentations we had – want the community associations split up. I guess that a lot of times it's not split up when you use a natural boundary. I know that we had asked that question before, and most presentations are in fact very adamant that they do not want the community associations split up.

Mr. Martin: Well, sir, one would not want to do that in general terms, but general terms don't necessarily cover the situation that we have here in the Edmonton area, where the geography very dramatically has created community districting by the way it slices the city into ravines and neighbourhoods and the like. So I think that some of the criteria you have suggested work very well in the Edmonton situation.

Mr. Clegg: Thank you.

The Chair: Gentlemen, might I remind you that you're going to get that map put together for us, and if you'll get it to the Chief Electoral Officer's office, that would be really, really very helpful to us.

The other comment I'd make is that you've gone to a lot of work, and thank you very much. You people as well as the gentleman who was just up here before know that once you get moving these boundaries, it affects so many different places; doesn't it? So we appreciate the work you've done. We'll look forward to getting your map. You were here when I outlined the schedule; weren't you? We don't expect to see you back the second time.

Mr. Martin: Well, thank you, I think.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Dunseith: Thank you.

The Chair: I'd like to welcome now Norma Callicott. Norma just arrived, so I'm going to take the opportunity to introduce members of the panel and in a very thumbnail sketch, Norma, what we're up to. This group has been put together under the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, and the Ethics Commissioner was selected as the chairman for some reason. The Leader of the Opposition recommended two people in consultation, and the Executive Council appointed two people. The people that I'd like to introduce you to are, on my left, Doug Graham, a lawyer in the city of Calgary; Ernie Patterson, the mayor of Claresholm, on my right; Glen Clegg, a former member of the Legislature for the Dunvegan area; and Bauni Mackay from Edmonton.

In fact, you are the 23rd group that we've met today, and then we'll be finished for this week. Then next week we start from St. Paul down to Medicine Hat, that part of the province, then later on in June Peace River and northern parts of the province. Early in July we're getting together to come to some conclusions, and our interim report will be available through the Speaker's office in the early part of September. We'd like you to have a look at that, get back to us with your comments. You noticed the rather facetious comments I made to the last group: we don't expect to see you back again. If you have suggestions for us the second time around, please do. Then we'll have the public hearings, and we'll do a final report. That final report will be available in March of next year, and then it goes to the Legislature for, hopefully, their adoption.

Just two other quick points. The legislation says that we use the figures from the 2001 national census, which is 2.98 million. The legislation also says that there'll be 83 constituencies. If you divide by that, it comes to about 35,951, so we're really saying 36,000. We're pretty much tied to using the census figures. That has to be the general approach.

7:50

Mrs. Callicott: Okay. I understand.

The Chair: Thank you very much for coming, and we look forward to your presentation. You can rest assured that there'll be some questions and comments after.

Mrs. Callicott: Thank you for the introduction. I'm presenting on behalf of the Sherwood Park Liberal Association. Firstly, I'd like to address the growth of Sherwood Park. Sherwood Park is the ninth largest provincial constituency, with 46,818 residents. Sherwood Park's variance from the provincial average is plus 30.2 percent.

Sherwood Park's population has been growing at the rate of 3 percent for the past 10 years. Residential development hit a record high in 2001 and is expected to break records again in 2002. The number of residents as forecast by Strathcona county's planning and development department is 51,764 by 2005 and could reach 70,000 by 2015. Sherwood Park is currently studying where future new urban development should occur. Prospective areas are beyond the current Sherwood Park division boundaries east and south.

Who should be part of Sherwood Park? The present boundaries of the Sherwood Park division exclude some residents such as those in the large-lot developments of the Estates and Fountain Creek, which are part of the Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan division, and those are highlighted in the appendix, the last page. The Estates, which is poll 31, is within Sherwood Park, separated by Wye Road. Fountain Creek Estates, which is poll 9, is one kilometre south of Sherwood Park. Residents in these areas had a lower voter turnout, 59.4 percent and 53.8 percent respectively, compared with the overall Sherwood Park rate of 65 percent, which was the highest in the province. These developments are much closer in proximity to Sherwood Park and may feel better represented in a Sherwood Park division.

Sherwood Park is not a city or a town but is a hamlet in a large county. Strathcona county governs urban, acreage, and rural residents, and its administration and council must consider the views of all residents in its governance. Rural and acreage residents in the county already contribute to Sherwood Park's community and prosperity. Including them with Sherwood Park residents would mirror existing municipal boundaries and reflect the sense of community that already exists.

What do rural and urban voters have in common? They use the same business, professional, and retail services. They use the same recreation, cultural, emergency, environmental, and transportation services provided by Strathcona county. They have a vested interest in local commercial, industrial, and residential planning and development decisions. They use the same health services provided by the Capital health authority. They use the same education services provided by the Elk Island public school and Elk Island Catholic school boards, and they are all taxpayers.

What can be done with the current boundaries? There is no doubt that redrawing Sherwood Park's boundaries must occur. Sherwood Park does not meet any of the requirements which would allow for a division with more than a 25 percent variance. Most areas around Sherwood Park have a negative variance from the provincial average and could absorb more residents, particularly Redwater, Vegreville-Viking, Lac La Biche-St. Paul, Barrhead-Westlock, and Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

What can be done with the current boundaries? Sherwood Park could be split in half with each half including some acreage and rural residents that are presently part of the Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan division. There are approximately 20,000 residents in the areas south of Sherwood Park to the county of Leduc border, east to Elk Island national park, and north to highway 16. If two divisions are created, these rural residents together with Sherwood Park residents total approximately 68,000. This would allow for two divisions of about 34,000 residents each. This would be within the acceptable range of 26,963 to 44,939 residents per division and would allow for future growth. The remaining parts of the Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan division could be divided up between the surrounding divisions. Residents in and around the city of Fort Saskatchewan and within the division of Redwater share a common interest in the heavy industrial development which resides in both of these divisions. Other rural areas share a common agricultural interest with surrounding divisions. Redrawing division boundaries surrounding Sherwood Park could create divisions of residents with

common interests and resolve issues of underpopulated divisions.

In conclusion, Sherwood Park needs to be split into two divisions as it is over the legislated acceptable size limit. The escalating growth of Sherwood Park must be considered. Sherwood Park urban, acreage, and rural voters in the same division would mirror the current municipal boundaries and the sense of community that already exists. Divisions around Sherwood Park are not large by geography or population and could absorb more residents. Combining parts of Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan with surrounding divisions and creating two Sherwood Park divisions would not increase the number of divisions.

That is my presentation.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much.

Mrs. Callicott: Short and sweet.

The Chair: And to the point. You've done a lot of work on it. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Callicott: Thank you.

The Chair: My colleagues are looking at the maps and underlining sections, but I think that Mr. Clegg has a question or a comment.

Mr. Clegg: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Norma. There is nothing in this that I wouldn't totally agree with, but I think we've got to be pretty stern on using the 2001 census. Now, we can say that there's going to be this great growth. We hear it in Calgary. We've heard it in Edmonton. We hear it from Sherwood Park. I don't doubt it for a minute. But I'm from the north, so I've seen Grande Prairie in the 1970s boom and then the oil patch went like this, and I saw half of the industrial area boarded up. Now, '84-85 came along since then, and they all opened up again.

I think it wouldn't be wise for us as a commission to try and guess who's going to grow and at what percentage. We can kind of anticipate for a little bit, but I don't think any of us can predict if it's even going to rain next week. I don't think we can predict, because if we predict the growth, we also have to predict the downsize. As you know, there are many areas in the province that have gone down in population. We have a big enough job using that 2001 census to try and figure out where something's going to grow. That to me is why we have this commission every two elections. Don't get me wrong; I probably agree with everything that you say in here, but I have seen – as you can tell, I wasn't born yesterday – over the years how the economy stops and it gets to be a recession. I've seen in lots of areas that there is no growth, so I don't think that we can in fact . . .

Mrs. Callicott: Sherwood Park is still oversized. Something has to be done. There are parts of Sherwood Park that aren't included in the current Sherwood Park boundaries.

Mr. Clegg: Absolutely. I understand all that, and thank you very much for the brief. It's very good.

Mrs. Callicott: Thank you.

The Chair: Just before Bauni asks a question, this is a question that I'm sure I know the answer to. We've heard from you people and we've heard from people south of the city and people north of the city, and nobody seems to be very interested in kind of getting in an urban/rural riding with the city of Edmonton. I take it from the look on your face right now and from the fact that you haven't made

reference to it here that that's not an option that you think is on the table at all from your point of view.

8:00

Mrs. Callicott: As far as being urban/rural in one riding?

The Chair: Some of Sherwood Park joining the city of Edmonton. We have some shortages on the east side of Edmonton, you see.

Mrs. Callicott: Okay. We did discuss parts of Sherwood Park joining with the city of Edmonton, but I think the biggest obstacle for us is that any possible amalgamation talks would I think create some pretty serious conflicts for a riding that would include Edmonton and Sherwood Park. But we did recognize that there were ridings in the east end that were lower.

The Chair: That's a rather consistent view that we've heard all day, I might add.

Ms Mackay: Well, Mr. Chair, you asked one of my two questions.

The Chair: I'm sorry.

Ms Mackay: It is tempting for us to look to Strathcona county and moving toward Sherwood Park in terms of building up both Edmonton-Manning and Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. So, you know, we have discussed it a little bit or referred to it.

Anyway, I just want to know. You're essentially saying that we would eliminate the Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan constituency?

Mrs. Callicott: That's right.

Ms Mackay: And this is with the knowledge and consent of the people in that part?

Mrs. Callicott: No. I'll be honest.

Ms Mackay: Okay. Are you suggesting that the city of Fort Saskatchewan would then be part of one of the two Sherwood Park ridings?

Mrs. Callicott: I would suggest that the city of Fort Saskatchewan could join Redwater. We haven't laid out specific maps and population and where each poll would go, because we don't have population numbers for each poll. I'm sure the commission has all that information. We just recognize that the city of Fort Saskatchewan does have some commonality with Redwater. There's heavy industry on both sides of the river, and we were looking for common interests there. If Redwater was too big, you know, there are other ridings around there that are smaller.

The Chair: The ridings east of Vegreville are down too.

Mrs. Callicott: That's right. Certainly they could perhaps absorb some of the rural polls that are outside of the city of Fort Saskatchewan and would be north of the area that we're proposing. We're not proposing really steadfast boundaries either. We're just giving some suggestions on what we feel is a good community around us.

Ms Mackay: Good. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Patterson.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, thank you. Thank you very much

for coming to present tonight and doing the detailed work here. It will give us lots to think about. The question I have is: you're going north, but I wonder why you didn't think of going south into Leduc.

Mrs. Callicott: Because the numbers are lower. Well, no. Leduc is actually a little higher than the provincial average. Why didn't I go further south into Leduc? I think we wanted to recognize the community and the business community. I think most people that are south of Sherwood Park would probably have more in common with Sherwood Park, more contact with Sherwood Park, use more of the services in Sherwood Park rather than in Leduc.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you.

Mr. Graham: I was going to ask a similar but more general question. You've given us sort of your first preference here, and I wonder: if that proves to be difficult or impossible, what would preference 2 or 3 be? Or are there any?

Mrs. Callicott: I don't think we really came up with scenarios 2 and 3. I know that what we wouldn't want as a scenario is to be amalgamated with some part of Edmonton. I don't think that would serve us terribly well. We recognize that Sherwood Park has to be cut in half. If you cut it in half, it's too small really to have two effective divisions, so there has to be something more added with Sherwood Park.

The Chair: Any other questions?

Well, thank you very much, Norma. You come at a very interesting time, because just before supper we had a presentation about really splitting St. Albert right down the number 2 highway and kind of going east and west. Then we have the gentleman at the back there – I was going to say with the shorts on, but that would be unfair – who is going to wipe out Redwater. I'm kidding because I know you're a good sport. Then we have the comments about Edmonton from the Edmonton-Riverview folks and yourself, and really all four groups have forced us to kind of sit back and see, you know, that these are options that hadn't really jumped into our direct line of vision just now. So you come at a very good time.

Norma, thanks for the good work you've done, and we appreciate your . . .

Mrs. Callicott: Thank you. You have your work cut out for you.

The Chair: That's been pointed out to us once or twice.

Mr. Clegg: I think that we'll leave the country when we get the report done.

The Chair: I'd like to take a five-minute break now, and then the next person we'll call is Dr. Kevin Taft. You notice that Mr. Fjeldheim has been very nice to Dr. Taft and I will be too because he sits on the Leg. Offices Committee. He's a member of the committee that we both work for. So take a five-minute break.

[The commission adjourned from 8:07 p.m. to 8:20 p.m.]

The Chair: Okay, ladies and gentlemen. We've heard all sorts of talk about Edmonton-Riverview in the course of the day, so now we've got the man who represents Riverview in the Assembly, Kevin Taft. I don't need to explain to Kevin the process because Kevin sits in the Leg. Kevin, Ernie Patterson is to my right, the 33-year mayor of Claresholm; Glen Clegg, the former member from Dunvegan; Bauni Mackay, whom I know you've never met before;

and Doug Graham, whom you likely haven't ever met before, from Calgary.

Okay, Kevin. What we'd like you to do is make your presentation to us, and then I'm sure, knowing this group like I've come to know them in the last couple of months, there'll be some questions and comments.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I should start by saying that I just am finishing a long drive here, so if I look like I've been on the road for several hours, I have been. I'm sorry I'm not a little better dressed, but I made it.

The Chair: That's the important part.

Dr. Taft: I think each of you will have a set of maps in front of you. There should be a package. I guess I'm going to make a different kind of presentation than at least one other one about Riverview.

I've lived in Riverview just about my entire life, and as the MLA for it I feel that it's a cohesive and pretty well-thought-out constituency. The kinds of ideas that went into creating it in the first place I think are probably still valid. As you can see from the very top map that has the neighbourhoods labeled on it, there is a total of 13 complete neighbourhoods in Edmonton-Riverview. I assume from the earlier presentations that you're oriented to where this is in Edmonton.

The Chair: Yes, we are.

Dr. Taft: It includes the university campus and the university farm and so on. It also goes out to the north side of the Whitemud freeway. So it includes 13 complete neighbourhoods plus, as I say, the U of A campus and the U of A farm, and the neighbourhoods are listed there. One of the notable things – and you can see this very clearly on the second map, this one here – is that the river runs through it. The river runs right through the middle of Edmonton-Riverview, and I guess there was an earlier presentation suggesting that that's a natural dividing line. I would in fact say that the river is not a dividing line; it's a uniting line. A dividing line is something like a freeway. In fact, people on both sides of the river are drawn to that river and to the valley. People want to be close to it. They enjoy it. They walk their dogs through it. They play in it. They have their picnics in the river valley.

So I think that in fact the river is a uniting factor in Edmonton-Riverview, and if you look at either of the first two maps, there is certainly much more in common between, say, a neighbourhood on the south side of the river valley, a 1950s neighbourhood, which most of these are, and a 1950s neighbourhood sitting across the river on the north side of the river valley. Those two kinds of neighbourhoods have much more in common than a river valley neighbourhood does with a 1980s or 1990s suburban neighbourhood. So I feel very clearly that these are neighbourhoods with a lot in common.

The issues they face are similar ones. They're all considered to be mature neighbourhoods by the city of Edmonton. They face issues of traffic, traffic congestion and traffic shortcutting, deterioration of some of the infrastructure. They have older schools in them, and they have similar demographic characteristics. Each of the neighbourhoods on there on average has a higher percentage of senior citizens than the average for Edmonton or for Alberta. They have a higher than average home ownership rate. They have a longer than average occupancy of the home, and there's a greater percentage age 55 and over than average. I will provide you the details of those figures a bit later, if you like, or in a subsequent

submission. So they have similar characteristics, similar demographics, and similar kinds of concerns that I think distinguish them from, say, a distant western or southern suburban community, which will have not only completely different demographics but completely different concerns.

As well, the future for these neighbourhoods is dominated by three issues that link them. One is the expansion of the university campus, or the intensification of the university campus. The second and I think more important one is the development of the university farm, which is in the southern portion of the constituency. Then the third one is the extension of the LRT, which will run from where it currently ends, under the university campus, down to the university farm, where it will ultimately split, one end continuing south to the vacant Heritage Mall – I'm not sure why, but they're determined to send it there – and the other swinging across Fox Drive and over beside the Quesnell Bridge and up through the west end of the constituency. So both sides of the constituency are affected by the LRT extension as well.

I haven't gone through these maps in detail. They're labeled at the bottom. You can see that the neighbourhoods were developed at about the same time. They reflect overwhelmingly the Edmonton of the prosperous 1950s and '60s. These are overwhelmingly single-family dwellings, above average income, and as I said, they have a higher percentage of seniors than average and they have lived in those neighbourhoods for a longer than average period.

Looking ahead to the changes you're forced to make, I'm going to propose what I think are some pretty simple solutions, and you might welcome that.

Mr. Clegg: Sure. That's what we need, solutions.

Dr. Taft: The permanent residency in Edmonton-Riverview is actually a little bit below what you want to have. I think you're looking at 35,800 or something like that, and right now Riverview is closer to 32,000. There are a couple of neighbourhoods that are natural to transfer, I would argue, from Edmonton-Whitemud to Edmonton-Riverview.

This map here has a slightly different shape to it, and there are three neighbourhoods highlighted. With the two on the lower part of the map, the one closest to the centre is Grandview, and the one below that is Lansdowne. You can see from this map that those two neighbourhoods are directly adjacent to the university farm, which is where, as I mentioned earlier, there are very extensive plans for development.

Right now those two neighbourhoods are in Edmonton-Whitemud. There are no direct traffic connections to Edmonton-Whitemud. All their traffic flows through Edmonton-Riverview. They are – I know, because I've met with the community leagues there – very concerned with what happens to the university farm. So bringing them into Edmonton-Riverview would tie them into all the other neighbourhoods that surround the university farm.

The Chair: How many people in those two areas, Kevin? Any idea?

Dr. Taft: I do have an idea. They comprise 2,430 people. They also are a very close match to the other neighbourhoods. Grandview Heights is very similar, for example, to Valleyview. Lansdowne is similar to, say, Crestwood. These are neighbourhoods that were developed in the 1960s mostly. Higher than average income. Far higher than average home ownership. Again, overwhelmingly single-family dwellings. Higher than average level of income and education. So there is, I think, a strong case to be made for those two neighbourhoods moving into Edmonton-Riverview. If you look

carefully at this map, you'll see that immediately to their west, just left of them on the map, it outlines Whitemud Creek. You see that there?

The Chair: Uh-huh.

8:30

Dr. Taft: Whitemud Creek, for those of you who don't know, is a very steep ravine, a very deep and steep ravine, and as I say, there are no roads across it to get into or out of Grandview and Lansdowne. Literally, you have to go through Edmonton-Riverview, so it would make sense to join those.

The other one that's highlighted here is Garneau neighbourhood. Garneau is a much older neighbourhood than any of the others in Edmonton-Riverview, so rather than being from that '50s and '60s period, Garneau was initially developed in the 1920s. It has a much higher transient population than the rest of the constituency, but it would complete the sort of circling around the university for Edmonton-Riverview.

The Chair: That would be to 109th Street and down to 82nd Avenue; would it?

Dr. Taft: Yes. You can see it there, 109th and 82nd.

Frankly, Garneau is culturally different from the rest of Edmonton-Riverview, so it would not be my first choice to add to Edmonton-Riverview. If you know Edmonton well, it's just an Old Strathcona kind of neighbourhood, whereas Edmonton-Riverview is very much a sort of upper-middle-class neighbourhood or a middle-class neighbourhood.

So with those comments I'll hold my fire and take some questions.

The Chair: All right. Ernie Patterson is the first to fire or to have a comment anyway.

Mr. Patterson: Yes, Mr. Chair. Thank you. It's interesting when you present this – I'm just wondering here, with tongue in cheek when I say this, if you have been consulting with the Edmonton-Whitemud PC association, because they made a presentation earlier today which seems to say the same thing that you're saying. I've just kind of got tongue in cheek when I make that comment.

Dr. Taft: Well, you'll be surprised. No, we didn't co-ordinate anything, and I have no idea what their presentation was.

Mr. Patterson: The other thing, if I could ask, Mr. Chair, is on the Garneau area. Have you any idea roughly how many people are in that area?

Dr. Taft: It would have a much more transient population. I'm sorry; I could easily get that for you, but I don't have it right now.

Mr. Patterson: That's fine. We can get it. I wondered if you just had it offhand.

Dr. Taft: I don't.

Mr. Patterson: Okay.

The other question which I really want to get into is that we heard so much from people when in Calgary about the community leagues. It looks from your maps like you have preserved the community leagues, which of course is one of our matrix concerns, but the other thing that we've heard so much about are these natural boundaries. Now, I find it interesting that on the one hand you talk about the

river valley as not being – what shall we say? – a concern, and then on the other hand you mention Whitemud Creek. Help me a little bit more with the river valley, because I think yours is the only constituency in Edmonton that goes across the river.

Dr. Taft: Yeah. I have thought about it, and I'm not surprised at your question here in terms of the difference between, say, Whitemud Creek and the river valley. I'm quite genuine in saying that I think the river valley is a uniting force rather than a dividing force. To compare that to the Whitemud freeway, which is along the south, I would think the Whitemud freeway forms a much stronger divide between parts of the city than the river does. In the river valley, as you know, Ernie, there are extensive parks. People walk their dogs. This is a big floodplain, so there are large flats through here: Hawrelak park, Laurier park. Whitemud Creek on the other hand is a very steep, narrow ravine. Now, people walk their dogs through the bottom of it, but I can tell you that climbing the banks of Whitemud ravine is not something done easily in most places. There's easy traffic back and forth, not just car traffic but foot traffic. There are two footbridges over the river in Edmonton-Riverview. People ride their bikes through there. There's a very popular loop that actually includes both footbridges and comes down on the south side of the river and goes back on the north side of the river. People just go to the river valley. I mean, it is the only really attractive geographic feature in Edmonton, and people love it. So it brings people together.

The other thing with these two neighbourhoods is that Riverbend, which is a huge area of Edmonton, starts on the west side of Whitemud Creek. So these are Riverbend neighbourhoods. They are in fact a later generation of development than these two in Grandview and Lansdowne.

Ms Mackay: Thanks, Kevin. I like your approach to this and the things that you enumerated as being the similarities of the communities on both sides of the river. You pointed out some things that I hadn't even thought of before. I agree with you. I think the river's not only a unifying natural phenomenon for Riverview but also for the whole city for that matter. I mean, we know that that's where people do tend to go.

Anyway, my question. Because I hear so many other people saying, "Oh, we have to get Riverview on one side of the river," as the sitting MLA how much difficulty is there for the people on the south side of the river to get to you where your office is on the north side of the river? I mean, you should be able to tell better than anybody else to what extent that's a barrier in terms of the people on the south side having access to their MLA. Are you hearing anything that's negative about that?

Dr. Taft: I've never heard even one comment particularly on that. There's bus service, so I've never even thought of it particularly. It's a fairly easy constituency to get around, so I don't think that people visiting an MLA on one side of the river or the other is a particular issue. I've never heard of that as an issue. I can say that the issues I hear in Crestwood, say, about shortcutting or traffic congestion on 149th Street or 142nd Street are identical to the issues I hear in Belgravia and McKernan about congestion on 114th Street. There are pressures that the suburbs are creating for these central neighbourhoods as people try to get from the south of Edmonton-Whitemud, say, to downtown. When Dave Hancock drives to work every day, he puts pressure on my constituents.

Ms Mackay: Well, that's good.

The Chair: Kevin, suffice it for me to say that in the course of an

hour we've heard from both extremes as far as the future of your riding of Riverview. It's pretty clear that not both of you are going to be happy, which I suspect doesn't surprise either one of you.

We've heard a lot about natural boundaries. You're a fair salesman on this idea of the river drawing you together. I've never heard that approach before. Now, mind you, I'm just a poor country boy, so I haven't been around that much, but I thought that that was an interesting approach to the issue. When we had our first meeting as a group and we met with a former chairman, one of the issues that Mr. Justice Wachowich said was really difficult for them when they did this last time was this whole question of the river and access from the north and south side.

Where we're going to go I don't know, but both groups have made very interesting presentations. Thank you very much, Kevin.

Dr. Taft: Sure. If I can just reiterate that I think it would be a mistake to connect these neighbourhoods to those ones out there or these neighbourhoods to the ones way in the south because they have much more in common with each other. The other thing this does is that by taking a little bit out of Whitemud, it allows some of the growth in south Riverbend to be added to Whitemud.

Thanks very much.

The Chair: Thanks, Kevin.

I'd now like to welcome Mr. Thomas Lo. Thomas was going to make some comments earlier, and the chairman unceremoniously cut him off, but we did suggest to Thomas that he take the opportunity to tell us what he wanted to tell us. So now is the time, Thomas. Please, go ahead.

Mr. Lo: Spill my guts, yeah.

The Chair: I wouldn't go quite that far, but tell us what you think.

8:40

Mr. Lo: Well, you guys know that I'm a transplanted Canadian, so I speak with an accent. I hope that you guys will be patient with me. I come here representing myself. A couple of days ago I saw my e-mail, and somebody said: Tom, you should go. I thought about it and said, "Okay, I'll come; maybe I'll meet some good people here," which I did.

The first observation I have is that you're artificially trying to draw a boundary to make it as natural and more accustomed to the people who lived in that boundary before, and that's a tough task. Look at countries that are divided like North Vietnam and South Vietnam and North Korea and South Korea. They go to war. So that's number one. I don't envy you folks your job.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Lo: Whatever you guys do, somebody is going to criticize it. You can never do a perfect job; I can bet you \$10. If you don't get one criticism, I'll give you \$10.

What I'm thinking is that the average people, as have turned out here, don't really care about how the boundaries are done. They care about whom they associate with. I heard earlier the comment about moving eastward, which means you cross highway 14. The last boundary decision already made some people from Sherwood Park very upset, like my friend Ace Cetinski, who used to be from Sherwood Park. By the way, I live in Sherwood Park myself. They have been joined to Mill Creek, you know, which they're totally unaccustomed to, and they still go to Sherwood Park. So I hope that you don't create an unnatural process if you can avoid it.

I disagree with Dr. Taft. I think the river is one of the natural boundaries. I hate to say it. The highway is another natural one. If

you can take community leagues into account, because people congregate and meet each other there, I think those are the considerations you should be taking. You should respect the municipal boundaries. One other is to go eastward, which cuts into the Strathcona county boundary. People from Sherwood Park in the county get fed up with the word “annexation,” and this would mean that they’re going to step over and annex a part of the county again. I don’t think you folks want to get involved in the political process; right? I think that’s why Mr. Clark has been appointed the chairman: because you are the Ethics Commissioner and you try to be as impartial as possible. I don’t know whether I’m correct or not.

Unidentified Speaker: Right.

The Chair: I’d like to hope that’s right.

Mr. Lo: You’re informed Albertans, so you guys probably know more than I do.

One thing I’m going to now be against you – I live in Sherwood Park, and I’ve been trying to do some fund-raising. I tell you that to visit 10 houses in Sherwood Park is about five times quicker than visiting places in the county. I think your commission never properly explained to people why there’s a differential between the rural and the urban, number one. I don’t think you should mix the rural and urban. I don’t think people like it even from the county. Rural people look at urban people as being a bit different than they are. Again, correct me; I’m not a natural Canadian, so I could be wrong.

The other thing I have is the newspaper about you folks. A couple of months ago I picked up the newspaper and saw that Calgary-Shaw had 80,000 voters. I said: how can that happen? It shouldn’t be happening in one election.

The Chair: Two elections.

Mr. Lo: Two elections? Okay.

It shouldn’t go that fast in two elections. I mean, it’s something where you should have – what do you call it? – a maintenance program. Just like anybody with a web site – you have to maintain your web site – you should maintain your boundary information. I mean, this thing of every two elections showing up and then you die away . . . There’s also the fact that you are not going to arouse people’s interest in it, whether they’re politically involved or not. So that’s my beef against you guys.

One of the things that you’ve got to do as facilitators to get people to buy into your decision is to promote and advertise. Don’t use me. You should use somebody who can do a proper job. As I can see here, people, the average Joe Blows, don’t care who represents them. As long as they’re happy and have no worries – don’t give me any headaches; don’t give me any hassle – then everybody’s happy.

That’s the end of my comments. You want to shoot at me, I’m sure.

The Chair: Oh, I don’t think we’ll be shooting at you. If I could just react very briefly to your comment about advertising and getting the public out. It’s a very good point. When we started as a commission and we got together, it was important to get the information out and in the hands of Albertans. Basically what we did is that we had the little brochure that Mr. Patterson’s got there, this one here, and it went to every household in the province. We advertised in the local papers when we were coming to the various areas. We could have done more, but we’ve got a budget of half a million dollars, and we’re trying to spend that somewhat judiciously. You may be interested in knowing that it cost about \$35,000 for the printing of that and about a hundred grand to mail them out to people

across the province. So that’s the way we tried to do it. Then some of us met with the editorial boards of the four major papers in Calgary and Edmonton to try and stimulate some interest there. That’s the approach we’ve taken.

Remember two other complications. One is that we have to have this work done within a year. Something that’s really going to impact on all of you is that there’s going to be a federal redistribution report that’s going to be released in September, which is going to add two more seats to Alberta. I dread the difficulty of people getting confused about the federal redistribution report adding two seats to Alberta and what we’re doing, which is the provincial report adding no seats.

Thomas, you’re forthright and to the point, and I appreciate that. That’s just a bit of a quick reaction that I had.

Mr. Lo: Can I make a comment?

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Lo: The junk mail that every Joe Blow receives is tremendous. I’m looking at this one. It has too much information for me to swallow. You know, you have to be short and sweet. I think one page is more attractive for an average voter to look at. I don’t know whether you can condense it into one page, but with a whole newspaper like this people will say: I’m not going to go through that.

The Chair: We’ll file that away. I’m quite sure that the five of us will not be on the next commission. Whether the Chief Electoral Officer will be around or not I don’t know, but his office will be. We’ll ask Mr. Fjeldheim to make note of that when he starts the file for the next commission.

Mr. Lo: I’ve got another comment. I think that the number of MLAs should stay the way it is. I don’t think that people expect it to increase any more, because an MLA is associated with extra expenses. I don’t think that they should be cut back either. I think the status quo should be there.

The Chair: Would you believe, Thomas, that about 75 percent of the presentations that we’ve received have been saying that there should be fewer MLAs?

Mr. Lo: Maybe for their own political reasons. As I say, I represent myself. I’m not representing anyone.

The Chair: Sure; I appreciate that.

Any other comments or questions to Thomas?

Thank you, Thomas, very, very much. We appreciate it.

Mr. Lo: That was easy.

The Chair: That wasn’t so bad; was it?

Mr. Lo: No.

8:50

The Chair: I know that none of you would be interested, but it’s 2-nothing for Detroit. It’s over. So I guess they go back to Detroit in a couple of nights.

Now, to get to the important matter at hand. Laurie Blakeman is the member of the Legislature for Edmonton-Centre, and you’ll notice that Mr. Fjeldheim and I once again are treating her with kid gloves because she also is on the Leg. Offices Committee. Thank you very much for coming, Laurie. You know Ernie Patterson. Glen Clegg you’ve rubbed shoulders with or something. Bauni

Mackay you know well and Doug Graham from Calgary.

Ms Blakeman: I'd like to start by thanking the five of you very much. This has been a very long day for you, and I appreciate it. I apologize for being the last person. I hope I can be entertaining in some way.

I didn't come to see you with any great agenda. I came to see you more with a comment, a musing, a hint, and a request. Let's put it that way. There are three areas that I wanted to talk about. One was the concept of community. Secondly, I have a possible suggestion for a swap in the boundaries that you may want to consider, and then I want to talk about representation and support for the constituency offices. Some of this you've heard from me before, but I thought I'd come and make it official.

The Chair: Just on that point, I should tell everyone here that one of the early things that the commission did was that we met with the three caucuses and talked to them about representation, about the challenges of their own particular constituencies, and also some of the things they wanted to raise with us.

Thanks, Laurie.

Ms Blakeman: You're welcome. Thank you.

I represent Edmonton-Centre, which is the centre, the downtown, the older communities in Edmonton. It's approximately square if you look on the map. It actually looks like an upside-down elephant with the trunk extending along Jasper Avenue, along the top of Louise McKinney hill. Well, we would call it Grierson Hill. So I have five neighbourhoods: Rosssdale; the downtown area, which is represented by a constituency association, not a community league, called DECA; the communities of Oliver, Queen Mary Park, and McDougall.

I just want to make a comment. There's been a lot of talk, as you've mentioned, about natural boundaries and some other word that you're using about the barriers that you're contemplating, and I wanted to underline that in two of the communities that I have, there appears to be a natural transportation corridor running through the middle of them, and in fact the communities run the other direction. I'm talking about the communities of Queen Mary Park and Central McDougall. They run from the top of the riding on 111th Avenue to 104th Street, and they're divided into their two separate parts by 109th Street, which is in the middle, but 107th Avenue runs this way, so the temptation is always to look at that and go: gee, it'd be easy to just slice it down 107th Ave. In doing that, you'd be cutting the two communities exactly in half. So that was my hint, that that would not be following those communities.

In particular, those two communities of the five that I have have really worked very hard in the last five years to reconstitute and rejuvenate themselves. They have rebuilt their community leagues. In both cases they have rebuilt their community halls. They are trying to bring the families out and in fact form community again, to rebuild community. They're being very successful at it, and I'm delighted to participate. As a matter of fact, their two city councillors, Michael Phair and Jane Batty, myself as the provincial representative, and Anne McLellan as the federal representative are hosting a family fun day for these two communities a couple of weeks from now. So that's how involved we're all getting in trying to support those two communities in becoming stronger.

The other community that has been in and out of Edmonton-Centre is the community of Rosssdale, which is sort of the elephant's head, if you will. It has at times belonged to Edmonton-Highlands. Now it's back in Edmonton-Centre, and it's a growing community. There has been a lot of infill housing happen in Rosssdale. It went quite upscale, and I think at times it might be tempting to think about

moving it into a different constituency, but in fact the character of Rosssdale has associated itself very firmly now with downtown. They see themselves as a downtown community. They get very involved with downtown development. The community members have been going to the development appeal board for the city of Edmonton. They're sitting on transportation committees for the city that are involved when the corridor is going through the flats and that sort of thing. So although it looks like a community that is separated, in fact it's building and it has worked very hard on building strong ties with downtown.

So those were my two hints.

There are issues of access and communication with all of those communities. Because it's the inner city, the housing stock is older and generally cheaper. It attracts new Canadians and immigrants, and when I presented to the panel, I was pointing out that translation is an expense that my office has to cover in order to be able to communicate with my constituents. They may not in fact be voters, but they're still constituents, and I think it's important to be able to communicate with them. Therefore, I have to expend money on translation services so they can understand what I'm saying.

It's very difficult for me to get into buildings. Eighty percent of the housing stock is in security buildings, so it's high-rises and condominiums that you can't get into. You're supposed to be allowed to go in during the 28-day writ period. That in itself is a struggle. So many places just flat out refuse to let you in, and by the time you wrangle out the permission, the election can be over, and that in fact happened to me. But getting in and door-knocking or mainstreeting to just go out and chat with people like you can in other communities while they rake in their backyards or shovel their snow isn't a possibility for me. I'm not the only MLA this is happening to. Increasingly you will have security buildings in every constituency in the province. So it is an issue that we have to address: what are the other methods of direct communication that you can have with your constituents?

So I spend a lot of money mailing newsletters to people through Canada Post, which is not reliable, because Canada Post will not put that piece of paper in a mailbox that says no ad mail or no junk mail, but Canada Post won't tell me which mailboxes those are. I have to pay to mail, but I don't know who gets and who doesn't get the material. I also spend money on a web site so that people can access information that way, and I spend a lot of money hosting events in the community so that people can come out.

The Chair: What's the web site cost you a year?

Ms Blakeman: The hosting space is a couple of hundred dollars a year, and the updating – I've got a contract right now with a friend, so I'm getting it at a reduced price – is about 50 bucks a month for them to do the uploads.

The Chair: So you're looking at a thousand dollars a year.

Ms Blakeman: Yeah. I'd say \$800 to \$1,000 a year. Of course, the more I do, the more expensive it gets. The more often the upload, the more information that's going on there, the more it is.

The Chair: The reason I asked the question. That's one of the things you talk about that is maybe something that could be done for every MLA.

9:00

Ms Blakeman: Yes. I think it's something we need to look at. It's a way for people to get information, and it's another interaction possibility with people.

I want to talk briefly about some possible swaps, and I didn't have time to discuss this with my colleague from Edmonton-Highlands, so I'll have to make sure that I do go and talk to him. You can all remind me to do that. The upper corner of his constituency is the sort of downtown part. My riding ends on 101st Street. In fact, there is a seniors' residence half a block over – in other words, between 101st and 100th – that I am actually servicing right now because it's very isolated in the upper corner of Edmonton-Highlands. I would like to suggest that if you are considering moving boundaries you would look at moving the boundary from 101st Street over to, say, 98th Street south of 104th Avenue, which would allow me to pick up that seniors' residence. I already have Macdonald Place, which is on 98th Street and Jasper Avenue. There are those two high-rise apartment buildings full of people that tend to get a little stranded, so it just knits better.

Alternatively, if you're looking at the map, the upside-down elephant, the elephant trunk is extending along Grierson Hill on the south side of the hill. So I pick up the Shaw Conference Centre and then this odd little tiny bit on the very top of Grierson Hill or Louise McKinney park. They're now building a development there called the View. I can't believe I'm doing this, but that development really should be with Riverdale. It will be very odd to have that community sitting right on top of Riverdale community and be part of Edmonton-Centre. It's separated by blocks before you get to anything else that's in my constituency that has human beings in it. I mean, there's the Shaw Conference Centre in between, but it just doesn't make sense anymore. When there were just a few houses and a little church there, it didn't make any difference, but when there's a whole development of people living there, I think you might want to look at that. Again you should probably talk to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands, but it's just a suggestion that I thought I'd make about kind of natural boundaries while we're at it.

The last thing I want to talk about is representation in constituency offices. I found that government is harder to access or people believe that government is harder to access even for simple questions. If you don't have Internet access, it's very difficult for people to get information like where an office is located. Many times in the telephone books all there is is a phone number. You don't even get an address of a building to go to anymore. That simple answering of questions has been picked up by the constituency offices. We've also I think picked up a workload around helping people understand what the programs are and how to access them, and that's a load that wasn't carried by constituency offices, say, 10 or 12 years ago. So I think that we are doing more out of the constituency offices than used to be done.

It's also an access point for material that is distributed by government. You'll notice that any new government MLA review or panel or summit or whatever says: you can pick up this briefing document from your local MLA's office. Once again even the government is directing people to come to the MLA's office to get information. So we're providing that service that used to be provided by government.

I find that there's more casework. Every year that I've been elected, there's been more casework to do, and the cases are more complex and multilayered than they used to be. For example, in 80 percent of the cases that we do in Edmonton-Centre there's an underlying mental health issue. So not only do they have a problem with whatever, housing or WCB, but there's an underlying mental health issue.

So what's being done in our offices is a lot more work, and I don't think we have the budget to support it. We're given a base budget of \$46,600 to pay for our rent, staff, equipment rental, and payment of activities. When you subtract \$1,000 for rent per month – and I could easily pay more for that; I'm downtown – and you pay for

your equipment rental or whatever maintenance contracts you've got and you take off 250 bucks for a seniors' tea and a few other things for supplies, you're left paying your senior staff between \$20,000 and \$25,000 a year. It's very poor pay for a job that is no longer a secretarial position. It may well have been a secretarial position at one time. It is certainly not a secretarial position now. I mean, our constituency managers are expected to be community liaison officers. They're expected to be experts on databases. They're expected to be able to write and produce newsletters, in some cases to design and upload onto the web sites. They are to manage other staff or volunteers. This is much more than a secretarial position. I think that if we're going to continue to serve the public well, we need to be able to recruit and maintain experienced staff, and we need to pay them accordingly. This isn't an easy job. It has a very high learning curve and very high multitasking. To have people turn over on a fairly regular basis because they're burnt out and underpaid is I think a detriment, and less service is given to the public. So I'm asking that as we consider representation of people, we look at those constituency office budgets.

I can tell you that I can handle more people if you will give me more staff. I don't have a problem with that, but I do know the load. For example, when I first started, we handled a little under a thousand cases in a year. I'm now at around 1,300 cases in a year. That's the number of people that have come to us, and that's more than a phone call or a letter. That's working a case: getting information, helping them fill out a form, arguing for them, going to a hearing, whatever. That's the level of workload that's expanded in the six years that I've been there. So that's my request.

The Chair: Okay. Thanks, Laurie.

Ernie.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm somewhat familiar with your constituency because I spend a lot of time in Edmonton with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association. We have to expand your riding, and you've talked about a couple of places, but I have a feeling that, even with those, it probably won't be sufficient to get us up to where we need to go. You talked about the Shaw Conference Centre and walking down past the Shaw Conference Centre. I'm not sure if maybe that's Riverdale you're talking about. There's an area you walk through which used to be a coal mine area – it's been filled in; it's empty now – and then you go through this nice little residential area on the banks of the river. I know that it's in Edmonton-Highlands. Is that Riverdale that you're talking about?

Ms Blakeman: Yeah. See, Rosedale also had coal mining. So in walking east from the convention centre, the community that's in the river valley, in the flats, is Riverdale.

Mr. Patterson: Okay. Now, the question I'm asking you. You know, we can look at this elephant's trunk, the upside-down elephant and so on, but we have to come up with some ideas on how we can get your population up. Maybe you don't want to hear that. I'm thinking that Riverdale probably isn't sufficient, that the seniors' apartment block you talk about probably isn't sufficient, so my question to you is: do you have some other suggestions where we might go that would be logical? I'm putting you on the spot a little bit.

Ms Blakeman: Yeah, you are, because I don't know the communities so well that are outside of my constituency. I mean, if you're telling me to make suggestions on things that can be added to Edmonton-Centre, I would look seriously at Riverdale, because I already have a river valley community and there are a lot of common

issues between the two of them. They actually have a coalition between the four river valley communities of Cloverdale, Riverdale, Rosedale, and Lavigne/Skunk Hollow. So there are a lot of common issues there, and it's not that much of a stretch to add it.

Beyond that, the old boundaries used to include the community of Prince Rupert, which is north of 111th Avenue, and I'm not sure how those communities break down. The kids are certainly moving around going to schools, crossing 111th, so although it's a big street, people do cross it. There might be something there as well if you have to add on. Where it doesn't work particularly is going west, because you start moving into Glenora. You jump up by about, oh, 50 grand, and it's not the same socioeconomic mix.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you.

Ms Mackay: Laurie, we had a presentation earlier today where the presenter suggested that perhaps when we're looking at the constituencies within actually both big cities – we'll just stick to Edmonton – there might be some justification for keeping certain constituencies smaller than others based on the demographics of the population. In other words, if the constituency has a particularly high-needs population, the constituency should remain smaller. I'd just be interested in your opinion on that.

9:10

Ms Blakeman: Well, I'm glad that a matrix was created last time, and I think the matrix should be added to. Part of my previous presentation to you was about some of the barriers of representing communities with a high immigrant or new Canadian population. I've already talked about translation. You also tend to cluster special-needs kids, so you end up with a family that isn't well-to-do that moves into Edmonton so they can get their special-needs kid into school. Well, the chances of there being other special-needs kids in that same family is very high, so then you have actually a whole family of special-needs kids, and they all tend to cluster there. When you go into my schools – I don't have a lot of them – there are very high needs there. Almost every kid in the school is high-needs, and they need a lot of extra equipment that doesn't come as part of the regular budget. So there are issues.

The parents can't fund-raise for the schools or even for the community. None of my community leagues charge a community league fee – none of them – because in most cases, with a few exceptions, they just couldn't collect the money from people. People couldn't afford to pay it or would choose not to pay it. Most of my people work in the retail or service sectors, and in the poorer areas, which are clustered in the very centre, which is where the new immigrants and new Canadians are, those people are working two and three minimum-wage jobs, so they don't have the time to fund-raise for their community league or their school. They're not working casinos or bingos to build a new playground. Not a possibility for them. Other people had to do it.

So it's very high-needs in that it's a changing community. We've got a lot of new people that have to learn a whole new country and a new language. It's a rejuvenating community with old housing stock and old infrastructure, so we're still getting torn up to have our sewers and things redone because they were the original sewers from 1905. Our communities are literally being redug up.

I don't know if that helped you. It's complicated.

Ms Mackay: Right. My question, however, was: do you think that because of all of that, your constituency should remain smaller, perhaps, than some of the other ones that are more affluent, less high-needs, et cetera?

Ms Blakeman: Well, it's a question of: do those people deserve the same amount of representation or the same amount of time and care as someone else? If there are other areas that don't need the attention of their MLAs so much, then yes, because my people certainly do. I can tell you by the number of cases that I'm working. They are high-needs, and they do need a lot of attention from me.

Ms Mackay: Good. Thank you.

The Chair: I guess that kind of leads into the argument that we hear in rural Alberta that people have got to travel farther to see their MLA. I'm not suggesting that they're the same, Laurie, but you heard here tonight that we have the need to look at a riding like yours, but also in the same evening we're being told that we should be looking at ridings that are kind of in the emerging areas and allow for growth. My sense is that the legislation doesn't go that far. We were to use the last census. I only raise that with you, Laurie, so that you understand kind of the dilemma we're in: we're damned if we do and damned if we don't.

Ms Blakeman: I do. I was talking, actually, to Doug about the differences in numbers. I just got my constituency budget numbers, and they're higher than what you've got here, and I don't know where they came from.

The Chair: Your constituency numbers are based on the last figures from Alberta Finance, which gets an update from Stats Canada every six months or every year.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. They have me at a higher number than you do.

The Chair: But the legislation says that we're to use the 2001 census figures.

Ms Blakeman: Okay.

The Chair: The Speaker uses kind of a running total, up to date, whereas the legislation says that we're to use the last 10-year census. We're in much better shape this time than the last review, because at that time the census was three or four years old. So we're better off that way.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. Let me answer the question this way then. Could I handle an extra 5,000 people? Yes. Could I handle another 15,000 people? No, especially not if they're the same kind of people that I already have. Overall, I still go back to all constituencies – I think that the way the budgets are worked for the constituency offices is outdated.

The Chair: Okay. Any other questions or comments?

Mr. Graham: I'd just like to commend you on your directness and your honesty. We appreciate it.

The Chair: He doesn't know you very well, Laurie; does he?

Ms Blakeman: No, he doesn't.

The Chair: Okay. On that elevating note, thank you very much, Laurie.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, folks.

The Chair: You're the last presenter. This portion of the commission's meeting is now adjourned. Thank you very much.

[The commission adjourned at 9:16 p.m.]