



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Peace River

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

Judge Ernest J.M. Walter, Chairman

Dr. Keith Archer

Peter Dobbie, QC

Brian Evans, QC

Allyson Jeffs

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Iris Callioux, Mayor, Town of Peace River

Darlene Frith, Deputy Reeve, and Cheryl Anderson, Councillor,

Municipal District of Northern Lights

Hon. Hector G. Goudreau, MLA, and Roch Bremont,

Dunvegan-Central Peace Progressive Conservative Constituency Association

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6:57 p.m.

Wednesday, October 7, 2009

[Judge Walter in the chair]

The Chair: Good evening. Thank you for taking the time to come out and share your views with us today. I know I speak for all of us 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 here with me today: on my far right Dr. Keith Archer of Banff, next to him Peter Dobbie of Vegreville, on my immediate left Allyson Jeffs of Edmonton, and on my far left Brian Evans of Calgary.

Our task here today 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 last few months we have been receiving community input through a province-wide consultation before developing our recommendations. Through hearings such as the one 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 areas, boundaries, and names of 87 electoral divisions. As you can tell, this will mean that we're 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.

I should present to you a brief summary of the electoral boundaries law. As I've mentioned, we are to make proposals 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 of 2010 that sets out the areas, boundaries, and names of the 87 proposed electoral divisions and the reasons for these proposed divisions. 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 of 2010. Then it is up to the Legislative Assembly by 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. This will 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, which is 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. We do have access to this information now in many areas for 2009, and our most recent numbers would indicate that the average quotient for the 87 electoral districts is 40,583. The most recent population that

we have for Peace River, the electoral division, is 33,809. I note, and I should point out, that we are also required to add the population of First Nation reserves that were not included in the census, as provided by the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.

Our commission, as I've said, is required to divide Alberta into 87 proposed electoral divisions by taking into account the factors it considers appropriate, but it must by law 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 – and this is very important – that a proposed electoral division must not be more than 25 per cent above or below the average population for all 87 electoral divisions. To this there is, again, one exception, and that is that 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 total 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 the 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 an Indian 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 says that these are the five criteria, and to meet this, you must have three of these that you comply with.

7:05

That's a general overview of the legislation, but the Alberta Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada have also provided guidance. They have agreed that under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms the rights of Albertans include the right to vote; the right to have the political strength or value or force of a 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 diluted unduly, in order to gain effective representation or as a matter of practical necessity. These rulings as well as the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act must guide our decisions and, ultimately, the proposals we will make to the Legislative Assembly.

Now that I've explained the law that we are required to be guided by, we want to receive the most important input, and that's your views. We believe that what we hear from you, 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.

We welcome all of you here tonight. For those of you who will not be speaking, you can still make your views known in writing by mail, fax, or e-mail. Our staff over there can give you the addresses, the website, and how you can e-mail any information or mail it or fax it to us.

With that information I'll 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. I have to point out that 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.

Now, our first presenter.

Ms Friesacher: Our first presenter is Ms Agnes Knudsen, reeve of Northern Sunrise county.

The Chair: Ms Knudsen, could you please for the record give your full name for the *Hansard*.

**Agnes Knudsen, Reeve
Northern Sunrise County**

Ms Knudsen: Certainly. Agnes Knudsen. Is that full enough?

The Chair: That's full enough.

Ms Knudsen: Thank you, Judge Walter. I am Agnes Knudsen, reeve of Northern Sunrise county. I'm here on behalf of my council, who unanimously voted to support the existing electoral boundaries in which Northern Sunrise county is situated.

One of the factors you have committed to taking into consideration in redrawing the map is a common community. Our community is defined in part by agriculture, oil sands development, and forestry. We understand that the electoral division of Lesser Slave Lake is one of the electoral divisions under the required 25 per cent population variance, being at 28.8 per cent. While the largest land portion of our municipality and two hamlets, Cadotte Lake and Little Buffalo, are currently within the Lesser Slave Lake electoral division, the majority of our population resides within the Peace River electoral division, our community. We do not want to see our municipality shifted into the Lesser Slave Lake division to increase its population so as to be within the 25 per cent variance.

This electoral division is already one of the geographically largest districts in Alberta. One constituency office is located in the town of High Prairie and one in the town of Slave Lake. Both of these offices are located a great distance from Northern Sunrise county residents, including those currently in that constituency. In addition, they are not located on a normal travel route for our residents. The major travel route for Northern Sunrise county residents is highway 2 towards Valleyview through to Edmonton. The other major route runs highway 2 towards Grande Prairie through Fairview. You can see that constituency offices located in Slave Lake and High Prairie are not the optimal locations for the vast majority of our residents.

Albertans living in rural and remote areas have communication access issues that other electoral divisions may not have. Contacting an MLA via e-mail is not always an option for our residents, particularly in areas with very limited or very expensive high-speed Internet access. The promises of the SuperNet have not been delivered to all rural and remote areas.

As you noted in your introduction tonight, the Supreme Court of Canada has agreed that under the Charter the rights of Albertans include the right to effective representation. The distances that MLAs in rural and remote areas are required to travel are cost prohibitive in more ways than simply financial. The human time cost required to travel to isolated communities is already excessive. At an even larger size these electoral divisions will lack effective-

ness and efficiency. A telephone call cannot replace the presence of an elected official in a community.

The significant distance to Edmonton is also a concern. With little access to air travel, returning to an MLA's community or home for a weekend with their family can become strenuous and exhausting. An MLA located in Calgary or Edmonton is able to participate in a town hall meeting within their constituency on the same day they sit in the Legislature. Our current MLAs physically cannot do that.

Our council appreciates the ineffectiveness of an MLA representing over the 25 per cent population variance; however, our MLAs are currently representing the largest geographical areas in the province. If they are given larger electoral divisions to cover, we do not believe that effective representation will be achieved.

If the commission is interested in altering the boundaries in which Northern Sunrise county currently sits, our preferred option would be to shift to the electoral division of Dunvegan-Central Peace. This division makes more logical sense in terms of travel patterns for our residents as well as shared community. Dunvegan-Central Peace currently has two constituency offices: one located south on highway 2 in Falher, with the other west on highway 2 in Fairview, located en route to Grande Prairie. While Peace River is obviously our preferred location for an MLA, Falher and Fairview make the next most logical location, rather than Slave Lake or High Prairie. We have prepared some rough maps to illustrate this scenario. However, our preference is to maintain the electoral divisions we are currently situated in.

We also recommend severing the bottom part of the Lesser Slave Lake constituency to allow for it to meet the criteria of special consideration electoral district.

Effective representation is crucial to democracy in Alberta. Our council emphatically supports the maintenance of the current electoral boundaries in which our municipality sits to ensure effective representation is achieved for our residents.

Thank you for your time and questions.

The Chair: Great presentation.

Ms Knudsen: Thank you.

Dr. Archer: Well, thanks, Ms Knudsen, for the presentation and for these maps. Just so that I can understand the situation that you're addressing, is it the case that at the moment Northern Sunrise county exists within two constituencies? Part of it is in Peace River, and part of it is in Lesser Slave Lake?

Ms Knudsen: That's correct.

Dr. Archer: Your preference is for us not to change that. Is that your preferred option overall or to have all of the county reside in a single constituency?

7:15

Ms Knudsen: If that were to happen, then we're afraid that maybe you would put the entire county in Lesser Slave Lake, which we would not prefer.

Dr. Archer: Right. We had a presentation earlier today. We were in Grande Prairie earlier this afternoon for some hearings, and one of the presenters at that session was commenting on Lesser Slave Lake and made some recommendations that I think are related to your county. I'm wondering if you can just give us your response to these recommendations. I'm trying to understand if the recommendations that that presenter provided are consistent with what you're saying or are diametrically opposed. I think they're consistent.

One of the options that was presented was that polling districts 1 and 2 – I think these are polling districts within Lesser Slave Lake, Tallcree north and south – be moved to the Peace River constituency. The second recommendation is that polling districts 3, 4, and 5 – again, I think these are polling districts within Lesser Slave Lake relating to Cadotte Lake, Little Buffalo, and Seetha – also be moved to Peace River. I recognize that you’ve not had a chance to review that previous submission, but what’s your initial response to that set of recommendations that we’ve received?

Ms Knudsen: It would be less awkward if Cadotte Lake and Little Buffalo were in the Peace River constituency. I think it would be easier for that MLA to help those folks out in that area as well. They often look to him for help, and it’s not really his constituency, so he really shouldn’t. Yes, I think that would be less awkward. As far as – Tallcree, you said?

Dr. Archer: Tallcree north and south; they’re polling districts 1 and 2 within Lesser Slave Lake.

Ms Knudsen: Just offhand, I’m not sure how that would affect us.

Dr. Archer: Again, I’m not sure if anybody else knows these particular areas, but it seems to be . . .

Ms Knudsen: I think that’s way north of the county.

Dr. Archer: Oh. That’s north of the county.

Ms Knudsen: Yes.

Dr. Archer: I see. Okay. But the latter – Cadotte Lake, Little Buffalo, and Seetha – are not inconsistent with your recommendation.

Ms Knudsen: That’s right.

Dr. Archer: Okay. Thank you. That’s all I have.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you, Reeve Knudsen. I’m sorry; I’m going to have to be brief because we have a full house tonight of presenters. First comment: thank you for a very clear presentation. It is helpful to know exactly where you stand. Can I summarize it that you’re satisfied with the existing Peace River constituency as it is presently configured?

Ms Knudsen: Yes.

Mr. Dobbie: My second question. We are attempting to establish principles about effective representation, and one of the options that we have now is to create up to four special constituencies. Currently there is only one defined as a special constituency. Have you as an individual or as a county council addressed that issue? Do you support the creation of one or more special constituencies that would have a population up to 50 per cent lower than the average?

Ms Knudsen: I think that’s what would happen if we took that little bottom corner off Lesser Slave Lake. That would make them a farther distance from Edmonton.

Mr. Dobbie: They already meet the criteria.

Ms Knudsen: Oh, they do?

Mr. Dobbie: Yes.

Ms Knudsen: That was the only reason we were suggesting that. I wasn’t sure if they were meeting the criteria.

Mr. Dobbie: If you were to give us direction, though, would your direction be to tend to increase the number of special constituencies or leave it at one? I guess that’s what I’m trying to get from you.

Ms Knudsen: I think, perhaps, increase them given some of the distances from Edmonton that we’re looking at here.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you. I know your constituency is 276 miles north to south and 240 across. It’s a big one.

Ms Knudsen: Yeah.

The Chair: Allyson, do you have any questions?

Ms Jeffs: No. Asked and answered. I’m all right.

The Chair: Okay.
Brian?

Mr. Evans: No, I’m fine. I just want to thank you very much, Reeve Knudsen. A very clear presentation. Thank you.

Ms Knudsen: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: An excellent presentation.

Ms Knudsen: Thank you, sir.

Ms Friesacher: The next presenter is Mrs. Liliane Maisonneuve Lavoie.

The Chair: Good evening. For the record could I ask you for your complete name so that *Hansard* can get it.

Liliane Maisonneuve Lavoie
Private Citizen

Mrs. Maisonneuve Lavoie: Yes. It’s Liliane Maisonneuve Lavoie. I’m here as a concerned citizen. I’ve been involved in the political process for many years, but I want to address this meeting in a general fashion because I’ve lived in three areas of the province. First of all, I was just wondering why we need this at this time, with the budget cuts and health services cuts, when we think of Ontario which has a 12 million population with only a hundred seats in the provincial Legislature.

The Chair: Could I help you there? By law they are required after every two general elections, within about an eight- to 10-year period, to hold these electoral boundaries hearings. By law they’ve been doing this for many, many years.

In relation to the number of seats, that is now the law, and we don’t have any jurisdiction over it here.

Mrs. Maisonneuve Lavoie: I just went over the cost: probably about \$2 million if you look at four extra MLAs.

Now, respecting the communities and trading areas, I have a few areas that I’m thinking about, especially the francophone communities in Alberta. For years Morinville was always with St. Albert, which was where people end up retiring or teaching, and Morinville

has been moved with Barrhead, which has divided this area. It's a trading area also, and it's a community with similar interests.

I want to speak, too, about the St. Paul area. The St. Paul and Bonnyville areas – that's where I'm originally from – are together. I would suggest that instead of doing this north and south – if you look at Lac La Biche-St. Paul and Athabasca-Redwater, they're long constituencies – I would like to see more of an east-west boundary so that you're not going from the tip of Conklin there right down to south of Two Hills. It used to be that we were watching for natural boundaries. It used to stop at the North Saskatchewan River, just north of Two Hills, and now it goes down to just about Vegreville. So I would like to see those two ridings, maybe, you know, on east-west divisions instead of north-south because this is quite a distance if you look at the north-south.

Some of the ridings, too, have been maybe, politely, gerrymandered, and I think that that's another thing that the commission should look at. I know that the Edmonton-Gold Bar riding in Edmonton doesn't respect the natural boundary and has gone now north of the river, crosses the river, and Kenilworth was taken off of that. The boundaries for the francophones in Edmonton also have been split right in half. There are 25,000 francophones right in Edmonton, and we're about 200,000 that speak French across the province.

I want to say that I was looking at this area, and I think that the Cadotte Lake and Lubicon would be a better division to be with Peace River, as was spoken about right before me.

It has to be effective, but it's very difficult when you see 23,000 for some ridings and 60,000 for others, where people have the same MLA and there's 60,000. So I think probably Calgary will need another riding. If you look at the statistics for the population, they're quite high.

The other one is Edmonton-Norwood. That was taken away in 2004. I think that the Edmonton area, you know, because of the population there, would probably need one more seat, and that was already cut last time.

The Fort McMurray area with its growing population would probably need to have one more representative.

7:25

I would just like to say that respecting natural boundaries – rivers, large highways – and respecting the communities or the trading areas would be very important. It would be good to think maybe more about what's good for Albertans and not for the party that's in power, so in some ridings where it has been maybe redrawn for the benefit of some MLAs, I think that that has to be considered.

I was wondering if there were any views or any studies done on proportional representation since maybe 30 per cent of the voters have no representative at this time since it's first past the post.

That's about my presentation. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Brian, do you have any questions?

Mr. Evans: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you very much, Mrs. Maisonneuve Lavoie. You obviously know an awful lot about the province.

Mrs. Maisonneuve Lavoie: Yes, I do.

Mr. Evans: So we appreciate hearing your comments. One comment about the east-west preference. You know, I just look at the provincial map, and I think about the road systems that we have, particularly in the north. My recollection – and I've travelled quite

extensively in the north – is that there's not a great east-west road system in the north. I mean, there's not a great north-south one either.

Mrs. Maisonneuve Lavoie: I wasn't talking about the north.

Mr. Evans: Well, you were talking about St. Paul and Lac La Biche.

Mrs. Maisonneuve Lavoie: Yeah. That's more central, central east. Athabasca, Lac La Biche: I was talking more about that area.

Mr. Evans: So you're talking about that central area.

Mrs. Maisonneuve Lavoie: Yes. I wasn't talking about the northern part.

Mr. Evans: Yeah. If we were going to be fairly consistent with that, that would require quite a few changes, and one of the things we're trying to do is deal with the growth of Alberta – that's another reason for looking at this every second election, particularly in today's Alberta with the considerable growth – to look at this and not make gratuitous changes, try not to change the status quo any more than is necessary given what's happening in various parts of the province and respecting as well some of the more remote areas, where we want to ensure that we're not losing effective representation. So I take your point, but I think it would be rather difficult to do that in isolation of the entire province.

Mrs. Maisonneuve Lavoie: That would be more the central: Barrhead, Morinville, Athabasca, Lac La Biche, St. Paul. I know the area quite well, and to go from the north, you know, just about Wabasca down to past Two Hills – I was just suggesting maybe have them more as square instead of long ridings.

Mr. Evans: Sure. All right. Well, thank you again. Very much appreciate it.

Mrs. Maisonneuve Lavoie: Thank you.

The Chair: Allyson.

Ms Jeffs: Thank you very much, and thank you very much for your presentation. You covered a lot of ground there. I wanted to ask you if you would be so kind as to elaborate on a comment you made regarding the current riding boundaries in Edmonton. You raised some concerns that the francophone community, a community of interest, is split. Could you tell me where you see sort of the problem areas?

Mrs. Maisonneuve Lavoie: Well, I think it's mostly the Edmonton-Gold Bar and the Edmonton-Strathcona ridings. If you have a map of where the francophone population is, they're mostly in the French quarter. One is in Edmonton-Strathcona. Some are in Edmonton-Gold Bar. Gold Bar, you know, crosses the river. It never used to be like that.

Ms Jeffs: So your concern is that Gold Bar shouldn't cross that river and that we should – did you talk about restoring?

Mrs. Maisonneuve Lavoie: And it probably could take in more of the Edmonton-Strathcona riding.

Ms Jeffs: Okay. Did you mention some particular neighbourhoods? Kenilworth?

Mrs. Maisonneuve Lavoie: Well, Kenilworth was taken away from the Gold Bar riding, and I must say that, you know, traditionally it was Liberal, so this was a little bit of a surprise.

Ms Jeffs: Okay. So your main concern is if that could be restored. That was, I think, done in the previous boundary, and you think that that's been an issue. Then are there particular neighbourhoods that are in the Strathcona area that you see are in the . . .

Mrs. Maisonneuve Lavoie: No, the Strathcona area is – well, it is an awkward riding also. It's in the length instead of the breadth. But I was just concerned more about the francophone boundaries for the area and Morinville-St. Albert also, Morinville being placed outside of the area, more with Barrhead and Westlock.

Ms Jeffs: All right. Thank you very much.

Mr. Dobbie: Can you please just answer one quick question? Just so you know, we have heard in Edmonton that the area across the river for Gold Bar should come back, so you're not alone there. Secondly, you understand that we have no authority to deal with issues like proportional representation.

Mrs. Maisonneuve Lavoie: No. I know. I just thought I'd throw that in for the next time.

Mr. Dobbie: And I'm going to ask you to also understand that we've given a list of many factors, and in some cases we are needing to trade off between population and communities. But it is very helpful to hear your comments. It is the first time we've heard about the concern about the splitting of the French community, so thank you.

Mrs. Maisonneuve Lavoie: No. I made a presentation in '02-03.

Mr. Dobbie: No, but this commission.

Mrs. Maisonneuve Lavoie: Oh, yes, this commission.

Mr. Dobbie: That was not us.

Mrs. Maisonneuve Lavoie: Okay. Thank you.

Dr. Archer: I heard the buzzer, so I'm going to end it there. Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you. Our next presenter.

Ms Friesacher: Our next presenters are Mrs. Cheryl Anderson and Mrs. Darlene Frith, councillors with the MD of Northern Lights.

The Chair: Good evening.

**Darlene Frith, Deputy Reeve
Cheryl Anderson, Councillor
Municipal District of Northern Lights**

Mrs. Frith: Good evening. I'm Darlene Frith, deputy reeve for the MD of Northern Lights, No. 22.

The current review of the provincial electoral boundaries includes the creation under Bill 45 of four new electoral areas, bringing the total to 87. While the location of these new constituencies has not been determined, we must remember that the electoral boundary review of 2003 clearly indicated that equal representation by

population was not feasible. The commission at that time decided that effective representation should be the goal and weighed rural population, sparsity, and distance between communities against population density in urban areas.

The MD of Northern Lights agrees that this same philosophy of effective representation as directed by legislation should form the basis for the current boundary review. We recognize that the Fort McMurray area has seen an enormous population increase over the past several years and is in need of effective representation similar to urban areas which have experienced comparable population increases.

The municipal district also believes that the sparsity of population and distance between communities in the Peace River and Dunvegan-Central Peace constituencies make it extremely difficult for our provincial representatives to effectively travel and represent the residents, and any increase in the size of these areas to ensure that they fall within 25 per cent of the recommended provincial average is unreasonable. In order for the Peace River electoral district to contain enough population to meet these requirements, the physical size of the constituency would have to increase dramatically.

We further believe that making the constituency smaller would not allow for effective representation as the people and communities of Peace River and Dunvegan-Central Peace share common community interests and work together on many issues such as transportation corridors, land-use planning plus development and overall regional co-operation. Splitting parts of these communities into other constituencies would destroy regional bonds that have taken many years to develop. Changing boundaries to include communities currently located in other constituencies would not only increase the physical size, making the job of the representatives even more difficult; it combines communities which do not have common interests, thereby causing a breakdown of effective representation.

7:35

The MLA for the Peace River constituency currently travels by vehicle approximately a hundred thousand kilometres annually to meet with residents and bring their concerns back to the Legislature. Some of the current regulations make it difficult for the representatives to travel to parts of the constituency as there are no scheduled flights from the municipal airport in Edmonton to anywhere within our area except Peace River, which then entails a three-hour road trip to High Level for the whole constituency. It would be useful to allow the MLAs to utilize charter flights and not have to absorb these costs in their office budgets.

In summary, we believe that for constituencies to maintain effective representation, the electoral boundaries review commission should leave the Peace River and Dunvegan-Central Peace boundaries in their current state and give serious consideration to changing the regulations covering MLA travel to allow for the use of charter flights without affecting constituency office budgets.

The Chair: Thank you. If I could sum that up, you're happy with the boundaries as they are, and you believe you're getting good, effective representation.

If I could add one more thing, we have no control over your MLA's budget.

Mrs. Frith: We thought we would just throw that in.

The Chair: Very, very good presentation.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you, Deputy Reeve. Again, we're still developing general principles that we're trying to apply. We've heard from people in Edmonton and Calgary, certainly the mayor of Edmonton and representatives from Calgary, that they would like us to consider Edmonton and its population as one tier, Calgary and its population as another, and generally we're hearing that they support the rest of the province being treated as one large group.

What the quick math tells us is that it's very close to 50-50, 49-51 between Edmonton and Calgary and the rest of the province. In developing general principles, one thing we can look at – and I mentioned this to a previous speaker – is using more special constituencies so that it does allow the balance of the province to be closer to the average. That's certainly something we're looking at.

My question to you is: have you as a county discussed your proposals with the representatives in Dunvegan? Have you reached outside of your constituency to talk to your neighbours about this proposal you've made tonight, leaving the boundaries the same?

Mrs. Frith: Yes, we have.

Mr. Dobbie: Were they in agreement with what you're recommending?

Mrs. Frith: Overall. We haven't talked to Mr. Goudreau, but it was the feeling of others that we had spoken to that, yes, we want to leave it as it is.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Allyson, any questions?

Ms Jeffs: Just one very quickly. The municipal district is currently in two constituencies. Am I correct about that?

Mrs. Frith: That's right.

Ms Jeffs: And you're comfortable with that? We've heard some concerns about counties being split and so on, but that is not a concern?

Mrs. Frith: No. It is not a concern.

Ms Jeffs: All right. That was my only question.

The Chair: Brian, any questions?

Mr. Evans: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thanks, Deputy Reeve. Without getting you panicky that I've got a hidden agenda here, are there any areas that you've identified either in your MD or in the constituency generally that you see as not being realistically within the constituency and better served if that area were out of the constituency, whether in Dunvegan-Central Peace or in Lesser Slave?

Mrs. Frith: I don't believe Lesser Slave would be an option. No. We have no preference other than to remain the same.

Mr. Evans: And the comment that Keith Archer made earlier about Tallcree perhaps being better aligned with Peace River: do you have any personal knowledge about that? Is it close enough to your MD that you'd care to comment?

Mrs. Frith: No, it's not. I'm afraid I have no comments on that.

Mr. Evans: Okay. And I assure you that we don't have a hidden agenda either.

Thank you.

Dr. Archer: Well, thanks, Councillor Frith. Just looking at the data that we have, the Dunvegan-Central Peace district, which is currently the only special constituency, if left unchanged, would be about 41 or 42 per cent below the provincial average. So if we continue to leave it unchanged, then it would certainly fall within a special district category. The population of the Peace River constituency is according to our data about 33,800 or 34,000, which places it about 16 and a half or 17 per cent below, so it wouldn't be a special district. There was some comment earlier that we have the ability to create up to four special districts. What I hear you say is that certainly within at least these two constituencies having one of them as a special constituency and one as not a special constituency seems to be working, and there's no need to apply a second special constituency designation to Peace River and look at decreasing the population within that constituency.

Mrs. Frith: No, and we would not be in favour of that.

Dr. Archer: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much for a good presentation.

Mrs. Frith: Thank you.

The Chair: Our next presenter.

Ms Friesacher: The next presenter is the Hon. Hector Goudreau.

The Chair: Good evening, Mr. Goudreau. I see you have someone with you. For *Hansard* could we get your name.

Mr. Bremont: Excuse me. My name is Roch Bremont. I'm president of Dunvegan-Central Peace.

The Chair: Thank you.

**Hector Goudreau, MLA
Dunvegan- Central Peace**

**Roch Bremont
Dunvegan-Central Peace
Progressive Conservative Constituency Association**

Mr. Goudreau: I'm Hector Goudreau, MLA for Dunvegan-Central Peace and making a presentation on behalf of the Dunvegan-Central Peace PC association.

Hon. Walter and members of the boundaries commission, it's certainly my pleasure to be able to present to you tonight. I'm prepared to go through a presentation, of which you've got a copy, but I'm going to highlight more of the points that are there because I think it's going to take more than the allotted time for the presentation. Then certainly we'll be open to questions. Mr. Bremont, to my right, has also agreed to participate in the question period.

We know that the act states that the commission shall take into consideration certain factors when determining the boundaries, and for the purpose of this submission there are a number of factors that are of particular importance that we want to look at. One is the sparsity and density of population. The other one is common community interests and community organizations, including those of Indian reserves and Métis settlements. Whenever possible, we looked at existing municipal boundaries; the number of municipali-

ties and other local authorities; the geographical features, including existing road systems; and the desirability of understandable and clear boundaries. In the past there has been some confusion in and around the Peace River Airport, for instance, and how that fits in with Peace River. It's always been confusing to try to determine where people were supposed to vote and in which riding they were.

We know that the commission is using various statistics for determining the population of riding boundaries, and I won't go into that. Based, however, on the above factors, we want to provide the following analysis of electoral boundaries in northern Alberta. We know that there are nine ridings in northern Alberta which approximate the area covered by the Northern Alberta Development Council. NADC is an existing structure, and it represents basically all of those nine ridings. These ridings are Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, Lac La Biche-St. Paul, Bonnyville-Cold Lake, Athabasca-Redwater, Grande Prairie-Smoky, Grande Prairie-Wapiti, Dunvegan-Central Peace, Peace River, and Lesser Slave Lake, with a total northern population of 317,594. That's on the basis of the last census. Now, the average population of a northern riding is 35,288. So if you take those numbers, divide by nine, it gives us 35,288. This is a variance of only minus 6.7 per cent from the average population per riding, suggesting that the north is fairly well served with nine ridings.

7:45

Now, of the four ridings in northeastern Alberta three conform to the act. Those are Lac La Biche-St. Paul, Bonnyville-Cold Lake, and Athabasca-Redwater. However, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, with a population of 52,000 and some, is 39 per cent larger than the average and 5,383 greater than what's permitted by the act. The bulk of this population lives in Fort McMurray. The only apparent solution is to eventually split Fort McMurray between two ridings in a manner similar to Grande Prairie.

We propose that the size of Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo be reduced. You'll notice the map that we've provided with the package there. The suggested southern boundaries would be the Athabasca and Clearwater rivers, bisecting Fort McMurray in such a manner that the amended riding would have a population of about 35,000. Now, the riding south of the amended Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo would be an amended riding called, we're suggesting, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche. The northern boundary of this riding would, of course, join with the southern boundary of the revised Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. That would tend to balance those particular populations.

I won't go into a lot of details – there are some of those details in my presentation there – but adopting this recommendation would align the electoral boundaries closer to those boundaries that are currently used by the Northern Alberta Development Council. The five ridings . . .

The Chair: Could I just interrupt for one second, Mr. Goudreau? The conservative figures now – when I say conservative, there are figures that are much higher for Fort McMurray – would indicate 77,000, probably closer to 80,000. If you divided Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo into two ridings, you would have two constituencies or divisions which are totally equal, and you wouldn't be doing any other . . .

Mr. Goudreau: We recognize that. You know, certainly, our arguments were on the basis of the last census figures that we were able to put our fingers on. When we do projections trying to figure what might happen here from now until, say, 2014, 2015, we also see very much the same things for both the constituencies of Grande Prairie-Wapiti, for instance, and Grande Prairie-Smoky, with the city

of Grande Prairie growing as fast as it has over the last little while. I guess that when we look at that, we know that there are two ridings that exceed the variance, but they comply with the exceptions permitted under section 15(2) of the act.

Now, Lesser Slave Lake, with a variance of about minus 30 per cent or minus 28.8 per cent, meets three of the five criteria that are identified under the act: the area exceeds 20,000 square kilometres, no town with a population that exceeds 8,000 people, and the riding contains an aboriginal reserve or Métis colony. This riding is also experiencing modest growth, especially amongst the First Nations communities.

The riding of Dunvegan-Central Peace – and you've alluded to it a number of times tonight – has a population of 23,650 and a variance of 35.7 per cent.

The Chair: Which one are you referring to there, Dunvegan-Central Peace?

Mr. Goudreau: The population of Dunvegan-Central Peace – that's right – of 23,649, I believe. Those are the numbers that we have.

Now, I want to say that the riding – and that's the riding that I represent in the Legislature – basically exhibits all five criteria for exemptions under section 15(2) of the act. These include the three above-mentioned for Lesser Slave Lake plus being in excess of 150 kilometres from the Legislature as well as its western boundaries being coterminous with the Alberta-B.C. boundary. Section 15(2) recognizes that large, distant ridings may have a population significantly smaller than the provincial average, of which mine is. The size and distance from the Legislature certainly makes it difficult for me as an MLA to service.

I want to maybe highlight some of the issues there. I'll start by indicating that we've got six rural municipalities, each with their individual council. We have 10 towns and villages, each with their elected council. We have 17 hamlets, each with various organizations there. We have one native reserve. The constituency is multi-ethnic, predominantly with English, French, and First Nations communities. We have at least six school boards that overlap and are represented in the constituency. There is one advanced education college split between Grande Prairie and Fairview. The south edge of the constituency is over 400 kilometres from the Legislature. Certainly, as I've indicated, the constituency borders the B.C. boundary. My largest town in the constituency is the town of Fairview, with a population of about 3,500. Most people would be over 500 kilometres from the Legislature.

Now, I have not counted them, but we certainly have, you know, numerous seniors' clubs. Just about every community has a seniors' club, a sports club, seniors' lodges, long-term care facilities, youth organizations, FCSS, ag service boards, and I can go on and on and on. Every community has major activities where they expect participation by their representative. Some of those include a provincially renowned honey festival in Falher; the pond hockey in Grimshaw, which is, again, another provincial activity; the Wanham plowing match, that hosts the provincial and national and international plowing competitions.

The other thing is that most of our regional headquarters – if I want to talk to the regional department of agriculture, for instance – are outside of the constituency, so it precludes having to meet. A lot of our regional headquarters are based out of either Peace River or Grande Prairie. There are, nonetheless, a number of departments and provincial buildings in the constituency. We're dealing with four RCMP detachments.

In the constituency alone I personally travel between 35,000 and 60,000 kilometres a year. In addition, I'll travel between 25 and 45

trips between Edmonton and the constituency in a year, and those trips average a little over 900 kilometres per trip. Going from east to west in the constituency, if I leave McLennan and I go to Bear Canyon or Cherry Point on the east side, it takes me three hours to do that. It's the same distance as travelling from Edmonton to Calgary, so to go back and forth is the trip that I do on a regular basis.

We've got numerous rivers that cross the constituency, making direct travel virtually impossible. Now, it was identified earlier with another presentation that we've got many residents that still do not have access to high-speed Internet, making it very difficult to communicate through modern technologies. We still have areas where cellphone reception is virtually nonexistent or extremely poor. We've got some communities with that. It's not evident. We deal with four different newspapers.

There's one little part of the constituency where the only way we can access it is for me to go into Dawson Creek and back into the province of Alberta. There's no direct access to that one community, and that's the community of Gundy. It just gives you an idea of the complexity of that special constituency of Dunvegan-Central Peace.

7:55

Our recommendation, generally speaking, is to try to identify the fact that the population base, if it's tweaked a little bit throughout the north part of the province of Alberta, would for the most part meet the criteria. Basically, we're saying, if we're going to maintain the effectiveness of representation by an elected official, that the boundaries be minimally changed, if anything, that they should stay the same. If we believe in effectiveness of representation, then we're suggesting that Dunvegan-Central Peace be left as is.

Failing that, we're making the recommendation that if it needs to grow – and we recognize that Grande Prairie's population is growing dramatically – Dunvegan-Central Peace would absorb the rural parts of Grande Prairie-Wapiti and Grande Prairie-Smoky, the northern parts of those constituencies, and constrict the ridings a little closer in towards the city of Grande Prairie.

Mr. Chairman, there is a lot more information in my presentation, but I'll stop now. Roch and I are prepared to respond to whatever questions you may have.

The Chair: In essence you're telling us: "Look. The boundaries are working as they are right now, and we don't need any change."

Mr. Goudreau: Virtually that's what I'm saying. It's challenging enough as it is presently. You know, at times I'm told that I'm not seen enough in the constituency. For the time it takes me to drive, most of my colleagues in larger cities can walk across their constituencies. Again, it was emphasized that we don't have the transportation structures to get me here and back on a regular basis. Often we finish the Legislature session at 5:30. By the time I'm leaving the city, it's 6 o'clock. Most of my mileage is done in the evening and during the night. That's the only way I can do the type of travelling that I need to do to service the constituency and feel comfortable that I'm doing a good job.

Going back to individual municipalities. I can meet – and we try to encourage regional types of meetings, but the municipalities themselves feel that one is just as important as the other. So if I meet with the council of the town of Spirit River, there's an expectation that I meet with all councils within my constituency. You know, imagine doing that a couple times a year, even if it's only a couple times a year.

The Chair: Well, I have a farm near Silver Valley, and I know how long it takes to drive there.

Peter, do you have any questions?

Mr. Dobbie: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Bremont and Mr. Goudreau. I clearly understand the position you've taken, so I'm going to move away from that because I understand it.

I'll indicate to you that we have been learning that in addition to the challenges faced by rural constituencies, we're hearing from MLAs that we need to consider that there's a distinction between, I guess, a suburban urban riding, the suburbs, where it's a neighbourhood of the same people, and inner-city urban ridings. There seems to be an understanding that there can be a distinction within Edmonton for the demands made upon an MLA. I guess my question to you is: do you agree with that proposition we've heard?

Mr. Goudreau: Sure. There's no doubt. I don't disagree at all.

Mr. Dobbie: I'm pushing you only because we have to get through. I guess the good news about that is that if they agree with it there, they're also conceding that there must be challenges for the rural MLAs. So I think that's a good understanding we're developing. Do you have a suggestion or recommendation to this commission as to the number of special constituencies that this commission should recommend?

Mr. Goudreau: I guess the attitude that I'm using and our constituency is using is that if it's working reasonably well, especially in northwestern Alberta, then there's no need to add special constituencies or to do any major changes. The system seems to be working, you know, well. We can start bouncing numbers around and bouncing people around. We can take parts of the Peace River constituency and move it into Dunvegan-Central Peace. We're still not gaining a lot. We tend to balance populations and would probably make two special constituencies of it, but nothing really changes in that effect.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you. I have lots more questions, but I have to defer to my fellow commissioners.

The Chair: Brian, do you have any questions?

Mr. Evans: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you very much, Mr. Goudreau, as well. Having a little experience, I would suggest that the presentation you made would have made an excellent maiden speech in the Legislature.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you.

Mr. Evans: It certainly does give us a very good view of your constituency.

You've alluded to a couple of things that I'm not sure urban MLAs are that aware of. Your comments about cellphone reception, the Internet – I must say that we've heard presentations from urban MLAs indicating that with the technology available and the SuperNet available throughout the province, there's no difference between accessing your rural MLA and your city MLA even though you can walk to the city MLA's constituency office. So that's very valuable. I would suggest that you and the other MLAs from the rural north, in particular, might want to take it upon yourselves to make that point with your urban colleagues.

Just one question about transportation within Dunvegan-Central Peace. You've indicated that it would take you about three hours to get from McLennan to the B.C.-Alberta border.

Mr. Goudreau: That's right. On the north side of the river.

Mr. Evans: Yeah. That appears to be probably one of the best transportation routes in your constituency. I take it that that's not the best transportation route either, and it just further identifies the challenges that you have and anyone representing your area might have. Is that correct?

Mr. Goudreau: That's right.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you once again, and thank you very much, Mr. Bremont, as well.

The Chair: Keith.

Dr. Archer: Thanks. Mr. Goudreau, just to make sure I understand your position. You've provided us with a map that included a drawing in which you've sketched in a potential second riding in the Fort McMurray area and then two potential extensions to your riding, but my understanding is that those are not your preferred solution. Your preferred solution is not to go in that direction.

Mr. Goudreau: That's right.

Dr. Archer: I just raise that partly because at the Grande Prairie hearing that we had earlier today, someone else had suggested that the Dunvegan riding possibly could stretch down and include Valleyview, and we heard quite a strong reaction to that from another presenter. I'm understanding you to say that if we need to grow somewhere, that would be a logical place, but it's not a preferred solution.

The second question – and you may not want to answer this, but I'll pose it to you anyway partly because there was this quite passionate discussion we had earlier today about the two ridings that abut yours to the south. One of the suggestions coming from the city of Grande Prairie is that we create an urban constituency within Grande Prairie, a totally urban constituency, and then a second constituency that includes the northern part of Grande Prairie and part of Grande Prairie-Wapiti and part of Grande Prairie-Smoky. Others came to the meeting and argued for the status quo. Based upon your working relationship with people within these communities, do you have a position on that, or do you have any guidance for the commission?

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you for that particular question. The map sort of identifies probably our preference if there's going to be some movement in that way. There are a couple of things. One, they're agriculturally based areas. Dunvegan-Central Peace, especially the full south, is agriculturally based. The relationship with the communities in the various areas is quite similar, so the challenges are very similar, and the opportunities are the same as well. It would make more sense to concentrate maybe a couple of constituencies towards the centre of Grande Prairie itself or closer towards the city of Grande Prairie and then to release some of that back to Dunvegan-Central Peace. That would have a tendency to rebalance numbers considerably.

8:05

Dr. Archer: Thank you.

The Chair: Allyson.

Ms Jeffs: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I will be brief. Thank you very much for your presentation. Mr. Goudreau, your current constituency fits into the special areas, and you seem content with that.

Mr. Goudreau: That's right.

Ms Jeffs: You have given us an option in case the commission, you know, looks at that, but we're very clear that that's not your preference. I'm just wondering if looking into the future with a constituency such as yours that is part of this special category which may decline as much as 50 per cent below the provincial average, what is sort of the trajectory in terms of the population in that constituency at this point? In other words, if we can leave you as you are now, is this option of perhaps moving the boundary south and, I note, creating an even larger constituency something that may be an issue for the next commission? Or do you see something else happening with the population? In other words, are you going to continue to decline?

Mr. Goudreau: This constituency has a couple of little areas where we're seeing a population growth, and that's in the Hines Creek area. We've got a large movement of Mennonite families from South America that's presently occurring, and we're seeing some changes there. The rest of the constituency: the community of Fairview has got moderate growth; the community of Grimshaw has some growth. Again, a lot of it will depend on whether or not certain economic activities occur. Let me use the proposed nuclear plant, for instance, of which they talk, an infusion of 3,000 to 5,000 people, the majority of which would no doubt live in the constituency or be shared between Peace River and Dunvegan-Central Peace.

Aside from that, if things stay the same and we use past population changes, we anticipate that by 2014 Dunvegan-Central Peace would basically be very similar in population to what it is today. We are still seeing the consolidation of farms. Our farms are getting much, much larger. Our farm families are getting smaller, generally. Our communities themselves, the community of Watino, for instance, I don't expect to see any growth whatsoever in that particular community in the next five, 10 years. There's nothing there to really cause it to grow. We do see some growth, no doubt, in the constituencies of Peace River and Lesser Slave Lake – I have alluded to that – maybe with the aboriginal growth that's there, and in the city of Grande Prairie.

Having said that, there are a number of activities that are occurring that could cause that to change. We've had tremendous resources that have never been explored. I'm going to use the iron ore, for instance, just north of Worsley that in the last year and a half or two years the Chinese have shown dramatic interest in. They're all resources that are there but have basically not been exploited, which could trigger some population growth. A proposed dam that was approved by the Legislature just off Fairview or Dunvegan itself, that's moving forward. They're doing technical work. It's going to create some work.

I guess what I'm trying to say is that, you know, we are not going to see a dramatic decline in population. If anything, it's going to be stable and slightly increase but probably not at the speed that you would see in Fort McMurray or Grande Prairie.

Ms Jeffs: No. Just for clarification, the reason I'm asking is that according to our data the constituency is about 42 per cent below the average now. As the rest of the population grows in the province,

that average riding size is going to increase, and that might create some issues down the road for future boundary commissions.

Mr. Goudreau: There's no doubt that, you know, certainly the future commissions will have to look at it very, very seriously if our population remains stable in relation to the growing population across the province.

Ms Jeffs: All right. Thank you very much, sir. I appreciate it.

The Chair: Well, thank you, Hector, and thank you, Mr. Bremont.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you.

Ms Friesacher: The next presenters are Clark McAskile and Mike Mihaly of Mackenzie Region of Northwest Alberta.

The Chair: Could I for the record get you to give your names for *Hansard*, please?

Clark McAskile and Mike Mihaly
Mackenzie Region of Northwest Alberta

Mr. McAskile: Yes. I am Clark McAskile. I will be presenting on behalf of the Mackenzie region. With me is Mike Mihaly. Mike is the former publisher and owner of the newspapers up the Mackenzie highway and also the former mayor of the town of High Level.

With us, if I may, Your Honour, is also Mike's wife, Ethel, who is a former president of the High Level & District Chamber of Commerce, and Mrs. Sylvia Kennedy, who is the current PC association constituency president for the Peace River constituency and the president of the High Level & District Chamber of Commerce. Also with us is Mrs. Susan Callihoo, who is a former town councillor and a former Liberal candidate in the Peace River constituency.

We have a brief presentation, and then Mr. Mihaly would like to address a couple of issues after I'm finished. The Mackenzie Region of Northwest Alberta would like to request the formation of a new provincial constituency serving the area north of 56 degrees, 25 minutes north, and west of Wood Buffalo national park to the British Columbia border, but this would also include the community of Garden River, which is located within Wood Buffalo national park. This would form one provincial constituency from the northern portions of the current Peace River and Lesser Slave Lake constituencies. Due to population size this would likely qualify as one of the special consideration constituencies.

The majority of the communities comprising the Mackenzie region of northwest Alberta are served by the Peace River constituency with the exception of the communities of Tallcree, which lie within the Lesser Slave Lake constituency. The communities of Tallcree, with a population of approximately 500 people, are at the extreme northern edge of the Lesser Slave Lake constituency, separated by a distance of 175 kilometres from Red Earth Creek, the next nearest community within that constituency. Tallcree naturally trades with Fort Vermilion to the north at a distance of less than 80 kilometres. We believe that placing Tallcree with the northern communities is a natural and logical choice.

For the balance of the presentation I will concentrate on the Peace River constituency itself and our request to form our own constituency from its northern portion. The communities of northwest Alberta comprise a natural region. While trade on a large scale does occur along north-south corridors, most local trade in northern Alberta tends to follow east-west lines. High Level is the main retail

centre for the region, with LaCrête, Rainbow Lake, and Fort Vermilion serving their immediate locales. The municipalities in the region have strong intermunicipal ties, sharing services to the benefit of their residents.

The suggested southern boundary would extend east-west just north of Twin Lakes. This is suggested as the north face of the Hawk Hills creates a natural barrier between these regions and a geographic gap of more than 100 kilometres between Keg River and Manning. As mentioned, the gap on the eastern side of the region between Tallcree and Red Earth Creek is over 170 kilometres.

The size of this constituency dwarfs most in the province. To make this presentation, our group drove 300 kilometres from High Level, a distance greater than that between Calgary and Edmonton. Had a delegation been present from the constituency's northernmost community, Indian Cabins, or its westernmost, Rainbow Lake, they would have been required to drive 450 kilometres to be here this evening, a distance equal to that from Edmonton to Lethbridge.

This distance is accepted by the people of the region but makes the constituency MLA's job much more complicated. One-way travel from the constituency office in Peace River to the remoter communities in the north can take in excess of five hours, often meaning that travel within this constituency is not measured in hours; it's measured in days. Speaking with the former and current MLAs, their monthly travel can average 5,000 kilometres and in some months exceed 15,000 kilometres. Even if the Mackenzie region is granted its own constituency, it would still contain over 12 per cent of the land mass of this province and require travel times of up to three hours between the communities within it.

8:15

The issue of forming a constituency out of the northern portion of the Peace River constituency was brought forward in the former boundaries review process. Unfortunately, it was in between the rounds. The former commission chair, Mr. Bob Clark, believed the creation of a Mackenzie region constituency was logical and sensible, but it had been brought forward too late, and a change of that magnitude would have had a severe effect on the other constituencies within the region.

The former Peace River constituency MLA, Mr. Gary Friedel, had had several conversations with Mr. Clark on the matter, and he had stated he would be available for questions if the Electoral Boundaries Commission believed that his input had value. Mr. Friedel also informed our group that Mr. Clark had assured him that notes were placed in the file for subsequent commissions to review for the creation of this constituency.

We do not make this presentation due to any concern we have with our current or former MLAs. We have been very fortunate to be represented by intelligent and dedicated individuals. Nor do we make this presentation to create animosity with the southern communities within our constituency. The people of Manning and Peace River are our friends and our neighbours and will remain so even if we no longer share an MLA. We make this presentation because we believe the growth in the northern portion of northwest Alberta merits a new constituency. We recognize that the population in the new constituency will be below the provincial average, but it should not be lower than the current populations in the Dunvegan-Central Peace or the Lesser Slave Lake provincial constituencies.

We'd also like to point out that as the present special consideration constituency of Dunvegan-Central Peace has virtually the same population as the northern portion of the Peace River constituency, there is little reason to continue attaching the town of Peace River to a population based more than 300 kilometres distant.

Regardless of the population size, we believe the creation of a new constituency for the Mackenzie region would be consistent with the

1991 Supreme Court of Canada decision regarding the Saskatchewan electoral boundaries review where it was held that the creation of northern constituencies was connected to their need for effective representation.

Mr. Mihaly would like to add a couple of points.

Mr. Mihaly: Yes. As the clerk introduced me, I'm Mike Mihaly. I've lived in High Level for 36 years, and for the past 20 I was waiting for that region to become a special consideration constituency, ever since the Supreme Court decision.

The new proposed constituency, which Clark referred to, would qualify under all five of your criteria. Consistently in the federal census we're in the top five growth areas. In other words, our average growth within census sometimes reaches 20 per cent, between 10 and 15 to 20 per cent. Right now since we're four years in, our population probably has grown 2,000 to 2 and a half thousand since the last census.

The thing that I wanted to say is an anecdote to point out that effective representation is hard to come by when you're that far away from other areas. As you know, ministers can't travel to every constituency all the time. There are just too many constituencies. I as a mayor for seven years untold number of times had to travel 300 kilometres to make presentations to a minister in Peace River. Many times the mayor of Rainbow Lake could not afford to take the time off to have an 880-kilometre return-trip drive and asked me to make a presentation for him. I don't think that is effective representation.

I urge you to take this into consideration and make the changes, finally, which would comply with the Supreme Court ruling.

I have one question. Is there any possibility to correct this, take it to court if it's not changed again? Since we have a judge, I'd like to have a . . .

The Chair: I don't want to excite the lawyers with respect to the possible legal fees.

We will certainly take into account your presentation and what you've said here tonight. We appreciate your thoughts and your views, and I'm sure there may be a couple of questions here.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you, gentlemen. You've given us a geographic degree; we don't have that on our map. I'm wondering if I could have you describe for me or just even mark on this map – I think we have ranges and townships.

Mr. McAskile: Actually, sir, if you look at the line . . .

Mr. Dobbie: If you could just indicate.

Mr. McAskile: It would be approximately on the 25th baseline. Right here.

Mr. Dobbie: Okay.

Mr. McAskile: The reason that this was chosen is that I believe the Notikewin area north of Manning – there is farmland that extends up into this area, and if some of that were to be homesteaded, it would put people into that northern constituency that would have a really long drive to get to any voting stations. That's why we chose this line, but that would then reinstate the communities of Tallcree.

Mr. Dobbie: In terms of a follow-up question, I take it that you've talked with those communities that are to the east, that you're asking to include.

Mr. McAskile: Actually, if I may, I have included in the package letters from the town of High Level, the town of Rainbow Lake, and also a letter from the North Peace Tribal Council, which represents the communities of the Dene Tha, Tallcree, Little Red, and Beaver First Nations. I believe the community of La Crête is making a separate presentation today.

Mr. Dobbie: My final question that I'll probably be allowed to ask is – and I haven't seen an actual number in here – have your communities done a more recent census than 2006 and submitted that to the province?

Mr. Mihaly: Some did.

Mr. Dobbie: Was High Level one of them?

Mr. McAskile: I don't believe there was one done since the last federal census, no.

Mr. Dobbie: You're saying that it will be over 20,000 people, though, according to your map.

Mr. McAskile: Yes.

Mr. Mihaly: Between 23,000 and 25,000.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you.

The Chair: Allyson.

Ms Jeffs: Yes. Thank you, sir, and thank you very much for the presentation. It introduces a sort of new look to have a horizontal riding across that portion of the province. Just to be clear, the configuration you're looking at would then create a single riding there, and the southern balance, if I can say that, of the Peace River riding would then be reconfigured between Dunvegan-Central Peace and Lesser Slave Lake.

Mr. McAskile: We didn't want to make a comment on where that would be best allocated. It was just that because there is that big geographic gap in this area already and the distances involved, we felt that the northern portion would be viable on its own.

Ms Jeffs: I apologize. You know the road networks and so on up there. This will reinforce sort of natural community linkages in that community and works better than a north-south configuration. Is that what you're . . .

Mr. McAskile: Most of the communities within that region travel east-west on the highway. There are only two north-south links. That is highway 88, which goes from Fort Vermilion through Tallcree down to Red Earth and Slave Lake, and highway 35, which we travelled today, which is between High Level and Grimshaw.

Ms Jeffs: And the idea is that this would fit into the special areas category.

Mr. McAskile: Likely the population would fall below the 25 per cent.

Ms Jeffs: Thank you. I appreciate seeing the letters of support from the other communities, particularly the First Nation communities, in your package. Thank you very much for that.

The Chair: Brian, any questions?

Mr. Evans: Thanks, Mr. Chairman, and thanks, gentlemen. I'm just curious about the efficiency that you'd gain by having this special riding. Is there air traffic regularly from Edmonton that would take you up to High Level? I guess that would be the only place. I know there's a strip at Rainbow Lake.

Mr. Mihaly: Yes. There are daily flights from Edmonton to High Level.

Mr. McAskile: And Rainbow Lake as well.

Mr. Evans: And to Rainbow. Okay.

Mr. McAskile: Six days a week there are at least two flights a day in and out of High Level. They also generally connect to Rainbow Lake.

Mr. Evans: Okay. You're not suggesting this southern boundary straight across. You'd be satisfied, if "satisfied" is the correct word – as I understood your presentation, you're talking about the existing Peace River boundary and then the southern boundary being at that, whatever.

Mr. McAskile: At approximately the 25th baseline. There is population within the Keg River and Carcajou areas as well that would be included in the northern constituency.

8:25

Mr. Evans: Okay. But you'd leave this configuration, basically, that I'm pointing out.

Mr. McAskile: I don't believe there's any population in the north part of Dunvegan-Central Peace that would be affected there. The consideration, the one that I believe is under a separate letter from Tallcree and is also under consideration with the North Peace Tribal Council, is to include Tallcree back into the north Peace constituency.

Mr. Evans: All right. Thanks very much. Appreciate it.

The Chair: Keith, any questions?

Dr. Archer: Yeah. Thanks, gentlemen, for the presentation. You know, at the moment we have two constituencies, one of which is a special constituency, population around 23,000. The other is Peace River, not a special constituency, population about 33,000. If the commission adopted your proposal, to a certain extent it seems like you would almost switch the two ridings around. You would have a northwest corner which is more square in shape, less distance north and south. That would be about 23,000, by the sounds of things, and would require a special designation. And then if you added the southern part of the Peace River constituency to Dunvegan, that would give you a constituency of about 33,000.

Now, your argument is that for the area that you're most interested in, it would result in more effective representation. Would you have a comment on whether your sense is that this would provide more effective representation in a reconfigured southern Peace River-Dunvegan constituency? In other words, would it benefit both areas, or do you see the benefit primarily being the area north of the 25th baseline?

Mr. Mihaly: Personally, first of all, I don't envy your position. Second, I really don't think we are qualified to comment on what effect it would have somewhere else. It probably will have a domino effect, and you'd have to change it all the way down to Grande Prairie. But I think it's almost imperative, for us to have effective representation, that we not have this kind of distance to cope with constantly and that our MLA has to cope with constantly.

The second thing that I might say is that it feels like no matter how nice we are about it, we are sort of almost attacking our neighbours and our MLA, who is a good friend of ours. We don't want to do that. We think that in order to catch up to the rest of the province, because we're probably decades behind in some cases, we need more effective representation.

Dr. Archer: Thanks. My second question has to do with: what would be your projection for, let's say, 10 or 15 years out? We heard earlier that the projected growth rate within the current Dunvegan-Central Peace district is likely to be fairly stable, not a lot of growth in that area. What do you see as the growth projections in this Mackenzie area over the next 10 to 15 years?

Mr. Mihaly: Thirty-six years ago, when I arrived in High Level, the region's population was 6,000. Now it's 23,000 to 25,000, so it is growing. The birth rate is very high. We're the only region, apparently, that's building schools. We have to build schools because there are more children coming. So the growth rate is phenomenal.

Mr. McAskile: The Mackenzie highway is the only entrance to the Northwest Territories in Alberta. All of the flow of traffic goes through the community of High Level into the Northwest Territories. Almost all goods flow either by rail or road through that community. A lot of the growth is tied to the resource industries, most definitely, in the area. There is more white zone being opened for agriculture but also forestry and oil and gas. It's a very vibrant, mixed economy. Well, it was a lot more vibrant a year or two ago. The growth potential is fairly large, and with the continued growth in the Northwest Territories those services are going to continue to be required in northwest Alberta.

Dr. Archer: Thanks, gentlemen. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you both for your presentations. We'll move on now.

Mr. McAskile: Thank you. I have the original letters. We look forward to your deliberations.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Friesacher: The next presenter is Mr. Jake Wiebe with the La Crête chamber of commerce.

The Chair: For *Hansard* could I get you to give your full name, please.

Jake Wiebe
La Crête Area Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Wiebe: My name is Jake Wiebe. I will be representing the La Crête chamber of commerce. Mine is going to be short, considering all the others.

The La Crête chamber of commerce knows the importance of population growths and shifts throughout the province. We feel it is important to rely on the boundaries, but at the same time we feel that it has some drawbacks. Our main concern is that in northern Alberta the communities are spaced far apart from each other, making it difficult for our MLA to visit all the communities. We feel that our MLA is working hard to keep up with the needs of all the people in his riding, and he spends countless hours travelling around to keep up. We feel that if his riding got any bigger, more time would go to travelling and less to hearing the needs of the communities.

We realize the population is a bit short of the requirements, but the distance and vast area, we feel, should be taken into consideration. We strongly urge that the boundary stay as status quo. We are asking the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission to take this into consideration.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Wiebe. I take it your submission, in essence, is to leave the boundaries as they are.

Mr. Wiebe: Yes. Yes. I would like to comment a little bit on the High Level presentation. For some odd reason they failed to ask the La Crête region about our thoughts on it. Just to let you know, we are Peace River north in our riding. We are the largest community north of Peace River, excluding Peace River.

The same with health. In both the High Level hospital and the Fort Vermilion hospital 50 per cent of the patients there have La Crête addresses.

And, yes, we did drive over 300 kilometres to come here to do our presentation.

The Chair: Well, thank you.

Allyson, do you have any questions?

Ms Jeffs: Just quickly. If you could expand a little bit on your thoughts on the previous presentation and that configuration. You would prefer to see the boundaries left as they are?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes.

Ms Jeffs: And La Crête would be in that new constituency.

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, they would be.

Ms Jeffs: If you can just elaborate on what you think the advantages are to maintaining.

Mr. Wiebe: Right now I think that if it was to change the way the presentation was before me, we feel that we would – we feel like we always get the short end of the stick. Just a prime example was the presentation that was provided. Our name was completely left out. If you take a look at the map that you have on your website, with all the boundaries, our name isn't even on there. I don't know what to do to get on the map. We always are misrepresented is what I'm saying.

The Chair: You're on the map tonight.

Mr. Wiebe: We have a lot of people there. All of this information can be taken from the La Crête Health Care Review Committee. They did a study where a group of local businessmen hired Archibald research to get the numbers which I am talking about here tonight.

Ms Jeffs: Thank you. That was my only question, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Brian, have you any questions?

Mr. Evans: Well, I see La Crête on our map, so you are on the map.

Mr. Wiebe: Perfect.

Mr. Evans: You know, you are considerably north, and you would be well within this Mackenzie region. What's the current population of La Crête?

Mr. Wiebe: The hamlet itself is around 3,000, and in a 40-kilometre radius it is over 7,000.

8:35

Mr. Evans: My recollection from being there a few years ago is that forestry is the main industry.

Mr. Wiebe: Forestry and farming. Yes.

Mr. Evans: And farming. Yeah. Okay. Thank you very much for the presentation. I appreciate it.

The Chair: Peter.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you, sir. It's one area of the province I haven't been to. I haven't been to La Crête. I take it the challenge that we are seeing on the map is that because La Crête is a hamlet, it hasn't expanded to take additional territory in, so it's presence doesn't come nearly close enough to showing its actual configuration, sort of like the hamlet of Sherwood Park. All right. Again, that was very helpful.

I want to understand. Again, as Ms Jeffs asked, it would seem that by drawing the line across the 25th baseline, the riding would be smaller, on the face of it, and it would seem that the communities would be closer. It sounded like your community's presence in High Level in, you said, the health facilities is significant. Just so I'm clear, there must be a lot of benefit in getting down to Peace River. You still would be able to travel there, but I'm just needing to understand: do you feel you would be less well represented in a smaller constituency?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes.

Mr. Dobbie: Okay. It would be helpful to know some further details from your group at some point.

Mr. Wiebe: Yes. There is a lot of history there. I don't really know how to say this, but we feel that right now the MLA that we have currently – we have never received so much feedback and so many visits as from the one we currently have. We feel he is very busy, but at the same time he always makes the effort to come to our area. So we would like to see the constituency stay as is.

Mr. Dobbie: The system is working. Thank you.

The Chair: Keith, do you have any questions?

Dr. Archer: No. No further questions. Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Again, if you have any further presentation in terms of a submission, feel free to e-mail it, fax it, or whatever.

Mr. Wiebe: Okay. Thank you very much.

Ms Friesacher: The next presenter is Mr. Brian Allen with the town of Grimshaw.

The Chair: Good evening. Mr. Allen, would you please for the record give your full name.

**Brian Allen, Mayor
Town of Grimshaw**

Mr. Allen: Brian Allen.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Allen: Well, good evening, and thank you to you the commission members for the opportunity to make a short – and I'll make it very short – presentation to you this evening. As I said before, my name is Brian Allen, and I'm the mayor of the town of Grimshaw. Grimshaw is centrally located within the MD of Peace.

Veronica Bliska, the reeve of the MD of Peace, was to have presented with me tonight. Unfortunately, she was delayed in Calgary and unable to be here.

My presentation will probably echo many of the comments made by Minister Hector Goudreau.

As the town of Grimshaw and municipal district of Peace No. 135 are two of several municipalities located within the Dunvegan-Central Peace constituency, we would like to urge the Electoral Boundaries Commission to recognize that the constituency must maintain its status as a special consideration electoral division. Due to the large geographic area of the constituency, the sparsity of the population, and the distance from the Legislature, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the elected MLA to effectively represent the residents of the constituency. The people of this constituency are deserving of fair representation in the Alberta Legislature.

The following facts are provided as justification for the Dunvegan-Central Peace constituency maintaining its status as a special consideration electoral division. There are currently 16 municipal governments within the constituency: six rural, 10 towns and villages. This results in a broadly distributed population throughout the constituency. The largest single municipality is the town of Fairview, with a population of approximately 3,200 people. There are at least six school boards within the constituency. Four RCMP detachments operate within the constituency. There are countless numbers of seniors' clubs, community organizations, sports clubs, seniors' lodges and long-term care facilities, youth organizations, gas and water co-ops, agricultural societies, churches, and special events; for example, the pond hockey championships, Wanham plowing match, honey festival, North Peace Stampede, music festivals, et cetera.

In order to serve the constituency, the MLA normally travels up to 60,000 kilometres per year within the constituency. Travel requirements are much more demanding than would be encountered in much smaller urban constituencies. In addition to travel within the constituency, 25 to 45 annual trips to Edmonton are required, averaging 900-plus kilometres per trip. It requires up to three hours of one-way travel from McLennan, located in the southeast, to Cherry Point, located in the northwest of the constituency.

The small-town, rural character is common throughout the constituency, with the agricultural and natural resource sectors providing the economic base.

Although the current population of the constituency is more than 25 per cent below the provincial average of 37,820, it is our belief that any attempt to increase the geographic size of the constituency

or significantly reconfigure the boundaries of the constituency will negatively impact the ability of the MLA to properly represent the interests of the constituents.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our views regarding the importance of maintaining the existing boundaries of the Dunvegan-Central Peace constituency. We strongly believe that the constituency meets the criteria for recognition as a special consideration electoral division.

The Chair: Thank you.

Brian, have you any questions?

Mr. Evans: No. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Allen. That's very clear and totally consistent with your MLA's presentation, so we hear you loud and clear.

Ms Jeffs: I just have one matter to touch on. Thank you very much for your presentation. You've heard the previous presentation about the potential to create a different configuration for a riding, that would affect more Peace River than your current constituency but then which might leave, if I can refer to it, that sort of tail of the Peace River constituency to somehow deal with. I'm just wondering if you would have any comment on a reconfiguration, if the commission were to accept the previous submission, with regard to that sort of northern riding and looking at dealing with some of these other communities, Manning and so on. Would you have any comment as to how that area should be dealt with with respect to either Dunvegan-Central Peace or to Lesser Slave Lake?

Mr. Allen: Well, I don't want to discount the views of our neighbours, but I do believe that the constituency as is is big enough. In fact, we're very pleased with the representation we receive from our MLA, but he is spread awfully thin. I think that adding anything to that territory would create just more work for him and less opportunities for us to have contact.

Ms Jeffs: All right. Thank you very much. That was my only question.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you, Mayor Allen. Just following up again on this issue because we've heard two pretty divergent views so far tonight. In looking at the southern part, the Peace River tail, if we can call it that, or the southern component, it seems to me that it is quite far away from the balance of the Lesser Slave Lake constituency and that the only way to move it would be west. I take it I'm correct in that assumption, that there isn't any natural connection from Peace River over further east; there's no way to get there?

Mr. Allen: To, sorry?

Mr. Dobbie: To head east towards Slave Lake, you're going down south and around before you get anywhere.

Mr. Allen: Well, there are some resource roads, but until we have an east-west connector in the north part of the province, it's not going to happen.

Mr. Dobbie: One other questions is: where's Wanham, and when's the plowing match? I want to bring up the kids.

Mr. Allen: I would like to defer to our MLA. It's by Rycroft, and I'm not exactly sure when the plowing match is. We put that in there just to indicate the number of different events and groups that our MLA does make the time to go and see.

If I could comment on your question regarding the people of Manning in that area, I'm not exactly sure – I was in the back of the room, so I didn't see the dividing line that they were talking about for that northern constituency – but the community of Manning is close to an hour north of Grimshaw, so adding that to Dunvegan-Central Peace just creates a lot more travel for the MLA. I think it shuffles things around, and it's the same problem, just in a different ballpark.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you.

8:45

Dr. Archer: The proposal from the people from the Mackenzie region had a couple of implications. I'd like to kind of separate them if I could. One of them was to look at moving part of the northern section of your constituency into a new constituency, into the Mackenzie constituency, and the map that we have doesn't show any population centres there. Would that involve any significant movement of population?

Mr. Allen: No. There's not a lot of population there.

Dr. Archer: Again, independent of other changes involving Manning and Peace River, that are east of your constituency, do you have a view on that part of the proposal to look at moving that section of the constituency to a different constituency?

Mr. Allen: I guess my thoughts on those communities would be – I guess we're talking about Cleardale, Bear Canyon, those areas. Really, they're only accessible through Fairview-Hines Creek. So if they were part of that northern constituency, the MLA would have to come down to our area and go across back up to them. There really isn't any other way to get there. Correct me if I'm wrong.

Mr. Goudreau: I think they're talking a line further north.

Mr. Allen: Okay. So they wouldn't be included.
Yeah, north of that there really is no population.

Dr. Archer: Okay. Thank you. That's all, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Allen. Tell Reeve Bliska that we appreciate the presentation.

Mr. Allen: Thank you for your time.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Friesacher: The next presenter is Iris Callioux, mayor of the town of Peace River.

The Chair: Good evening. We have to ask you for your name, Iris, for the record.

**Iris Callioux, Mayor
Town of Peace River**

Ms Callioux: Yes. My name is Iris Callioux, and I am the mayor of the town of Peace River. As the mayor of the town of Peace River, first, I would like to welcome all of you back to the town and encourage you to continue to drink the water, for the legend is that if you drink the water of the Peace, you will return.

On behalf of the town of Peace River I would like to thank the commission for the opportunity to make this presentation to the

Electoral Boundaries Commission. I offer the following comments for your consideration. First, I represent the council of the town of Peace River, and the council has had full discussion on the presentation that's being made tonight.

The geographic size of the Peace River constituency we believe must not be increased. Although the Peace River constituency contains a population that falls approximately 10.9 per cent below the provincial average of 37,820, the geographic area contains 83,500 square kilometres. This represents 12.6 per cent of the total area of the province and is 10.5 times the geographical size of the average Alberta constituency. The population base is widely scattered, creating many challenges and difficulties for the MLA with respect to providing fair and equitable access and representation for the constituents.

The population of the Peace River constituency is broadly distributed, and reaching constituents requires excessive driving time already. There are no twinned highways in this constituency, many paved highways do not have paved shoulders, and several roads are of a gravel standard. The distance between the two largest communities in this constituency is a 600-kilometre return trip. Peace River, the most southerly community, is a 1,000-kilometre round trip to Edmonton.

It is important to acknowledge that enlarging the Peace River constituency would compromise the fair and equitable representation of constituents. Rural and dispersed populations are deserving of special consideration when defining electoral boundaries. This being said, we believe that the communities of Cadotte Lake and Little Buffalo are isolated in their current constituency and must be easier to reach from the Peace River constituency.

We have had discussion with the members of the community council in Little Buffalo, and we are advised that – I think there is a member here today – they would wish to have their area covered by our MLA. I took the liberty of contacting our MLA to see what his position was, and he said that he would be very pleased and honoured to represent them and felt that he could do so within this current riding. So we encourage you to carefully consider their presentation to your commission.

I just want you to note that the town of Peace River is very uniquely situated right in the middle of four rural communities; three of them we are very connected to. We have well-established trading patterns that have developed over the last couple of centuries. The town of Peace River and the river itself were the draw, and it was the North West Company that traded furs in this area and created a trading pattern to the town. From our northern area we have had very good connection with both the community of La Crête and the community of High Level. I sincerely respect the representation from the community of High Level; however, it is our position that the electoral boundaries should and can continue to remain the same.

I trust that you will recognize our desire as a community within the Peace River constituency to be afforded the same opportunity as other Alberta communities to meet with and be fairly represented by our MLA. I know that is the intent of your commission, so we very much respect that.

If there is to be a change, I would very much want to ensure that the town of Peace River, the MD of Northern Lights, and the county of Northern Sunrise remain within one area. Now, the entire county of Northern Sunrise is a very large county, and the natural trading patterns from Red Earth Creek-Loon Lake are south to High Prairie. I'm not suggesting that they would be included but definitely the rest of the county.

The other is the MD of Peace and the town of Grimshaw. There is a lot of travel back and forth between our communities. We're very connected by culture, we're very connected by history, and

we're very connected in relationships. Our community has worked very hard to develop positive relationships with all of our rural neighbours, and we respectfully suggest that we should be combined together.

Although I will go with my council's comments, and I will support them fully that we would like our boundaries to remain the same, I only make those comments if you're considering a change.

The Chair: Thank you.
Peter.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mayor. The topic of Peace River has come up quite a bit in the latter half of our meeting tonight, and it was helpful that you've had a chance to think about this proposal. I take it you had some advance notice.

Ms Callioux: We did, and our council has considered it fully.

Mr. Dobbie: On one hand you're saying: please don't increase our riding.

Ms Callioux: That's right.

Mr. Dobbie: On the other hand you're saying: maybe you can increase it to add the eastern half of Northern Sunrise county or at least a portion of it. Can you show us on the map how much you would like to add around those communities?

Ms Callioux: My presentation was based on the fact that what we are asking for is that our riding remain exactly the way it is with the exception that the land claims settlement – Cadotte Lake, Little Buffalo – be included in our riding. That is their natural trading pattern. They are here all the time to shop. They are here all the time to do business and attend for doctor's appointments, et cetera.

Mr. Dobbie: So we'll reach in there, is what you're suggesting. Do you know how much population you're adding to this constituency and taking away from Lesser Slave Lake?

8:55

Ms Callioux: The population of Little Buffalo is about 400, and Cadotte would be about perhaps another hundred.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you. I just wasn't sure what we were adding.

The Chair: Are you finished?

Mr. Dobbie: That's all I need for now. Thank you very much.

Ms Callioux: You're welcome. Thank you.

The Chair: Brian.

Mr. Evans: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Your Worship. Two questions. Is there actually a road from Cadotte Lake and Little Buffalo over toward that north-south route from Red Earth down to Utikoomak?

Ms Callioux: There is, and it is a paved road. It does not have a paved large shoulder, but it is a paved road.

Mr. Evans: But those two areas do not go to Red Earth for any of their shopping. They've got more facilities in Peace River.

Ms Callioux: Our experience is that they continue to do business within the town of Peace River. Most of that area is aboriginal community, and the town of Peace River has an aboriginal inter-agency committee that represents the aboriginal component of our area and is very well connected with that community. They have traditionally through history, through trading patterns always come to the town of Peace River.

Mr. Evans: My second question. You've talked about the good relationship that you have with Grimshaw and that you wouldn't feel any problem with being in the same constituency as Grimshaw. Can you identify any advantages that would occur to you from being in the same constituency?

Ms Callioux: I only made those comments if you were considering a change.

Mr. Evans: I know it's secondary.

Ms Callioux: I do support them staying the same as well. They are about 25 kilometres from the town of Peace River. We go there often for hockey. We definitely take in a number of their events. So we are a very close community in that regard as well.

I don't know that there are any benefits. The way that it's currently operating, it functions very well. They feel well represented, and I know that the town of Peace River feels very well represented by our MLA. We are fortunate that our MLA lives in the town of Peace River, but that may not always be the case. There's always the option that the person could live in the town of High Level. We still feel that the boundaries should remain the same.

Mr. Evans: Thanks very much. Appreciate your presentation.

The Chair: Allyson.

Ms Jeffs: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much, Mayor Callioux. Certainly, you've been very clear about what your preference is, that the boundaries stay the same. I think one of the other messages we've had very, very clearly is that the constituency is very large. It just seems that if there was to be consideration of sort of a more northern region with the Mackenzie group, as the Mackenzie group has suggested, it might be possible to create a more manageably sized community in the southern boundary. I'm curious as to what the concern would be with Peace River. You've certainly made it clear that if something was to change, you would like certain communities to stay in the same riding.

Ms Callioux: You've heard and I fully respect and understand the position of the Mackenzie presenters. I've travelled the width and breadth of this entire area as clerk of the court and sheriff, so I've been in absolutely every community and on every reserve. I fully appreciate the size of the community, of the area. I also understand some of the complexities of the history that's there.

I believe – and this is just my own belief from knowing some of the people in the area – that La Crête may feel more comfortable remaining within the Peace River riding. However, I think the other thing that you should consider is that in order to get to La Crête, you either go across a ferry or an ice bridge or you go around through High Level. So I think that's something that you should be aware of.

Community is a huge word, but it means a lot to the people that live in it and are connected to it. If you consider community, my feeling is that that area may feel well connected to the town. I know

that whenever I am shopping, I see many people from the La Crête area that are shopping within the town of Peace River.

Ms Jeffs: Thank you very much.

Dr. Archer: Thanks, Mayor Callioux. I wanted just to talk about the area on the eastern edge of the southern portion of the constituency that you had made reference to, around Cadotte Lake and Little Buffalo. I had mentioned earlier that we had a presentation earlier today that recommended not only those two communities but a third one in that area, Seetha. They are evidently polling divisions 3, 4, and 5 within Lesser Slave Lake and also polling districts 1 and 2 in Lesser Slave Lake, which is Tallcree north and south. That would be just a little bit southeast of La Crête at that right angle. It would be bringing those two communities in. Are you familiar with any representational issues that are going on in those areas that would align these communities more closely with Peace River as opposed to Lesser Slave Lake?

Ms Callioux: North and south Tallcree currently go west. I fully respect the representation from the Mackenzie group. They are very correct, from my knowledge of that area. Those people go west to the town of High Level for all of their needs, and there is no connection roadwise that is a usable road. There is highway 88, but it is gravel, and it is not a tremendous grade. You know, you're taking your vehicle and yourself at risk when you're travelling that area. So most people would go to High Level from that area.

The Seetha area. I'm sorry. Whereabouts would that be? Is that south of north and south Tallcree?

Dr. Archer: The text on this map is so small and my eyes are getting so poor as I age that I'm not able to find it. I don't know if anyone else is familiar enough with that area to know what the Seetha area is.

Ms Knudsen: There was a sawmill there which has shut down. So I'm not sure that there's much of a population there.

Ms Callioux: Red Earth Creek is just directly east of the town of Peace River, and it is connected by a paved road. It would be just further east than Little Buffalo and Cadotte. It also has a paved connector road that goes both to the town of Slave Lake and the town of High Prairie. I understand we have people that commute that way for business purposes on a regular basis to serve the industry in that area, but so do the other two communities.

Dr. Archer: Right. Great. Thanks so much.

The Chair: All right. Thank you very much, Madam Mayor, and say hello to my good friend, the past assistant chief up here, Rick McIntosh.

Ms Callioux: I will do so. Thank you.

The Chair: All right. Since we have no further presenters, let me thank you all for your time and your presentations. We will consider them carefully, and I hope we'll come out with a decision that'll make you all happy. Thank you.

[The hearing adjourned at 9:04 p.m.]

