



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Public Hearings

Edmonton

Monday, January 16, 2017  
6:30 p.m.

Transcript No. 3

**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**

Michael Janz, Board Member, Ward F, Edmonton Public Schools  
Scott Matheson, Associate, Field Law  
Jeff Renton, Project Manager, Agroforestry and Woodlot Extension Society  
Olav Rokne  
Greg Schell  
Neil Singh  
Amanda Wakaruk



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[Justice Bielby in the chair]

**The Chair:** Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Thanks very much for coming out. My name is Justice Myra Bielby. I'm a judge of the Court of Appeal of Alberta, but at the moment I'm also chair of Alberta's Electoral Boundaries Commission. I'd like to introduce the other members of the commission. At my far left Jean Munn of Calgary, Laurie Livingstone of Calgary, at my far right Gwen Day of Carstairs, and immediately to my right Bruce McLeod of Acme.

Over the past few weeks a number of people have asked for more information about the reason for the Electoral Boundaries Commission and why it's been formed at this time, so I thought I'd start off by talking a bit about that. Our commission has been created to 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.

Now, that's a long sentence, but basically it boils down to this. In our democracy representation is based on population. Rep by pop is something that we learn in high school, and that means that generally people's votes should be worth the same amount one as to the other. People's votes should have the same overall effect. Our work is necessary at this time because Alberta has experienced a huge population growth since the time of the last Electoral Boundaries Commission, about eight years ago. Our population has had a net increase of over 20 per cent since 2010, notwithstanding our recent economic climate.

How does this play out in terms of our boundaries for our provincial constituencies? Alberta has 87 provincial constituencies. The provincial Legislature has not seen fit to change that number for this round of boundary examination, so we don't have the power to create more constituencies or to reduce the number of constituencies. We have a pizza that we're going to cut up into 87 pieces, and the question is the size and location of those pieces. Now, of course, each constituency represents one MLA, for 87 MLAs in the provincial Legislature. Our voters in Alberta elect our MLAs.

Now, as I said, our population has increased by more than 20 per cent since our current constituencies were formed in 2010. In 2010 the average population of each of our constituencies was 40,880 people. Today we estimate the average size of a constituency in Alberta is 48,884 people. We've taken the estimated provincial population and divided it by 87. That's how we came up with this number. Those estimates are based on information provided to us by the Alberta Treasury Board, but we're in the happy position of anticipating receipt of the 2016 federal census data sometime during the first week of February. At that time our estimated figures will be adjusted to reflect the actual figures. We're not expecting there's going to be a huge change, but know at this point that we're just using those estimates, and before we finish our interim report, we'll have the actual hard numbers and we'll be using those numbers.

Why do we have a problem here today, or why is there this challenge facing us? Well, the more than 800,000 people who've come to Alberta in the last eight years haven't moved equally and proportionately into the 87 constituencies, not too surprisingly. The majority of them have moved to certain constituencies, and while each of our constituencies has grown, interestingly, in size, at least by some, there is now a significant disproportion in the size of the constituencies. For example, our populations range from an estimated 25,192 people in our smallest constituency to 79,034 people in our largest constituency, so a huge swing.

Now, back in 2010 the constituencies were designed to have 40,000 people, with a relatively small variance between each constituency, but that's gotten out of whack, if you like, because of these changes, because of this immigration into Alberta. To restore representation by population, to ensure that that's preserved for future elections, our job is to make recommendations to the Legislature as to how and where constituency boundaries should be moved to ensure that Albertans have effective representation by their MLAs.

In attempting to create clear and understandable boundaries for our constituencies, we're not simply bound by the numbers. If that was the case, all we'd have to do is take a map of Alberta, divide it into 87 sections, each with the same amount of people, and our job would be done. But the legislation that governs us, the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, sets out certain criteria that we are obliged to consider in deciding what recommendations we'll make for each of these constituencies.

Those criteria, those factors include relative population densities from constituency to constituency and common community interests and organizations, including those of First Nation reserves and Métis settlements. We're hoping to not divide up communities of interest through the arbitrary placement of constituency boundaries if we can avoid it. We also want to respect existing community and neighbourhood boundaries in Edmonton and Calgary, so we'll be trying to avoid cutting a community or neighbourhood right down the middle in either of the two major cities. We're directed to attempt to respect municipal boundaries throughout the province – so we're going to try to avoid cutting up a town, a village elsewhere in the province, to respect the municipal boundaries there – and to help people understand where the boundaries of their constituencies are. Where we can do it, we're going to try to make those boundaries line up with major roadways, with rivers, with mountains, with other things that might suggest a natural boundary to a constituency.

That's not a closed list. We're open to considering other things that you and other members of the public feel might bear on what we should take into account in deciding what the right constituency would be for Albertans to allow their MLA to be an effective representative for them.

Over the next few weeks our commission will hold public hearings throughout the province. This is the first day, so you're our guinea pigs. Thanks for coming out. Your input will help us develop our recommendations. My thanks to those who have registered to make oral presentations today. We have a little bit of extra space this evening. Our last time slot isn't taken, so we'll have a little bit more time for you than the 10 minutes that we originally advertised as being the maximum length for each presentation, and after each presentation there may be some questions from the commission.

In addition to the information we get at these oral hearings, we've invited written submissions on the issue. I'm pleased to say that we've had a good response to that. We've had over 300 written submissions so far in two weeks of operation compared to last time, when they had 500 in a year. So thank you very much for paying attention to our media contact for our website and so forth and making those submissions. If you know of anybody who would like to make a written submission who isn't here today or you want to make a written submission in addition to what you're going to say today, check out our website at [www.abebc.ca](http://www.abebc.ca) or engage us by e-mail, social media, or, of course, the regular post.

We're going to consider these submissions, written and oral, in preparing an interim report that will be filed with the Legislature by May 31, 2017. The report will be published and posted on our website. It will make specific recommendations as to the size, boundaries, and names of each of the 87 constituencies in the

province. After that report has been made public, we'll invite you to make further submissions in writing or orally in regard to our proposed changes. Some people find it easier to respond to an actual proposed change rather than making a general submission, so there will be that opportunity. We'll have another round of public hearings, likely in late July or early August, and you can register for those on the website as well.

We'll consider those presentations in preparing a final report with our final recommendations on each of the 87 constituencies. We're to file that with the Legislature no later than October 31, 2017, and the Legislature may then enact legislation changing the boundaries and names of our constituencies so as to be ready for the next provincial election. It seems like that might be quite soon, taking into account when the last provincial election was, but these dates are specified by the legislation, the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, under which we were created. I understand that's because the provincial returning officers and local returning officers need a considerable amount of lead time to set up polling arrangements in each constituency.

6:40

When engaging our task, just to review, the quality or parity of population between constituencies isn't our only consideration. Our Supreme Court of Canada and other courts have interpreted our legislation as meaning that each one of us has the right not to have the political strength or value of our vote unduly diluted, but this legislation does permit variances from average where necessary of up to 25 per cent above or below the provincial average and up to a maximum of 50 per cent for potentially four special constituencies in the north. We only have two at the moment that fall within that special category.

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

We're going to start our task by saying that 48,800 is the average constituency number. Looking at each of the constituencies on the map that's the second from the left there, which gives your actual estimated population as of today, look and see whether that's above or below the 48,800 by a significant amount. If it is, decide how we should move the boundaries to increase or decrease the size of the population to get closer to the 48,800 unless there are good reasons not to do so or to move the boundaries to achieve other goals. That's where we're going to take into account these other criteria that you suggest to us perhaps.

If you're going to suggest a boundary change – and there's our map; it looks tiny up there, but when you get up, you get all the information on it – it would be helpful also if you can tell us how you think the boundaries should be moved: north, south, east, west, in, out. What would make the most sense to you? We don't have intimate knowledge of each of the 87 constituencies. We more or less know the communities in which we reside, but the people who live in other communities have been giving us good suggestions all day about what to include and what not to include when designing the changes that might have to happen to their constituencies. So we invite you to do that as well. If it's helpful or of interest to you, if you think a specific boundary should be changed during your presentation – there's a laminated map of Edmonton there on the wall – feel free to take a marker and go up and draw where you think the new constituency should be. Our clerk will take a photo of that, and that photo will become part of the record of your presentation.

*Hansard* is recording all that is being said here today, and this

transcript and the oral recordings will be posted on our website, so anyone who isn't here can dial in and listen to the hearings at a future time if they want to.

Once again, welcome. I'm going to call on our speakers now. I understand the first speaker, Michael Janz, may not be here. Is that true?

But we have Scott Matheson, the second registered speaker. I'd invite Mr. Matheson to come forward and have a seat at the table. If you wouldn't mind, if you could tell us the constituency you live in, that would be helpful.

**Mr. Matheson:** Good morning, Justice Bielby and the other commission members. My name is Scott Matheson. I live in the federal constituency of Edmonton Norwood. I'm not sure what the provincial constituency is as currently drawn because I am directly east of 97th Street. So I'm living on the boundary line between two constituencies in Edmonton.

My submissions today, which I'll try to keep very brief, aren't about the line of a particular constituency but about a particular community of interests that I'd ask that the commission consider in this round. That's a constituency of interest that hasn't appeared in the last three reports. It's visible minorities in Alberta. I've reviewed the text of the '96, 2002, and 2010 commission reports, and that phrase doesn't appear.

Now, right now about 1 in 5 Albertans are a visible minority. For the census purpose that does not include aboriginal Albertans. If you add in aboriginal Albertans, that figure would be about 1 in 4. Census Canada has been tracking visible minorities since 1981. Obviously, they're a protected Charter group, and they've been historically disadvantaged and vulnerable. In addition, in the Saskatchewan boundaries reference Chief Justice McLachlin talked about minority representation as a factor that commissions might wish to take into consideration. In spite of that, though, as I said, the phrase hasn't appeared in prior reports, the last three, nor have they received any real consideration or discussion.

Obviously, because there are 800,000 new Albertans and many of those are visible minorities, perhaps a disproportionate amount, I'd suggest that perhaps it's something this commission ought to rectify. Why is that, and what is the problem? Frankly, right now, to be totally blunt, white Albertans are drastically overrepresented in this province, and visible minorities are underrepresented. The overrepresentation of white Albertans is at their expense. That's the conclusion of some independent scholarly work in the area, and I do want to hand up something for the commission. This is the most recent scholarly study of visible minority voting power in Canada that includes provincial electoral divisions within the ambit of the study. The conclusion of the independent work in the area, including the study, is essentially that visible minorities are systematically underrepresented in terms of their voting power.

I've really handed this up because there's one chart that fairly drastically shows this. If you could just flip to page 93 of the study. This is a chart of voting power by percentage of visible minorities for the provincial, not federal, electoral districts in Quebec, Ontario, Alberta, and B.C. The authors have helpfully arranged it by groups of divisions that have low proportions of visible minorities versus those that have high proportions of visible minorities. They include a number that is sort of the equivalent of an electoral quotient, where 1 would be that they have exactly average voting power. Anything above 1 would mean that their voting power is enhanced, and below 1 would mean that it's diluted. You'll see that the districts with low visible minority populations are all those that are overrepresented. The constituencies that have 3 per cent or fewer visible minorities are the most heavily overrepresented in Alberta. Conversely, those that have the highest proportion of visible

minorities are those that have the least voting power; in other words, their votes are being systematically diluted.

Once I read it, I noticed that the paper doesn't contain division by division data for Alberta. So I made a quick spreadsheet based on the 2011 census data that Treasury Board provided after the last census. Just a portion of it is on the spreadsheet that I handed you. I am not a statistician, so I expect that these numbers will change with the new census data. But all I've done is taken the top 10 divisions that have the least voting power, on the first page, and those that have the most voting power, on the second page, and put in their respective visible minority populations.

On the first page you'll see that 6 out of 10 of the divisions that have the least voting power have more visible minorities than average. Three of these 10 are in the top 10 of 87 in terms of their percentage of visible minorities. On the second page are the 10 divisions with the most voting power. Zero of these 10 have more minorities than average. All of them have fewer.

6:50

**The Chair:** If I could just interrupt because when we're talking about mathematical things, I like to ask my questions as we go along so I don't lose track. When you're saying "voting power," you're talking about the minimum variance for provincial average, so voting power as a reflection of how close the constituency population is to provincial average. Am I right?

**Mr. Matheson:** Yes. Where a constituent in a district that had 48,440 people in it would have a voting power of 1, so where the population is lower they effectively have more voting power than those where the population is higher. One would be the average. Effectively, when you look at the numbers in the study, anything above 1 has more votes than anything below 1.

Of the divisions that have the most voting power, 6 of the top 10 have fewer than a thousand people in those divisions that are a visible minority. The division in Alberta that has the most visible minorities is Calgary-Greenway. It has about 32,000 according to the last census. In order to match that number, you'd have to add up the bottom 26 divisions in Alberta. Effectively, there are more visible minorities in Calgary-Greenway than there are in the bottom 26 in Alberta.

I bring this up to ask what the commission should do. If you turn to the study on page 97, the authors actually make some suggestions for the work of boundaries commissions. The authors, who are a Canadian and American law professor respectively, write: "Commissions should consider the impact on visible minorities of over-representing rural ridings within a province." They find that "given the clear costs to visible minorities brought about by rural over-representation, community of interest considerations should not be interpreted to assist only rural voters." When I read the prior reports, they take a very blinkered view of what a community of interest is.

As you said, Justice Bielby, the Supreme Court's decision doesn't require that, and in fact section 14 of the act permits the commission to take into account a lot of things, any factors it considers appropriate, in coming to its determination of the boundaries. That's what I'd implore the commission to do, to take a wider view in this round of what is a community of interest for your purpose than has been done by the prior reports in '96, 2002, and 2010.

In fact, it's not just visible minorities that are included. The word "aboriginal" barely appears in any of those reports. They don't discuss in any detail aboriginal interests as a community of interest. As I said, that would push the number from 18.4 per cent to 25.8 per cent of Albertans that are either a visible minority or aboriginal.

I don't think that this means visible minorities are the only thing that the committee ought to look at, but they are certainly one.

The numbers that I have given that are in this spreadsheet and the ones that in the paper are dated, however. As you said, the new numbers for census data will not be released until 2017. One thing I would ask because I don't really know – in the past after the census it's taken Treasury Board some time, perhaps a matter of months or maybe longer to break down census results by a provincial electoral division to allow you to make the kinds of determinations that I'm suggesting you might want to about how many visible minorities are in each district. I'm not sure what the commission's schedule is for delivering its interim and final reports, but I would suggest that the commission and its staff might wish to inquire of Treasury Board whether they'll be able to provide in time for their reports sufficiently granular data on visible minority and aboriginal populations to permit you to consider them as communities of interest.

I hope I am under my 10 minutes because I'm happy to take any questions or else to cede the floor to the next speaker.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, I have some questions, and I believe my panellists may as well. I'm going to play the devil's advocate here. Calgary-Greenway: I'm not familiar with that constituency personally, but I'm betting that it's not just one type of visible minority person in that community, that there are different subsets, no doubt, of folks who are visible minorities. In looking at community of interest, do you argue that we should consider that all visible minorities have the same community of interest even though they may speak different languages and not have a language in common, come from different places in the world, and have a different demographic in terms of age and where their kids go to school and that sort of thing? We should treat them all the same?

**Mr. Matheson:** No, I certainly don't think you should treat them all the same. In Calgary in the division you're referring to, I believe, the vast majority of the visible minority population is south Asian, but obviously not all from the same parts of south Asia or sharing a particular language. But I don't think the fact that there are differences within a visible minority population means that visible minorities as a whole shouldn't be looked at as a community of interest, if only because they have been historically a vulnerable group and, in fact, a Charter-protected group.

**The Chair:** Questions?

**Ms Livingstone:** Just one. Just reviewing the chart you provided us here, I noticed that the data you're using for the population appears to come from the 2011 census, and I'm wondering if you've run this analysis current to the date of the last boundaries commission. I'm just noticing that there's population growth reflected here that a boundary commission hasn't yet been able to account for. I'm looking specifically at Calgary-South East, which, you know, grew rapidly through the entire period. I'm just wondering if there's a mix of numbers here and we may be accounting for growth that may reflect differently back to the last time the commission did its work.

**Mr. Matheson:** Whether or not the last commission had the same data or not, I'm not sure. I believe they ended their work in 2010, and the numbers that I've used are from the Treasury Board. They put out an Excel spreadsheet that has, you know, 800 lines that are census determination lines. It effectively translates the results of the federal census into provincial electoral divisions. I don't know whether the last committee had them or not.

I would caution all of you that, again, I don't know how long it might take Treasury Board to translate the federal results that might

come out and be available to you soon into provincial results that could help you perform your job.

**The Chair:** If we were inclined to go down this road, do you know of any source we could go to which shows geographic areas in the province, so what part of Calgary-Greenway has predominantly Southeast Asian origin folks and what part has people from Greece and what part has other people? Is there anything like that? If we're doing community of interest, that might be relevant.

**Mr. Matheson:** Two answers. One would be that as far as I could tell online, Treasury Board did break down provincial electoral districts more thoroughly by visible minority in the 2006 round of the census than it did in the last round of the census that was available. I'm not sure why that was, and I don't know how they plan to do this round. As for whether there are any sources that would allow you to dig deeper within an electoral division, that's a good question. I don't believe that the census data is provided in a way that would allow you to break it down by, you know, postal code or something else. I believe the census data is broken down by federal electoral district, but I stand to be corrected on that by someone who knows more about it than me.

In other words, in terms of where you could get your data if you wanted to redraw a line to better reflect where a particular immigrant or visible minority community is, that might be a question for Treasury Board to determine whether or not they have data that would help you do that.

**The Chair:** Any other questions?

Okay. I'm going to take you to something that you haven't addressed but would help us in a different way. I'm going to assume that you live in or near Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, which right now has a population of 54,805 people, about 10 per cent higher than the average. If we were going to address that – and I'm not foreshadowing because who knows whether we will or not – to move the boundaries in that constituency to achieve something closer to average, how should we do that in your view? North? South? East? West? Is there something we should include or exclude?

**Mr. Matheson:** Well, geographically one of the boundaries is easy since the south boundary of the district I believe is probably the river. As for where the east boundary is, I believe that it might be 97th Street, but again I could be wrong. The only two boundaries that might be susceptible to an easier division would be the north or the east. In terms of what communities of interest might lie within that, I would say that one unusual thing about the division is that it has a huge swing in terms of affluence and income. Highlands is a very rich neighbourhood, and Norwood and Boyle Street – Boyle Street might be the poorest neighbourhood in Alberta. That sort of difference between the communities might be relevant in determining what a better line might be.

7:00

**The Chair:** Thank you. That was very helpful.

**Mr. Matheson:** Thank you for giving me the chance to speak.

**The Chair:** Thank you. It was very interesting.

Okay. I understand that Mr. Janz is here now, so if he would like to come forward, we'd welcome him. Mr. Janz, if you could tell us the constituency you live in.

**Mr. Janz:** Good evening. Yes. I live in the constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Janz:** May I begin?

**The Chair:** Oh, yeah. Please do.

**Mr. Janz:** I thought that right at the beginning I would introduce myself. I am the board chair for Edmonton public schools, but I'm not speaking to you in the capacity as board chair for Edmonton public schools. The school board doesn't have a formal position on what the boundaries should be or a particular variance. It's not a topic we've addressed. I do want to speak to you as the trustee for ward F, which is the central area of Edmonton – downtown, university, Southgate, and also Riverbend – some of the most affluent and some of the most hard done by socioeconomic status neighbourhoods in our city.

I just want to share with you a bit of my perspective as somebody involved in politics who is an elected representative and who has been going through this journey of what it means to be an elected official in the era of social media and everything else and my feelings as the trustee, not as the board chair, on this matter. I had a few points to share with you.

First of all, in my background I've been privileged to be involved in civics in a few different areas. I mentioned trustee for the school board. Also, I was working in neighbourhood and community development as the marketing director for the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues, where I was working with all of the 200 neighbourhoods around Edmonton trying to get grants and support for ice rinks, support for community halls and just building programs and capacity throughout our city. I also had the privilege of serving on the board of the Edmonton public library for six years and advocating for libraries both in Edmonton and also throughout Alberta through the Alberta Library Trustees Association. Finally, I myself am a K to 12 graduate of Golden Hills school division, which is in Strathmore-Brooks, so I have kind of a rural or, as we would say, rural background. Growing up, I mean, I could hear cows in the morning, so I think that counts for rural at least.

The first point I want to make is that I believe that in Alberta one vote, wherever you cast it, should remain and be valued the same wherever it is cast. Throughout all my journeys in all these different roles I've noticed that Alberta has had a pronounced weight in decision-making of regions over individuals, and I hope that's something that we can rectify through these discussions. It's happened on numerous occasions such as when MLAs have told me, "Well, you know, we advocated for new schools for you. We advocated for new schools for Edmonton, but it's very tough to win over the rural caucus. We're outnumbered," or at the University of Alberta when I went to government relations functions specifically targeting the rural MLAs, knowing that they were more numerous and they had a greater weight or were perceived to be a greater weight in decision-making in Alberta – and that was as recent as 2007 – and, as I mentioned, throughout the library community as well, knowing that, despite having more users and more burdens on the libraries here in the cities, we were limited in our advocacy and the voices that the MLAs in our city could have for our readers and our learners.

The second point I want to make is that I would urge you to use the best data. As I understand and as I think the speaker previous might have been speaking to, Statistics Canada is ready to share all of that census data on February 8. Unfortunately, I haven't had a chance to review that, but I would tell you that at the school board we are constantly planning and predicting thousands and thousands of more Edmontonians, especially little ones, coming to Edmonton and that especially in the regions around Edmonton we're going to see continued growth: the growth outside the Henday, the growth



in our new communities across the city. The city is growing, but we're especially seeing that growth in our new communities. It's so acute that just in the last two years we've seen 6,000 more students in Edmonton public schools, and we are anticipating that there will be many, many more students coming to the city. So as you are making your decision about where boundaries are going to be, if you're going to be thinking about variances, let us carefully consider why and where variances need to be and what growth projections are going to be into the future.

The third point I wanted to make was – sorry. How am I for time?

**The Chair:** Just carry on. This is fascinating.

**Mr. Janz:** The third point I wanted to make was about: the vote count matters. As I mentioned, there have been numerous occasions where I was told, you know, by decision-makers, by people who were going to be giving us schools or investing in education: well, we would like to support you more, but there are just not enough of us, and we're outnumbered despite having more kids, more demands, et cetera. So it's that constant feeling of our vote not being heard and the city not being understood.

Some of the realities that we have to deal with. In the school district 30 per cent of new students are English language learners. Edmonton has great barriers to overcome in terms of cultural inclusion and ensuring that everyone can participate in the democratic process. In other campaigns I've been on, we've had to talk about: well, how do we communicate with Edmontonians in terms of language, translation, et cetera? That's been a big barrier.

The fourth point, building on that, I wanted to talk about was that complexity matters. Access is a challenge to representation, and I would challenge the committee: what distance is further, the distance between Strathmore and Gleichen, or Vulcan and Lethbridge, or from Edmonton to China, or from Edmonton to Syria, or from Edmonton to Africa? We have enormous cultural, language barriers, linguistic barriers. Now, for me as an elected official here in Edmonton more and more of my business is done through phone, through e-mail, through having to work with translators and other assistants. I believe that as we look ahead to how MLAs effectively do their jobs, more and more we're going to think about how we need to address that complexity and how that's a major issue in some of our more diverse and more urban communities. I think in the past we may have thought about complexity and distance in terms of just geography and miles and kilometres, but really it's more complex than that.

Building on that last point: technology matters. Again, 90 per cent of my correspondence is via e-mail, telephone on occasion. We certainly do have in-person meetings, but those are – more and more the constituent preference is that they want to e-mail you when they want to send you a message. They just want their matter to be resolved quickly. If they could text me and had my personal cellphone, I'm sure that would be their preferred method, too. So we need to think about how we look ahead in engaging communities and doing our work as elected officials.

I think, ultimately, that if Alberta was one riding and I told you that all of us got to vote once in this riding except if you lived in a rural area, that in certain points, say, you got two ballots or three ballots or four ballots, you would say that that was absurd. But the reality is that this is how many of my constituents – and through my experience I felt as an elected official and as an advocate in Edmonton that this has had a profound effect on our spending in infrastructure and that we need to look ahead and think about how we're truly going to engage all Albertans and make sure that all voices are heard.

I hope that we can think about how to creatively address

linguistic and socioeconomic status challenges, and I hope that looking forward, we can look at the electoral districts and ensure that they're all much more equal in terms of population, that we don't have the previous massive variances that we've had, and that one vote can count the same wherever it is in Alberta. So I think that moving the variance down to something around 5 per cent would be much more appropriate.

I would also like to see the commission keep the special districts to a minimum. I don't believe that the justifications used for large geographic ridings at the cost of large urban population ridings can be justified. I think there are other workarounds that we can invest in.

Those were some of the points I wanted to share. I'm happy to be more specific or to answer any questions.

**The Chair:** Would the Edmonton public school board or you be prepared to share your growth projections for Edmonton with us?

**Mr. Janz:** Absolutely. Yeah. They're publicly available. I will follow up with your admin staff on how to get those to you.

**The Chair:** That would be terrific. Thank you.

Commissioners have any questions?

This isn't right on topic of what you've said, but I've been interested in this, and I've been asking everyone. You're from Edmonton-Whitemud. The numbers in your constituency are 52,574 at the moment, estimated by Alberta Treasury Board, which is slightly less than a 10 per cent variance. If we found we had to move the boundaries in Edmonton-Whitemud – and this is not foreshadowing; I'm just investigating all possibilities here while we have people who know – in which direction do you think the variation should occur? In other words, how should we shrink Edmonton-Whitemud if we feel we have to?

**Mr. Janz:** I think, again, you have a natural boundary in the city, the river. That's one clear, easy boundary to sort of follow along south. I think that given the growth outside the Henday and the projections there, the south side will certainly take care of itself in terms of how you have to address that area, especially because Edmonton city limits are slightly further south than that. So I have less interest in the particular geographic lines of where they fall but more interest in the variance of the number of electors within the ridings. Sorry I'm not more help in that regard.

7:10

**The Chair:** Okay. I just don't have that visual of Edmonton-Whitemud in my mind. Would you move the south border north a little bit? Is that what you're talking about?

**Mr. Janz:** With the river on the west edge, I would continue the riding going south. However, you very quickly get into I believe that's Edmonton-South West. Yeah. Edmonton-South West will have to be adjusted because it's another massive growth area, and there are thousands of houses there.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Ms Day:** I have a question.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Ms Day:** Are you currently familiar with the last decisions and how many were at 5 per cent variance?

**Mr. Janz:** I'm not familiar with how many were at 5 per cent. I have a list of those that were at 10 per cent, and I have a spreadsheet of some of the other outliers.

**Ms Day:** How many exceptions are allowed over the 25 per cent?

**Mr. Janz:** I don't have that in front of me. I apologize.

**Ms Day:** I believe it was two allowed out of four. That's an opportunity to have four, but the two were allowed only that were of those high, high numbers. And then about 80 per cent, I believe, were within that 5 per cent goal.

**Mr. Janz:** I see 18 that were over 10 per cent and then, yes, two that were over 25, one that was at 23, and then a bunch that were in that middle region. Overall, though, I think we could certainly lower them to 5 and bring it closer together.

**Ms Day:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Anything else?  
Thanks so much, Mr. Janz.

**Mr. Janz:** Enjoy your travels. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thanks.  
Okay. The next speaker we have is Mike Lanteigne.  
All right. Mr. Greg Schell has spoken to the clerk and asked to be added to the list.  
Mr. Schell, could you tell us what constituency you reside in?

**Mr. Schell:** St. Albert.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Go ahead.

**Mr. Schell:** I come from a background in my previous life having worked for the Legislative Assembly as a government researcher, a caucus researcher, and also a constituency assistant. I was able to work with a number of both rural and urban MLAs, both from Calgary and Edmonton and the rest of Alberta.

I think that – I mean, in a perfect world it would be nice to have on average every constituency be the same. However, there are a number of things that we have to consider, and I think that geography is a great consideration. We have to consider that some ridings in the province are almost the size of some Maritime provinces. In terms of trying to attract people who might want to run as a candidate in the next election and knowing the distance from their riding to Edmonton, the commute, all I need to remind you of is that we've lost at least two MLAs who have lost their lives commuting between the Legislative Assembly and their ridings: most recently Manmeet Bhullar, the former MLA for Calgary-Greenway; and also the Premier's father, who died in a plane crash in 1984. We need to be cognizant of the fact that there are huge distances in rural Alberta, that we need to consider.

As well, while some of those numbers may look a little bit small in terms of census figures, it doesn't include the thousands who work in work camps in places like Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, Red Earth, Grande Prairie, so you're looking at things like WCB claims, inquiries, health care access.

As well, the growth in Alberta hasn't just been within Calgary and Edmonton. You also look at the rest of the province as well. When you look at ridings like Banff-Cochrane and Airdrie, Grande Prairie-Wapiti, Red Deer-North, you've seen huge population surges. When you're looking at the province, you're looking at: rural Alberta does need more representation there, too.

When you look, Calgary has eight ridings that are less than the average, but they also have four that are well above the average, and Edmonton, likewise, has two above the average but seven that are below the average. I think that keeping the number of seats constant within Calgary, Edmonton, and I'll call it the rest of

Alberta, there are enough where they can distribute – like, Calgary-South East, Edmonton-South West could be easily distributed amongst the rest; the rest of the ridings in Edmonton could be shared about.

As well, if you're an MLA in the Edmonton area, you really don't have the concept of what it means to be a Member of the Legislative Assembly because when you look at things like distance, they can go to the Legislature, and they can go and sleep in their own bed at night as opposed to: if you're an out-of-town MLA, you usually get an apartment or other accommodations, and you've got to maintain that. Now, I realize that they get a living allowance for that, for living in the capital region, but it doesn't take into account other things. If you're an MLA, particularly from outside the Edmonton area, divorce is one of the occupational hazards that you have to take into consideration in terms of trying to attract quality people. I mean, knowing this, it might scare off a number of people from looking to run. As well, if you're raising a family, distance from your children: those are other considerations as well.

Could the Edmonton area be higher than the average? Yes, I do believe it could, and also Calgary could, for that matter. When you look at those two centres, in addition to their MLAs, you also have another layer of government, with a whole city council to look after local concerns such as transit and roads and so forth and also other big-ticket items like access to universities, health care centres of excellence. Those are other considerations, that you also need to take into consideration, that rural Albertans don't have access to in terms of access to government provincially.

That concludes my presentation.

**The Chair:** Great. Thanks.

Before I turn to my fellow commissioners and ask if they have any questions, my recollection is that St. Albert is one of the constituencies that is currently right on the provincial mean. Yes. You've got 48,430 people living there, which is very close to 48,488. But there is the other constituency of Spruce Grove-St. Albert. You may be familiar with that. You'll be right next to that, and they are well above the provincial average. They've got 59,453 people. Notwithstanding your eloquence tonight and not foreshadowing anything, because everything is open and we're just looking at all possibilities here, because we have you here and you're familiar with St. Albert, if we found ultimately that we had to recommend that the Spruce Grove-St. Albert constituency boundary shrink to reduce their population to something closer to the provincial average, do you have a view as to which boundary should move to make that happen?

**Mr. Schell:** I would actually argue that St. Albert could actually absorb more. They could take on the part of Sturgeon county just to the northeast of St. Albert, where there are a number of acreages, or even go as far east as Namao, to the base. There's also the Edmonton part of Big Lake, where I know that there are a number of parents who reside there who send their children to school in St. Albert, and they access things like: they have their children registered in hockey, and they're accessing other services in St. Albert. They're shopping there. They're going to doctors, accessing the hospital there as opposed to going to Edmonton. That might be a natural way to add.

7:20

But I would also look at, going forward, when you look at the boundaries that were set last time for Spruce Grove-St. Albert: there was growth in Spruce Grove, and most of the growth in St. Albert was occurring in that northwest quadrant of the city. When you're looking at North Ridge and Lacombe estates, that might also be

another area, and then the emergence of Jensen Lakes – the St. Albert riding could look to future growth as well, to accommodate that going forward.

**The Chair:** Thank you.  
Anybody have a question?

**Mr. McLeod:** I have one about your presentation. It sounds like when you talk about bringing in Big Lake and other places – I'm looking at the map over that way – you're not, then, to me, opposed to the rural-urban kind of merging together to a certain degree.

**Mr. Schell:** If it makes sense. I mean, when you look at Big Lake, you're taking homes that are the same age as many of those in St. Albert. You're going to find that it's a residential neighbourhood. You're not blending a small pocket of rural with urban, where I think the danger would be that if, let's say, rural only makes up 10 per cent or 15 per cent, they might be ignored. But if you look at people who are, you know, living in a suburban community – St. Albert is, by and large, a suburban bedroom community of Edmonton anyway – as long as they are, like, similar . . .

**Mr. McLeod:** And then you said: north, going northeast slightly up to – is that Sturgeon up there? I'm just looking at the map over there on the wall.

**Mr. Schell:** Right. Most of those are acreages, like, around the Sturgeon golf club. They're not – they're more like . . .

**Mr. McLeod:** It's just that we've heard a lot of comments in regard to, like Mr. Janz has said: nay to rural-urban because rural already has too much power per se. But then we've also heard from other groups that would suggest something different. If it's appropriate to move in such a way as to add some of the rural to a constituency, it may not be out of line because they're using all those services anyway, as he talked about, the libraries and everything else, because they're only 10 kilometres, in a sense, outside of that little so-called boundary line.

**Mr. Schell:** Right. I totally agree with you. I mean, if it makes sense, if they're using similar services, then I would agree that adding some rural would make sense as opposed to: right now Sturgeon is part of Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater, and your MLA's constituency office is in Athabasca. It would make more sense, if you live in Sturgeon, that you could drive into St. Albert, just like when you're going to the hospital or taking your kids to school or shopping or going to your bank. Chances are you're going to be going to St. Albert or to Edmonton and not Athabasca.

**Mr. McLeod:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Day:** I have a quick question as well. I'm just going back over some notes I took from some submissions that we had a chance to look at and a couple of people's comments. Currently your constituency has Spruce Grove and St. Albert together. Is that correct?

**Mr. Schell:** That's the name of the constituency, yes.

**The Chair:** There's St. Albert, and a hybrid is right next to it.

**Mr. Schell:** Yes.

**Mrs. Day:** Okay. So they're just saying that you shouldn't put those two together in this submission. Is that . . .

**Mr. Schell:** No. When I was asked about how to redistribute, what I was mentioning was that most of the growth of that riding, when you look at how much it's increased, is because it's absorbing most of the new area, new residential communities in not only Spruce Grove but most of St. Albert as well.

**Mrs. Day:** Because of where the line is. Okay.

**Mr. Schell:** There hasn't been as much growth on the St. Albert side per se.

**Mrs. Day:** But closer to Spruce Grove?

**Mr. Schell:** Yes.

**Mrs. Day:** Okay. And then another said that it makes more sense to move it south and take in more of Edmonton-Castle Downs. They have more in common in that direction. Would you agree with that?

**Mr. Schell:** I wouldn't agree with Edmonton-Castle Downs. It's different. There are different communities, and if you're looking at things socioeconomic, there's going to be a difference there. As I said, if you were going to include Edmonton, it would be part of the very northwest portion of Edmonton-Calder, where you've got the Starling-Big Lake area, that's right across Ray Gibbon Drive from St. Albert. That would be the more natural boundary.

**Mrs. Day:** Thanks. I appreciate that.

**The Chair:** Anyone else?

Okay. Thanks so much.

Now, we've come to the end of our list of registered speakers, but, as earlier today, we have a little bit of extra time, so I'd like to invite anybody who's here who would like to come forward, who has a comment to make. It doesn't have to be fancy and prepared but just something that has brought you here today. You're probably here for a reason. You have a view of some kind, and we'd like to hear it if you're willing to share it.

If you'd just give your name and the constituency you live in.

**Mr. Singh:** My name is Neil Singh. Actually, I live in Edmonton-Ellerslie, but I'm a riding president of the PC Party in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. We have a huge constituency called Edmonton-South West, and I believe that's probably going to be your first priority, to divvy it up. I would say that the new constituency should have a very western part and a very eastern part, and I believe the very western part is Glastonbury and the Hamptons, those communities. I think they should go into Edmonton-McClung because Edmonton-McClung has a very low population. I think it's 41-something, right?

**The Chair:** Edmonton-McClung at the moment is 42,971, so it's about 7,000 below the average.

**Mr. Singh:** I believe both of those communities should be merged into Edmonton-McClung. I believe the eastern half of Edmonton-South West, the newest communities such as Chappelle and Cavanagh, should be redistributed into Edmonton-Ellerslie. Edmonton-Ellerslie has a very northern half, which is the Mill Woods communities such as Meyokumin, Sakaw, Crawford Plains. I believe they should be pushed up north into Edmonton-Mill Woods. Then I believe the rest of Edmonton-South West . . .

**The Chair:** Sorry. I've missed my train of thought here. I was reading this note: we have one more speaker, who's coming at 7:50.

If you could go back to: Edmonton-Ellerslie has Mill Woods communities at the very north . . .

**Mr. Singh:** At the very north of it. Right. They're called Sakaw, Meyokumin, Crawford Plains, Pollard Meadows. I believe they should be pushed up north into the provincial Edmonton-Mill Woods riding. I believe, then, that after those divisions the rest of Edmonton-South West, which would be the newer communities such as Windermere, should become its own riding called Edmonton-Windermere or whatever.

**The Chair:** So you're recommending that this separate riding be hived out of Edmonton-South West?

**Mr. Singh:** Yes, with all of its southern and northern and western parts put into other ridings.

**The Chair:** Go ahead. I've said it already. You have a turn.

**Mrs. Day:** Could you go ahead and draw that on that map?

**Mr. Singh:** Sure.

**Mrs. Day:** We have that specifically for this kind of reason, because it's a lot of names and numbers, and I'm not familiar with your area at all.

7:30

**The Chair:** So, as a result of that, creating a new constituency in the sense that we still have Edmonton-South West but we also add a new constituency called Edmonton-Windermere or similar?

**Mr. Singh:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thanks.

**Mr. McLeod:** Some of the lines that you drew over there: are they natural boundaries, or are they just kind of hypothetical right now, at this point in time? In some cases, you know, the river is the natural one.

**Mr. Singh:** Yeah. Well, the boundary that I cut out, where I said that that boundary should go into Edmonton-Ellerslie – there's a road called Ellerslie Road. I believe that because those communities are very close to Ellerslie Road, they should belong in the provincial Edmonton-Ellerslie riding. The chunk of Edmonton-Ellerslie, the Mill Woods part, I mean: that's exactly in Mill Woods. You'd have to go through an overpass, past the Anthony Henday to get into the rest of Edmonton-Ellerslie. So I really believe those communities should be in the provincial Edmonton-Mill Woods riding. I find that the very, very western side of Edmonton-South West is just too far from the main communities in the Edmonton-South West riding.

**The Chair:** Have you thought, sir, about the annexation of the land south of your constituency going to the northern boundary of the International Airport? That will add some population to the southwest corner of Edmonton. We don't have the figures for how much that growth has been – we don't have tentative figures; we have to wait for the census figures on February 8 – but we're all of the view that there's probably some growth because you can see all those houses there as you drive along highway 2. Should they be added to Edmonton-South West on your configuration – I know it's hard to answer this because we don't know how many people, but just assume that lots of people are there – or how should we deal with that?

**Mr. Singh:** I believe those communities are probably in Leduc-Beaumont, in that riding, so if Leduc-Beaumont needs the readjustment and if their population is too high, then I would say yeah. I mean, you could go that route because taking those chunks out of Edmonton-South West would – I'm not sure how much the population would be.

**The Chair:** Well, they're not part of Edmonton-South West now because they're part of Leduc-Beaumont, but once the city boundary moves – one of our little rules is that we're trying to respect the city boundary if possible – that would come out of Leduc-Beaumont and go into a city riding, arguably. I mean, that's going to impact on your numbers here, presumably.

**Mr. Singh:** Yeah. I mean, that very well could. You'd really have to look at which way the city makes those boundaries, which way they they're shifted, right?

**The Chair:** Right.

**Mr. Singh:** I mean, after that, then you can kind of see what would make sense to put – you don't want the riding to become too far, like some of these other ridings are, like Stony Plain. You don't want one end of the riding and the other end of the riding to be too far for an MLA or candidates to traverse.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thanks.

Any other questions?

Thanks so much.

All right. Mr. Lanteigne is coming at 10 to 8. Is there anybody else that would like to come forward and say something while we're waiting for him?

**Mr. Rokne:** Hi. My name is Olav Rokne. I'm a resident of Edmonton-Centre, but what I'd like to talk about is actually the esthetics of riding shapes. Unfortunately, the more convoluted the shape of a riding is, the less it gives a sense of fairness and democratic choice. A couple of examples that come to mind are Chestermere-Rocky View and Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill, both in and around Calgary. If you look at it, you can't walk from one end of the riding to the other without going through a different riding, just about. I mean, some constituencies other than in Alberta have imposed laws around the shape of ridings. Some places have contiguous-riding laws. I believe we have one noncontiguous riding in Alberta if I remember correctly, though I can't recall which one it is.

**The Chair:** Where?

**Mr. Rokne:** It might be federal.

Some other jurisdictions have laws around convex shapes or the number of vectors that a riding can be drawn from. Just those two ridings in particular do seem very weirdly shaped.

**The Chair:** We had another presenter earlier today who talked about the Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill riding and showed us a map with a little circle in the middle and suggested that that was a separate riding. Later the commissioners together were thinking about that and wondering whether that circular area wasn't simply Nose Hill park.

**Mr. Rokne:** It's Calgary-Northern Hills.

**The Chair:** Is there residential development there?

**Mr. Rokne:** I believe so. Calgary-Northern Hills is separate from Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

**The Chair:** But is it actually Nose Hill park itself?

**Mr. Rokne:** It is not.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Rokne:** I believe Nose Hill falls into – the minister for the status of women is the MLA there. I don't recall the riding name, though.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thanks.  
Any other questions?

**Mrs. Day:** I'm just curious: are you suggesting that the ridings have straighter lines and more normal shapes rather than following along jagged boundaries?

**Mr. Rokne:** Yeah. Well, geographic boundaries make clear sense, like rivers and whatnot. I'm just looking at Stony Plain right behind you on the wall, and there's that weird block up. From the perspective of somebody just looking at the map, it does seem odd that it would be so irregularly shaped there. I mean, the more egregious example is Chestermere-Rocky View, which is sort of this weird H-shape above Calgary, where it's one block connected to another block with a little stanchion between them. What do people on one side of that have in common with people on the other side of that?

**Mrs. Day:** Yeah. That's been discussed earlier today as well, yes.

**Ms Livingstone:** I don't know if you're aware, but that is Rocky View county. That's the shape of the municipal boundary.

**Mr. Rokne:** Thank you.

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

**Mr. Renton:** My name is Jeff Renton. I'm in Edmonton-Calder. Just pretty simple thoughts. I live in Prince Rupert, which is a small neighbourhood just right on the other side, just south of the Kingsway. I don't have a shape argument. It's just more sort of the style of neighbourhood, I think. Especially if you look at the distribution of the fairly lengthy district, I think that it would probably fit in a little bit more with the adjacent, I guess, Edmonton-Glenora. Based on the type of neighbourhood demographics, it would be a little bit more suitable. Especially transportation is very different. I guess the industry is a little bit more different on the west side. I think that lumping Prince Rupert in would be a little bit more suitable.

**The Chair:** Okay. Just while we've got you, looking at the Edmonton-Calder figures, I see that they're 53,918, again about 10 per cent higher than the provincial average. Without saying that we're going to be wedded to the provincial average, because we're not – it's just because it's the starting point for our discussion – if we had to move the Edmonton-Calder boundary to make that smaller, am I correct in understanding that you're suggesting that Prince Rupert and the southern part of that riding be taken out of Edmonton-Calder?

**Mr. Renton:** Yeah. I think it's about 2,000 people. I think that would be, yeah, quite suitable.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Any questions?  
All right. Thanks so much, sir.

Okay. If there's no one else ready to go, we'll just adjourn for 10 minutes to give everybody a break. Thanks so much.

[The hearing adjourned from 7:40 p.m. to 7:53 p.m.]

**The Chair:** All right. We've got a whole separate meeting going on there, but a very vigorous and helpful discussion.

I'm wondering whether the speaker we were waiting for has arrived, which from his e-mail address looks like he's the president of Twin Brooks Community League, Mike Lanteigne.

All right. Is there anybody else here who hasn't spoken who would like to make a comment on what you've heard today or on anything that relates to electoral boundaries?

Okay. Well, thanks so much for attending. It's been good to have an audience.

**Ms Wakaruk:** I'd – sorry.

**The Chair:** Yes. Okay. Great.

**Ms Wakaruk:** Very quickly. I haven't prepared anything. My name is Amanda Wakaruk. I live in Edmonton-Centre. We were just having a bit of a discussion about the topic at hand, and it strikes me that there are not a lot of resources around best practices in other jurisdictions on your website. I was looking for best practices in other provinces, other countries, and I'm sure those studies have been done. I just haven't had the time to do the research, and I'm wondering what variances are legislated in other provinces, if they're close to what we are. If not, what are the problems or the benefits of those jurisdictions? That's just one comment.

The other thing that kind of has been rattling around over the evening is something an earlier speaker said about one vote having the same weight regardless of where it's cast in the province. That's something that I would like to echo quite strongly. I think that's important to democracy and that the further away you move from that, the greater the chances of increasing the democratic deficit within the population. I'd just like to reinforce and reiterate that comment from earlier.

Yeah. I think that's it. Thank you for your time.

**The Chair:** Without having studied it up, my understanding is that B.C. has legislation very similar to ours. Saskatchewan has legislated a maximum variance of 5 per cent, so they've taken a different approach. They were like Alberta, virtually identical to Alberta until a few years ago, but they've gone in a different direction now. Otherwise, I'm not specifically familiar with maximum variance in other provinces.

Questions, anyone?  
Thanks so much.

**Ms Wakaruk:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** All right. Last call.

Okay. Thanks very much.

We'll resume again tomorrow morning in this room at 9 o'clock. Thanks.

[The hearing adjourned at 7:55 p.m.]





