



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

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Electoral Boundaries Commission

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Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Edmonton

Public Participants

Zard Sarty

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[Justice Bielby in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning. Thanks very much for coming out. I know things look a little sparse here, but if yesterday morning is any indication, people keep arriving through the day when their time slot to speak comes up, so I'm confident that we'll have a reasonably good turnout this morning.

My name is Justice Myra 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 is Jean Munn of Calgary. Next is Laurie Livingstone, also of Calgary. At my far right are Gwen Day of Carstairs and Bruce McLeod of Acme, Alberta.

Over the past few weeks, since our publicity started going out, some people have asked me for more information about the reason for the work of the Electoral Boundaries Commission and why we're doing it right now, so I thought I'd start by just giving a bit of a thumbnail on that topic.

Our commission has been created to research and make recommendations to the Legislative Assembly to address where and how our provincial constituency boundaries should be changed to ensure effective, proper representation by our MLAs in future provincial elections. This is necessary right now because under the legislation which controls the design of provincial constituencies, a commission like ours has to sit once every eight to 10 years, and it's been eight years since the last time a commission sat.

More important is that we have had phenomenal growth in our population in Alberta over the last eight years. Notwithstanding the recent economic conditions our population has grown by more than 800,000 people, by more than 20 per cent, since 2010. That affects our democracy base. We have a general principle in democracy that representation in the Legislature should be based on population, that every vote should have a relatively equivalent effect to every other vote, and we're obliged to redesign our constituency boundaries from time to time to adjust populations so that that actually happens.

Let me try to explain. Alberta has 87 provincial constituencies. This commission has no power to increase or decrease that number. It was set by the Legislature last time around, and this time the Legislature didn't choose to increase or decrease the number of constituencies. Basically, we're talking about dividing up a pizza into 87 pieces of different sizes and shapes. We can't increase the size of the pizza or change the number of shapes. Needless to say, each constituency elects one MLA to the provincial Legislature each election, so there are 87 MLAs.

Every adult resident Canadian citizen has the right to vote. In 2010 the average population of each of our 87 constituencies was 40,880 people, but today that average is estimated to be 48,884. That number is based on estimates prepared by the Alberta Treasury Board. Fortunately, the Statistics Canada folks are going to release the figures from the 2016 census as to population on February 8. That's what they say on their website. So by the time we file our initial report and certainly our final report, we'll have the actual statistical figures available. We won't be relying on estimates. But I'd be surprised if there was a huge difference from the estimates the Treasury Board has come up with.

This poses a bit of a problem because our population growth has not spread equally among our 87 constituencies. We didn't have 8,000 people move into each of the 87 constituencies over the last eight years. Wouldn't you know it? They gravitated to certain areas and not to other areas. While it's a testament to our growth in Alberta that virtually every constituency grew to a degree, they

didn't all grow at the same rate. While eight years ago we were within a relatively close number of the 40,880 in each of the 87 constituencies, now it's quite out of whack. We have variations ranging from 25,192 in our smallest constituency to 79,034 in our largest constituency. As I say, that variation has arisen in large part because those who have moved into Alberta have not moved in in equal numbers to each constituency. They've tended to gravitate to the larger cities, particularly Calgary and Edmonton, but also to Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray, and Red Deer.

The job of our commission is to see whether constituency boundaries need to be moved to ensure the principle of representation by population is honoured and that there are relatively equivalent numbers in each constituency to ensure that Albertans have effective representation by their MLAs in the future. But it's not simply a numerical exercise. If that was the case, we could have just done that with a pen and paper on the first day and no problem.

Rather, the legislation, the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, which was passed by the province of Alberta a number of years ago, gives us certain criteria that we must consider. That's an open list. We can consider other criteria as well, and that's one of the reasons we're having these hearings, to hear what the population thinks we should consider.

Our goal is to create clear and understandable boundaries which reflect factors including relative population densities; common community interests and community organizations, including those of First Nation reserves and Métis settlements; existing community and neighbourhood boundaries in Edmonton and Calgary. So for each community served by a community league, we're going to try not to divide those up unless we have no other realistic choice. We're also to respect municipal boundaries throughout the province, so to try not to make a constituency that crosses municipal boundaries if there are other solutions. We would like to respect geographical boundaries, natural features such as rivers, mountains, major roadways, and not cross those if possible and to use those as boundaries where they're available because perhaps they give a more intuitive understanding to people as to where the boundaries of their constituencies lay.

Over the next few weeks our commission will be travelling Alberta. We'll be going through the province to seek community input to assist us in developing our recommendations. Thanks to those of you who've registered to make an oral presentation today. We're not fully booked for this morning, so I won't hold you to a strict 10-minute time limit if you have a little bit more to say, and the panel may have some questions for you when you've finished your submissions. We'll consider your submissions along with the written submissions that we have received in preparing an interim report to the Legislature.

We've had some good success, I think, in getting written submissions. Last time there were 500 written submissions over the course of a year. This time we've had 300 written submissions in the first two weeks, so I guess that's a testament to the fact that we have a website now, that people can just make a submission by writing on the website. We're using social media, and we're trying different platforms to get to the public. Anyway, we've been gratified by the number of written submissions. They are being provided to us, and extracts of them will be posted on our website so that you can see what other people are saying, and we'll consider that plus the information you're giving us today and around the province.

Prior to May 31 the five of us will sit down and make a list of 87 recommendations, one for each of the 87 constituencies, as to the size and boundaries and names of those constituencies if there are any name changes to be made. Our report will then be tabled in the

Legislature, it'll be made public, and it'll be posted on our website. Then we go into round 2.

Often I understand that people have more to say when they're speaking to a specific recommendation rather than just speaking in a vacuum about how this should work. We're hoping that we'll get significant additional input when people see what we're actually proposing to do, and we'll then have a second round of public hearings in late July and early August. That's what we're anticipating. The representations made there along with any further written representations will go into our final report. We have to table that by October 31. The Legislature will then consider it, and it may choose to enact legislation amending the constituency boundaries to reflect the recommendations in our report.

We're doing this at this time because the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act gives specific dates that this has to be done by. It seems intuitively early to be doing this, but the returning officers have indicated, I understand, that they need about a year to really get going in preparing for a provincial election, so this is being done well in advance to give them enough lead time so they're ready to go before the next provincial election.

In summary, equality or parity of population is not our only consideration in making our recommendations. Our courts, including the Supreme Court of Canada, have indicated that each of us has the right not to have the political strength or value of our vote unduly diluted, but our legislation permits variances from average of up to 25 per cent in certain cases and for a maximum of four constituencies in Alberta up to 50 per cent. In fact, we only have two constituencies that are over 25 per cent at the moment, and they're in the very northern part of the province, Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley and Lesser Slave Lake.

9:10

We're directed to do our task this way. We look at a constituency, we look at the actual population in that constituency based on the census in 2016, we compare that to the provincial average of 48,800 or whatever that actually is when StatsCan gets the figures out, and then we decide if there's any acceptable reason not to move the boundaries of that constituency in or out to increase the population or decrease the population to get to that average number.

If you believe there's a good reason to move a boundary of a constituency in Alberta or to not move a boundary notwithstanding population change, we're hoping that you'll tell us about that today. If you have specific ideas about how a boundary should be moved, we'll invite you to tell us that by writing on our laminated map over there. We'll take a picture of that, and that will become part of our record for consideration later on.

So that's the task at hand. Again, welcome.

I'm going to start by calling on our first presenter, Zard Sarty. I invite you, Mr. Sarty, to sit at the table there and give us the name of the constituency in which you currently reside, and we'll be delighted to hear from you.

Mr. Sarty: Good morning. I'm Zard Sarty. I'm going to give you the name of the constituency in my presentation.

The Chair: What constituency are you living in right at the moment?

Mr. Sarty: Edmonton-Riverview.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Sarty: I'm here to inform you on the potential effects of emerging science which has taken place in the last 30 years, on the nomination process in general, and on electoral boundaries in

particular. I'll introduce myself. I was trained as an architect, urban designer, and manager. I have worked for regional planning commissions, the city of Edmonton, and as a designer of the Benchlands area structure plan for the town of Canmore. I contributed to the Edmonton urban growth strategy. I was one of the principals. I acted as a private consultant, and for the past 30 years I have been doing research on the science of complexity. I have the largest library of chaos-related books, with over 50 in my library.

First, I'll give you my recommendation. In delineating electoral boundaries, the first priority should be the inclusion of established and working communities and their interests. That means equal but special treatment to identify ridings not only by population but also by communities represented. Why this recommendation? Emerging scientific discoveries indicate a trend toward the importance of established communities rather than insistence on equal-number ridings in metropolitan areas, particularly in metropolitan areas. As long as the numbers are within your mandate of variance, being 25 per cent up or down, there should be no reason to not have the variation in metropolitan areas as it is done for the urban-rural divide.

I'm going to show you two analytical displays so that we may refer to them during the rest of my presentation. By the way, this is my wife, Valerie. First, we are naturally attracted to political leanings, and in addition we develop tendencies for corporate thinking. There is the social democratic form of governance, the liberal form of governance, the conservative form of governance, and then there is corporate, corporate thinking. There are three governances, which I just said, and the corporate model. The colours on the image are exactly the same for the three legitimate governing models.

But look at the corporate. There are no colours, just a hammer in the middle of it. The corporate model is simplistic. It reduces the objectives. That's why it's so successful. Anyway, I'll go on reading properly. The corporate model is simplistic and attempts to reduce complexities inherent in multiple orders. Simplistic thinking and corporate interests diminish the organized regional communities in Alberta and, consequently, encourage the urban divide point.

In Alberta we had regional planning commissions, which mixed urban and regional needs and interests. A previous government, the Klein government, could have addressed the corporate interest of lobbying by the land development industry against these regional planning commissions by changing the mandate from planning to development within predetermined budgets and thus could have preserved the talk shop so helpful in the urban-rural divide. They were the nine regional planning commissions, and one, the Fort McMurray area, was a special area, with a czar appointed. This was a talk shop. We met every month. These representatives of rural and urban came around one table, one room. They represented talks like this one. Then they talked to one another. They made deals. By one swoop of corporate behaviour government abolished them. We could have changed the mandate.

Two – the second part, please – this image shows natural and man-made dividers in Edmonton. My 40 years of experience in planning shows here. I know the city like the back of my hand. The image is of 12 towns within the city of Edmonton. The intensity of the colours on the image represents the rates of change. That's called entropy in the science of chaos. That means capacity and potential for change. Darker colours show greater potential for change. For example, the city centre town has taken the most change since this map was produced, so it is change that you should take into consideration as well as all the other factors. Your job is not easy. I understand that.

Our home is in the Edmonton-Riverview provincial riding. The riding includes the University of Alberta community, emphasis on “community”; the old town of Jasper Place, another community, historical community; and the Riverview neighbourhoods: a perfectly reasonable balance of communities with diverse interests. It is also flanked on one side by the old town of the Strathcona community and on the other side by West Jasper Place, a new town. There was a new town document that created West Jasper Place, West Edmonton Mall, and all of those places.

9:20

Two other provincial communities that I would like to bring to your attention, amongst many that I can talk about if you question me, are the towns of Belvedere and Fort Road. They are on my plan. These are very small. There is no reason why these should not have the smallest population in Edmonton compared to the downtown area, that can be divided into two, the old area and the new area, on the east and on the west. You can question me on these if you like.

Now I have a handout for you which is basically a summary of my book, 150 pages. It has 12 analytical displays and seven abstract analytical chapters. These two plates are two of the 22 analytical displays. I can give you a copy of my submission as well. There’s only one copy of the submission, Madam Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Sarty: And I think there are about four of these. One of you will be short. If you could share this one, please. Thank you for hearing me out.

The Chair: All right. I’ll start off with a question. Community of interest is, of course, an important consideration in designing a constituency, perhaps one of the most important considerations. You’ve suggested to us that there are certain communities of interest in Edmonton, and you’ve identified them. What’s the source of your information?

Mr. Sarty: Well, I worked for the city of Edmonton for five years, and I basically was one of the five people that implemented Mill Woods new town. I made it my business for the five years that I was there to attend almost every council meeting, so I gathered a lot of information. My research of the last 30 years basically has taken me in that direction. Of course, Edmonton was my playground, and the city and province were my playground. Therefore, I had to refer every bit of research I did to the actuality in the province.

The Chair: Is there a set of source documents? Like, we have Statistics Canada census information that we can rely on for population figures. Is there some source document where some scientist such as yourself has identified different communities of interest in the province?

Mr. Sarty: Well, my book perhaps is the best bet I can offer you. In there, for example, I have a display of identities and governing systems. I identify 26 governing systems. The province is one of those. Electoral boundaries is so important in getting everyone involved. The size of complexity: chaos theory teaches us to be careful not to ignore established communities. Established communities sometimes are as powerful as corporations. The notion that the numbers are important is true, but you have to have also a special consideration when you delineate. My point is not specific; it’s abstract. I’m urging you to think outside the box. What you’re doing is so essential to having everybody heard, and numbers are only one factor.

The Chair: Thank you.

Any other questions?

Ms Munn: When you talk about established communities, are you talking about community associations? Are you talking about community of interests in a broader way?

Mr. Sarty: Thank you for that question. The answer is going to be philosophical. Chaos theory, which we understand now: life is so much more complex than our brain can analytically order it, so we continually stumble to create order. I am an order of particles. We are an order of family. I identify 26 orders, if you like, in terms of governing systems. Order comes in small packages, and it’s very temporary. It’s so important to cherish every bit of importance you find because we live in chaos. Any importance, any order forms itself, which is automatic because our DNA does it, our social conditions do it, our economics do it. Any order is important. That’s the philosophical point that I’m giving you: preserve all the orders. So when I talk of community, if anybody comes to you with a group, try and recognize that group. Your job is very difficult. You are really in the front, cutting edge of delivering democracy.

Ms Munn: What groups should we be keeping our eyes open for in Edmonton?

Mr. Sarty: Neighbourhoods. Old, historical places like Gold Bar. Gold Bar was designed by Noel Dant, who was imported from England, and was supposed to be a garden city. This is very special. That was the first garden city in the city. Noel Dant designed a number of other neighbourhoods. Your staff should ferret out these things where there was order. Anything that sounds of order you have to find out and then try and include.

One of the objections I have to the previous designation is that all of a sudden you looked at an electoral boundary; a chunk was taken away from a community and added to this riding in order to balance the population. Don’t do that. Population can be lower in one riding and bigger in the other. Don’t try and yank away a part of an established community, established neighbourhood. Don’t cross neighbourhood boundaries; include the natural boundaries, as one of the 22 displays showed you.

But in Riverview they are combined. A river is considered as their focal point. The fact that the university, this highly educated group, is bunched with one of the poorest old neighbourhoods in metropolitan Edmonton – Jasper Place didn’t have any proper infrastructure. We are even now improving the infrastructure in Jasper Place. Isn’t that beautiful, to have one MLA bringing those two together? My MLA is doing an extremely good job of combining those.

The Chair: Other questions?

Ms Munn: So what you’re saying is that it’s okay to put together disparate communities of interest as long as you don’t take a solid, established community of interest and cut it up.

Mr. Sarty: Well, go back to my philosophical response to: what is community? Yes, because you are basically honouring the university community and Jasper Place community and giving that MLA the task of combining those two different demands, if you like. Yes, yes.

Ms Munn: But in their entirety, not in bits and pieces.

Mr. Sarty: Yes. Yes, if it is possible, unless it breaks your 25 per cent dictate of the act. That 25 per cent, by the way, is very reasonable. I don’t know about the two exceptions that are there

somehow. There has to be some creative thinking even with those two exceptions.

Mrs. Day: If I may?

The Chair: Yes. Please do.

Mrs. Day: Thank you for your presentation. I appreciate what you're bringing forward. It's interesting. Reading 100 summaries so far and the comments yesterday, so many people have asked us, like, are very fixed on a number, 5 per cent: keep it in 5 per cent; keep it in 10 per cent. What would you say? I guess, in our world today it's easy to fixate on a percentage. It's tangible. What would you answer to those people that are asking us? That's probably been the most common thing we've heard: keep and make parity between voters in Alberta to keep it democratic. So how would we answer that?

9:30

Mr. Sarty: I would answer it by using my architectural training. Think of a building, your house. There is the foundation. Then there is the basement, and then there are the living room and the dining room. By the way, there is a little hutch for your dog or your cat. Include everything. The numbers game is the foundation of democracy. Everybody's opinion has to be heard, but, heavens, a house without furniture is a dull house. Build on that. Population is the base and the act has given you all you need for population. Build the dollhouses. Build a little bit for the cat and for the dog. Build a special area where you can take refuge in the corner of the house to read. This is a house you are building. Population is the basic principle of democracy. You can't violate that. But make it beautiful.

The Chair: Anything else?

We have to consider all options, of course. We haven't any set view at this point. Far from it. We're just starting our work. But, as I said earlier, one of the things we have to consider is the current population of a riding and compare it to the provincial average. That's one of the first steps on our analytical journey.

Looking at the estimates we have now for the population of Edmonton-Riverview, it's at 45,517, about 10 per cent below the provincial average. If we found at a certain point that we had to consider expanding the constituency to bring it closer to the provincial average, can you identify a community of interest for us that adjoins Edmonton-Riverview that could perhaps be added to Edmonton-Riverview in respect of your principles?

Mr. Sarty: I wish that you would have asked that question of Belvedere, but I'll answer for Edmonton-Riverview. The boundaries of the university are basically limitless, so you can make adjustments there, but don't encroach into Edmonton-Strathcona because that is a heavyweight on its own.

The Chair: So in Belvedere, and that would be part of – well, I'm not sure what constituency represents it. It's to the east, I imagine, is it?

Mr. Sarty: It is. My recommendation to you on that part of the city – think of 118th Avenue. You know, it's such a special area but such huge problems.

The Chair: Is that the Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood constituency? Is Belvedere part of that?

Mr. Sarty: I haven't studied that particularly, but I would concentrate on 118th Avenue. Of course, there used to be that old

town there and Fort Road and those things. This is a difficult one. You have to commission me to research that for you if you like, without pay, of course. It's such a special area of the city because it's such a needy place. At the same time, I was a participant in some of the efforts of planning, trying to breathe life into that community, and there have been so many attempts to breathe life into that community. Make it the responsibility of one MLA. Load that MLA with the responsibility to keep at improving that area. It's a political statement you'll make in that boundary.

The Chair: But just looking at this, it would seem that the 118th Avenue area is totally embraced within Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, so there would be one MLA at the moment.

Mr. Sarty: Of course.

The Chair: If I'm right on that – and, again, I haven't looked at the map, so maybe I'm not. There are 54,804 people estimated there, 10 per cent above the average. Is there part of the Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood area that you in your experience know which would be a community of interest that could be excluded from that constituency and still respect your views?

Mr. Sarty: My research basically shows – and this will be in the book if you download it. I identify two natural and man-made boundaries. Now, those natural and man-made boundaries should be complemented with the social conditions that I referred to. It's not an easy job.

The Chair: All right. Thanks.

Any follow-up questions or anything?

All right. Thanks so much for your presentation.

Mr. Sarty: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Our next speaker is Janet Smith. If she's here, she can come forward and settle.

She hasn't arrived yet, and it is a little bit before her time, but if Kathy Williams is here, we'd be happy to hear from her.

All right. If there's anybody here who hasn't registered to make a presentation but because of being here and hearing what other people have said or for any reason would like to speak to us, we'd be happy to hear from you while we're waiting for the other registered speakers. Would anybody like to come up and take the mike?

Mr. Staples: May I just ask a question?

The Chair: Sure. Would you mind sitting at the mike? We've got *Hansard* reporters, and they have to take this all down.

Mr. Staples: All right. I'm David Staples with the *Edmonton Journal*. I'm just curious. You said that in your initial report you will recommend any boundary changes for all 87 areas. Can you recommend at that point that more areas be created? Do you ever do that, or is that a political decision that might come after this process?

The Chair: No. It's a political decision that would come at the front end of this process, I think. That's what's happened in the past. Not on this occasion, but for example in 2009-2010 the Legislature decided to create four new constituencies. Prior to that there'd only been 83 constituencies, so they made four new constituencies, and the Electoral Boundaries Commission had the additional task of deciding where those new constituencies should sit and what they should be called. We don't have that opportunity.

Mr. Staples: That's already decided, then.

The Chair: That's already decided. That's off the table. We're just looking at the given 87 constituencies and deciding what to do, if anything, in regard to their boundaries. In fairness, though, I should say that the number of 48,880 is not necessarily especially high for a number of people to be represented by an MLA in and of itself. For example, the wards in Edmonton and Calgary municipally are larger than that, and the constituencies federally are more than twice that size. I mean, I'm not defending the decision of the Legislature. I have no idea how that was reached, but it's not beyond the reach of imagination that we could function well with the 48,800 if that's how it works out after the StatsCan information is out.

Mr. Staples: So if you are to have more constituencies, that is decided ahead of the process, not after the process.

The Chair: Right.

Mr. Staples: So that's not going to change. We're going to have 87 in the end in Alberta.

The Chair: Right.

Mr. Staples: Okay. The maps on the wall, the red and the blue numbers: what do they represent?

The Chair: The blue numbers represent the population in those constituencies when the 2009-2010 Electoral Boundaries Commission made their report. Looking just over my shoulder here at Stony Plain, when it made its recommendations setting the boundaries of that constituency last time, the constituency numbers were 2 per cent lower than the provincial average of 40,800 people. As of the day these maps were prepared for us by the good folks at Elections Alberta next door based on the Alberta Treasury Board estimated information, the population in Stony Plain was 47,018, which was 4 per cent below the current estimated provincial average. That number will change with the census but probably not much. Let's say for discussion purposes that that is the actual number.

Our job when we get to that constituency is to look at that 47,018 number and say: should that be adjusted to increase it upward, for example, to the provincial average, by 4 per cent? Are any of these factors that we've been talking about today or that I mentioned in my introduction at play here? Maybe we should just leave it alone because it's not such a big variance. Maybe there are communities of interests in their neighbourhoods. It doesn't include just Stony Plain. I'm just looking at it. It looks like it contains a lot of acreage country out there and so forth. We'll have to look at all of that and see whether there's a logical reason for recommending a change or whether we should recommend that it just stay the way it is.

9:40

Mr. Staples: You mentioned the legislation which has a 25 per cent variance, and that's either above or below.

The Chair: Right.

Mr. Staples: So it's actually a 50 per cent spread? Is it fair to put it that way?

The Chair: You could have a 50 per cent swing.

Mr. Staples: That's provincial legislation; it's not a federal one. Is that correct?

The Chair: Right. It's the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, chapter E-3 of the consolidated *Statutes of Alberta* passed in 1990.

Mr. Staples: Some provinces have a different variance than Alberta, for instance, but ours is 25 per cent?

The Chair: Right. I will say that historically that has been the system in the prairie provinces and British Columbia. British Columbia still has, I understand, identical legislation to Alberta. Saskatchewan has changed theirs, and they have a maximum 5 per cent variance.

Mr. Staples: And Manitoba: do you know?

The Chair: I don't, right off. Sorry.

Mr. Staples: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Now, the price of coming forward is for me to ask you what constituency you reside in.

Mr. Staples: I'm in Edmonton-Riverview as well.

The Chair: Okay. As I just said, the population in Edmonton-Riverview is 10 per cent lower than the provincial average estimated. So if we decided at a certain point that we wanted to look at those constituency boundaries and had to increase them – and I'm not saying we're going to do that; we just have to look at all options – can you think of a community of interest or a natural boundary or a way that we could expand Edmonton-Riverview that would make sense?

Mr. Staples: Well, I was struck by the previous speaker's idea that it's very important to keep communities together but you can balance different diverse communities. That's a very interesting thought. I don't know offhand if you needed to add 4,000 or 5,000 people where that community might be, that would make sense to balance with the people south of the river, north of the river. But that's what you would be looking for, another community, perhaps, that has something in common with that group. He's saying that all the people are united by the river and by the university, and I think that's an interesting thought about Edmonton-Riverview. I think that's probably accurate.

With those two principles in mind, people who live along the river and have a strong connection to the university would be a natural group of people to add. I'm strongly in favour of trying to balance out those numbers. I think if you keep in mind his principle of keeping communities together and balancing so there's not a huge, overwhelming community and then a bunch of little ones that have a lot less power and if you can balance it out while keeping the variance as small as possible, I think that that's a guiding principle that I would like to see.

The Chair: Thanks.

Anybody have any comments or questions for Mr. Staples?

Mrs. Day: Yeah. I think I have to add a comment. Listening to the speaker before you about the organicness of – and you just encapsulated the challenge, that it's two anomalies, keeping communities together but working with numbers. Yeah. There is the challenge, right? But what I like about our government and really across Canada is that we're an effective representation. So the variance and the allowance is because of reaching that goal of effective representation at the same time. So there are number of things that we have to keep in our minds as we move forward. But

that's why the variance is there. It's the effective representation part of it.

Mr. Staples: You mentioned in your summary of the letters that you're already getting that there's a strong inclination to go by the numbers and not have much of a variance. Is that what you're hearing – right? – at this early point in this?

Mrs. Day: Yesterday, I would say, maybe a little bit more that way, but there were also strong comments about the allowance for those variances in the rural areas. There was really a mix yesterday. But, yes, the numbers are easy, tangible things for people to come to. We've heard 5 and 10 per cent were the common numbers given out yesterday. Yeah.

Mr. Staples: Thank you.

The Chair: I want to take advantage because you announced that you were with the *Edmonton Journal*, which many of us know. We're just at an information-gathering point.

Mr. Staples: Yes.

The Chair: It's hard to know where the established communities are in certain parts of the province. I live in Edmonton-Riverview, so I kind of have a feel for Edmonton-Riverview as well. But when we get down to Brooks or the Crowsnest Pass or Fort Vermilion, nobody on this panel probably has quite that sense of the community of interest. So my message to the public is that we'd love to hear from you on this point. If you think you have a community of interest that we shouldn't divide up or two communities that go well together, please drop us a line and let us know so we've got that hard information when we get to considering your particular constituency.

People can go on our website and write in their submission just right on the website, and it'll get to us. It's easy to do. That's abec.ca.

We've got lots of submissions so far, but for myself I'm particularly interested in hearing from people about their particular local areas. That's why I ask all the presenters: where do you live, and what do you think of your own personal constituency? That's the sort of information that might get missed if we don't specifically seek it out for certain constituencies.

Mr. Staples: And perhaps there is a demographer who has actually studied this, the different forms of communities in Alberta, not just the physical towns and neighbourhoods. But perhaps there are other kinds of communities within these different areas.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Okay. By now is Janet Smith here? Kathy Williams? Okay. Anybody else like to come forward and talk about this? You're here for a reason. You're interested in this topic. I bet you have something to say. I'm putting everybody on the spot here.

Okay. Well, we'll take a few minutes' adjournment in case the speakers who had registered and aren't here are just a little bit late in showing up. Let's say 10 minutes. Thanks.

[The hearing adjourned from 9:46 a.m. to 9:58 a.m.]

The Chair: Hello. I think we can assume that nobody else is coming this morning, so we're going to adjourn until 1 o'clock. Everybody who's here is welcome to come back at 1 o'clock if they'd like. We have a fairly full schedule for the afternoon.

Thanks very much, everyone.

[The hearing adjourned at 9:58 a.m.]

