



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Edmonton

Monday, January 16, 2017
1:02 p.m.

Transcript No. 2

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

Justice Myra Bielby, Chair

Gwen Day
Laurie Livingstone
W. Bruce McLeod
D. Jean Munn

Support Staff

Robert H. Reynolds, QC
Shannon Dean
Aaron Roth
Shannon Parke
Tracey Sales
Janet Schwegel

Clerk
Law Clerk and Director of House Services
Administrator
Communications Officer
Communications Consultant
Managing Editor of *Alberta Hansard*

Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Edmonton

Public Participants

Liz Acheson

Mike Cardinal

David Dorward

Sarah Hamilton

Irene Hunter

Duncan Kinney, Executive Director, Progress Alberta

Katherine O'Neill, President, Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta

Marie-José Pang

Randy Rogoski

Ken Zinyk

1:02 p.m.

Monday, January 16, 2017

[Justice Bielby in the chair]

The Chair: All right. Good afternoon, everyone. Thanks very much for coming out. I'm Justice Bielby. I'm a judge of the Court of Appeal of Alberta, but at the moment I'm chairing the Electoral Boundaries Commission. I'd like to introduce the other members of the commission: at my far left, Jean Munn from Calgary; next to her, Laurie Livingstone from Calgary; at my far right, Gwen Day from Carstairs; and Bruce McLeod of Acme.

I apologize to all of you who were here this morning for having to listen to my introduction once again, but because the bulk of the people are new, I'm going to do it all over again. We were just joking that by tomorrow I'll have it down pat and I won't need my notes.

Over the past few weeks, ever since our flyer came out in the mail, I think, we've been approached by people asking questions about the Electoral Boundaries Commission and why the commission was created and why it was created now, so I thought I'd start out by saying that the Electoral Boundaries Commission has been created to do some research and make recommendations to the provincial Legislature as to where and how our provincial constituency boundaries should be changed to ensure effective, proper representation by our MLAs in future provincial elections.

Representation based on population is a fundamental principle of democracy, but the commission's work is needed right now because Alberta has experienced a huge increase in population since the time of the last Electoral Boundaries Commission, about eight years ago. Our population has increased net by more than 20 per cent since 2010 notwithstanding the recent economic climate.

Alberta has 87 provincial constituencies. We have no power to increase or decrease that number. That power rests with the Legislature, and it decided for whatever reason to not make any changes this time around, so this commission's work is to make recommendations as to how the province should be divided up into 87 parts. Needless to say, each constituency elects one MLA, Member of the Legislative Assembly, to sit in the provincial Legislature after each election.

As I said, Alberta's population has increased a great deal since the last time, 20 per cent, so the average population now in the province is 48,884 people. In 2010 it was about 40,000 people. The number that you see on the screen there was reached by taking the estimated population of the province and dividing it by 87. The estimated information was received by us from the Treasury Board of Alberta, but happily for this commission Statistics Canada is going to have very current information available for us to use in our reports. It's announced its intention to release the 2016 census population figures during the first week of February 2017. So when that happens, our estimated figures will be revised to reflect the actual figures in the census. However, I'd be surprised if we were very far off the 48,800 average number once we get that information from Statistics Canada.

Now, our population growth hasn't been consistent over the last eight years. In other words, with the influx of people, over 800,000, into Alberta, they haven't moved equally into each of the 87 constituencies. I don't suppose that's a very big surprise. But the result is that whereas last time, in 2010, the 87 constituencies were pretty close to the 40,000 average – there was a variance of maybe less than 10 per cent in virtually all of them – now we have quite a wide swing, from the smallest constituency of 25,192 people to the largest constituency of 79,034 people. That variation, again, has arisen because those who have moved into Alberta haven't moved in equal numbers into each constituency.

So that's the reason for our job here. Our job is to recommend changes so that the boundaries of the constituencies move so that each Albertan, when he or she votes, can be assured of effective representation by their MLA. What do we do in establishing this? What do we do in addition to taking into consideration population figures? While our overall goal is to create clear and understandable boundaries for all constituencies, there is legislation that we're bound to follow, the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. It sets out certain rules for us to follow in considering how constituency boundaries might change. So in addition to population numbers, we're going to consider relative population densities in different constituencies, common community interests and community organizations, including those of First Nation reserves and Métis settlements, and existing community and neighbourhood boundaries.

So when we're looking at the constituencies, for example in Edmonton, we're going to try to avoid cutting up certain neighbourhoods if we can. We're also going to try to respect existing municipal boundaries for the smaller communities in Alberta and, to the extent we can, not divide up small towns, villages, and what have you to put them into different constituencies. We're also going to try to take into account geographical features that suggest natural boundaries such as major roadways or rivers, mountains, that sort of thing.

The most important thing perhaps today for us to focus on is the input we receive from the public, including you here today, as to how we should approach our task. Over the next few weeks our commission will be holding public hearings throughout the province to seek community input to assist us in developing recommendations.

Thanks very much to those of you who've registered to make presentations today. On timing, the benefit of being here for the first day is that it isn't going to hold us to just allowing each of you the 10 minutes that we'd originally anticipated. You can have a few more minutes if you need, plus five minutes of questioning afterward. In the end, all of our spots weren't filled, so if any of you here wasn't registered to speak but would like to, I would encourage you to come up and speak at the end. I'll give you a chance. We had some great representations this morning from the floor, and I'm hopeful that that could be reproduced this afternoon.

In addition to what we're hearing at our public hearings around the province, we've invited written submissions to be made as to what constituency boundaries should be set at through our website at www.abebc.ca, by e-mail, by social media, and by regular mail. I have to say that we've received a fairly good response, quite surprisingly good, actually. When the former commission did this eight years ago, they got 500 submissions in the course of the year, and we've had 300 submissions in the first two weeks, so we're being blessed by response. I'm glad about that.

1:10

We're going to consider each of the submissions, both oral and written, in preparing an interim report. We're going to file an interim report with the Legislature no later than May 31, 2017, and the reason for that is that that interim report will make specific recommendations as to the size, boundaries, and name of each of the 87 constituencies. So we'll make 87 separate recommendations. Then that will be published, and we'll be inviting further input from the public as to our draft or proposed changes. Often, I think, people are more able to respond effectively to a specific proposed change, so there'll be another opportunity to write in or register for a further set of public hearings we're having in July and August to talk about what we're actually proposing to do.

We can further change those recommendations, depending on the input we get, but we have to make a final report with our final recommendations, which has to be tabled with the provincial Legislature no later than October 31, 2017. Then the Legislature may enact legislation to change the boundaries and names of the constituencies in accordance with our report to be ready for the next provincial election. It seems like we're doing this early, but these are the timelines set by the specific legislation. I understand part of that is that the provincial returning officers need a fairly significant amount of time to prepare for the next election, so if there are changes to the boundaries, they don't want to be pressed for time when they're doing their work.

Unlike some times in the past, the commission hasn't been given authority to create additional constituencies. We can't solve some of the challenges of increased population by creating new constituencies. That's not in our power. We're left with dividing the province up into 87 parts. The question is: what size and shape should those parts be? As I said, equality and parity of population is not our only consideration. Our courts, including the Supreme Court of Canada, have interpreted our legislation to mean that each of us has the right to not have the political strength or value of our vote unduly diluted. Nonetheless, our legislation permits variances where necessary of up to 25 per cent above or below the provincial average and for a maximum of four constituencies up to 50 per cent below average.

Now, at the moment we only have two of those dramatically below-average constituencies in that special category. They are Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley, with a population about 48 per cent lower than average, and Lesser Slave Lake, with a population about 38 per cent below average. They're special categories because they're in the far north. They're large. In the past travel and communication have been challenging in those areas, so they've been given permission to have a smaller population to constitute a constituency than elsewhere in the province.

We're here today inviting your input as you're the people who are going to be affected by the changes to your constituency boundaries that might be made. It's critical to know what you think to assist us in designing a revised electoral map, one which will be fair and ensure effective representation to all Albertans.

Our task is, in summary, to consider the actual population in a constituency. If you look at the map second from the left over there on the wall, in the red it gives the estimated constituency numbers for right now, and in the blue it gives you the estimated constituency numbers for 2010. You can see how each constituency has grown, and every constituency has grown in size in Alberta. They just haven't grown proportionally the same. You can see the percentage above or below the provincial average where your constituency is now. That's where we start. We look at the average. We look at where each constituency is in relation to that average and then decide if there's any acceptable reason not to move the boundaries in or out to increase or reduce constituency size until that average number is reached.

If you believe there's a good reason to move a boundary – and this is Edmonton and our constituencies in Edmonton – we'd welcome you to tell us specifically how you think it should be moved. You can speak generally, of course. For example, this morning we had a good presentation from the Edmonton-Mill Woods constituency that came in with specific proposals, with a map as to where the presenter thought the boundary should be moved, and she had good reasons for that. So if you have specific suggestions and can tell us why you think that would be a good idea, that would be particularly helpful. In that regard there's a laminated map over there on the side wall, and one of our presenters this morning was brave enough to accept our invitation to mark the

boundaries on that where she thought the boundaries of Edmonton-South West should be moved. That opportunity is available this afternoon, too, to anybody who wants to take it. That's basically the task for this afternoon.

I'd like to welcome you all once again and start by calling the first registered presenter, Duncan Kinney. Mr. Kinney? All right. Well, then, perhaps he's a bit late or what have you.

Irene Hunter and Marie Pang, are you here and ready to go? Hi. Come on in. Have a seat, please. If you could start out by giving your name and the spelling of your name and the constituency you live in or where you live, that would be really helpful.

Mrs. Hunter: Good afternoon. My name is Irene Hunter. I'm from Edmonton-Riverview.

Mrs. Pang: My name is Marie-José Pang, and I'm from Edmonton-Meadowlark.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mrs. Hunter: My spelling. Would you want Hunter spelled?

The Chair: Thank you. Go ahead.

Mrs. Hunter: Okay. Together we come as representatives of an Edmonton women's breakfast group who meet monthly to discuss the political situation in Alberta and Canada. Our membership hails from nearly every riding in the city of Edmonton, and some of the women are here today. They come from Edmonton-South West, Strathcona, Gold Bar, Riverview, Meadowlark. We're not all here. There are many of us, probably 40. Most of us take a keen interest in the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission of 2017. We support the size of the Alberta Legislature to remain at 87 seats, and we look forward to the 2017 proposed electoral division areas to be more equal in population.

First, I'd like to explain to anyone who does not live in the large metro cities of Calgary or Edmonton the way we live. Our community leagues, though they're sizeable, 3,000 to 8,000 residents, do not isolate us. We rely on our entire city for our needs and services. Like the breakfast club women, who come from all corners of the city, Edmonton residents use the entire city to shop and play, attend religious and spiritual groups, take part in leisure and recreation activities, attend educational facilities, as well as attend to our medical needs.

Our electoral districts do not provide all our services, either. For example, Edmonton-Riverview, population 45,517 residents, where I live, does not have a post office, no library, no swimming pool, nor does it have a high school. However, Riverview has a university and a nice arena. Our junior high and high school students ride the public transit to school. City dwellers are often riding the bus or taking rapid transit to work since rush hour traffic in the morning and evening can exceed two hours each way. Our cities are prone to traffic jams and gridlocks.

Now, like our residents, metro MLAs often travel outside of the riding boundaries to reach and support their constituents and act as provincial representatives for city, province, national, and global events. Metro MLAs can be seen at international events, national health councils, global conferences, city festivals, aboriginal talks, and greeting visiting dignitaries. They are also seen presenting cheques to various organizations since headquarters are often in Edmonton. Personally, I have seen MLAs at Gandhi dinners, Alberta global council conferences, international speakers events, International Day of Peace, Daughters Day, at gay parades, women's marches, Environment Week, heritage days, and book talks. Most often these events are out of the MLA's riding.

1:20

Urban MLAs also face similar traffic and parking problems as metro residents. To avoid traffic snarls and find parking spaces, which are both at a premium and financially costly, and their numbers are low, one has to leave early. Once I noticed Rachel Notley, before becoming our new Premier, circling the block in apparent desperation to find street parking so that she could make the opening at a women's day march. This was at the University of Alberta, which was out of her riding.

Urban MLAs are extraordinarily busy, so they don't need extra large ridings. We also are supportive of using the federal 2016 census stats that are to be released in February of 2017 rather than the municipal surveys, which have been challenged by Alberta Municipal Affairs specific to the issue of permanent residents versus nonpermanent. They're shadow residents. For our calculation we'll use the provided best estimates from the Alberta Treasury Board and Finance and Statistics Canada, anticipating the differences to be slight. If stats are disproportionate, we hope we may have the ability to adjust.

Now for Marie, if you could give our recommendations.

Mrs. Pang: Yes. I will try. You'll have to excuse me with my medical eye condition. The lighting system is not very good.

Our recommendation is that the size of the current Alberta Legislature remain the same at 87 MLAs. The 2009-10 Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission failed to do the hard work of redrawing the provincial boundaries to reflect the increase in population and simply increased the number of seats and continued making hybrid rural ridings. The 2006 Canadian census at the time was four years old. There is a table in our presentation which shows the four largest provinces and territories in size based on the census of 2011 and the land area in each province. Alberta definitely has a greater number of MLAs per population and per land area.

That good governance and the laws of election be followed to meet the needs of all Albertans.

That good governance and electoral rights as defined in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms be followed to meet the needs of Alberta.

Unfair indicators of representation are when government legislation differs from public opinion, when entitlement sets 44 years of one-party government, and when the rights of fair transition of government are thwarted.

Historical perspective of democratic rights in Alberta. In late 1980 the Alberta government challenged the electoral rights of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In April 1989 Madam Justice McLachlin granted an order stating that the British Columbia provincial electoral boundaries were inconsistent with the rights to vote in section 3 of the Charter. A population variance of 25 per cent above or below the norm should not be tolerated. At the time Alberta had 51 constituencies over the acceptable variance.

In December 1980 the government introduced legislation to reform the discrepancies, and the challenge to the Charter was dropped. It provided for 43 urban and 40 rural ridings. To overcome the discrepancy, it created hybrid constituencies consisting of urban and rural votes, therefore diluting the rural voice.

Since 1990 Alberta has decreased the number of constituencies which are outside the acceptable variance from 51 per cent to 11.4 per cent. Congratulations.

In 2010 the largest discrepancy was Dunvegan-Central Peace with a population of 24,000 and above and a variance of 40 per cent whereas Calgary-Hawkwood was at 47,600 with a variance of 17 per cent. The vote disparity between the two ridings was 57 per cent.

Today in Alberta the electoral boundaries site uses the following calculation. Twenty-six years later Alberta has 87 constituencies: Edmonton, 19; Calgary, 25; and the rest have 43. Respectfully, the total of these areas are 973,000, 1.3 million, and 2.29 million. In 2017, as you made mention, Madam Justice – you didn't mention a name – Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley has a population of 25,000. Calgary-South East has a population of 79,800, which provides for a spread of 219 per cent in the vote, which means that Dunvegan represents three times fewer the number of people that Calgary-South East has to represent.

Manitoba allows for a variance of 10 per cent except for regions with a latitude above 53 degrees. The province of British Columbia is proposing a variance of 15 per cent for only 12 electoral districts. The 2017 Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission, based on a projection of population, has 25 electoral districts above a variance of 15 per cent.

To provide fair and just representation, the current allowable variance should be decreased, and based on the 48,000, et cetera, quotient, Edmonton should have 20 constituencies, Calgary should have 27, and the rest of Alberta, 40 constituencies.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. I'm going to start off by asking about Edmonton-Riverview. I don't have the exact figures of Edmonton-Riverview at my fingertips – I know they're on the map over there – but I know that the current population is over 48,800 at the moment. Do you have any suggestions or recommendations for how the boundaries of Edmonton-Riverview should be adjusted?

Mrs. Hunter: Well, I've got a lot of friends now because you put us politically together, but there is that one large river that keeps us apart. I think the voters have a different story to tell than I do. So there is a hardship there, that crossing of the river. It's a different territory on the other side.

The Chair: So you don't think that the constituency should be divided by the river.

Mrs. Hunter: Oh. Well, I'm going to leave that one for you people to decide because now that you've given it, I've met a lot of friends on the other side. I wouldn't have known them otherwise.

The Chair: I think you can visit your mother-in-law even if she's in a different constituency. I'm pretty sure that's allowed.

Okay. What about Edmonton-Meadowlark?

Mrs. Pang: Okay. If you want, Edmonton-Riverview is projected at 45,517.

The Chair: At the moment?

Mrs. Pang: Yes.

The Chair: So you're slightly below, but still – okay. What about Edmonton-Meadowlark?

Mrs. Pang: Edmonton-Meadowlark is projected at 52,039, so above.

The Chair: Do you have any recommendations or thoughts as to whether the constituency boundaries should be changed and how?

Mrs. Pang: No. Well, with all of the development in the west end of the city I'm thinking that the variance in Edmonton-Meadowlark is going to be greater than that. We have to consider the population increase in the west of the riding. That means moving the eastern

boundary east. We can't go south any further because Edmonton-South West has a greater problem than both Meadowlark and Riverview have, and we can't go west past the city boundaries because then we're into rural area.

The Chair: Okay. That's well stated. Thank you.

Anything else you would like to say in regard to that before I open the questioning to my other commission members? No questions. All right.

Well, thank you very much. That's very helpful.

I thank the staffer who just gave me the list of constituency numbers. I was just thinking that we should put the map right here where I could see it rather than over there.

Thanks very much for your presentation.

All right. We're a little bit off time. Is Duncan Kinney here now? All right, Mr. Kinney. I'll give you a moment to get organized.

1:30

Mr. Kinney: Hello. Thanks for having me. I have 10 minutes?

The Chair: That's right, and then five minutes for questioning from us afterwards. But I said earlier that we have got a little extra time this afternoon. The last two time slots aren't filled up, so we'll let you take a little more time if you need it.

Mr. Kinney: Fantastic. Thanks so much. I'll just start off by introducing myself. My name is Duncan Kinney. I am the executive director of a nonprofit named Progress Alberta. We got started just around this time last year. We launched in early January of 2016. Our mission is to build a more progressive Alberta, and we have thousands of supporters all over the province.

The Chair: I forgot. I mean, I know you just came in. I made the previous speakers spell their names and give us their personal constituency that they live in, so would you be good enough to do that?

Mr. Kinney: For sure. Duncan Kinney. I live in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

The Chair: *Hansard* is here, and they're recording everything, and I think they appreciate the spelling. That's why I've asked for it.

Okay. Go ahead, Mr. Kinney.

Mr. Kinney: I think I'm obligated to start off my presentation by talking about something that I raised with the commission last week, and that is to push the deadline for written submissions back to February 8. You know, February 8 is currently the deadline for written submissions, and it is also the day that Stats Canada will be releasing its census data from the 2016 census. This is the data that the commission itself will be using to make its decisions. It is the opinion of Progress Alberta that the commission should push back its deadline for written submissions to a day or two past the final public hearing in this first round of public consultations.

The Chair: We'll do you one better than that, Mr. Kinney. One of your fellows brought this to my attention last week. Wow. We didn't realize that when we set our dates; we didn't have the Statistics Canada date. Just this morning we've chatted among ourselves and decided that anybody who's filed a written submission has until the 17th of February to update the numbers, the statistical information in it, if they would like to reflect the actual figures released by Statistics Canada.

Mr. Kinney: Okay. So the deadline for written submissions has essentially been pushed back to February 17?

The Chair: No. You have to have made a written submission already to be able to put in the further figures, but you can put in further figures if you want.

Mr. Kinney: Or an updated map or something like that?

The Chair: The reason for this is that we want to have all of the information before us when we start our deliberations, so there has to be a final date.

Mr. Kinney: Of course.

The Chair: Actually, Progress Alberta succeeded in this.

Mr. Kinney: Okay. Fantastic. Just to clarify, we would submit a written submission, and then we would have an opportunity to revise our figures or maps based on the data that would be available on this?

The Chair: The actual data. We're not anticipating a significant or relevant difference, but anybody who's made a written submission or even an oral submission can now e-mail us revised figures if they'd like, and we'll certainly take them into account.

Mr. Kinney: That's fantastic. Thanks so much. With that out of the way, I think we move on to one of Progress Alberta's concerns, and that is kind of vote equality. While we realize that the standard that the commission must follow is effective representation and not necessarily representation by population, we do have large concerns over the rural-urban divide. The best way to ensure that a person's vote in Peace Country is equivalent to that of a new family in Airdrie is to not allow ridings that have a large variance from the electoral average. There is precedent for this in other provinces. Five of the 10 provinces use either 10 per cent or 5 per cent as the maximum variance from the electoral average, and currently Alberta uses 25 per cent.

The Chair: A maximum of 10 per cent, you said?

Mr. Kinney: Four of the five use 10, and Saskatchewan uses 5 per cent.

In the last redistribution the last commission did an admirable job, probably not as good as I would have liked, but 72 of the 87 ridings fell within this 10 per cent range. I feel that the goal for this commission should be that 83 of the 87 ridings fall within this 10 per cent range. I think that that ensures effective representation while also ensuring that there is effective representation by population as well.

Progress Alberta also wants to talk about the decision criteria used by the commission in order to draw up its maps. I think it's worth going back and talking about what these decision criteria currently are. It's area, population density, dependent population proportion, number of elected bodies, and distance to Legislature.

As these criteria are currently drawn up, I think they unfairly favour rural areas compared to urban areas. I think one of the easiest criticisms you can make off the top of this list is that area and population density are essentially two sides of the same coin. They're making essentially the same point: the fewer people, the larger the area required to reach the population of a constituency and the larger the area required to reach the constituency population, the lower the population density. I would submit to the commission that one or both of these combined is probably an effective decision criteria on its own, but having both kind of unfairly privileges rural areas.

I'd also submit that the distance to Legislature and the area and population density decision criteria have been diminished in

importance by advances in communication technology and rural Internet connectivity. While transportation issues are still a very real issue for rural politicians serving large ridings, advances in communication technology and rural Internet connectivity have effectively bridged the gap when it comes to communicating effectively with constituents and constituents communicating effectively with the government. If effective representation is our goal, as it is, then in the past seven years since the last Electoral Boundaries Commission the advances in communication technology and rural Internet connectivity mean that rural politicians can now better serve their constituents. Alberta is currently the most connected province in the country. We have the widest Internet coverage in the country, and while our upload and download speeds are not the greatest compared to other provinces, our breadth of service is the best in the nation.

Enhanced rural connectivity is now combined with the fact that government services and information are now increasingly available online. Some examples of this: the Alberta Energy Regulator, for instance, has an online portal that allows citizens to see everything from a map of abandoned wells to regulatory proceedings to public notices of application; Alberta Infrastructure has an interactive map of every capital project over \$5 million in the province; Alberta Supports has an online tool that allows you to find family and social support services. Those are just three examples of things that a rural Albertan might have needed to go to their MLA's office to get in the past that are now very easily available online. With rural areas kind of increasingly connected and government services increasingly available online, this diminishes the importance of the kind of area, population-density, distance-to-Legislature criteria that the commission uses to draw up its boundaries.

In addition to that – this is probably another criteria argument – past commission reports have acknowledged kind of language and cultural diversity as potentially important criteria for effective representation; however, nothing has been done to address those concerns even though they've been raised multiple times. There was a long discussion about using mother tongue data as the basis for a decision criteria in the boundary commission's report of 2002-2003. While they ultimately did not do that for data availability reasons, their argument still stands.

I think that quoting from that 2002-2003 report makes it clear kind of what the argument here is. I'll just quote it for you right now.

In reviewing the variables used in the 1995/1996 matrix, the 2002/2003 Commission considered that, given the submissions it had received, it would be useful to add variables related to the number of languages other than English spoken in the division and some social variable such as the number of persons receiving assistance under the various programs offered by the Province. In addition, the Commission considered that some indication of the number of non-profit organizations which an MLA would be required to maintain contact with would also be an indicator of representation challenges.

We would agree with that argument.

I think that adding decision criteria that look at the things that were raised in that past commission's report is extremely important. When you dive into even the 2011 mother tongue data from Stats Canada, Alberta is quite a diverse province. More than 22 per cent of Albertans – that's around 700,000 people – have a mother tongue that is not English. Of those 700,000 Albertans who do not have English as their first language, 550,000 of them live in either Edmonton or Calgary according to the municipal and provincial data. We would expect those numbers to increase in the 2016 census

data as well, as Alberta has proven over time to be a magnet for international migration. I think we need to redefine what effective representation is, and adding these decision criteria, adding language and cultural diversity, is extremely important for the commission to do its work.

1:40

The other, final thing that I'll add – and that's what's also raised in the quote. Kind of the complexity of urban ridings, which is kind of raised by the social variables or the amount of people accessing services, I think is an important consideration for the commission as well. Servicing constituents is a very different affair between rural and urban ridings. While I've never been a CA, I have talked to them, and there are anecdotes that I feel will probably be coming in to this commission, which would illustrate the difference that a constituency assistant would face in the caseload of an urban constituency versus a rural constituency.

Anecdotally I've heard that there is a higher kind of human services caseload as poverty tends to agglomerate in urban areas. One of the most important things that the provincial government does is to provide income support to low-income Albertans, and in these tough economic times we need to ensure that these people aren't slipping through the cracks kind of due to the urban-rural split in political representation.

I would also say that newcomer and refugee settlement is another area of importance that is mostly dealt with in urban areas as well, which would add to the caseload of urban MLAs.

I would urge the commission to add decision criteria that take into account the diversity and complexity of urban service delivery. Previous commissions have identified this as an important point, but unfortunately it was never acted upon, so I think now it is time to kind of rectify that error.

That's all for my presentation at this time. I'd love to take your questions.

The Chair: Sure. Before I turn to my colleagues here for comment, you said a few things that might confuse the people who were here for my intro and our PowerPoint presentation, so I just wanted to mention that some of the criteria that you were speaking about for us to use, as set out in the legislation, don't apply to all constituencies but apply to only the exceptional constituencies. Right now those are Dunvegan-Central Peace and Lesser Slave Lake. We can have up to four of those constituencies. For example, the criterion of distance from the Legislature or no town that has more than 8,000 people apply only to those exceptional constituencies.

For 85 of the 87 constituencies we have a smaller number of statutorily prescribed criteria, and they are: representation by population; effective parity to the extent possible – and that's in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms – sparsity or density of population; common community interests and common community organizations; respecting the existing community or neighbourhood boundaries within Edmonton and Calgary; wherever possible respecting existing municipal boundaries; geographical features such as road systems and rivers and what have you; and, overall, to have understandable and clear boundaries.

I take your point that there might be discussion in regard to the two exceptional constituencies, but in regard to the bulk of the constituencies those are what we have to consider. The legislation allows us to consider these other things. You've pointed out some new ideas here, and I thank you for that.

I'll invite my colleagues here. Does anybody have any questions or comments?

Ms Livingstone: I had just one. You had mentioned in regard to the rural ridings that distance is less of an issue these days with enhancements in technology, and I just wanted to give you the opportunity, since you weren't here this morning, to maybe discuss a different view that was posed this morning. A presenter this morning noted for us that those same areas with very sparse population are also the places where connectivity and high speed are still an issue. I don't know if you wanted to address that, that the lower the density, the lower the likelihood of high-speed connectivity being available.

Mr. Kinney: Yeah. I mean, you're less likely to have higher speed and higher quality Internet when you are out in the country, but the facts and the data on the ground support the fact that since 2010 rural connectivity has increased, and since 2010 Alberta has become the most connected province out of all the provinces in Canada.

Ms Munn: In fact, I think that in 2015 with Xplornet accessibility has even become better.

Mr. Kinney: Yeah. Xplornet is what my parents use. They live in Lethbridge county. There's no wire line to their house, so they do end up using Xplornet. While it's not ideal, they do end up – they're not able to use Netflix, for instance. They're still able to get a high-quality Internet service kind of out in the middle of nowhere, so, yeah, that's correct.

Mrs. Day: A recent conversation is in my head. I'm just outside of Carstairs, Alberta, and, you know, 10 minutes from highway 2, and a friend of mine is another 10 minutes and was saying just yesterday that she's barely able to check e-mails. We are pretty high density for rural in our area, and it's very spotty, and she's changed providers several times – just to give you a picture that, even in the not so sparse, it depends on your land, if you're in a valley, you know, and so many other variables when it's not in the ground. But yes, the SuperNet and those hubs now that have got into the small communities are wonderful for Alberta. It hasn't spread out from that necessarily yet.

Mr. Kinney: Yeah, I know. You do make an excellent point about the SuperNet, which is kind of a fibre network which was supported by the government of Alberta and which does reach many town centres, lots of libraries, lots of community colleges, that kind of thing, and schools. That does improve connectivity. It doesn't necessarily help people in their homes, but it does encourage more Internet across Alberta, and it is one of the better things that has ever happened in this province, the SuperNet, to be frank.

Mr. McLeod: If I may, through your presentation you talked about the rural-urban situation, and you seemed to be opposed. Can you expand a little bit on that, the combination?

Mr. Kinney: Of course. I mean, historically in Alberta rural seats, the rural ridings, have been far more important to the electoral success of the province than urban ridings, and while this was somewhat corrected in the last redistribution, it was more of an inch in the right direction rather than a step in the right direction. I think that the commission should probably be looking at the criteria that I'm talking about in order to rebalance what has historically been a split towards rural representation versus urban representation.

Mr. McLeod: Thank you.

The Chair: Any other questions?

Ms Munn: Do you know if there is any information available about MLAs' caseloads, sheer numbers or numbers and subject matter?

Mr. Kinney: I am unaware. I could reach out to the various caucuses, or that might be something that the commission could do, but I think it's a data point worth exploring, and it's worth seeing if there is one out there.

The Chair: All right. Well, thanks very much.

Mr. Kinney: Thanks for having me.

The Chair: Lots of ideas. Thank you.

I've just had a note up here to let you all know: don't think you have to talk just about Edmonton or its surrounding area here in this public hearing. Every public hearing is open to every Albertan to talk about any aspect of our redistricting project, so if you're here from outside of Edmonton and you still would like to say something, we're happy to hear from you.

Our next registered speaker is David Dorward, and *Hansard* tells me that they're clever enough to be able to get the spelling of names off my list, so I won't put you through the trouble of that.

Mr. Dorward: Well, there were times in the Assembly that I stood up and spoke, and it was one of those names that could be spelled differently, and I actually, as I was speaking, spelled it for *Hansard*, so I didn't get one of the pink pieces of paper that they used to send down.

Hon. Chair, commissioners, thanks for the opportunity to present before you. I have copies of my presentation if that's appropriate.

To frame my comments, I was an unsuccessful candidate in the 2008 election in Edmonton-Gold Bar and a successful candidate in the boundary-revised Edmonton-Gold Bar constituency in 2012. For the first two-thirds of my term from 2012-2015 I served as deputy chair of Public Accounts, on Treasury Board as deputy whip, and on several other committees. I took many opportunities to travel our great province and hear the messages of the people. The last third of my service was in cabinet, again travelling a lot to better understand the needs of the great aboriginal peoples of our province.

I mentioned that our boundary changed in Gold Bar. In 2008 approximately 20 per cent of the electorate were in the downtown area. Previous alignments apparently had decided that, like the spokes of a wheel, it was better to have several MLAs interacting in the area. I learned that in 2008, as I went around, it wasn't really working. The area was so different socioeconomically, geographically from south of the river that fundamentally the needs were vastly different.

1:50

Fortunately, a change was made in 2010, and Gold Bar today is pretty homogeneous. It has natural boundaries, and I don't recommend that you make any changes to it. The boundaries: while they won't change, the population will as the city continues with work on densification in the area.

I'm not here, therefore, to talk specifically about Gold Bar; I'm here to talk about your eventual recommendations to the Assembly as they pertain to rural Alberta for the most part. As Gold Bar is now, to the extent possible it is better that an MLA has the ability to work with a like-minded population.

Rural Alberta is so important in the issues of grazing lands, wetlands, use of water, the rural roads, the lakes and streams, the oil and gas activity, the more direct impact of weather on lives, the wildlife issues. I could go on and on. These issues are real, and they're different.

In our caucus we had three breakout caucuses – Calgary, Edmonton, and rural – who would meet at least once a month. It's hard to express the significant differences between them. They had their own unique agendas. When we had our regular caucus meetings, the chairs of the caucuses would speak to the issues of each. The comments and suggestions of the rural versus urban were important and were weaved into the decisions made at the overall table. In cabinet this was as well borne out as thoughtful conversation that preceded important meeting decisions.

There's only so much that you can do as an MLA. I thought the question from the last presenter was an interesting one. As an MLA my mind was constantly wondering, considering how I could do a better job representing the 42,000 people in my area. Were I to attend every community meeting that I could, if I was to go to every school monthly, if I spent time with every not-for-profit – and the list goes on – I would have needed to be three or four people. That is in part because as an MLA you have your other responsibilities as a legislator. You need to intimately know the legislation that's on the floor of the Assembly. You have to work on Public Accounts or other committees. You might have an agenda on Treasury Board or another committee that you're on. You could be on some international committees. You have e-mails to return, phone calls, and those individual visits.

Thank goodness that in that pressure cooker of a time management world, I did not have to sort out my input on issues to the caucus, meaning that I didn't have to sort out my issues as to whether they were rural or urban or to the government on those kinds of issues. I only had one subcaucus to attend, not two.

Therefore, my first recommendation is that you tread carefully when it comes to the temptation to have urban and rural areas mixed as it pertains to their representation, understanding that some of that is in place now and is necessary.

I would like to talk about geography. Before I do, however, I'd like to let you know what I felt was the most important work I did as an MLA. It's hard to come up with that answer, but I think I know. It was the intimate conversations that I had with the good folks that came to me in my office, whether that was the lady that was faced with jawbone cancer, who had been told that . . .

The Chair: People came to you with heartfelt stories that you remember even today.

Mr. Dorward: Yes.

. . . her operation date was after the date that she was told she would be passing away. The young person who wanted to tell me about their fundraiser for African children. The English as a second language class that came often to my office to learn about our government system. Persons who came to tell me about their grant application for a new roof. The lady who came to me with her dog, who wanted more support for emotional companions, or the widow who wanted to know what support she had.

I think that the most important and best work was done in the walls of my office. Not everyone has a computer, as we just talked about. Not everybody is able to take their thoughts and put them on paper or a computer, but everybody feels the opportunity to visit with somebody.

Let me make it clear. We can't let the population numbers solely dictate the electoral boundaries of our great province. We need to allow as many folks as possible to get in front of their MLA. You see, I did not have to travel much; I could be at the Assembly about 15 minutes after visiting with a constituent. The larger you make a constituency, the less they are represented simply because they are not able to visit reasonably with their representative.

I'm an accountant by profession. There are some tried-and-true principles in managerial accounting that are sometimes helpful in the world that we live in. One is the concept of equality and fairness. Equality is often as trying to catch a leaf in the wind: hard to touch, let alone grab; hard to measure and get a hand on; hard to know what direction it's going in. Fairness, although subjective, is a much better measure. I treat my children with fairness, which is rarely equal.

How can you say that a constituency of 42,000, Edmonton-Gold Bar, is equal to a constituency of 42,000 people in rural Alberta when that constituency might have to deal with more than one school board, many municipalities and municipal districts, parks, several agricultural societies, miles of rural roads, potentially irrigation, First Nations lands with their own unique interests and needs, Métis settlements, et cetera? They could be dealing with heavy industry or not.

You see, population numbers do not make the constituencies equal. What it is important is that the constituencies be fair. I've heard that an underpopulated area is more represented if rural. I submit it's not necessarily true. When you're an MLA, you get a pretty good sense of the community you represent if you try. Whether that's 42,000 people or 30,000 people, you get a sense of that. You can't talk to all of them anyway.

So my second recommendation is that the commission not use a strict measure of population in their determination of boundaries of electoral districts, and you enunciated some of the requirements in the act.

Finally, the rules regarding electoral representation in Canada are in our Constitution. Those include a grandfathering clause whereby the number of seats in a province will not be less than the number in 1985. I would ask the commission to consider a recommendation to the Assembly such that it be established that the number of rural areas in Alberta not be less than the number of seats in rural Alberta in the election of 2015. I think that it's important as our cities grow that rural Alberta will get the representation that they deserve and need.

I understand you may have questions. Thank you for the time.

The Chair: I always take advantage of my position as chair to jump in with the first question. I'm not going to be shy this time. I understand what you're saying about not being too tied to the numbers, but in fact our current estimated population for Edmonton-Gold Bar is 44,691. That puts it about 10 per cent less than the provincial average. Even though I understand this isn't your position, if we nonetheless found that we had to move the boundary in your constituency to increase it to try to get closer to the provincial average, do you have any view as to whether that should go north, south, east, or west?

Mr. Dorward: Yes. I would say that Riverdale as a community is closer socioeconomically than getting up the hill into the areas in east downtown, so that's a possibility. It's more challenging to go straight south in that there's a very large industrial area between Argyll Road and south of there, Mill Woods. However, that's just a geographic issue, not so much a socioeconomic issue. If you jumped over Mill Creek, the south part of our riding from Whyte Avenue south to Argyll Road – the Ritchie area, I guess that would be – that is a possibility as well, and socioeconomically it would be closer to the communities of King Edward Park, Avonmore, Bonnie Doon than going into the east downtown area.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That's helpful.
Anyone else?

Mrs. Day: Thank you for your presentation. Also, as a former elected official you spoke so eloquently to when people came to your office and the access to face to face, and sometimes that's demographic, too, especially in rural Alberta. There's a large number of rural Albertans that are aging farmers. But just thinking about getting out and going to community events and the importance of that, what did you find there, not just as you're waving your political flag and trying to get re-elected but, you know, just being in the communities and getting to be at a grand opening of an arena in a community or whatever it would be? Like the ladies were talking about this morning, you know, marches and all kinds of things: the same as in the city, the same would be hoped for in the rural areas. Did you find that of value to you as well and hearing from the people in more social settings?

2:00

Mr. Dorward: It's mandatory, and it's huge. That's where people will come up to you and corner you about whatever issue comes to their mind. You have to do that. It's of huge importance, and it's so much easier for me to do that. Literally, in the city of Edmonton I can be anywhere, as most of you would know, in half an hour, at the very outside even if that wasn't in my constituency. Within my constituency, which I've lived in for 54 years, I could travel from one corner to the other in about four and a half minutes or five minutes. So it is absolutely essential that you are visiting with those people at those community events and other places. So important. That's why I have so much empathy towards individuals who left our meetings on Thursdays and travelled, you know, up to four hours to get to their constituency and then had to travel again to try to get to those events to hear from their people. That's why I was so strong in my thought process relative to the need to allow them, the people, the opportunity to see who has represented them and corner them as I described.

Thank you for allowing me to emphasize that.

The Chair: Anyone else? Okay. You've been very clear and helpful.

Mr. Dorward: Thanks so much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Dorward: I'll leave those here at the back?

The Chair: Yes. Actually, Mr. Clerk, could you come and give them to us? Thanks.

All right. We're making good time here. We're ahead of our schedule, but if Katherine O'Neill is here and would like to come forward, that would be terrific. All right.

Mike Cardinal, please.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Your Honour and members. I was a member, too, of a commission previously for a couple of terms. My name is Mike Cardinal, and I'm from the Athabasca-Redwater constituency. Today I'll make a short presentation. I'm glad that you gave me the opportunity. The area I want to address is dealing with the safety and the commerce in the Athabasca-Redwater riding and north, Lesser Slave Lake and Fort McMurray.

There is an urgent need in that area of Alberta to complete the connector road from Fort McMurray-Wabasca to Athabasca-Wabasca to Lesser Slave Lake, whatever it takes to complete that. It would mean a process in place that will allow for municipalities, First Nations, and different levels of government to work together to try and complete that connector road. There are about 50 kilometres or so that are not completed between Chipewyan Lake

and Fort McMurray. The rest of the road will be paved, but this past summer's fire didn't allow our people to get out there in time to stop the flames and change the direction of where the fire goes. We just weren't equipped.

This is where I think, you know, in that area municipalities will work with you. In fact, at one time we discussed the possibility of allowing private industry to build that road and, once it's completed, turn it back over to either the municipality or the First Nations or the provincial government. I don't think that has ever been explored. I tried that when I was with a former government, and at one time they thought, when CNRL was being built, that they had to do 35 miles of road. This is where private industry would have built that road and completed it sooner than waiting till the time.

Basically, that is what I'm here for. I really appreciate the work you're doing. I've done it two different times, and it's really, really rewarding. As you go on, you'll find that it gets more rewarding and more fun. It's very interesting work. It'll be there forever once you complete it.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity.

The Chair: Well, thank you, and thank you for the encouragement. It's already been fun to a degree, and it's been great meeting all the people here today. I'm not personally as familiar with the area that you're describing where you need this roadway as, obviously, you are and some other people may be. What constituency does that area fall within?

Mr. Cardinal: To start with, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater would be one, Lesser Slave Lake, another. Fort McMurray has two different MLAs. It would mean working together. Most of it is in the MD of Opportunity. The Bigstone band is the band I belong to. Of course, they cover a similar area. The MLAs would be Lesser Slave Lake and Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater and, of course, Fort McMurray, which has two MLAs, I believe.

The Chair: Okay. I wonder if you'll bear with me. I'm going to ask you some questions that have nothing to do with what you talked about, but I'm concerned that you may be the only one from Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater we hear from in our process, so I don't want to miss this opportunity. Looking at the Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater constituency numbers, your estimated population right now is 38,051 people. The average population is estimated to be 48,800 for constituencies. That's our goal population, more or less, for all the constituencies, so you're about 10,000 under. Now, without foreshadowing or suggesting we're going to do anything in particular – we have to look at all options here – if we got to your constituency and we found that we had no choice but to make it larger geographically to expand the population, what's your view on whether we should go north, south, east, or west?

Mr. Cardinal: I think that most of the traffic pattern in northern Alberta goes north and south like the birds – a cardinal is a bird, you know – so north and south. Generally, north and south commerce, I would say. Like, for somebody taking off from Fort McMurray, going through Wabasca, on to Athabasca, and on to Edmonton, yeah, it's a long drive. For a truckload of equipment that's heading to Fort McMurray, it would be over a thousand dollars an hour of loaded mile savings by taking the shorter route, which would mean Fort McMurray, Chipewyan Lake, Wabasca to Athabasca, and on into Edmonton. The other route would be very similar except it would be going through Slave Lake and then heading south again from Slave Lake to Westlock and St. Albert.

The Chair: So popping your boundaries south a bit: is that what you're saying?

Mr. Cardinal: Uh-huh.

The Chair: Yeah. Okay. All right. Thank you.
Go ahead.

Ms Munn: There was a comment this morning that Sturgeon county is divided right now between two different constituencies and that consideration should be given to putting all of Sturgeon county in one constituency. Do you know anything about that particular issue?

Mr. Cardinal: This is probably – I was the MLA there for a number of years, Athabasca-Redwater. At the time the population was about 36,000, 38,000. That's, you know, a number of years ago, not that long ago, though. But as far as, you know, government change, when a review is done, we always look at the picture overall and try and determine: what are we here for? We're here to try and provide a good service for Albertans, and I think that we've done okay. I know that you guys, no doubt, will do a good job.

2:10

The Chair: I'm going to ask you another question that you probably didn't expect, and that's in regard to Slave Lake. That's one of our exceptional constituencies, which is allowed to have a greater variance than otherwise would be permitted. Again, its population is about 25,000 people, well below the provincial average. Now, we don't have to try to match parity, necessarily, but if we found we had to increase the geographic area to a degree to increase the population at least somewhat, again, would you think that working south would be the best way to do that?

Mr. Cardinal: North and south, I think, is. Again, when I was in there as the MLA previously, we had those rules in place, you know, where the riding can be almost any size. I would say: allow the MLAs to charter private planes to be able to go see their constituents. That's one option. That was there. I don't know if it's still there or not, but it worked. At the time I was in there, there were two ridings in northern Alberta other than Fort McMurray. Pretty well, you know, you just move stuff as needed, and you will find it's rewarding. Also, in working with municipalities, First Nations, and so on, no doubt what you do will lay out the plan for a lot municipalities in the whole province.

The Chair: Okay. I'm really hogging the mike here.

Mr. Cardinal: Oh, no problem.

The Chair: Finally, First Nations are a specific consideration in the legislation. I don't want to let you go without asking you about that because I'm not sure how many other First Nations folks will actually come to speak to us. Do you have any observations in general that you'd like to make about how we should respect the needs of rural First Nations people in Alberta?

Mr. Cardinal: Of course, as a former MLA – and I am a band member – I was the first treaty Indian to be in cabinet in Alberta, so I've got a lot of work to do yet. You know, we still have a lot of work. The federal government, really, is outside our provincial jurisdiction. Off-reserve we're pretty well handled the same as anybody else. On-reserve it's a little different. When you're on-reserve, you can't vote for a municipality. Members are not allowed to vote . . .

The Chair: For members of your local municipality?

Mr. Cardinal: Yeah. But if they're off the municipality and working off, they would pay taxes, too. Like, I pay taxes.

The Chair: So the issues of your local municipality affect you even though you don't have a chance to vote for representation there?

Mr. Cardinal: Uh-huh. That's right.

The Chair: Okay. Yes, please go ahead.

Mr. Cardinal: You must have more.

The Chair: Yeah. I just can't type that fast.

Mr. Cardinal: You're on the kill time.

Mrs. Day: I'll think about it in half an hour. It's like: oh, I should have asked.

We're going up to Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray later this week. Will people from your area come to those hearings? Are you aware of those hearings, times and places?

Mr. Cardinal: I'm not sure how many would go there because First Nations have their own rules; like, on-reserve they have self-government. One of the things they don't have, though, and, I would think, all those south, outside of the jurisdiction, is a system to be able to – like, the MD of Opportunity is where I'm at. The municipality there is a large area, but their taxation is \$85 million a year, so we live pretty high. Our taxes are low, with a lot of programs for seniors. But the First Nations that are off-reserve have no way of taxing the system. They basically run on program grants to their members. How do you raise money? They get program money each year, and that's one of the tough parts. Eventually I think that something will happen to change that. That would change the direction of revenue.

It wouldn't be using provincial dollars. No doubt, it would be using federal dollars. Like I said, the MD of Opportunity gets \$85 million a year. Maybe the same option should be available to treaty Indians off-reserve or on-reserve, a system of how you may tax, you know, the companies that are working there. Companies do want to work with First Nations, and sometimes we don't have the process in place to be able to do that, at least not a legal process that I know of.

The Chair: Okay. Do you have any ideas as to changes that might be effected to help First Nations people get to the polls? For example, in my mind, in my work as a judge I've been to reserves where not everybody has their own private transportation, and it's hard for them to even get to court sometimes. I don't know right now what the voting rate of First Nations members is in provincial elections, but I expect it could be improved, just like all voting rates. Do you have any thoughts as to what might be done to assist in that regard?

Mr. Cardinal: I think the best one is education. Education has been a major problem, and it is the key to getting us self-sufficient and independent. If you go back, for 10,000 years or more our First Nations, my forefathers, have lived off the land, like, a hundred per cent. You know, there were no hospitals, no housing programs. We only spoke our own language, Cree. We didn't speak English, couldn't read or write. There was no formal education. But we lived off the land, like, a hundred per cent, no welfare, completely.

In 1951 or so things started changing in those communities, where we transitioned from living a traditional lifestyle to an

industrial lifestyle without the education that was necessary. We tried, the First Nations – you know, the federal government, the provincial government, the municipal government tried to assist. Once you started school, at a certain level there were challenges, and the dropout rate was high. I was a former dropout, too, and it was quite common at my age, when there was very, very limited formal education. At the time, if the people had said, “We are going to send all the kids to school and pay some financial support to complete grade 12” – if we had done that 40 years ago, we wouldn’t have the problems we have today. We got caught in the system or a change in lifestyle and then not enough formal education. It can be done.

The Chair: Thank you very much.
Any other questions, then?
Okay. Thanks very much, Mr. Cardinal.

Mr. Cardinal: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: You’ve been very helpful. Thanks.
Then I’m going to go back to Katherine O’Neill. Is Ms O’Neill here?
Okay. Well, that’s the end of the list of our registered speakers for this afternoon, but I’d like to extend the same opportunity as I did this morning. If there’s anybody here who would like to come up and make a presentation about anything, large or small, I’d invite you to do so.
Yes, sir.

Mr. Rogoski: Hi there. My name is Randy Rogoski. It’s not much of a presentation, more of a comment. I’m just hoping that the urge to try and make the rural and city constituencies together – I would hope that that’s not going to be the case. I just feel that there’s such a big difference between what people in the city need and what some people in the rural areas need, that these won’t be combined where it can be helped. I just wanted to make a comment regarding that.

The Chair: Sure. What constituency do you live in, sir?

Mr. Rogoski: I live in Edmonton-Decore.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.
Any questions?

2:20

Mrs. Day: I just find it interesting because people in the rurals say the same, and then people from the city say the same. It’s very interesting. It’s come up a lot already.

Mr. Rogoski: Well, it’s just that you would be kind of divided if you have, say, constituents in both areas. How do you represent them appropriately when you’re getting both people coming to you with ideas? I think it would be difficult to get an idea of what everybody wants. I think you get better representation if the rurals are represented by people looking after all the rurals and the city looks after the city.

The Chair: The reason I’m not asking you, “Do you have any thoughts on moving your constituency boundaries?” is that Edmonton-Decore is almost exactly right on the provincial average. It’s a special constituency, that you live in.

Mr. Rogoski: My comment was more just in general . . .

The Chair: Sure. Of course.

Mr. Rogoski: . . . not specific to . . .

The Chair: To your constituency.

Mr. Rogoski: That’s right.

The Chair: Sure.
Any other questions or comments?
Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. Rogoski: Thank you.

The Chair: All right. Katherine O’Neill.

Ms O’Neill: Good afternoon. My name is Katherine O’Neill. I’m the president of PC Alberta. I’m here with Sarah Hamilton, who is our chair of election readiness. She’s going to help with a detailed overview of some of the riding concerns we have, and I’m just going to quickly start with a couple of things that we wanted to register with your commission. Thank you for having us this afternoon.

Firstly, we’ve heard a lot from our membership because we put out kind of a call to our members to say that this is happening and, hopefully, to come to all the regional meetings that you’re having. Something that we did hear back was on the timelines around the online submissions, that the deadline of February 8 might be cutting it a bit too close, might not give enough time for people to get in their online submissions. I’m not sure if you would ever reconsider stretching it out maybe to the end of February. I’m not sure about your timelines.

The Chair: Okay. I know you just walked in, but a previous speaker raised this, and we’ve extended the time for modification of written submissions to reflect the census information to February 17.

Ms O’Neill: Okay.

The Chair: We needed to put a deadline down because we are having our own meeting to start our deliberations, and we wanted to make sure we had all the written submissions in by the time we completed the first round of oral submissions so we didn’t overlook anything that anybody had said.

Ms O’Neill: I was going to talk about the census, so that’s perfect. We will let our membership know, and thank you for making that . . .

The Chair: Okay. But if they want to make a submission, they should send it in, to the extent they can, before February 8 so that we know they’re out there and are interested and then update it when they get the census information they want.

Ms O’Neill: Perfect. Perfect. That is great.

The second thing we want to talk about, when you’re considering any possible changes – this was another high-level point – is to not only take in population size but also access to elected officials. We’ve heard a lot that, particularly in the rural ridings – I’ll take Drumheller-Stettler, for example. It’s quite a large riding for someone to travel across. I know that we live in a large province, that people are spread out thinly, particularly in the rural areas. But take access into consideration because we don’t want our population to lose access to their elected officials, that if the riding becomes too spread out and too large, meeting with their elected representative would either be too costly or just not worth the time

and effort. That was the other big high-level comment that we'd heard from our membership.

I want to pass this over to Sarah to talk more about Edmonton and some of the key issues that we've looked at in Edmonton and, if you can indulge us, to talk about possibly a few ridings outside of Edmonton.

The Chair: Absolutely. It's wide open.

Ms O'Neill: Okay. Perfect.

Ms Hamilton: Hi. Thank you for having us here today. I'm going to touch on some of the Edmonton ridings, first of all, some of the feedback we heard from former MLAs who represented the area.

I'm going to start with an oldie but a goodie, Edmonton-South West. I have the map in here somewhere. There it is. You're probably very familiar with it. It's familiar to a lot of us. It encapsulates Twin Brooks all the way over to the Hamptons and Glastonbury. The people in Twin Brooks share very few commonalities in terms of their representation with the people over here in Glastonbury and the Hamptons. They don't share the same roads, they don't share the same hospitals, and they don't share the same schools. I know that that constituency was formed sort of with the remainder of Edmonton-Whitemud, some of Edmonton-McClung. It was pieced together. The feedback that we heard from our previous MLA was that it ended up being very challenging to represent because of – I'm not going to say travel – just the span of the constituency. I know that likely by the census we'll know that the population has grown in that area sufficiently to reduce the size, the geographical size, and give the people of the Hamptons and Glastonbury maybe representation closer to where they live, essentially.

Edmonton also has one of the most beautiful examples of gerrymandering, Edmonton-Riverview. Similar to Edmonton-South West, Edmonton-Riverview goes from 170th Street up to Stony Plain Road and then all the way down to, like, 63rd Avenue and 109th Street. Again, people aren't sharing the same roads, the same schools, or the same hospitals.

Those are two examples of how we're looking for shared commonalities in terms of our electoral boundaries so that people who are represented and communities may find it easier to come together. With Edmonton-Riverview, like I said, you could have people living in Garneau and people living in what would be, like, Meadowlark, West Meadowlark, all trying to come together for volunteer activities or even events. Planning something like that is very challenging.

If I move on to some of the other ones across the province, I think there's a great example in Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, which actually has two other ridings inside of it. That doesn't seem to make sense in terms of representation, to have Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South inside of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. There is probably a better way to represent the people who live there.

Then my personal favourite, Chestermere-Rocky View, which actually surrounds the entire city of Calgary and includes Tsuut'ina First Nation but not any of the places where the people of Tsuut'ina First Nation would go outside of their First Nation. So it doesn't include Bragg Creek. Calgary Glenbow is over here, so those access points are not available. Again, the people down here don't have a lot in common with the people up here – this is Morleyville up in the upper right-hand corner, and then down here is close to Brooks, Alberta – very disparate interests, not sharing the same hospitals or schools or roadways. Trying to get, say, volunteers to come together from this entire area proves to be really challenging, not just from a constituency perspective. But if your constituency association is

over here, why would you come from all the way over here through the entire city of Calgary to meet with your representative? So that kind of gerrymandering probably prevents some social activity and on a political level.

Another great example: this is Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill. Again, you can see it pretty much hugging the riding inside of it. There's, again, probably a better way that we can represent the people in these areas in their commonalities and their communities than that. I don't know. I'm not going to get artsy here but . . .

The Chair: What's the riding that you put your finger on that's within it?

Ms Hamilton: I can't remember the name of it. This is Foothills right here. This is Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

The Chair: Okay. That's fine. We can check it out later.

Ms Hamilton: Yeah. Then sort of a lesser example of that is something like Calgary-Fort – and this is a pretty small map – because Calgary-Fort is huge. The people down here might use a hospital like the south campus, but people up here are pretty much near downtown. It is only 20 minutes from door to door, from one corner to the other, but that's on highway 2. I think that that's an example of how we could better represent commonalities within communities, again, shared hospitals, roads, schools.

2:30

The Chair: Okay. Well, I'll leap in, as I have been doing, and take you through those five constituencies and ask you the same question. If we decided that we should change the boundaries of Edmonton-Riverview, in your view, how should they be changed?

Ms O'Neill: I actually live in Riverview. I think that with the river you have that cut, so it's either linking – and obviously I think the census data will tell us that Edmonton probably could use another riding. I think that in the last redistribution we received one – it could have been possibly two – and I'm sure the population growth has shown that we're due for one. I think that the south of the river would be put into the ridings around it, and the north, Parkview and those neighbourhoods, would go into Edmonton-Meadowlark, and then Meadowlark would be, where the Henday is, cut into another riding.

You've got these roadways and rivers that cut, making sure that you don't cut the people off by those, that you include them in so that they're not cut. I knew from Meadowlark that you had almost two very different ridings when you had the Henday. The people that were west of the Henday didn't really have any commonalities with the people in Meadowlark that were east of the Henday. It's making sure that you don't . . .

The Chair: What about the part of Riverview – and I have to disclose that I live there, too – that's on the south side of the river? Where would you put that?

Ms O'Neill: I'm trying to think. Well, just include it with ridings that are in the south, so maybe Edmonton-Strathcona.

Ms Hamilton: Yeah. Edmonton-Strathcona or Edmonton-Rutherford. There's probably some natural divide there.

Ms O'Neill: Edmonton-Rutherford has been another one that we've heard a lot about from our membership, that seems to be an unnatural riding as well. We haven't gotten enough data back for me to give anything very concrete for you there, but either

Edmonton-Strathcona or Edmonton-Rutherford would possibly fit for the people south of the river.

The Chair: Okay. And if we were to not leave Red Deer as the doughnut hole in the Innisfail-Sylvan Lake riding, how would you see the Innisfail-Sylvan Lake riding redrawn?

Ms Hamilton: I don't know the updated statistics on Red Deer, but it's our third-largest municipality. My guess is that part of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, similar to something like Fort McMurray, could see part of the city included with the greater sort of rural area.

The Chair: Make a hybrid riding?

Ms Hamilton: Yeah. I can't speak to living in Red Deer and what those commonalities are, but the surrounding area depends on Red Deer quite heavily, just as much as Red Deer economically depends on those surrounding areas.

The Chair: Okay. What about Chestermere-Rocky View? How would you change that to meet your concerns?

Ms Hamilton: Chestermere-Rocky View: I think that above it is Airdrie, to the west is Banff-Cochrane, and to the east is Strathmore-Brooks. I believe I would incorporate it in that way. That west part of Calgary-Chestermere: I don't know the census statistics on it . . .

The Chair: If I could interrupt you there, Calgary-Chestermere isn't a constituency.

Ms Hamilton: Oh, sorry. Chestermere-Rocky View. My apologies.

The Chair: Okay. So you're just slightly below the provincial average now, 46,900, so it's not so much dealing with the population in there, but you are concerned about the shape of it. How would you reshape it to better increase commonality, in your view?

Ms Hamilton: I would probably split it east-west. At the risk of, you know, separating people further, separate it east-west, and send the east over towards Strathmore-Brooks and the west either as part of Airdrie or split it into two parts, part of Banff-Cochrane and Airdrie, and possibly that part in the south – as I mentioned, there's Bragg Creek, right outside the Tsuut'ina First Nation – in a completely different constituency.

The Chair: How would that cut driving times down? You've got a number of different options here.

Ms Hamilton: Well, you're not cutting through the city. Say you were having a meeting on the east side of the constituency. You would have to cut through the city of Calgary, the entire city of Calgary, actually, to get there. Likewise, if you wanted to have a meeting on the west side, people from the east side would be going to the west side.

Ms Munn: One of the comments that we've heard today and, in particular, was a big issue in that part of the world was that we don't want to divide counties. The reality is that that's Rocky View county, and it goes around the city. If that were divided – and it has been talked about at length by lots of different people – then everything that they have in common already in terms of representation and politics and taxes would be divided as well. So there would be MLAs having to do sort of double duty on one

county. I think we heard from somebody this morning from the Association of Municipal Districts and Counties that it wasn't a good idea to divide up counties.

Ms O'Neill: We've heard that, but we've also heard from residents, and that's what we're hearing from our membership, people that actually live there and represent it, that this is their biggest – so both sides of it. You're hearing from the people that are the administrators and then the people that are being represented that while we're always looking for commonalities, just driving through the city to go to the other side of the riding cuts down on connections. That's what we're hearing from our membership about that. You just have to weigh the benefits to each side and try to figure out a way. Obviously, again, we haven't seen the census data, but I'm sure that Calgary would also be looking, probably, for a new riding. I'm not sure. It's very hard to, like, even redraw it without knowing where the largest growth areas have been and things like that.

The Chair: Well, then, that's going to make it harder for you to answer the next question. You talked about Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill almost completely surrounding another constituency. Any thought on how that would be redrawn to meet your concerns?

Ms Hamilton: I'm not as familiar with the population size there, but looking at the map earlier today, there are large areas that are still being developed. Incorporating this constituency along natural boundaries might be more . . .

The Chair: What are the natural boundaries, then?

Ms Hamilton: Stoney Trail is up here. So half of this goes on the other side of Stoney Trail, and then I believe it cuts down – it's not Nose Hill Drive. I'm not as familiar, again, with the Calgary – it cuts down some roads in the northwest here. That's the boundary line.

The Chair: I think you had one more – let me look back – Calgary-Fort. What's your proposal there?

Ms Hamilton: It would be to fold in – I think this is Calgary-South East down here – part of Calgary-Fort into Calgary-South East. There's a big industrial part here. In general I don't want to say that those areas are less represented, but you don't tend to see a large population in that area.

The Chair: Right. So adding that wouldn't change the population figure, and Calgary-Fort, as you said, is slightly above, at 51,000.

Ms Hamilton: There's quite a significant population in the south, and then to the west boundary it's more industrial, so cutting off the south side would probably alleviate some of the pressure on the constituency. I believe it goes through, like, Glenmore Trail and then up along the Deerfoot to near downtown.

Ms Munn: I'm sorry. You're recommending that Calgary-Fort be shrunk or be expanded?

Ms Hamilton: Be shrunk. It's over. You said that it's over.

The Chair: Just 2 or 3 per cent over.

Ms Hamilton: Yeah.

Ms O'Neill: So cut the suburban part of the riding – it's not really suburban – maybe in half because it's a very large riding in the city, and there are not the commonalities, again. You've got an inner-

city part of it and then a part that's growing more suburban. Maybe make a commonality there with Calgary-South East, so cutting it up.

2:40

The Chair: Okay. Any questions from the panel?

Ms Livingstone: Really, this is part question, part opportunity to clarify something you said. In your presentation you twice used the word "gerrymandering." Now, that's a big word to use. Are you in fact accusing the last commission or the previous government that passed these boundaries of impropriety? That's what gerrymandering insinuates.

Ms Hamilton: My apologies. It's a colloquial term in politics for the design of boundaries, and I didn't mean to imply that the previous commission had done anything improper.

Ms Livingstone: Thank you for that clarification.

Ms O'Neill: We understand these are always difficult decisions. There are communities involved, and we're just trying to find commonalities. I think that sometimes when those decisions are made, you're not always taking in every community. It's hard. I don't think there's an easy way, path for anybody in this room.

The Chair: Do you know how many Albertans responded to your survey?

Ms O'Neill: The party will do a submission, and I'll put that in the submission, but we had a good take. We've also been travelling the province in the last year talking to our ridings, and we've been getting this feedback along the way with our election readiness committee. It's something we've gathered, and then we put out a call right after Christmas for this, so I will make sure that's in our formal submission.

Ms Munn: I'm glad to hear that. I'm just confirming that there is going to be a formal written submission?

Ms O'Neill: Yeah. Exactly.

Ms Munn: Fantastic.

The Chair: Okay. Anyone else?
Okay. Thanks very much.

Ms O'Neill: Thank you for your time.

The Chair: All right. We're going to take a 10-minute break, and I hope that when we come back, there'll still be some people here who would like to discuss this issue because we're going to open the floor at that time to anybody who'd like to come forward who hasn't spoken and who might like to make a presentation.
Thanks very much, everyone.

[The hearing adjourned from 2:42 p.m. to 2:57 p.m.]

The Chair: All right. Ladies and gentlemen, we're just going to resume briefly or not so briefly, depending on whether anybody else has anything else they'd like to say to us this afternoon.

If not, we'll adjourn until 6:30, and I'm happy to say that every time slot this evening is already occupied.

Yes?

Ms Acheson: We did say something this morning, so are we allowed to say something else?

The Chair: Oh, sure. What the heck.

Ms Acheson: Oh. Can I come up again?

The Chair: Well, no. I mean, this is going to be something different than what you said this morning, right?

Mr. Zinyk: This is just in addition.

The Chair: Could you give your name again, please?

Mr. Zinyk: Ken Zinyk. We're from Edmonton, but we've been through Calgary, and there's a wonderful highway bypass through the north that you can travel at 100 kilometres an hour, so you can go from one side of Rocky View to the other, right?

Mr. McLeod: Stoney Trail.

Mr. Zinyk: Stoney, whatever it is, yeah. So the previous thing about it being so difficult . . .

The Chair: Okay. All right.

Yes? Come forward. Your name again, ma'am. I'm just thinking of the *Hansard* reporters who have to get all this.

Mrs. Hunter: Okay. Irene Hunter.

The Chair: Okay.

Mrs. Hunter: I have one thing more to add. It's really important to me. I have country cousins in Dunvegan, and I have family, grandchildren, in Riverview, and I believe that they should be close to the same vote. I would like to see that. I don't think my distant cousins should have way more voting power, 3 to 1, than my grandchildren. That's cutting that straw way down there. What happens is that you may have effective representation. Like, everybody gets to see the people. I don't really get to see my MLA. I don't really go to the office or anything like that.

The thing is that the legislation that is made by this smaller population affects this very large population, and there are often times when, again, the indicators were that public opinion differs from the legislation. Even when one party is voted in like a block for 44 years, that affects our representation as well.

I'm thinking of something else. The change of government. Sometimes with this change, people can't even accept it. I don't know. I have a lot of family that are really having a hard time with the new government. So when you vote in a block or give more representation to a populist that hasn't got as much, has a lot of straw votes for the numbers of people, this happens. That's what I'd like to clear up.

But I'd welcome any questions because you didn't ask me any questions, the other people up there.

The Chair: That was just because you were so clear in your presentation.

Mrs. Hunter: Oh. Okay. But I welcome them, you know. Ask me. We can have a conversation.

Mr. McLeod: I have one question for you, then.

Mrs. Hunter: Yes.

Mr. McLeod: By your comments, the mixing of rural and urban: as long as it's appropriate, you're not opposed to that?

Mrs. Hunter: Okay. A lot of the urban-rural – heck; I even own a farm. I know what's happening out in the rural area. I also live in

the city. So I don't think the mixture is the worst. You don't try to do it because there are differences and things like that, but I believe that number one is making a fair and equal voice. You know, there are special considerations or whatever you want to call them. Maybe make them a little smaller. But this will affect our type of government.

The Chair: Okay. Thanks very much, Mrs. Hunter.

Mrs. Hunter: Yes. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thanks to everybody who has attended and particularly to those who have sat through all the proceedings to this point today. We're now going to adjourn until 6:30 this evening.
Thank you.

[The hearing adjourned at 3:02 p.m.]

