



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

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Electoral Boundaries Commission

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[Judge Walter in the chair]

The Chair: Good evening, everyone. I want to say thanks to all of you for coming out to share your views with us today. I know I speak for the entire commission when I say that we're looking forward to hearing from you.

My name is Ernie Walter, and I'm the chairman of the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission. I'd like to introduce to you the other members of the commission: to my far right, Dr. Keith Archer of Banff; next to him, Peter Dobbie of Vegreville; on my immediate left, Allyson Jeffs of Edmonton; and next to Allyson, Brian Evans of Calgary.

Our task here is that we've been directed by legislation to make recommendations to the Legislative Assembly on the areas, boundaries, and names for 87 electoral divisions based on the latest census and population information. In other words, our job is to determine where to divide Alberta into 87 areas so that each Albertan receives effective representation by a Member of the Legislative Assembly. Over the next few months we will seek community input through a province-wide consultation before developing our recommendations. Through public hearings such as the one we have here today, we want to hear what you have to say about the representation you are receiving in your community.

In carrying out this work, we have to follow the provisions of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. It says that we are to make proposals to the Legislative Assembly regarding the areas, boundaries, and names of 87 electoral divisions. This, you will realize, means that we are mandated to propose four additional electoral divisions in Alberta, which will come into effect at the next provincial general election. We're also reviewing the law, what the courts have said about electoral boundaries in the province of Alberta and in Canada, the work of previous commissions and committees which have studied the boundaries in Alberta, and the population information which is available to us.

A brief summary of the electoral boundaries law. Our function, as I've said, is to make proposals to the Legislative Assembly for 87 electoral divisions. We have a limited time to accomplish this task. We are required, after consideration of representations made at these public hearings, to submit an interim report to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly by February 2010 that sets out the areas, boundaries, and names of the 87 proposed electoral divisions and reasons for the proposed boundaries. Following publication of the interim report, a second round of public hearings will be held to receive input on the proposed 87 boundaries. After consideration of the input the commission must submit a final report to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly by July 2010. Then it is up to the Legislative Assembly by a resolution to approve or to approve with alterations the proposals of the commission and to introduce a bill to establish new electoral divisions for Alberta in accordance with the resolution. The law will then come into force when proclaimed, before the holding of the next general election.

One way to ensure effective representation is by developing electoral divisions with similar populations, especially where population density is similar. The law directs us to use the populations set out in the most recent census of Alberta as provided by Statistics Canada, the 2006 census, but if the commission believes there is population information that is more recent than the federal census compiled by Statistics Canada, then the commission may use this data in conjunction with the census information. And we have, indeed, a lot of new information with respect to census in 2009, particularly for the large cities. I note that we are also required to

add the population of Indian reserves that were not included in the census, as provided by the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.

In dividing into 87 proposed electoral divisions, the commission will take into consideration any factors it considers appropriate, but it must and shall take into consideration the following:

- (a) the requirement for effective representation as guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms,
- (b) sparsity and density of population,
- (c) common community interests and community organizations, including those of Indian reserves and Metis settlements,
- (d) wherever possible, the existing community boundaries within the cities of Edmonton and Calgary,
- (e) . . . the existing municipal boundaries,
- (f) the number of municipalities and other local authorities,
- (g) geographical features, including existing road systems, and
- (h) the desirability of understandable and clear boundaries.

The population rule in the act states that a proposed electoral division must not be more than 25 per cent above or below the average population for all 87 electoral divisions, with one exception. Up to four proposed electoral divisions may have a population that is as much as 50 per cent below the average population of the electoral divisions in Alberta if three of the following five criteria are met:

- (a) the area . . . exceeds 20 000 square kilometres or the . . . surveyed area of the proposed electoral division exceeds 15 000 square kilometres;
- (b) the distance from the Legislature Building in Edmonton to the nearest boundary of [any] proposed electoral division by the most direct highway route is more than 150 kilometres;
- (c) there is no town in the proposed electoral division that has a population exceeding 8000 people;
- (d) the area of the proposed electoral division contains [a First Nation] reserve or a Metis settlement;
- (e) the proposed electoral division has a portion of its boundary coterminous with a boundary of the Province of Alberta.

It also says that for these purposes the municipality of Crownsnest Pass is not a town.

That's a general overview of the legislation, but the Alberta Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada have also provided guidance. In rulings they have agreed that under the Charter the rights of Albertans include the right to vote; the right to have the political strength or value or force of the vote an elector casts not unduly diluted; the right to effective representation; and the right to have the parity of the votes of others diluted, but not unduly, in order to gain effective representation or as a matter of practical necessity. These rules and rulings as well as the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act must guide our decisions and, ultimately, the proposals that we make and take to the Legislative Assembly.

Now that I've explained the law that we are guided by, we want to receive your input, your views. We believe that what we hear from you, the people who will be affected by these boundary changes, is critical to recommending a new electoral map that will ensure fair and effective representation for all Albertans.

Again, on behalf of the commission let me welcome all of you here today. For those of you who will not be speaking, you can still make your views known in writing by mail, fax, or e-mail.

So with that background I will now call on our staff to call the first speaker. Each speaker will have 10 minutes to present and then five minutes for questions and answers with the commission. The commission's public meetings are being recorded by *Alberta Hansard*, and the audio recordings will be posted to the commission website. Transcripts of these proceedings will also be available. If you have registered as a presenter or choose to participate in this evening's meeting, we ask that you identify yourself for the record prior to starting your presentation.

Ms Friesacher: The first presenter is Dan McKinley.

**Dan McKinley, Edmonton-Whitemud
Progressive Conservative Constituency Association**

Mr. McKinley: Good evening. I'll follow your instructions. My name is Dan McKinley. I am the president of the Edmonton-Whitemud Progressive Conservative association, and I'll be presenting on behalf of my constituency association.

My presentation is going to be basically in three parts: a bit of a description of our riding, which I'll try to keep quite brief; just some general comments on how we think the commission should consider its deliberations as it goes forward on a general basis; and then some specific thoughts with respect to our riding. Hopefully, you will find our comments useful, and hopefully your questions won't be too difficult to answer.

7:05

Let's start off a bit with what the Edmonton-Whitemud riding is. Edmonton-Whitemud is in the southwest portion of the city, south of the river and basically extending from the city boundaries through the Calgary Trail and up as far as the North Saskatchewan. Your materials indicate that the riding is 56,596 people, which is 56.5 per cent in excess of the target population. Our riding will likely have to shift downwards substantially, so much of my comments will rest on that fact.

I think, though, that in your deliberations you should keep in mind that our area is also one that's growing substantially. On the basis of the 2009 city census the population is approximately 71,000 people, or, in other words, about 88 per cent over your target, and the riding continues to grow. Even though there is not necessarily as much of a housing boom as there was, there continues to be substantial construction in the southern end of our riding, and there are still substantial amounts of land which are potentially available for growth. So we're concerned in terms of the size of our riding, and some of our comments are rested on that.

We view the natural boundaries of our riding to be the North Saskatchewan River and the city boundary at the end and, as well, being the Whitemud Creek and the Blackmud Creek ravines. At present our riding actually extends as far as Calgary Trail and also includes some communities on the east side of the Whitemud ravine. We think that those are areas which don't fit within the natural boundaries or the trading patterns or community of interests within our riding. As I said, some of the comments will rest with that.

We think that the commission in going forward should keep in mind that quite often when the area is looked at, it's looked at on a basis of the Whitemud freeway as being a natural dividing line. It's really not. The areas of Brookside and what's commonly called the old Riverbend fit within the rest of the community, and it's an integral part. We share schools. We share the Cubs, Scouts, sports teams. It's all an integrated area. It's really the Whitemud ravine which is the logical breaking point.

Now, that sort of leads, then, into some initial comments and some general thoughts. One thing about presenting this is that we've been a little uncomfortable as a group in that we had to sort of put this together very quickly. We received notice at the beginning of the month. We had to put together a working group, and what you see today is some discussion of our executive and the working group we put together for the report. We really haven't had an opportunity to go back into our general community and have representations from our population, so in some ways this is a little bit of a narrow sort of view of hopefully a representative group but, at the same time, a narrow group. I realize the commission has some tight deadlines to work with, but we're sort of asking, in the next set of hearings, if we

could have a little more time, sort of suggesting at least six weeks, to be able to put something together so that we could have some town hall meetings or some other types of discussions with our group.

The second thing is that in going forward, another general thought is that you should try to keep the size of the ridings as close together as possible. We realize that you can have 25 per cent above or below, and there may be very distinct reasons and individual circumstances as to why ridings should be substantially above or below the target, but we think that the fact that there may be a 50 per cent swing from the top to the bottom is excessive in normal circumstances. There should be overriding reasons why the ridings should not be the same size. In saying so, we think that distance in today's communication world is not necessarily as important a factor, and particularly distance from the Legislature shouldn't be an important factor in looking at the size of ridings.

We think that in going forward, you should as much as possible consider the nature of the communities you're looking at and their potential growth patterns. You know, for example, in southwest Edmonton the communities of McClung, Strathcona are basically built out, and they're not likely to change substantially in population whereas in the area of Whitemud, particularly the southern extremities are likely to continue to grow substantially between elections. We think there should be an attempt, if you're going to be a little bit on the high side in an Edmonton area, that you're going to put high side on the areas that are already built out so that we won't necessarily have these sorts of population problems recurring on a fairly regular basis.

As I've already said, the federal census shows a number which is substantially lower than the current population of Edmonton-Whitemud, and we'd really encourage you to use more up-to-date data. Our understanding – now, these are very casual conversations. Obviously, you guys will have a much better idea than I will. But at the same time our understanding is that most of the communities in Alberta get their funding by way of a per capita count, so they land up doing regular censuses, particularly the areas that are growing, so they can maintain their funding. So using more up-to-date data we think would be important.

Of course, you should look at natural boundaries. I think that's something which even Judge Walter introduced. Take a look at the nature of communities, looking at trading patterns, common interests, and transportation patterns.

In going forward, as a general thought we feel that the ridings in Edmonton should not be split by the North Saskatchewan. I think that right now there are two ridings – Riverview and, I think, Gold Bar – with parts on both sides of the river. I think that's not a good idea. Bottom line, I think that that was a universal comment in our working group, that we feel that there is a significant difference between those kinds of communities north and south of the river. Again, looking at schools, how kids travel to schools, where people shop, how people join community leagues: they're different on different sides of the river. So we'd encourage you to seriously attempt to try to make sure we're not using communities that are on both sides of the river.

Then as a final comment under general things – and I guess this is perhaps general but specific – our sort of rough guess is that in terms of when you look at the four additional ridings, likely one of them will be in Edmonton. We think that in doing so, you should seriously consider putting it in southwest Edmonton because when we take a look at the size of the ridings in southwest Edmonton and the growth patterns, we think that there is a serious need for an additional riding in that area. In doing so, when you take a look at that, we would suggest that with the southern part of Riverview, that

being south of the river, Strathcona, Rutherford, Whitemud, and the new riding, it may be an attempt to reformat all those five ridings, including the new one, rather than trying to tweak individual boundaries around to make them fit into a particular population size. In other words, go back to square one and relook at the areas.

In terms of specific items, we accept the fact that a substantial amount of our population is going to move to a different riding. We know that, so most of my comments that are going to follow specific to our riding are going to reflect that as a thought process, to give you some ideas about what we think you could consider doing. We think that in doing so, you really have to take into account community of interests – what the nature of the community is, where the kids go to school, how the community fits together – and as well try to follow natural boundaries. So what do we think those are?

Well, we think, first of all, that the river on the north part of the boundary and on part of the west boundary is the logical dividing mark. There's a substantial difference in how the community views itself on the north side of the river versus the south side. That is our current boundary in that area, and we don't see why that should change.

The southern part of the boundary we think is either the city of Edmonton limits or Anthony Henday freeway. We were unable as a group to arrive at which of those two. We think there is a difference in the communities south of Anthony Henday versus north of Anthony Henday: how they view themselves, how they move about, how they shop, how they get together. So we think that either of those would work, but certainly going north of Anthony Henday would take some population away from us, and it could be moved to another riding.

We think that the natural eastern boundary of the electoral division is either the Whitemud Creek ravine or the Blackmud Creek ravine. Again, we were unable to arrive at a consistent thought. We think that going as far east as Calgary Trail just did not make sense because the communities were so far apart. What happened was that we thought those areas in the far east would make more sense to be relocated to other ridings, and we were again divided as a group between Whitemud Creek or Blackmud Creek but probably a little bit more in favour of Whitemud Creek as a boundary. Again, that would take some of the communities in the southeast part of our riding, and those could be reallocated to other ridings. We think that would make sense both in terms of how the community views itself and the connection back to the central core of the community.

7:15

I want to stress again: don't think of the Whitemud freeway as being anything other than a road that goes through the riding because in the community, most of the Riverbend-Terwillegar area, our kids all go to the same junior high school, and the separate school from K through 9 is all the same school. What happens is that the kids are bused from the southern part of the riding to the northern part of the riding to go to school. So the communities are all the same, the community league has a long history together. It just doesn't make sense to look at the Whitemud ravine.

Specifically as some thoughts, the communities of Aspen and Westbrook are on the east side of the Whitemud ravine. Although we like those communities very much, the reality is that they are different from the rest of the riding. They are on the other side of the ravine. They go shopping somewhere else. Their kids go to different schools. They're not part of the rest of the nature of the community.

The final thought in this sort of specific item. We tried to go through a process of saying: well, if we're trying to hive off 30,000 or 40,000 or 50,000 people, how would we do that? Where do we

have to put the line? We really, to be honest, didn't have enough time to do that. We didn't have the information. But at the same time, what we could agree on as a group was that the use of some kind of arterial roadways within the riding sort of made sense, that roads should be a clear dividing line, particularly arterial roads, because people then know whether they're north or south of that, you know. Not that it's the perfect example, but if you look at a map of the riding, 23rd Avenue basically transects all across the bottom third of the riding. I don't necessarily say to use that, but at the same time people know whether they live north or south of 23rd Avenue. We think that's important.

In conclusion of this presentation, you know, we think that you should seriously consider using more up-to-date data in particular. We accept the fact that our riding will be divided up, and we think that there are some logical boundaries that could be reconfigured, but as I said, we weren't able to gain enough individual population information within the timing for this meeting to sort of say whether, perhaps, the tweaking we have – the Whitemud ravine, Anthony Henday, and hiving off the stuff that's on the east side of the Whitemud ravine – would be enough to pull us down within the target area, but at the same time we think it would go a long way to doing so.

Having said that, on top of everything else we think that there should be another riding in southwest Edmonton, and we also think that it would make sense, if you did so, to take a look at all the ridings in southwest Edmonton and basically relook at the boundaries of all of them. There are some weird demarcations. In terms of running along Fox Drive and up 122nd, you zig and zag, so I think it may be an opportunity to reformat the whole thing.

With that I'm open to questions. I may not have answers, but hopefully I will.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McKinley.

Allyson, do you have any questions?

Ms Jeffs: Yes. Thank you, sir, for your presentation. I just have a question for clarification. If I'm understanding what you're looking at, if there were to be a new riding or a significant redistribution there in the southwest, the affected ridings would be in addition to Whitemud, Rutherford, Strathcona, and Riverview, but you don't want us to sort of mess with that boundary between the existing Whitemud and McClung.

Mr. McKinley: No. I think I have McClung on my list as well.

Ms Jeffs: Oh, I'm sorry. I missed that in your presentation.

Mr. McKinley: Sorry about that. The ridings I was thinking about are Strathcona, Rutherford – actually, yeah, McClung as well. I'm sorry. Yes.

Ms Jeffs: And McClung. Okay.

Mr. McKinley: It was missed. But we were contemplating that being thrown in the mix.

Ms Jeffs: In the mix as well although you seem pretty attached to that boundary of the Saskatchewan River between Whitemud and McClung as a natural boundary and as a natural riding boundary.

Mr. McKinley: Yeah.

Ms Jeffs: Okay. Any thoughts on alterations to the boundary through Edmonton-Ellerslie?

Mr. McKinley: No. We have not gone that far in our discussions.

Ms Jeffs: Okay.

Mr. McKinley: Obviously, having said that, though, I think one of the things we did note is that if you use Anthony Henday, the communities south of that, you get a long, skinny area. There were some comments that you might end up with a riding that looks sort of like a hockey stick if you weren't careful, but some of those may end up going to, you know, those other areas, perhaps even something into Edmonton-Leduc. But we did not discuss that at any length.

Ms Jeffs: All right. Thank you.

Mr. Dobbie: Thanks, Mr. McKinley. We're trying to balance, of course, effectiveness, dilution of votes, and geography, and in this particular case I think your presentation was very helpful in that you have given us some general guidelines as well. I take it that we're assuming that the city of Edmonton boundaries are to be viewed as boundaries within which we deal with the ridings. You are not suggesting that we look outside of the city of Edmonton boundaries at all.

Mr. McKinley: For the most part I think it's not desirable. Again, looking at how people move, people tend to move into the city rather than outside of it, you know. So in general, yes.

Mr. Dobbie: Just so you're clear, we do have the most recent overall numbers for Edmonton for 2009. We don't have the individual neighbourhood numbers yet, but we expect to have those in the next week or two, and they would be available to your group as well from the city of Edmonton.

Mr. McKinley: We'd love to have that and come back again to the next presentation with more specific thoughts.

Mr. Dobbie: Those are all of my questions at this time.

Dr. Archer: Thanks for the presentation, Mr. McKinley. Again, it was really helpful. To get the kind of detail that you provided puts a lot of context into the nature of the communities within the area. Now, the figure you quoted for the population of Edmonton-Whitemud, 77,000, is a bit higher than I had heard, and I think it may be higher than the number that we're working with at the moment. Is this based on the Edmonton census?

Mr. McKinley: Just as I glance at my notes, it's actually about 71,000 by our numbers.

Dr. Archer: Oh, 71,000.

Mr. McKinley: Now, having said that, again, you may be more accurate in your numbers because ours were sort of taking some stuff from the city census and a couple of our board members sitting with calculators, trying to quickly go out, but we were relatively comfortable that it's about in that area.

Dr. Archer: Okay. Again, I think that's still a little bit higher than what we've seen thus far, but I'll just give you a sense of the context that we're working with. The data based on the householder that we sent out had Whitemud at about 50 per cent above the electoral quotient. So it seems fairly compelling that there are going to be

some pretty substantial changes in this area. The other constituency that seems to be a fair bit over the electoral quotient is Edmonton-McClung. The real challenge that we're going to come up against, I think, is that to the extent that we see the river as a boundary that can't be crossed between these two constituencies, it's going to be tough to come up with a formula to have two constituencies that are fairly close to the average size.

I know that we're certainly open for further input by Albertans between now and just after Thanksgiving, and if your constituency association wants to give any further thought to, you know, what kind of advice you can provide us as to where to best draw that line to take into account the numbers that we're dealing with, that would be really helpful.

Mr. McKinley: Okay. I appreciate that, and I think that we appreciate the fact that you have some really serious problems in terms of how you divide up. We would appreciate getting more accurate information. We had sort of thought that what we'd really like to do is be able to come to you with a chart that says: this is how we think that everything should be divided up. Unfortunately, we just didn't have that information. Now, you mentioned that we can submit it up to – what date?

Dr. Archer: I think it's the 12th of October.

Ms Jeffs: The 13th. October 13.

Mr. McKinley: Yeah. I'm leaving for England tomorrow morning and coming back on October 10. So I will pass that along. We have a board meeting Thursday night, and I will pass that along and see if I can get someone else to take up the charge.

Ms Jeffs: Or something to do on the plane.

The Chair: Brian.

Mr. Evans: Thanks, Chairman. Thanks very much, Mr. McKinley. For the length of time, as you've pointed out, that you've had to bring your comments together and those of your colleagues, I think it's a terrific job that you've done. It's very helpful to us. Just looking at the map between McClung and Whitemud, as Keith Archer has said, it really does create issues given, as you've said and others have said, that you don't want to have constituencies on both sides of the North Saskatchewan River. So that is going to be a big issue for us. Rather than ask you any questions, because you've been very comprehensive, I'd just make the comment that if you and your colleagues would canvas others in surrounding constituencies and try to reach a broader consensus on what would work and what would be palatable, that would be exceedingly helpful to us.

7:25

Mr. McKinley: I will make an attempt. As I said, you know, I will have to pass the charge. I'd love to do it on the airplane; however, I think I'd be divorced by the time I hit London. I'm one of eight people in our working group, so I think I could probably get somebody else to take charge of it.

Mr. Evans: Great.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Mr. McKinley. That was a very good presentation, and we'll certainly take it into consideration. We look forward to receiving any further information you can provide to us.

Mr. McKinley: Thank you very much.

Ms Friesacher: The next presenter is Richard Martin.

**Richard Martin, Edmonton-McClung
Progressive Conservative Constituency Association**

Mr. Martin: Good evening. My name is Richard Martin. I'm a board member with the Edmonton-McClung PC Constituency Association. It's interesting that so far we've talked a lot about Edmonton-McClung even before I get to come to make my presentation. It's obvious from the committee's deliberations to date and Mr. McKinley's comments from Edmonton-Whitemud that these are the two constituencies that show the largest overage in the area.

The comments that I have in my presentation also stress the growth that's happened in the city since the 2006 census, so we will also be looking very closely at the information related to distribution of 2009 census data so that we will be able to make a further contribution to the commission's deliberations. Looking at the 2009 data, looking at it in comparison to the 2006, the city of Edmonton as a whole has added over 50,000, which is 137 per cent of the commission's average population. So on that basis alone, since 2006 we should get an extra seat, not just the one that Mr. McKinley was talking about. That's wishful thinking, I believe.

Looking at it particularly from Edmonton-McClung's vantage point, our current constituency uses the city limits on the west, the North Saskatchewan River on the south, the Whitemud freeway on the north, and the river intersects Whitemud at Rio Terrace, so we only really have the three boundaries that impact the constituency. We believe that these boundaries follow natural dividing lines and have served the constituency well since the last distribution. However, according to the data in the commission's flyer McClung had a population of just over 45,000 in 2006, which is 19 per cent over the average. That implies that we also will probably be having some of our territory removed. Even though we're not over the 25 per cent, it makes sense that there's something that we should be looking to lose as part of this redistribution.

Looking at that as the basis, we looked at our constituency, and basically there are five portions to our constituency. If you look at the map, the city limits boundary to Anthony Henday is an area that stands out. It is a trading area within itself, and it houses approximately 16 per cent of the population. What I've done to come up with these numbers was to extrapolate from the 2008 voters list, which had about 34,000 people on it, and I've brought it up, just extrapolated straight out to the 2006 census numbers that the commission is using. That's how I've come up with the population numbers that I'll be referring to.

The second portion is between Anthony Henday and Lessard Drive, or 178th Street. It curls around. That portion of our population is fairly well developed and mature. It has about 37 per cent of the population at the current time. That's the second area that we looked at.

The third one is between 178th Street, or Lessard Drive, and 170th Street. That's also a fairly well developed area. Although there are portions down in Cameron Heights that are still growing, generally it's fairly well developed and represents about 28 per cent of the constituency.

The last two areas are those between 170th Street and the Patricia Heights ravine, which represents about 11 per cent of the population, and then the area between the Patricia Heights ravine and Rio Terrace-Quesnell, that area, which is about 8 per cent of the overall population within the constituency.

Looking at the adjoining constituencies, the one that we're

concentrating on is Edmonton-Riverview. Edmonton-Riverview is adjoining, and we've spoken at length with the Conservative association in Edmonton-Riverview. Although they are planning on making a written presentation rather than an oral one at this time, they indicate that they're in agreement with what we're recommending.

We're recommending that the area in Patricia Heights, Rio Terrace, and Quesnell Heights, which were polls 1 to 7 in the last election, would be moved to the adjoining Riverview constituency. According to the information in the commission's materials Edmonton-Riverview is about 3 and a half per cent below the average population, and the addition of these polls from Edmonton-McClung would bring it to a little over 3 per cent above the average. That would also bring Edmonton-McClung down to just under 10 per cent over the average, or about 9 and a half per cent. Even though that isn't exactly the number that the commission is looking for, it is, we believe, a reasonable number. In looking at the trading patterns, the Rio Terrace-Patricia Heights-Quesnell area really doesn't follow the same trading patterns. Because of the access off the Whitemud it comes directly north and into Riverview. The schools are shared between the two communities. Really, it's been an island for Edmonton-McClung since the last redistribution.

We looked also at other possible combinations. The next block that would look to go would be to bring the part from 170th Street to the Patricia Heights ravine. However, to do that would bring Edmonton-Riverview 15 per cent over the average and bring us below the average, so I'm not sure that that's desirable. From that vantage point, that's not the recommendation that we're making to the commission.

I will undertake on behalf of Edmonton-McClung that when we get the updated numbers, we'll run some number crunching on what they tell us, and if there's a significant difference between what we've indicated to date and what we've presented so far, then we would make a further presentation to the commission.

Mr. Chair, those are our comments.

The Chair: Thank you.

Peter.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you. I'm wondering if you could comment on the assertion from your neighbour who spoke just before you that Edmonton-McClung appears to be developed to capacity. Is that something that you agree with, or do you still see significant growth within that constituency?

Mr. Martin: I think that the previous speaker was thinking of Riverview in terms of moving inward rather than outward because the area between Anthony Henday and the city limits is still growing fairly rapidly.

7:35

Mr. Dobbie: Okay. Again, that was my impression, that there was still room there. Just for your notes, we have a quotient that we've arrived at using the 2009 data. We're looking at 40,583. If we have a strict numerical division of the population by 87 constituencies, that's the base number that we're using now.

Mr. Martin: Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you.

The Chair: Allyson.

Ms Jeffs: Yes. Thank you very much for your presentation, sir. I appreciate that your presentation is focused on sort of solving the problem, if I can use it that way, in McClung. But as you know from the rest of the map, there may be more significant changes in that area. I'm wondering if your constituency association has thought about that. In particular, you know, we have that very nice natural boundary of the North Saskatchewan River there. If a boundary was to be drawn crossing that river, is there anything that would be livable in terms of the communities and still respecting communities of interest, just recognizing that where the shape of the population growth there is, there may be more significant changes than that in that area?

Mr. Martin: I think that from McClung's perspective, if you look at the growth that's happened, particularly in the Whitemud area, we agree with Whitemud that the first additional seat for Edmonton should be south of the river in the carving out of Whitemud and redistributing some of the other ridings in that area. We do believe that it's not as desirable to be crossing the river within a constituency. However, given the time constraints we didn't believe that we could go about solving all of the city's problems. We were just trying to address it from a McClung perspective.

I know that there is potential for broader discussion among the constituencies between now and mid-October, and I believe that there could be some common thinking that we can come up with. As I say, we've talked to Riverview. If, in fact, Riverview were to be only on the south side of the river, as is envisioned in the Whitemud presentation, we would believe that whatever riding takes over what is currently on the north side of the river for Riverview would still follow the same trading patterns with respect to the areas that we're recommending be cut off from the rest of the McClung constituency because it is very much the case that the trading pattern for Rio Terrace, Patricia Heights, and Quesnell is not with the rest of McClung, but it is right there with the Glenora to a degree, Riverview, and Meadowlark constituencies.

Ms Jeffs: Thank you.

The Chair: Brian.

Mr. Evans: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thanks very much, Mr. Martin, for your presentation. I'm presuming – and I'm going to ask you the question – that if we were to endorse your suggestion and the current population would already be 9.5 per cent above the quotient, you and the rest of your organization and your MLA would all feel comfortable that your MLA was able to effectively represent that larger population, notwithstanding that it is larger than the average size of the constituencies that we would try to get to.

Mr. Martin: Well, I believe that the answer to that is the fact that he's already servicing all of that area and that we would in fact be reducing some of the territory that he has.

Mr. Evans: At least for the time being.

Mr. Martin: For the time being. I mean, when the next boundary commission comes into effect, I suspect that McClung is going to be one of the ones that is going to be looked at again because, based on the forecast for population and the area that is eligible to be built up within the territory west of the Henday, we will have considerable population growth over the next number of years. But that's not there at this point, so to draw the boundary at this point for what may or may not happen in the future isn't reasonable.

I believe, yes, our current MLA has shown the ability to represent all of the portions of the riding, and by taking away part of the territorial area, he will be able to serve even if the population grows.

Mr. Evans: Thanks very much.

Dr. Archer: Thanks for the presentation, Mr. Martin. It was really helpful. I'm not exactly sure where the boundary is of the three communities that you've identified: Quesnell Heights, Rio Terrace, and Patricia Heights. Does it go all the way across Whitemud, or is it just up in the top right-hand corner of your constituency?

Mr. Martin: It's in the top right-hand corner, all below the Whitemud. The Whitemud is the north boundary for the complete constituency, but because of the Patricia Heights ravine those three communities are cut off from the rest of the constituency because there are no roads that go there, so the people there go north into Riverview and Meadowlark.

Dr. Archer: Okay. Thanks. Just a couple of other questions. If we were looking to reconfigure things a little bit differently and were looking to reduce the population of Edmonton-McClung, is there another east-west break other than Whitemud Drive, like something south of Whitemud, which would be a natural breaking point within that constituency?

Mr. Martin: No, not really. The way that the road system goes, the north-south routes are 170th Street, and as I've indicated, the population in Westridge between the Patricia Heights ravine and 170th Street is a mature population and is only about 11 per cent of the total population. On the east-west lines there really aren't any that are a natural boundary. I mean, 69th Avenue is a potential, I suppose, but really there's no magic to that. There's no difference in trading patterns north and south of that. The only one that would be a boundary that is in the making is Anthony Henday Drive, but the population on the west side of that doesn't warrant anything at this point in time. I think that might figure into the next commission's deliberations, but that's a long way away.

Dr. Archer: Great. Thanks. Just one last question. Would you have any suggestions for a name for the constituency if a new constituency was created in the southwest part of Edmonton? Is there a compelling local identifier that would be appropriate for this area?

Mr. Martin: That's an interesting question. I haven't given that any thought at all. I think that probably it would be better for us to confer with Edmonton-Whitemud and some of the other ridings and jointly put forward a suggestion. I don't have one off the top of my head.

Dr. Archer: Thanks. That's all I have.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Martin. That was very helpful, and I'm sure we'll hear from you in the future.

Mr. Martin: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Friesacher: The next presenter is John Kolkman.

John Kolkman
Private Citizen

Mr. Kolkman: Good evening. My name is John Kolkman. I'm here in a personal capacity as an interested citizen. I did prepare a brief written submission which does a number of things. It proposes a distribution of electoral divisions based on the 2006 federal census and updated 2009 population counts, and I've also, you know, divided the province by the 87 electoral divisions, as you can see in the table, using both 2006 federal census data as well as updated 2009 population counts. Based on that, it's my view that the city of Calgary should receive two additional electoral divisions, that the city of Edmonton should receive one additional electoral division, and that the rest of Alberta should also see an increase of one electoral division. Just to go through that, I've got all the data here.

7:45

In terms of the city of Calgary, based on population growth since the 2001 census, the city of Calgary should gain two additional electoral divisions. Twenty-five electoral divisions in Calgary would result in the average Calgary electoral division having a population about 4 per cent above the provincial average, and that's both in terms of the 2006 census as well as the 2009 civic census. In terms of the rest of Alberta outside of Edmonton and Calgary, the additional rest of Alberta electoral division should be created by dividing the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo into two electoral divisions. The most recent population count for Wood Buffalo was 88,131. Now, that did include the shadow population. I'm not sure exactly how you're going to account for that, but certainly Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo argues that, you know, those folks are living there most of the time.

Then if you look at the rest of Alberta, the only other riding in the rest of Alberta with a greater than 25 per cent variance above the provincial average is Airdrie-Chestermere, which is bordered to the east by electoral divisions with significantly below-average populations. In my view, the populations of these ridings could be equalized as follows. Move the county of Stettler and all incorporated places within its boundaries, including the town of Stettler, to the Battle River-Wainwright electoral division, which is significantly below average in population. Secondly, combine the county of Newell and all incorporated places within its boundaries, including the city of Brooks, with the remaining Drumheller portion of the former Drumheller-Stettler electoral division and thereby create a Brooks-Drumheller electoral division.

Finally, combine Wheatland county and all incorporated places within its boundaries, including the town of Strathmore, with the town of Chestermere. So take that out of the Airdrie-Chestermere riding and also include the rural area of the MD of Rocky View, that's directly to the east of Calgary, in a Chestermere-Strathmore electoral division. I haven't done the exact math on this, but I think that if you did it that way, you could create three ridings that are pretty much bang on the provincial average in terms of population and thereby solve the problem of Airdrie-Chestermere being, you know, above the 25 per cent quota.

Now, I want to spend the balance of my presentation talking about the proposed Edmonton electoral divisions. I've created a map that actually demonstrates these electoral divisions and how it might work. Based on population growth since the 2001 census, the city of Edmonton should gain one additional electoral division. Nineteen electoral divisions would still result in the average population of an Edmonton electoral division being slightly higher than the provincial average and 5 per cent higher than the average electoral divisions outside of the two main cities.

Two versions of the proposed electoral map are attached to this submission. Map 1 shows the proposed provincial boundaries in red

compared to the existing provincial boundaries in black. Map 2 shows the proposed boundaries in red and basically shows which neighbourhoods would form part of each of the 19 proposed electoral divisions. I should also mention that I have attached a spreadsheet as well with the populations of each of the 19 Edmonton electoral divisions. I'll get back to that in a moment, but arguments in favour of this map are as follows.

First of all, the proposed electoral map follows Edmonton's existing neighbourhood boundaries in every instance. Secondly, the proposed map better reflects community of interest by eliminating the two current electoral divisions that cross the North Saskatchewan River valley.

The proposed map tries to follow other major geographic barriers as much as possible; for example, ravines, Whitemud Drive, Yellowhead Trail, 23rd Avenue, Stony Plain Road, and so on. Wherever possible, the proposed map tries to keep neighbourhoods with a strong community of interest in the same electoral division in which they are currently located unless there is a need to move them to equalize populations. The proposed map keeps all existing electoral division names, with the new electoral division being called Edmonton-West to reflect its geographic location in the city. With only one exception the proposed electoral divisions have a population variance within 5 per cent of the city average based on the most recent municipal census, 2009.

The exception, Edmonton-Whitemud, has less than a 10 per cent variance below average, and I think that that's justified because it is located in the most rapidly growing southwest area of the city. In fact, the exact population of the ridings currently within Whitemud is 71,091. Essentially, just to explain the process that I used, I did sort of start with Edmonton-Whitemud because it had the greatest variance and then kind of worked my way around to try to create this electoral map.

In conclusion, I would say that I've had some previous involvement in a former life with, you know, the electoral boundaries issue, and I'm sympathetic to the fact that if you significantly change the boundary of even one division, it can have a cascading effect across many electoral divisions in Edmonton and Calgary. As you can see, I've provided the maps and the population variances, and I'd be very happy to answer any questions you may have.

Ms Jeffs: Well, first of all, thank you very much, Mr. Kolkman, for the detailed work you've put into this. This may make our job very much easier here.

Just a point of clarification. You've done this on the basis of the 2009 data and what made sense, in your view, in terms of the neighbourhoods and the various boundaries but, if I can put it this way, without sort of community input although you've respected those neighbourhoods fairly well from the look of this.

It appears that in terms of our problem in the southwest that we've been discussing this evening, you're proposing a riding sort of in the middle between Whitemud and McClung and Riverview that would be on either side of the Whitemud Creek but would not cross over the North Saskatchewan.

Mr. Kolkman: That's correct. It's the red lines on these maps that are the proposed electoral divisions. The boundary for Whitemud – and I appreciate what the gentleman said previously – is difficult. I mean, this is not the most straightforward thing in the world, but what I am proposing is that the northern boundary of the Whitemud riding would be the river on one side and then Anthony Henday until you hit Terwillegar Drive. Then it would go north on Terwillegar Drive to 23rd Avenue and then follow I believe it's Blackmud Creek. I appreciate that maybe that east-west thing is problematic, but I just couldn't figure out any other way of doing it.

The other challenge you face is that if you want the Riverview riding, for example, to be all on the south side, it has to grow into Whitemud. I mean, it perhaps grows in on my map a little bit more than people in the existing riding of Edmonton-Whitemud might wish, but I couldn't see any other workaround for that, so that's what it does.

Ms Jeffs: I see that. It grows into McClung a bit. I see, just turning attention to the north side a little bit – am I reading this correctly? – that you're making the river the boundary for Highlands. That piece of Gold Bar that's across the river would stay . . .

Mr. Kolkman: With the neighbourhoods. I appreciate the fact that the neighbourhood boundaries are a little hard to read on this map. Unfortunately, I don't have sophisticated mapping software, so I actually drew them by pen.

Ms Jeffs: It's very good. Thank you.

Mr. Kolkman: The three neighbourhoods that are currently in Edmonton-Gold Bar on the north side of the North Saskatchewan River – Riverdale, Boyle Street, and McCauley – would go into the Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood riding, with which, I would argue, they share much more of a community of interest. They're very low-income neighbourhoods, and most of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is lower income neighbourhoods. Edmonton-Gold Bar is a wonderful riding – my mum actually lives in it – but it is, you know, sort of a middle-income riding.

The other thing that I'm proposing is that the Beverly-Clareview riding, in fact, become the Beverly-Clareview riding rather than the north Beverly-Clareview riding. The new boundary for Beverly-Clareview would actually be the North Saskatchewan River, so the three neighbourhoods north of 118th Avenue would go into the Beverly-Clareview riding.

There are a number of other adjustments as well.

7:55

Ms Jeffs: Very good. Thank you very much.

Mr. Dobbie: I have a question that I would like you to answer in writing if you can because we're a little tight for time tonight. You've spent a great deal of time thinking about this and working on it. I would appreciate hearing from you as to your thoughts on the special ridings – tonight we are relatively tight for time in terms of the number of presenters – if you've addressed your mind to that. Either a phone call or an e-mail. Clearly, with your background your thoughts would be helpful.

Mr. Kolkman: Well, if I can just answer, I personally have no difficulty with the variance in Dunvegan-Central Peace. I also notice that the Lesser Slave Lake riding, I believe it's called, is now more than 25 per cent below average as well, and I don't have any difficulty with that being a special consideration riding either. I think those are really the only two that need to be because if you look at the rest of northern Alberta, you've got large urban centres like Grande Prairie and certainly Fort McMurray, which, I would argue, actually should get an additional seat. Like I said, I have no quarrel with a couple of special consideration ridings. I'm also aware that while you can have up to four, you know, there can also be less than four.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Dr. Archer: No questions, just a comment. You know, you've done a tremendous amount of work here. It looks very well considered and thoughtful. I guess one of the issues that we'll want to look at pretty closely is the degree to which these lines capture communities of interest effectively. I notice, just by way of illustration, that both in the Edmonton-McClung and in the Edmonton-Meadowlark constituencies you have the riding coming across Whitemud. What we had heard previously was that that may be an important north-south boundary for the Edmonton-McClung area in particular. That remains its boundary for the most part, but a small piece is taken out. It does have the benefit of producing constituencies that are remarkably close to the average size. So thanks for all your work.

Mr. Kolkman: Okay. You're welcome.

Mr. Evans: Well, my only comments, Mr. Chairman, are to thank Mr. Kolkman for just a terrific presentation and to ask rhetorically what we could do to encourage him to give Calgary a go. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Kolkman, this is a very, very helpful presentation, and thank you very much. We really appreciate it. If you saw fit to give Calgary a shot also, we'd be interested.

Mr. Kolkman: Well, I'm not nearly as familiar with Calgary in terms of communities of interest and so on as I am with Edmonton.

The Chair: We appreciate that. Thank you.

Ms Friesacher: The next presenter is Steve Benson.

Steve Benson and Sandy Gillis, Edmonton-Meadowlark Progressive Conservative Constituency Association

Mr. Benson: Hi there. My name is Steve Benson. I'm representing the Edmonton-Meadowlark PC Constituency Association, and this is my colleague Sandy Gillis. He's up here for support because I'm a total newbie at this, and I don't have a clue what I'm doing.

We won't take much of your time today because it's a fairly simple proposal for our riding. We as an association have reviewed the pertinent information from the Electoral Boundaries Commission and from our internal documentation, including poll-by-poll and overall results, as well as existing boundary maps. We'd like to make the recommendation to the commission that our riding boundaries remain the same for the next provincial election.

Our recommendation is derived from the following criteria. The population of our riding as of the 2006 federal census was 38,434, and according to the information from the boundaries commission, that puts our riding at only a 1.9 per cent variance from the optimal riding population. I did hear earlier today that you have actually changed that number, so that number will change slightly.

You've also asked us to consider the natural boundaries of our ridings. Although not natural on all sides, our riding has Stony Plain Road on the north, which we feel is a clean boundary and keeps those areas separate because there are some different trading patterns on that side. On the south side we have an even cleaner break, which is the Whitemud freeway. If you go on each side of the Whitemud freeway, the trading patterns do get significantly different. The Whitemud seems to be a deviation point in the city, in our opinion. To the west we have the Edmonton city limits,

which couldn't be a more perfect political boundary. To the east of our riding it's not as clean a line as it could be. It juts from 156th to 163rd and back to 159th Street, but with the bordering riding, being Edmonton-Riverview, having a population variance of only negative 3.3 per cent, we feel that their variance is well within your prescribed criteria. Again, with those new numbers that will change slightly, but it will still be well within relevance.

Our riding is made up primarily of single-family homes and multi-family townhomes, which is row housing. We do have approximately 34 low-density, which is four storeys or lower, condo developments in the area that are approximately 60 to 65 per cent rental units. There is one development just behind the Misericordia hospital, which is called Meadowlark Village, that consists of two 16-storey apartment buildings. The lower ones are dispersed relatively evenly throughout the riding with the exception of the west side of 156th Street, running from 100th Ave. to 95th Ave., and that is primarily all low-density condos along that side.

Our riding does have a diversity of income and cultural events, as I'm sure most, if not all, ridings do. I go to a little different bent than most on this. I feel that's a good thing. I feel that our leaders should have to go to more than just the people who agree with them and should bring everybody in.

Our constituency also includes West Edmonton Mall and the Misericordia hospital, which do bring with them some unique issues that all of our constituents are in close enough proximity to be directly affected by. This means we can deal with those issues as a group instead of fracturing the riding between people that are far enough away who may not care about the outcome and those who do.

Another issue that we are anticipating is going to come to a head in the future is the LRT route to the west end of Edmonton. This is going to be a very contentious issue. This is more of a municipal issue, but we know that this is going to have to be dealt with by the sitting MLA as either of the proposed routes comes directly through our riding. The first route goes along Stony Plain Road to 156th, drops down on 156th going to 87th Ave., and then goes from 87th directly through to Lewis Estates. The second one: I'm not sure exactly where it starts, but I know that in conjunction with our riding it would just go directly through 87 Ave. right to Lewis Estates. Either way that would directly affect almost everybody in the entire riding as it sits.

There is some room for growth in our riding in the Lewis Estates area, which is west of Anthony Henday, but the construction in that area has slowed dramatically in the last two years. Most of the building in that area is higher end, larger houses with a very low population density. We do not anticipate that it will substantially affect the population in our riding for at least one if not two election cycles. So that change, if it occurs, can be dealt with with future electoral boundary commissions.

In conclusion, the executive for the Edmonton-Meadowlark PC association is asking that your board accept our recommendation that there be no changes to the boundaries of Edmonton-Meadowlark. We are looking forward to the time when we will need your guidance and expertise for new boundaries in the future, but we do not feel it is necessary at this time.

Thank you for your consideration.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Jeffs: Thank you very much for that presentation. I just really have one small question. I think you're using the data of the 2006 census because that puts you pretty close to the average there at that point.

8:05

Mr. Benson: Yes, that is correct.

Ms Jeffs: Do you have any sense – I don't know if you've had an opportunity to look at any municipal data as to whether there's been a lot . . .

Mr. Benson: Unfortunately, we haven't. I was trying to find that information, actually, today, but I could not find it in that short order.

Ms Jeffs: No problem. As I say, we will be looking at that. If you have thoughts on that once you've had a chance to look at it, of course we are taking written submissions until October 13.

Mr. Benson: Absolutely, yeah. It would be great to have more time to look at this, too, because it was kind of put on us – I won't say at the last minute but between last minute and procrastination.

Ms Jeffs: Oh, that procrastination.

All right. That was the only question I had. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Brian.

Mr. Evans: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thanks very much, Mr. Benson. We, of course, have to look at where we might make some changes if we had to. Although I live in Calgary, I was born and raised in Edmonton and went to St. FX high school in grade 10, so I've got more than a little bit of history with the Edmonton-Meadowlark area. It would seem to me that if we were to change the boundary of Meadowlark, the most logical place would be north of Stony Plain Road. That's still within trading area, commonality of . . .

Mr. Benson: Yeah. You're talking about increasing it?

Mr. Evans: Yeah.

Mr. Benson: Yeah. I would think it would either have to be that or to the east of the 159th/163rd break point.

Mr. Evans: In Edmonton-Riverview.

Mr. Benson: Yeah.

Mr. Evans: That doesn't seem to me as logical as going north, though, particularly with Stony Plain being a divider. It's the same trading both north and south of Stony Plain Road.

Mr. Benson: Yeah, you would be right on that.

Mr. Evans: Right. Okay. Thanks very much. That's my only question.

Dr. Archer: Well, just to take that one step farther, I guess. The presentation we just had from Mr. Kolkman has a proposal that has some cascading effects. By moving one boundary, you're put in a position of moving several. His proposal took Meadowlark all the way up – it changed a bit on the east – to 137th Ave. on the north. So, again, just to follow up on Brian Evans' question which was: you know, it seems like it's a similar community of interest if one goes across Stony Plain, but how far up can you go and continue to make that case?

Mr. Benson: I'm not sure because I, of course, haven't seen his map. I wish I had the time that he had to do the presentation. Did you actually say 137th Avenue? That is a long way from where our riding stops right now. That would be, well, 37 blocks because Stony Plain Road is 100th Ave., basically.

Mr. Dobbie: I'll just pass you my copy so that you have it in front of you.

Mr. Benson: Okay. Yeah.

Dr. Archer: The eastern boundary in this for at least part of it is 170th, so it doesn't go as far east as 158th or 156th as it currently does now.

Mr. Benson: Okay. Well, you know, basically, what we can do is that we can take a look at this proposal and sit with our working group and see what we can contemplate with this, and we can get back to you before your written submissions.

Dr. Archer: Great. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.
Peter.

Mr. Dobbie: Nothing to add. It's just that when you do talk to the working group, if you could give us some feedback on how close to the average they would like to see the constituencies within Edmonton, that would be helpful.

Mr. Benson: All right. We can do that.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Benson. Most helpful, and we look forward to hearing from you more on this.

Mr. Benson: Thank you very much.

Ms Friesacher: The next presenter is Allen Sayler.

**Allen Sayler, Reeve
County of Two Hills No. 21**

Mr. Sayler: Good evening, Mr. Chairman. My name is Allen Sayler. I'm the reeve with the county of Two Hills. As I was listening to my urbanites here, I would like to share that we have one community, one province, and the same common goals, so I would like to do my presentation here before you today.

As reeve of the county of Two Hills I am pleased to make a presentation on behalf of my colleagues and the residents of the county of Two Hills. We as a county have major concerns over the possibility of losing rural seats in the Alberta Legislature and wish to highlight some of our challenges. While our population may show a decline according to the 2006 federal census, we believe this information may not be accurate considering the large number of new residents, especially the Mennonites, who have moved into our county. The town of Two Hills has conducted its own census due to the same reason and found their figure showed a 20 per cent increase in comparison to the federal figure. This trend – i.e., the increase in the population – continues, and an examination of the student enrolment in the Two Hills Mennonite school will support our claim. This does not include the growing Hutterite colonies and the shadow population, mainly the lakes.

I wish to stress, Mr. Chairman, that population is not the only part

of the equation. We must take into consideration the geographical comparisons of the county's boundaries and the challenges our MLA faces in effectively serving our constituents. Any decrease in rural seats both here and in the rest of Alberta will be detrimental to the efficient and effective manner in which our county is served on the provincial landscape. Over the years we have prided ourselves on having close and personal contact with our MLA, and any changes in boundaries may lead to problems with this mutually beneficial agreement.

The average rural turnout in our elections in rural areas is above average, and in the case of our constituency it was 48.5 per cent. Many in the county of Two Hills see our region as more than an agricultural community. Increases in neighbouring areas such as Lloydminster and Fort McMurray show many choosing to make the county of Two Hills their home due to affordable prices and central location.

Please allow me to return to agriculture, Mr. Chairman. While this province relies heavily on oil and gas for its revenue, over the years this revenue is largely based on the global economy. While this may be the case in the farming sector, it is agriculture that sets the very foundation of our existence. Farmers need a strong voice in government, and it is farming more than any other industry that deserves the constant attention of political leadership. Natural calamities such as drought and low commodity prices have a major impact on the people of Alberta. As well, we are witnessing accelerated growth in the oil and gas, forestry, and tourism sectors in our part of the province.

Mr. Chairman, we need more than mere numbers on which to base our political representation in view of the above facts. I strongly urge the commission not to eliminate any rural boundaries, and more importantly we ask that you retain the current boundaries of the Lac La Biche-St. Paul constituency. I also might add if you are looking for a name change, well, sometimes we feel like orphans. We're included with Lac La Biche-St. Paul; their names are there but ours isn't.

I thank you for this consideration, for this time, and for the opportunity to make this presentation.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sayler.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you, Mr. Sayler. In looking at your map attached to your presentation, I count seven Métis settlements or First Nation communities. In preparing for this presentation, did you have a chance to meet with your fellow reeves or to consult with any of the other, I guess, heads of municipal or other governments within your constituency?

Mr. Sayler: No, we didn't. But I'm familiar with the Métis settlements, and their trading area includes our county. They come to our hospital, and we share the same services with them.

Mr. Dobbie: Within rural Alberta, if you listen to the presentation by Mr. Kolkman, the quick math works out for an increase of one seat within the areas outside of Edmonton and Calgary. Assuming that we are going to respect those city boundaries, what you're suggesting, I take it, is that there can be a variation in population within the rural constituencies.

8:15

Mr. Sayler: Yes. Our area is a large area. In fact, I would like to see more rural representation for more voice. We can't lose that in the provincial government. For our MLA, for example, if he drove from Two Hills to Lac La Biche, one way is probably two hours. It

is a large area, and for him to become accessible all over, he's got a lot of travelling time.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you.

The Chair: Allyson?

Ms. Jeffs: I don't have any questions. Thank you very much, though, for the detailed map and the presentation.

The Chair: Brian?

Mr. Evans: I can't say I have any questions either, Mr. Chairman. Thanks very much. I appreciate the presentation.

Mr. Sayler: Well, thank you for this opportunity.

The Chair: Keith?

Dr. Archer: Yeah. Thanks, Mr. Sayler. You made reference in your written comments and in the oral presentation about a disjunction between the federal census figures and the figures from the census that the county of Two Hills has conducted. I think you said that there was a 20 per cent difference.

Mr. Sayler: Yes.

Dr. Archer: Is there a time frame on yours? Is that the 2008 or 2009 census that was conducted? Do you have a sense as to whether the census figures for the entire constituency are available for a more recent time frame than 2006?

Mr. Sayler: We did briefly within each elected boundary in our constituency, and there is a slight increase in population. Two Hills did an actual count, but we did it between council members because we know pretty well where all our constituents live. We figured it out, and there's been a dramatic increase.

Dr. Archer: Okay. Thanks.

I just wanted to confirm the proposed name of the constituency. Was it Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills?

Mr. Sayler: Two Hills. We'd like to include it.

Dr. Archer: Thanks.

The Chair: Well, we'll do that if you take care of the drought.

Mr. Sayler: Well, I tell you what. Drought is a serious thing in rural Alberta.

The Chair: Very serious.

Mr. Sayler: And that's where our food starts. A couple more years of that, and we'll be paying double for our commodity prices. We've got to ask the good Lord to help us out because, I'll tell you, we could starve.

The Chair: It won't take two years. One more year.

Mr. Sayler: That's right. It's so dry at our place that the cows are coming home with powdered milk.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Sayler. That was very helpful.

Ms. Friesacher: The final scheduled presenter is Joel Friedman.

Joel Friedman
Private Citizen

Mr. Friedman: Hi. I don't have any material to present you with. I don't represent any particular group. I'm just here as myself, as a young Albertan trying to understand the electoral boundaries process.

Being a resident of Alberta since the day I was born and doing – I'm sorry. I'm a little nervous, with the microphone and everything.

The Chair: Take your time.

Mr. Friedman: All I'd like to say is that having done a bit of research into recent electoral boundaries commissions and the amount of revisions that have been done in the last decade and a half, I see that the philosophy that has directed these revisions has been effective representation over representation by population. Not to diminish the concerns of rural Alberta, but the fact that this has been the philosophy for nearly the last two decades has come at the detriment of urban populations' representation by population, which has been increasing in recent periods. So I'd just like to express my concern that the weight of an urban vote is drastically disproportionate to that of the rural vote at this time in Alberta. Not to claim that there needs to be a reduction in rural representation; however, this imbalance needs to be addressed now and before future growth makes this even more misrepresentative for the future.

I just thought I'd like to get my voice in there. Thank you very much. That's it.

The Chair: Does anyone have any questions? Brian.

Mr. Evans: Well, thanks, Mr. Chairman. I'd just like to congratulate you, Mr. Friedman, for coming up and speaking. I think it's just terrific that you have that kind of conviction that you'd come in front of this commission. It's not easy, and we all respect you greatly for doing that.

Certainly, what we are trying to do through this commission is to have effective representation, recognizing how that has been interpreted through the courts. Of course, we'll try to bring the variance closer together, not further apart, between rural and urban Albertans, at the same time recognizing that we do live in different areas. We're not all in the same density. We don't have the same abilities to get from point A to point B. Different people, of course, in the same geographic area will have different abilities. We have to take all of those things into consideration, but it is essential as well that we recognize that we should be looking to minimize that variance as best we can. I believe you were here for some of the earlier presentations. Some of the urban constituency representations were that that variance was workable. We have to be practical about it and ensure that we don't disadvantage one segment of Alberta society and overadvantage the other.

Your points are well taken. Believe me, it's something that we're abundantly aware of and is very critical and central to the discussions that we're going to be having and the input we're going to be hearing.

Thank you again.

The Chair: Anyone else have any questions?

Dr. Archer: Yes. Joel, again, thanks so much for coming and making the presentation. It's much appreciated. Sometimes in commentary on electoral boundary map-making people draw a distinction between equality of constituency sizes and effective representation. I think it's fair to say that the courts have not said that these are different principles but that they can be compatible principles. The notion of representation by population is, you know, very much at the core of our system of democracy, and I think we're all mindful of that. What the court has said, though, is that there's an acceptable range of variation within Canadian democracy in terms of constituency size, that there may be special constituencies – and that's the legislation that we're working with that provides our capacity to develop up to four of those – but also that we should be mindful of the importance of representational equality.

Now, with that in mind, I wonder if I could put the question back to you again. If you could provide some specific advice on what would constitute – and this is aside from a set of special constituencies that are subject to larger variation. If there is a general variation that you would see as reasonable, what would you say that is?

Mr. Friedman: At the moment I know that Alberta has the highest amount of MLAs per capita in Canada. I think an even distribution can be done with a reduction in the amount of MLAs overall. I know that Edmonton and Calgary make up roughly half, 40 seats, in the Legislature, while rural Alberta makes up 43. I believe both those numbers could be reduced, perhaps going the other way: the same ratio, however flipping urban and rural just because of the recent patterns of migration to Alberta coming into Edmonton, Calgary, and Fort McMurray especially. Populations are becoming urbanized and more concentrated.

8:25

I know that in the past the logic has been that there have to be more rural ridings because of the geographic difficulties and long distances. However, there are technologies these days which can counteract that problem. In fact, almost a greater problem, I would say, than geographical barriers is sheer number and traffic of concerns of constituents towards their MLA. It's almost more difficult for an urbanite to get in touch with their MLA at the moment than it is for those in rural parts of the province. I know one person that lives in Westlock, and I know she regards her MLA as fairly accessible whereas when it comes to sitting in Edmonton-Centre or Edmonton-Strathcona or Edmonton-McClung, you have to get in line among a lot of people to talk to your respective representative.

I don't know if that dealt with your question.

Dr. Archer: I was looking for a number, but that more extensive answer is fine, too. Thank you.

Mr. Friedman: A number. I know it goes on 25. I mean, people have thought that 25 per cent plus or minus the average. I think that could be lowered to 5 per cent, but I don't know how that would cascade, to use the words that have been used already. I'm not familiar with the maps and processes of it all, so I'm not sure of the repercussions.

Dr. Archer: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Dobbie: I know we're getting close to the end. First, a comment that one of the tools we have this time that the last commission did not have is the ability to use more current numbers. They were stuck with the '96 census doing redistribution in 2001-2002. We're able to use the current numbers.

As a first step, if we were to look at Calgary, Edmonton, and the rest of Alberta and just run the math and allocate the seats equally among those three sectors, would that be a reasonable start in your view?

Mr. Friedman: I can't say yes because I'm not naive enough to say that sheer numbers can be equivocated with effective representation. I believe that is a start, but I do believe that some of the concerns and reference points that are given in the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act such as geographic and common concerns among communities are also important. As much as I say that I came here to voice my opinion that I think now is a good time to kind of turn the tables back to address an existing imbalance between rural and urban representation, I don't think that only goes down to numbers. I'm not sure.

Mr. Dobbie: Again, thank you for coming.

Mr. Friedman: Okay. Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Friedman. Thank you for your input. Do we have any other presenters?

All right. Again, thank you all for coming. We will then adjourn until tomorrow morning.

[The hearing adjourned at 8:28 p.m.]

