



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Public Hearings

Westlock

Friday, February 24, 2017  
10:31 a.m.

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**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**

**Electoral Boundaries Commission**

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## **Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Westlock**

### **Public Participants**

Gordon Elliott, Chair, Electoral Boundaries Review Subcommittee, Wildrose Party Executive Committee  
Laila Goodridge  
Jan Hoffart, Trustee, Town of Westlock, Pembina Hills Public Schools  
Colin Piquette, MLA, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater  
Doris Splane, Reeve, Athabasca County



**10:31 a.m.****Friday, February 24, 2017**

[Justice Bielby in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hello. Good morning, everyone. Thanks very much for coming out. I'm Justice Myra Bielby. I'm a judge of the Court of Appeal of Alberta. I live in Edmonton, and I sit throughout the province. At the moment I'm enjoying chairing the Electoral Boundaries Commission as well.

I'd like to introduce the remaining commissioners. To my far left we have Jean Munn of Calgary and then Laurie Livingstone of Calgary. To my far right is Gwen Day of Carstairs and Bruce McLeod of Acme.

Over the past few weeks while we've been travelling around Alberta holding these public meetings, people have asked why we're doing this work at this time and why there is an Electoral Boundaries Commission at all. I thought I'd start out with a brief explanation. In general, the boundaries 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 continued effective, proper representation by our MLAs in future provincial elections.

We probably all remember the representation by population principle that we learned in school about how democracy works, and that requires each person's vote to be relatively equal in weight and effect as every other person's vote. But over time the contents of constituencies, the populations in constituencies, change as people are born and people pass away. In Alberta over the years we have had particular growth as a result of other Canadians immigrating into our province.

In the past eight years, since the last time the Electoral Boundaries Commission did its work, the province has experienced a huge increase in growth. Since 2010 our population has increased by more than 14 per cent, more than 600,000 people. To put that into comparison, the populations of Edmonton and Calgary are the first and second in the country in terms of rate of growth, and it depends on which city's paper you read as to which is first and which is second. They each claim first, but Vancouver is third at 6.9 per cent. So being over 14 per cent, comparing that to 6.9, you see that there's been a disproportionate growth in Alberta over the last eight years. This has affected the representation by population rule because the result has been that some constituencies have a much larger population within them than others. The new people who have moved into Alberta haven't moved proportionately into each of our 87 constituencies.

If you look at the map on the wall there, you see the province of Alberta, and it's divided up into our current 87 constituencies. A colour version of this map is on the far wall there to my left, your right, with the green patch at the top. That's a version of this map with the names of the constituencies written on it and also the population figure which was used to set the boundaries as they currently are. They were set in 2009-2010 by a process identical to the one that we're following. The figures in red show the current population of each constituency based on the Statistics Canada population figure for Alberta, released February 8, 2017, so we have really current population figures to use this go-around, which is welcome.

We have 87 provincial constituencies, one constituency per MLA. The people who live in a constituency who vote vote to return one MLA from all of those who are running for that position, so there are 87 MLAs in total in the province now who sit in the Legislature in Alberta and make our provincial laws. As I say, our population has increased by more than 14 per cent since the last time, and that means our actual average population of a constituency in Alberta is 46,697.

We reached that number by taking the number given to us by Statistics Canada based on the 2016 census, adjusted to take into account the reduction in population in Fort McMurray due to the wildfires. Statistics Canada went up there and did a mini census in the fall to determine that there were 9,100 people approximately who had not yet returned to Fort McMurray, and a little bit of an adjustment because the Saddle Lake reserve chooses not to participate in federal censuses. They haven't done it for a long time. I'm not sure why that is, but anyway.

So this is a slightly adjusted number, but dividing that by 87, you see that if every constituency had the same population, every constituency would have 46,697. Now, of course, they're not required to have identical populations. That would be very hard to achieve in any event. That figure is offered because it's a comparator with the average figure used when our current populations of 40,880 people were established. There's a growth there of almost 6,000 people per average in a constituency.

The challenge for us is to address this because the growth hasn't moved equally into each of the constituencies. Most of the growth has occurred in Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer, Grande Prairie, and Fort McMurray. While I'm pleased to say that virtually all of our constituencies have grown a little bit in absolute terms, some of them have grown proportionally much faster than the average rate of growth, and some of them have grown much more slowly than the average rate of growth.

That leaves us in a situation today where our constituency with the lowest population, Fort McMurray-Conklin, has a population of 17,129 people, and our largest constituency, Calgary-South East, has a population of 92,248 people. If we were having a provincial election tomorrow, a vote in Fort McMurray-Conklin would have about four and a half times the effect of somebody casting a vote in Calgary-South East. That's happened, as I say, not really because people are moving in from rural areas to the cities – that is a small contributor to this growth and disproportionality – but it's largely because of the number of people who have moved into Alberta from other places in Canada.

The job of the Electoral Boundaries Commission, then, is to make recommendations to the Legislature as to how to move the constituency boundaries to ensure that each Albertan continues to be effectively represented in the Legislature. That involves bringing constituency population sizes more in line with the average by making a constituency larger, to capture more population geographically, or smaller, to reduce its population, but that's not the only thing we have to take into account. If that was the whole story, we could have just sat down with a pencil and a ruler and divided the province up into 87 pieces, each with 46,697 people in them, and we would be done.

The legislation tells us that we have to consider other factors. That legislation is called the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. There's been a version of this in force since 1905, when the province was created. It was amended most recently in the year 2009, and it sets out the rules that we're to follow under the redistribution rules section in the statute. It says that we're to base recommendations for changes where necessary on applying the following rules, the following factors. Certainly, relative population density is important, but also important is maintaining common community interests and organizations, including Métis colonies and Indian reserves.

That means that we don't want to inadvertently put a constituency boundary running through one community and certainly not through a reserve or Métis colony. They didn't get that right last time. Earlier this week in Calgary we had a delegation from what used to be called Hobbema but now is Maskwacis, and the constituency line runs right through their reserve. You know,

that's a perfect example of what we're trying to avoid here and why these public hearings are so valuable, because we can get input. People can bring these problems to our attention.

To help us do that, the legislation says that we should specifically keep in mind the neighbourhood boundaries in Edmonton and Calgary. You probably know that each of those big cities is divided up into a number of neighbourhoods. They usually have a school and a community league in Edmonton in the centre, and people consider themselves part of a certain neighbourhood. We're to try to avoid putting a constituency boundary through a neighbourhood if possible. We're to try to respect municipal boundaries of towns and villages, to try to avoid cutting up a town or a village.

10:40

You know, last time they did a great job – and I'll talk about that in a minute – but they did cut Tofield in half, and we've heard from people about that, that they'd like to not be cut in half. That's an example of how just because maybe they didn't have the right input or it was overlooked or what have you – it wouldn't have taken much to vary the boundary there to avoid that happening.

We're to take into account geographical features that suggest natural boundaries. So where there is a major highway or a river or railway yard or what have you, it would be helpful to make a boundary there so that people could more easily remember where their constituency began or ended.

But the act doesn't give this as a closed list of the only factors that we're to consider. It's open to other factors that we can consider at our discretion, and that's the reason we're having these hearings. We want public input into how we should adjust our boundaries, not just to try to bring the populations closer to the provincial average size but to deal with some of these other concerns.

To that end, we've been holding public hearings for three weeks. This is our last day. We invited written submissions, and we've received, I'm pleased to say, 749 written submissions in six weeks. Last time they received 500 in a year, so I'd like to claim tremendous success there. But I have to admit that we have a website this time, and it's easy to make a submission right on the website. We can do it by e-mail, by social media. So there are many more ways to make a submission. We've tried to make it easy for people to make a submission, and we've had a terrific response.

So we're going to consider the comments made not just in the public hearings, which are being recorded by *Hansard* here – and there will be a public record of those posted on our website, [abebc.ca](http://abebc.ca), in a couple of days, both an audio recording and a written transcript of everything that's said, so just keep that in mind when you make your comments; you're being recorded for posterity – but we're considering all of the submissions in coming up with our 87 recommendations to make to the Legislature.

We're obliged to make those recommendations by May 31 this year. When we've got our report containing them ready, we'll post it on our website, and I'm sure the Legislature will also put it up on its website. We're then inviting further response, further public comment. Sometimes people have a better idea of a concern or issue once they see what's actually proposed for their constituency, and that'll give them an opportunity to respond and say, "Hey, you guys didn't get it right," because of this or because of that. We're certainly hoping that the public will do that either in writing or, again, at a public hearing. We're holding public hearings, not exactly in the same spots as this round, at the end of July, first of August to get further public feedback. We can then refine our 87 recommendations or not or some of them or what have you and file a final report with the Legislature by October 31, 2017.

In the normal course the Legislature will then pass a law implementing those new constituency boundaries so that they'll be

in force for the next provincial election. This probably sounds quite early for that, but I understand that this is done at this time to give the returning officers enough time to set up their work and their polls and what have you in different areas across the province. The timelines in the act provide that the boundaries will stay for two successive elections. So they'll be in place as legislated by the Legislature for the next election and the election after that, and then there will be a new Electoral Boundaries Commission looking at it all over again.

As I said, equality of population or trying to achieve equality or parity of population isn't our only goal, but in 2009-2010 the commission came up with a set of recommendations – and none of us were on it at that time – which actually moved very progressively toward that end. The recommendations it made, which are embodied in our current constituency boundaries, brought half the constituencies in the province within 5 per cent of the provincial average at that time, and 85 per cent were within 10 per cent of the provincial average. So when you consider that there are up to four special constituencies which are allowed to be 50 per cent below the average, that tells you that they did a pretty good job in bringing almost the entire province within 10 per cent of the provincial average.

Just to mention that last category, we were up in Slave Lake yesterday, and that's one of those special constituencies. There are two of them, Lesser Slave Lake and Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley, which in 2009-2010 were more than 25 per cent below the provincial average but less than 50 per cent, and that's permitted in the act because they're such huge areas abutting the Northwest Territories boundary. In fact, Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley is now more than 50 per cent below the provincial average – if you look at that map, you can see the actual number – so we'll definitely have to be doing something about that.

Last time, eight years ago, there was a move toward bringing us closer to the provincial average, but that has gotten out of whack, with the description I just gave you now of the wide range of populations in our different constituencies. While our courts, including the Supreme Court of Canada, have interpreted our obligations under the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act to mean that each one of us has the right not to have the political strength or value of our vote unduly diluted, the act also permits variances for every constituency of up to 25 per cent above or below the provincial average where necessary. Last time they brought that pretty much within 10 per cent of the provincial average, and that was how the commission interpreted the legislation and their obligation at that time.

When we sit down to deliberate, the five of us, and come up with a set of recommendations that we're going to file with the Legislature, how we'll approach our task is that we'll take your constituency size. That's the red number shown on the map over there. Right now for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock it is 42,091. We'll compare that to the average of 46,697, and we'll see that Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock is 10 per cent below the provincial average now. Then we'll decide if there's any reason not to move the boundaries in a little bit to get it closer to the provincial average, and there may well be good reason not to do that. That's the reason we're here, to find out what you think.

But we have to ask ourselves that question, and that's the question we're going to be asking about every riding. Many of the ridings, I'm sure, will be untouched. A surprising number are very close, within 2 per cent of the provincial average, generally in the core of Edmonton or Calgary, but we will have to go through the analysis for each one of the ridings as we go through the province.

As you present – and registered presenters get priority, but I'm sure we'll have time at the end for anybody who isn't registered but

would like to make some comments. If you have a suggestion for a particular boundary move – and we had some good ones yesterday in Slave Lake, you know, to include an Indian band that had been excluded last time that was right on the border and all sorts of things. People were great. They took the marker from our clerk, went up to the map of the different constituencies – we've got Barrhead up on the wall but also your neighbouring constituencies – and just wrote on the map to show where they thought the boundaries should be. If that would help you make your presentation, we'll invite you to do that. Then our clerk will take a photo of that, and we'll have that photo with us when we consider our work so that we won't misunderstand your input.

With that introduction completed, I'd like to invite our first speaker up, Jan Hoffart. If you wouldn't mind, Mrs. Hoffart, please start out by telling us the name of the constituency in which you reside.

**Mrs. Hoffart:** I live in the town of Westlock.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thanks.

**Mrs. Hoffart:** Good morning, and thank you for giving Albertans the opportunity to provide input to the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission. Our school board recently conducted an attendance area review, and we know that you can't please everyone. However, public input helps to make these decisions.

Among the factors the commission is considering as it drafts its recommendations is the principle that the population of an electoral constituency should not vary more than 25 per cent from the provincial average of 47,000 residents. Our school board is concerned about expanding constituency boundaries to capture a target number of residents. We believe that doing this runs the risk of creating constituencies that are so geographically large that an MLA will have a very difficult time articulating and representing the distinct and divergent needs of the many small communities within their constituency. Will the voices of individual communities be diluted as the MLA seeks to convey a common message for the whole constituency?

**10:50**

By creating constituencies that are so geographically large, voters will not have easy access to their MLA. To effectively serve their constituents, MLAs must be able to build and sustain direct connections with residents. MLAs must have the capacity to do the outreach and local constituency work to effectively represent those who elect them. While electronic communications can play a supporting role in building these connections, nothing can replace face-to-face communications between Albertans and those who represent them and their interests in the Alberta Legislature.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice our school board's concerns.

**The Chair:** Thank you. If we could ask a few questions?

**Mrs. Hoffart:** Okay.

**The Chair:** We haven't had much input from school boards, yet yesterday we had an excellent presentation by one of the school boards in Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater. They were good enough to go to the map and draw where the boundaries that they served were in the constituency. So if I pass you this map of the constituency, would you be willing to draw the outlines of the area that your board serves?

**Mrs. Hoffart:** Sure. Absolutely.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Hoffart:** I'm going to need a magnifying glass.

**Ms Livingstone:** The print is really small.

**Mrs. Hoffart:** This will be rough.

**The Chair:** That's okay. Close enough is good enough for this kind of work at this stage. Mrs. Hoffart, if it would be easier for you, there's a large map there.

**Mrs. Hoffart:** Okay. Maybe that would be better.

**The Chair:** You know, sometimes, sadly, the print is even blurrier on the large map because it's just been blown up, but maybe you could make it out better over there. I bet you the clerk could give you a marker to use to mark on that. To the left there, on the wall map.

Thank you very much. I'm sorry. I missed the full name of your school board.

**Mrs. Hoffart:** Pembina Hills public schools.

**The Chair:** How many children are served by your school board?

**Mrs. Hoffart:** About 15,000. Well, we also have the Alberta Distance Learning Centre, so that number fluctuates. We have students all over the province. We also have Vista virtual school, that also serves students from all over the province.

**The Chair:** But that 15,000 would be just on the land sort of thing in the constituency?

**Mrs. Hoffart:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** This probably has nothing to do with our work, but we were just chatting among ourselves yesterday when we got through in Slave Lake about how interesting it is that the school board boundaries don't seem to overlap county boundaries, let alone constituency boundaries. Are you aware of the history that led your school board to serve, if I may say, such an oddly shaped area?

**Mrs. Hoffart:** Well, I was actually a teacher in Westlock 20 years ago, more than that. Anyway, we had just the Westlock school division and the Barrhead school division. Then at that time many school divisions were amalgamated, so that's when, in 1994 – I believe it was '94; it could have been '96 – the school divisions amalgamated. Yeah, you're exactly right. Like, Woodlands county helps with our Fort Assiniboine area, and they're not, you know, in our school division, for sure.

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

Now, I'm going to ask you some questions, if you don't mind, just because you happen to live in the area and because of suggestions that were made to us yesterday in Edson and in Slave Lake about what might be done in relation to the boundaries of their constituencies, which are very close to the boundaries of your constituency or butt right up against them.

I'll start off by asking – I hear from your presentation that you don't want any changes to the size of the constituency, but as we go along, we have to consider all options for every constituency. When we get to asking ourselves, "Well, is it possible to expand the area covered by the Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock constituency?" which way should we go? In your view is it a more natural connection for your constituency to grow into the Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater area to the east or into Whitecourt-Ste. Anne to

the south, or north? Which way do you think would be the better linkup to get common communities of interest, people who have the same issues, the same views?

**Mrs. Hoffart:** I think that the Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater area makes more sense. Morinville is more of a suburban community, I think. I lived there, actually, and it was suburban. You know, we drove into the city quite a bit. I think that Whitecourt has a different industry base, whereas Athabasca and Redwater tend to be more farming communities. We don't have a lot of industry in Westlock and Barrhead, so I think that would make a more sensible link.

**The Chair:** Just along that line, roughly how far is Athabasca from the boundary of your constituency?

**Mrs. Hoffart:** Well, Clyde kind of goes up to almost Tawatinaw. Like, from Westlock do you mean?

**The Chair:** Yeah. From Westlock to Athabasca?

**Mrs. Hoffart:** I think it's about a 45-minute to 50-minute drive.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I'm now going to turn to my fellow commissioners and ask if they have any questions. Any questions?

Thank you very much.

All right. I'll now invite Laila Goodridge. If you could start off by telling us the constituency in which you reside.

**Ms Goodridge:** All right. My name is Laila Goodridge. I'm a resident of Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, and I'm a long-term resident of northern Alberta. I'm here in my capacity as a private citizen. I've recently moved down to Edmonton for work, on a temporary assignment, but Fort McMurray is and always will be home. My comments are my own, and I've consulted with many people on the issues that I wish to raise.

I've got about four big things that I'd like to talk to you guys about. The first is the issues with the census; the second is effective representation and what I believe the committee should do; the third is what the committee should do if they don't agree with my recommendations; and then the fourth is the reason why I'm really here, the special case for Fort McMurray.

First of all, I respect your guys' work. It's intensely difficult, and providing constitutionally mandated effective representation is not easy by any means. It's even harder when you have to work with a flawed census. The 2016 census in Alberta is particularly flawed because it happened immediately in the aftermath of one of the largest mass evacuations in Canadian history. Over 88,000 people were evacuated from my home community and ended up living elsewhere across Canada and across Alberta. This happened just one week before the official census.

There are many reasons to believe that the evacuees explain why Stats Canada found over 30,000 more people in Edmonton than the Edmonton census, that was done just weeks prior. This also explains why the city of Calgary's census, that was completed just weeks before, found about 4,000 fewer in Calgary. To me, it makes sense. Edmonton and Fort McMurray are very closely linked, and I know that most people that I knew from Fort McMurray evacuated and lived in and around the Edmonton area.

**11:00**

The census would have you believe that there were only 6,000 more people in Fort McMurray last year than there were in 2011 even though there are more than 76,000 more homes. That's simply impossible. Housing is a challenge in Fort McMurray, to say the least, and there is no chance that there were just over 76,000 extra

private dwellings but only 6,000 people living in them. That's just not going to happen.

In 2015 the RMWB regional survey, completed in June 2015, found 125,032 people living in the special municipality, and that counted 30,324 dwellings in the RMWB. If you take out the shadow population, that leaves a number of 81,948. The official census suggests that there were only 71,589 residents.

**The Chair:** Sorry. What was the number after the shadow population was taken out?

**Ms Goodridge:** It was 81,948.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Ms Goodridge:** The official census suggests that there were only 71,589 one year later, so even though there were more dwellings, there were 10,000 fewer people. To me, that just doesn't make sense. I believe that you should just accept that the census is flawed.

Don't take my word for it. Stats Canada, in fact, accepts that the censuses are flawed, which is why every two years they put forward an official estimate of the undercount of the official census. If you look at the Stats Canada official estimate, on April 1 it was 4,233,933. However, one month later it was just over 4 million, so they lost 167,000 people from their official estimate. That would be concerning. However, in September 2018 they will report the net undercoverage estimate, where Stats Canada releases a revision. This happens every two years.

In Alberta in 2006 the census found 115,000 in the net undercoverage estimate. In the 2011 census they found 128,000 people in the net undercoverage estimate. If you factor that growth in, it would be reasonable to assume that there will be approximately 150,000 people in the net undercoverage estimate in 2018. That's three ridings' worth of people. I would also put to you that because of the Fort McMurray fire the estimate will likely be even higher than that 150,000 people.

It's to be mentioned that 2016 was the first time the census was done predominantly digitally rather than by door-to-door canvassers. It's to be noted that both Edmonton and Calgary devoted much more of their resources to doing their censuses using door-to-door canvassers, which is a much more effective way of getting an accurate number.

On to my second point. What should the committee do concerning the census? The law requires you to use the official census numbers. However, you do have a provision to use, as you consider appropriate, the most recent information respecting the population of all or any part of Alberta. I suspect that many communities will be getting you more-up-to-date information, but unfortunately that likely won't happen until after the preliminary reports are released.

I will also point out that the law allows you to set riding populations with quite a bit of variance, as you guys noted earlier. I will put to you that the numbers in Edmonton are wrong by about 30,000 people and that there are at least 10,000 too few that were reported in the Fort McMurray riding. I would argue that for the cities of Edmonton and Calgary, that have more of the resources, their counts are far more accurate. That leads me to believe that the net undercoverage estimate amount of about 150,000 people will likely be found outside of Edmonton and Calgary. If you go back to the official estimates, that gives Edmonton and Calgary about 52 per cent of the population of Alberta and the rest of Alberta about 48 per cent.

The province of Alberta compiles a document called the Municipal Affairs population list, which is a really useful document. It takes into account the census as well as local censuses



completed, and it then includes the corrected number based on the net undercoverage estimate reports. The 2016 the Municipal Affairs population list also discusses the concept of the shadow population, which is particularly important in the RMWB and in other northeastern communities that have resource dominance. All in all, combined, these documents suggest that most of that net undercoverage will be found outside of those two big cities.

I've listened to many of the transcripts. Many of the speakers have told the committee how much harder it is to provide effective representation for MLAs outside of big cities than it is for MLAs who represent the dense urban populations. The Supreme Court of Canada talked about how an elected official's role as an ombudsman for their constituents is more important than their role as a representative. The ombudsman role leads to the importance of effective representation. In fact, in Edmonton and Calgary there are some ridings that can be walked across in an hour whereas there are many rural ridings where you can drive for hours and not see more than a handful of households. This would lead to the fact that an MLA could more easily provide effective representation to 56,000 people in Edmonton or Calgary than an MLA could provide in rural Alberta to 35,000 people. I know that there are MLAs from Calgary that have admitted this to the committee.

All of these factors suggest that the commission should recognize (a) the problematic census numbers, (b) the other factors that you are statutorily bound to consider, and (c) the constitutional duty to protect effective representation over equal representation. The committee should not increase the number of seats in Edmonton or Calgary. I believe that you should keep them where they are, which leaves 51 per cent of the seats in Edmonton and Calgary and 49 per cent in rural. Then I would recommend that the panel work to redraw the 43 seats outside of those two big cities to more accurately reflect population patterns as they've changed in the last eight years and redraw the maps within the two big cities to, again, reflect the changing population patterns. If the committee wanted to get closer to the 52 number, then they would have to increase the seats by one in the two big cities.

On to the third, what the committee should do if they disagree with my recommendation and want to add seats to Edmonton or Calgary. I recognize that you guys might choose to take other people's recommendations over mine and might seek to add one or possibly even two seats to Edmonton and Calgary. If you're looking to reduce the number of seats in Alberta in a rural area and increase in Edmonton and Calgary, my first recommendation would be to split up the Peace River riding by sending the southern population centres of Manning and Peace River into the Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley riding, creating a new Peace River-Notley constituency. Then you'd take the northern communities of High Level, Fort Vermilion, and La Crête and add them to the Lesser Slave Lake riding, creating a Mackenzie-Lesser Slave Lake constituency. This change is now possible because of the paving of highway 88 between Slave Lake and the northern Mackenzie region. This was only recently finished, and this option has never been available up until this point.

**Ms Munn:** Can you please tell me the name of that highway again?

**Ms Goodridge:** Highway 88. It's the Red Earth Creek road. It used to be a really sketchy dirt road.

This would create a predominantly agricultural Peace River-Notley constituency and a predominantly remote, rural-based Mackenzie-Lesser Slave Lake constituency. It would group together most of the aboriginal and Métis communities into Mackenzie-Lesser Slave Lake, which I think would be a massive plus for the region. The northern communities used to have to be

attached to Peace River because that was their only linkage to Alberta, but the addition of highway 88 being paved allows this opportunity. An advantage of this: it allows you to both eliminate one of the special existing constituencies and redistribute the populations.

**11:10**

If you were looking to add a second riding by taking from rural Alberta, which, I will stress again, is really not my recommendation, I would suggest that you break apart the Whitecourt-Ste. Anne riding, add Whitecourt to West Yellowhead, and separate the remaining population amongst the neighbouring ridings to make the relevant adjustments required. Whitecourt, I will note, is really similar in terms of industry and whatnot to Hinton and Edson. Indeed, it actually has many similar businesses that are owned by the same owners in Hinton, Edson, and Whitecourt. All three centres exist because of their presence along transportation corridors, and they would be very easily represented by one MLA as the interests are very similar between those communities. The breaking up of the rest of the population of Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, the Lac Ste. Anne county portion, would facilitate the adjustments that you guys need to make all the ridings around Edmonton equalize their population.

I think it's important that the committee understand that if ridings disappear in Alberta outside of Edmonton and Calgary, the population patterns of northern Alberta are much more conducive to larger ridings than in southern and eastern Alberta. In most of northern and rural western Alberta the communities are clumped together, and the population bases are, again, clustered. Really, the only exception is in the agricultural Peace Country, but even in that region the farms are the biggest in Alberta. In rural eastern Alberta and rural southern Alberta every section and quarter section of land has a homestead on it, and there are many more small communities, which makes having effective representation in a large riding far more challenging in southern Alberta compared to northern Alberta. I firmly believe that if a larger riding has to be created, then the northern ridings, not the southern and eastern ridings, should get bigger.

For the special case of Fort McMurray, firstly, I really have to object to the idea that Stats Canada subtracted 9,180 people from the census numbers from May 10. Nowhere else in the province were subsequent surveys done of people to see who might have moved or intended to move. The reduction in numbers should not be used as using this is unfair to the RMWB, and it's inaccurate as many people had no idea what their plans actually were. The stress after the fire made it so that many people may have changed their minds. I have many examples of people that had no intention of returning to Fort McMurray and have returned.

The population of Fort McMurray-Conklin was listed at 17,129 in the 2016 census whereas it was 39,657 during the electoral boundary review in 2010. Nobody believes that in six years 22,000 people left one of the largest growing communities in Alberta. Fort McMurray has had a perennial issue of people not giving accurate information to Stats Canada because they were afraid of being reported to the CRA because there are so many illegal basement suites and unique living situations that exist in Fort McMurray. This is a perennial issue. The RMWB has done all kinds of unique censuses where they've looked at the water usage per person in the community to prove how much the population actually has to be, because even going door to door is very challenging in that community.

Obviously, the census is wrong, as I mentioned earlier, and it's undoubtedly because of the fire and the evacuations. The panel should accept that the census is wrong and move the boundaries

between Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo and Fort McMurray-Conklin to equalize the dwellings between the two ridings. I do firmly believe that the RMWB should continue to have two ridings, and I am certain that when a municipal census is done, it will confirm that the committee will have done the right thing if it leaves the RMWB with two ridings.

I'm sorry that I went a little over. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Not at all. You've given us much food for thought here. I have some specific questions, and I'm just going to ask them to make sure that I clearly understand what you have to say and that I'm not confused by anything. The first comment that I've noted here is: you said that there are 76,000 more homes in Fort McMurray now than at some previous time?

**Ms Goodridge:** Seventy-six hundred.

**The Chair:** Seventy-six hundred. Okay. So 7,600 more homes in Fort McMurray now in comparison to when?

**Ms Goodridge:** Compared to 2011.

**The Chair:** Okay. Do you know how many of those homes would be in Fort McMurray-Conklin versus Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo? Half-and-half?

**Ms Goodridge:** Most of the new homes have been built in Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, and most of the expected growth is also going to be in Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**The Chair:** Did some of those new homes burn in the fire and are being rebuilt now?

**Ms Goodridge:** Yeah. Most of the burnt homes were in the Fort McMurray-Conklin riding.

**The Chair:** Then moving on, you talked about the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act allowing us to consider additional information to that provided by Statistics Canada. Now, we have been told that Statistics Canada did a follow-up census after the fire, and as a result of that, we've reduced our population figures for Fort McMurray by approximately 9,100 people. You may not know the answer to this question, but do you know when that follow-up census was done?

**Ms Goodridge:** I do not, and I have asked about 25 people, none of whom heard anything from census, so I'm not sure where that number would have come from.

**The Chair:** Okay. This is leading up to my next question, which is based on section 12 of the act, which says that we can use more recent population information than the province-wide census done in 2016 in conjunction with that 2016 census information. You've given us a lot of deductive commentary about why you think the census figures are wrong, but are you aware of any more recent population information that's actually been compiled by Fort McMurray or anybody who had a system for doing it since the fall of 2016?

**Ms Goodridge:** The one piece of data that I think might be of use, because I do not believe there will be a census, is the number of debit cards that were distributed in the aftermath of the fire, where they had to prove residency in Fort McMurray. There were over 50,000 households that were given debit cards, and that number was substantiated by Municipal Affairs in the looking forward six months after the fire document. That's 50,000 households, and Fort

McMurray is not a community where there's one person per household.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, just to get technical here, because that is my business as a judge, those 50,000 cards were distributed at about the time of the fire. That wouldn't have been after the fall census. We don't have any way of knowing whether each recipient of one of those cards has already moved back to Fort McMurray or has yet to move back.

**Ms Goodridge:** The school boards in Fort McMurray that were expecting a 10 per cent drop in enrolment have only seen a drop in enrolment of about 4 to 6 per cent, depending on the school board.

**The Chair:** Right. Okay.

Next question: your interpretation of Supreme Court of Canada jurisprudence.

**Ms Goodridge:** Shouldn't have done that.

11:20

**The Chair:** No. I'm interested. You said that you believed the Supreme Court of Canada said that the ombudsman role of a Member of the Legislative Assembly is more important than the MLA's duty to represent their constituents, and this is news to me. We did a case law search of all of the law relating to electoral boundaries over decades, including the Supreme Court of Canada statements in the 1991 Saskatchewan reference, and I don't recall that. So could you tell me where they said that?

**Ms Goodridge:** I'll have to get more information on that one.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thanks.

All right. When we were in Calgary earlier this week – and, you know, you don't have to defend this. But I want to ask you because we heard one thing in Calgary and you've told me something different, and I don't want you to not have an opportunity to respond to their view. You say that roughly right now the number of seats in the Legislature is 51 per cent between Edmonton and Calgary and the other 49 per cent in rural Alberta, but we heard representations in Calgary to the effect that if you counted the population in the other cities in Alberta – I believe there are 16 other cities, 18 in total – the actual number is about 65 per cent city resident versus 35 per cent other. Some of that other includes bedroom communities around Edmonton and Calgary that aren't part of the city but basically are inhabited by people who work in the city, like Chestermere-Rocky View, that surrounds most of Calgary. So that would up the number of people who are urban residents in Alberta in a wider sense of the word.

It's not that we've accepted that or not accepted that, but we've heard this theme of rural, urban everywhere we've gone. You're very well informed, so I wanted to give you a specific opportunity to respond to the argument that it's not so that there's a 51-49 split between seats in the Legislature at the moment between urban and rural but that the actual number of residents in Alberta who live in urban areas is upward of 65 per cent.

**Ms Goodridge:** I wouldn't totally disagree with that. However, I've lived in the Banff-Cochrane riding. There is a difference if you're in Edmonton-Centre or central Calgary compared to Banff-Cochrane even if you're in the community of Cochrane, which is, by all accounts, a bedroom community. There is a difference, and there is a difference in the representation. The one thing I've found is that when you go into rural Alberta, everyone knows who their MLA is and everybody knows who their MP is. You go to Edmonton or Calgary, nobody knows. It doesn't really matter as

much. It doesn't matter where they live. They're going to go to the MLA or the MP that's closest to where they live or work or that they see is on their view. The representation based on who it actually is means less, I find, than in most of rural Alberta.

**The Chair:** Okay. Next, forgive my ignorance of the highway system completely. When we had our earlier hearings, we heard about an ongoing problem in northern Alberta, which is the lack of a highway connection between Fort McMurray and Slave Lake or Fort McMurray and Peace River without coming down to Athabasca and going across. You've suggested that we join part of the Peace River constituency to the Lesser Slave Lake constituency, and you talked about highway 88. I don't know where highway 88 is, but really what I want to know is: is there a direct paved highway between High Level, Fort Vermilion, and La Crête and the town of Slave Lake?

**Ms Goodridge:** That's highway 88. It used to be called the Red Earth Creek dirt road or something along those lines.

**The Chair:** Any idea how long that travel distance would be?

**Ms Goodridge:** I can honestly tell you that I have not travelled it since it was paved.

**The Chair:** And when it was still gravel?

**Ms Goodridge:** We were putting up election signs and stopping very frequently, so I don't know. But it would be easily represented by one MLA, I believe, and it's currently represented by one federal Member of Parliament, a much larger community. It actually comes all the way down to Westlock and goes all the way up.

**The Chair:** All right. Thanks. Sorry; I've kind of dominated that, but I didn't want to miss any of my questions.

I'll now turn to our other commissioners and ask if they have any follow-up questions.

**Ms Livingstone:** Mine just follows directly on that question. We've got the Lesser Slave Lake map over there. I was wondering if you could just go and mark on it for us where highway 88 is. I'm sure we can look that up ourselves, but I'm just curious right now. Thank you.

**The Chair:** So the part that's on the map goes from Slave Lake to at least the border of the Lesser Slave Lake constituency with the Peace River constituency. Okay. Thank you.

Any other questions?

**Ms Munn:** We've known from the beginning of our work that the Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo and Fort McMurray-Conklin areas are going to present a special challenge in terms of getting it right because of the numbers. So the question is: if we are going to look at something outside of StatsCan 2016, we need to have a very good reason for why the numbers would be better. Is there going to be a municipal census in Fort McMurray in May or June or this year? Do you know?

**Ms Goodridge:** I'm not sure. I would suspect that there likely will be, to try and get more funding for the community.

**Ms Munn:** When the municipal census is done, and there certainly was one in – was there one in 2016 in Fort McMurray? It would have been a bad time. You don't know?

**Ms Goodridge:** I don't believe so.

**Ms Munn:** Was there one in 2015?

**Ms Goodridge:** I'm not a hundred per cent sure when the last municipal census was – actually, there was one in 2015.

**Ms Munn:** There was one in 2015?

**Ms Goodridge:** Yes, there definitely was one in 2015, and it found 125,000 people and change living in the specialized municipality of RMWB, and that included the shadow population.

**Ms Munn:** It does include the shadow population.

**Ms Goodridge:** And that's where the population number of 81,948, if you removed all the shadow population, came from.

**Ms Munn:** Do you think that a municipal census, if there were to be one done in 2017 in a timely fashion, would be more reliable than the StatsCan information?

**Ms Goodridge:** Yes.

**Ms Munn:** And why is that?

**Ms Goodridge:** Because, like I noted earlier, many people in Fort McMurray do not give accurate information to Statistics Canada out of fear that they will get charged by the CRA because they do not claim income on rental suites.

**Ms Munn:** But we can't prove that – right? – so we have to have something that's reliable, a good rationale . . .

**Ms Goodridge:** There's always been a large gap between the municipal census and the federal census in Fort McMurray. You can look back through the years, starting in probably 2000. That's when it really started.

**Ms Munn:** Okay. We've heard that same argument in Calgary, which is a municipality that hasn't done very much work on secondary suites, yet they're said to abound throughout the city. People don't report populations because of the same concern. But we can't rely on that. I am very interested in looking into whether or not there is going to be anything else that's more reliable than StatsCan because we are allowed to use it if it's there and it's a very special case. So I'll keep my ears open.

**Ms Goodridge:** But there are the exceptions, and you have the variance of up to 25 per cent. The one recommendation that I would give for the Fort McMurray ridings is to separate out the rural communities amongst the two ridings. So add the communities of Fort MacKay, Fort Chipewyan, and Fort Fitzgerald to Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo so as to split up the rural between the two, and take some of the urban population that is currently in the Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo riding and transfer it to Fort McMurray-Conklin, thereby equalizing those two population bases.

**Ms Munn:** You think that that would be an appropriate approach?

**Ms Goodridge:** I think it would make it much easier to have effective representation. Having the large rural communities and having the urban centres would allow that split.

**Ms Munn:** Where's the line drawn in the city of Fort McMurray right now?

**Ms Goodridge:** It's a very awkward line. It follows the highway through downtown and across the river, and then it goes up Thickwood Boulevard and it splits the community of Thickwood in

half. Half of Thickwood is part of Fort McMurray-Conklin, and half of Thickwood is part of Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. In the legislation it says to keep in mind communities. That is one very large community. Everybody in Fort McMurray identifies which community they live in, and that is split in two.

**11:30**

**Ms Munn:** Do you happen to know off the top of your head where there might be a more natural dividing line that would do what you're suggesting, that is, to split that central urban population more evenly?

**Ms Goodridge:** Well, currently the downtown population is part of the Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo riding. I would recommend putting that as part of Fort McMurray-Conklin, and in doing so, that's approximately 6,000 people or so. The other half of Thickwood that is in the Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo riding: transfer that over to Fort McMurray-Conklin so that the dividing line would be the communities of Dickinsfield and Wood Buffalo, and everything north of that would be Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Ms Munn:** Dickinsfield and . . .

**Ms Goodridge:** Wood Buffalo.

**Ms Munn:** Wood Buffalo and everything north.

**Ms Goodridge:** Everything north could be within the Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo riding, and everything south of that would be in Fort McMurray-Conklin. To me that would make more sense.

**Ms Munn:** Okay. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** I have another question. I'm excluding my people to the right, but when we were in St. Paul a couple of weeks ago and we were talking about their circumstance, the discussion touched on whether the Fort McMurray-Conklin boundary would have to move south. Now, I appreciate what you're saying here, and I'm not discounting it at all, but we have to consider all options. If, at the end of the day, we're left with a 63 per cent under figure, I'm hearing you say that part of that could be dealt with by moving the boundary between the two constituencies. But, further, if we had to move the boundary of Fort McMurray-Conklin south to pick up some more population, what's your view of adding Lac La Biche to the constituency? I mean, the highway between Edmonton and Fort McMurray goes through there.

**Ms Goodridge:** It does. There would be transportation commonalities; however, Lac La Biche is primarily an agricultural community, and Fort McMurray has no agriculture. I think it would make for a very difficult area to represent when most of the population is in one community and the interests and industry are drastically different. While there would be historical and transportation commonalities, I believe it would make for a very challenging representation.

**The Chair:** Okay. Now, it's going to get even worse here. You know, again, because it's a big number, you're the smallest constituency as we're looking at it right now. If we had to move down to St. Paul, that would add a more agricultural base to the population. You'd have St. Paul, Lac La Biche and Conklin. I'm just suggesting that because it might be necessary if we were just looking at the information we have now.

**Ms Goodridge:** I think adding St. Paul to Fort McMurray would be a very big mistake.

**The Chair:** And why is that?

**Ms Goodridge:** Historically they've been separated for decades on both the provincial and federal sides, and I do not believe that there are many commonalities between St. Paul, which is a historical francophone community, and Fort McMurray. Athabasca would have more in common.

**The Chair:** With?

**Ms Goodridge:** With Fort McMurray. And even then, it does not.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Ms Goodridge:** I'm not suggesting to add Athabasca. I'm simply stating that, like, adding St. Paul would be a very bad decision, in my opinion.

**The Chair:** Okay. Don't be alarmed. It's just people have made these suggestions. Everybody's got their own concerns, and sometimes it leads to suggestions that you haven't heard of before. I don't want to be sitting down with my fellow commissioners at a future time and saying: well, gee, I wonder what she thought about this.

The next suggestion, heard just yesterday, would be to do a connection right through to Lesser Slave Lake because of the northern connection, I guess. What are your thoughts on that?

**Ms Goodridge:** That used to be the federal boundary where it used to go all the way to High Prairie. It was a nightmare. The communities of Slave Lake and High Prairie do not have the same things and the same concerns as Fort McMurray. I hate to say that we're special, but kind of we're special, and I would implore you guys to keep that in mind. It would be a step back for our community to lose that representation.

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

**Mr. McLeod:** You mentioned that one of the suggestions is to include the downtown area and the Dickinsfield community. Is there a natural boundary there: a street, a road, a river?

**Ms Goodridge:** There's a creek.

**Mr. McLeod:** Pardon me?

**Ms Goodridge:** There's a creek.

**Mr. McLeod:** What's the name of the creek, please?

**Ms Goodridge:** I have no idea.

**Mr. McLeod:** Okay. In some cases we have natural boundaries like the Athabasca River and stuff like that. Sometimes it makes it . . .

**Ms Goodridge:** The natural boundary was when Fort McMurray was being developed in the early '70s. The area was called area 6, and that included Thickwood, and the Thickwood area went all the way up to the Birchwood trails, so the trails split between Thickwood, Dickinsfield, and Wood Buffalo. My recommendation would be that the community of Wood Buffalo starts at Real Martin Drive, and it's contained, and the community of Dickinsfield starts at Dickins Drive, and it is contained, so put those two communities, that are very contained communities, into the Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo riding. I think it would be very confusing to have the

community of Wood Buffalo not be in Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. McLeod:** The other question I have is: you talked about how Conklin had the majority of the loss of houses, but you also stated that it's on the Wood Buffalo side where the majority of the building is going to continue. Not so much on the Conklin side. Is that where the expansion is going to be, where you would see the housing growth?

**Ms Goodridge:** The newest communities that are growing are in Parsons Creek north, which are located within the Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo riding.

**Mr. McLeod:** Okay. Thank you very much.

**Mrs. Day:** Well, thank you for your presentation. I picked up a little bit. I didn't capture it all. Is the 2016 Municipal Affairs document called – and it offered some numbers or some . . .

**Ms Goodridge:** It's the Municipal Affairs population list. It takes into account the municipal census, Stats Canada, and the net undercoverage estimate.

**Mrs. Day:** Is it a document recently produced? Is there a year on that?

**Ms Goodridge:** There is. The 2016 one.

**Mrs. Day:** All right. Thank you. If we had a map – I mean, we've got all this in *Hansard* and stuff. We can relisten to it. But we don't happen to have a small map around of Fort McMurray that we could give to Laila to draw on? We've got lots of words, but maybe we could just get it in a physical drawing. That would be great.

**Mr. Elliott:** There are actually maps in my presentation.

**Mrs. Day:** I think we have some, and I know we took some of this down when we were in Fort McMurray as well, but the combination of the two things was very helpful.

**Ms Goodridge:** Had the census numbers been completed when you guys were in Fort McMurray, I would have made a presentation.

**The Chair:** Well, who knew there was going to be such a change? I didn't think there'd be much of a change myself based on those school enrolment population numbers.

**Ms Goodridge:** There you go. It's a really easy line. The line doesn't look like it makes sense except if you know the communities, and then it does make sense. Alternatively, you could use the river, depending on the populations, and I think the river would be very easy for the community. Everyone would recognize: okay, I'm north of the bridge or south of the bridge. That would be really easy. If the numbers work that way, do that.

**The Chair:** And the name of the river?

**Ms Goodridge:** The Athabasca. So it would very simply be: everyone north of the bridge, everyone south of the bridge. That would be the easiest fail-proof if the numbers allow that.

**Ms Livingstone:** I had just one more question. You mentioned that there was a municipal census in 2015. Do you know in that municipal census if it gives an estimate of shadow population versus permanent residents?

**Ms Goodridge:** Yup.

**Ms. Livingstone:** It does?

**Ms Goodridge:** Yup.

**Ms Livingstone:** Okay. Thank you.

**Ms Goodridge:** It actually breaks it all down.

**11:40**

**Ms Livingstone:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** And just a follow-up if I may. Does it give us the explanation of how they define shadow population? It's been suggested to us that the differences between municipal censuses and the federal census virtually everywhere in Alberta where there's been a municipal census is because of shadow population, so I wondered if you knew whether your municipal census defined how they established shadow population.

**Ms Goodridge:** I'm not a hundred per cent sure on that. However, I have worked in the constituency office in Fort McMurray, and I will say that the shadow population utilizes our constituency office at a much higher rate than people that live in Fort McMurray proper. If you were to look at federal boundaries, the riding of Muskoka is allowed to be substantially under in terms of population due to the massive cottage country shadow population, and I would recommend that you look to that if you were curious because I know in our Fort McMurray office we saw a massive uptake from the shadow population, and that's everything from people that live in basements and go back to Edmonton or people that live in camps and go back to wherever.

However, there are lots of people that refuse to admit that they live in Fort McMurray, but they don't live anywhere else, and that's something that you see in Fort McMurray that you really do not see anywhere else. They live in camp or they live in a bedroom in Fort McMurray. They say that home is Newfoundland or Edmonton or Calgary, but they never go home. They don't have property home. They just refuse to call Fort McMurray home.

**Mr. McLeod:** I'm confused. Okay. So we have this shadow population. Help me understand this a little bit more, okay? We have this shadow population that you're talking about that may add several thousand people.

**Ms Goodridge:** Oh, probably 25,000 or more.

**Mr. McLeod:** Twenty five thousand people. Do they vote?

**Ms Goodridge:** Fort McMurray has the lowest voter turnout in the province.

**The Chair:** Are they registered to vote in Fort McMurray?

**Ms Goodridge:** Depends. That was one of the things that was found very interesting when they were giving out the debit cards as many people had no other home location. They finally had to admit that they lived in Fort McMurray, but they didn't have any driver's licence or any documentation other than their work contract or their lease proving that they lived in Fort McMurray.

**Mr. McLeod:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thanks. Thanks for allowing us to cross-examine you.

**Ms Goodridge:** Sorry I went over.

**The Chair:** Mr. Elliott.

**Mrs. Hoffart:** May I just make a correction to something that I said?

**The Chair:** Sure.

**Mrs. Hoffart:** I said that our student population was 15,000. I don't know where that number came from in my head, but it's only 3,900. Thanks.

**The Chair:** Thirty-nine hundred. Okay. I was thinking there were lots of kids up there. All right. Thanks.

Mr. Elliott, I know you told us earlier the constituency in which you reside, but I can't remember it right off the top.

**Mr. Elliott:** Yes. I live in Calgary-North West still, two days later.

**The Chair:** A lot of water under the bridge in the last two days.

**Mr. Elliott:** I'm sure you're busy, busy.

I'd just like to have a couple of comments on the previous presentation first. You have to be very, very careful when people talk about urban versus rural because Statistics Canada – and here I'm reading from their website.

Statistics Canada has defined urban areas using the same methodology based on population size and density since the 1971 Census. An urban area was defined as having a population of at least 1,000 and a density of 400 or more people per square kilometre. All territory outside an urban area was defined as rural area.

By their definition I'll bet you'll find out that Westlock is an urban area. It's a different urban area than Calgary is.

The other point was about upcoming censuses. I can't speak for the city of Edmonton, but the city of Calgary conducts a census as of April 1 every year, so they will – well, I'm not sure they'll have people knocking on my door this year. They did last year. They do the census in sort of April, May, aggregate all the data, and generally release it in early July. That will be after your interim report, but it'll be before your final report. I think it would be important for you to get that data and use it in your work.

Let me start my formal presentation, then. I'm the chair of the electoral boundaries review subcommittee of the executive committee of the Wildrose Party of Alberta. The executive committee created this subcommittee earlier this year to manage our relationship with you and the work that you were doing.

Point 2 in my presentation. As much as is practicable, the subcommittee recommends that the commission keep the current boundaries for the existing 87 electoral divisions. Changing the boundaries will create confusion among the electors, so we recommend that the commission avoid it wherever possible. I think that's self-explanatory. As I said to you on Tuesday, many people don't even know we have three levels of government. When we change things, people have to relearn that going forward.

Point 3. The subcommittee recommends that the commission build walls around the cities of Calgary and Edmonton to separate the highly urban areas of the province from the rural areas, to maximize the effectiveness of the representation of the people who live in the rural areas. This is a figurative wall, not a literal wall. It really is very, very important to disaggregate the big cities from the rest of the province, in my opinion.

The previous commission created Calgary-Northern Hills as a compact electoral division and, as a result, had to create Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill from two disparate groups of communities: the older communities, adjacent to Nose Hill park, of Huntington Hills, established in 1967; Beddington Heights, established in 1979; Sandstone Valley, established in 1982; and MacEwan Glen,

established in 1982. The second grouping was the new community of Evanston, north of Stoney Trail. It was established in 2007. Since the commission was done in 2009, there weren't very many people in Evanston at that point in time.

The previous commission joined these two groups together by adding the Calgary International Airport to Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill. Nobody lives there, but at least now the two groups are contiguous because of doing that.

The subcommittee recommends that the commission not create electoral divisions like Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill because of the differing interests of the various communities, basically depending on how old they are and how established.

Fifthly, the subcommittee recommends that the commission ensure that no provincial electoral division has the same name as a federal electoral district. Again, it creates confusion among the electors. At the moment there are three provincial electoral divisions that have the same name as a federal electoral district: Edmonton-Centre, Edmonton-Strathcona, and Edmonton-Manning.

Electoral divisions in the three regions. StatsCan reports a population of 4,067,175 from the census. You've then taken that number, as you said earlier, added the 4,700 people in the Saddle Lake Indian reserve, and subtracted the 9,100 people who must have been included in the original census but who in the second census said that they weren't going to be moving back to Alberta or had left Alberta, something like that.

The average population, as you showed earlier, is 46,697; 50 per cent of that is 23,000 and change, 75 per cent is 35,000, and 125 per cent is 58,000.

The population of the city of Calgary as determined by StatsCan is 1,239,220, with a population density of 1,500 people per square kilometre.

**11:50**

Edmonton: StatsCan says 932,546, with a population density of 1,361 people per square kilometre.

Then the population of Alberta outside the cities: 1,890,000, with a population density of 2.9 people per square kilometre. The population densities: Calgary has 524 times the population density of the rural area, and Edmonton has 475. Very, very different places to live, quite frankly.

I'd say again here that the subcommittee recommends that the commission respect the boundaries of the cities of Calgary and Edmonton, primarily so that we do not reduce the effective representation of the people who live in rural Alberta. I would probably add the word "unduly" there. I mean, there are things that you may have to do in doing your work that might reduce the population, but I think it's important to keep the representation in rural Alberta as high as possible.

Calgary has 30.5 per cent of the population. If you multiply that times 87, it comes out to 26.54, which rounds up to 27. Edmonton: 22.95 per cent. If you multiply that times 87, it is 19.97, which rounds up to 20. That's one more than the current 19. So rural Alberta would have 40 electoral divisions. If you give Calgary 27 and Edmonton 20, there are only 40 left over.

Point 16, the population per electoral district: in Calgary, 45,900; in Edmonton, 46,600; in rural Alberta, 47,271. This means that if you strictly follow a mathematical approach, then rural Alberta will have the most people per electoral division, which will then tend to reduce the effectiveness of its representation since those MLAs will have to go further afield to consult with their constituents.

To increase the effectiveness of the representation in rural Alberta given its low population density and huge areas, the subcommittee recommends that the commission round the

calculated number of electoral divisions for Calgary from 26.54 down to 26 and thus make the number of electoral divisions in rural Alberta 41 rather than 40. What this does is give an average population per electoral division: Calgary, 47,662; Edmonton, 46,627; and rural Alberta, 46,118. So now rural Alberta has the fewest number of people per electoral division. I mean, this is more than a thousand, 1,100, fewer people per electoral division, which makes it easier to represent.

I want to talk about Calgary specifically. I've attached a map of the current electoral divisions, the 25 at the back, as attachment A. The Bow River is a natural boundary within the city of Calgary. There are three current electoral divisions that straddle the river: Calgary-Fort, Calgary-Acadia, and Calgary-South East. The subcommittee recommends that the commission ensure that a maximum of one electoral division straddles the Bow River, preferably around the periphery of the city because that's where there are the largest areas with the fewest people. You've got to include those people together, and it may be necessary to straddle the river to do that.

Calgary-Fort straddles the Bow River. I really think this is an accident of history because of the name, Calgary-Fort, in order to include Fort Calgary within Calgary-Fort. It's on the west side of the Bow River, very close to downtown, where the Elbow River flows into the Bow. The subcommittee recommends that you put the portion of Calgary-Fort west of the Bow River with Calgary-Buffalo and east of the Bow River with Calgary-Hays and Calgary-East.

Calgary-Acadia straddles the Bow River as well. We propose that you put the portion east of the Bow River with Calgary-Hays; north of Glenmore Trail with Calgary-Elbow; west of the Bow River, east of Macleod Trail, and south of Glenmore Trail with Calgary-Fish Creek; and west of Macleod Trail with Calgary-Glenmore.

Calgary-South East straddles the Bow River. Again, what we recommend you do here is add the portion of Calgary-South East west of the Bow River to a new electoral division and leave the portion of Calgary-South East east of the Bow River as Calgary-South East. You mentioned earlier that Calgary-South East has 92,000 people in it. You can split it right in two, and you're right on your average to do that.

I've created a map of the proposed 26 electoral divisions at the back as attachment B. They all have populations greater than 75 per cent of the average and less than 125 per cent of the average. None of them straddle the Bow River, and they respect all community boundaries within the city. So it's a suggestion for achieving many of the goals that you have.

The subcommittee recommends that the commission rename Calgary-Buffalo to Calgary-Downtown so that people know from its name where it is located. Varsity is one of the communities within the electoral division of Calgary-Varsity, and we recommend that you rename it Calgary-University, again so that people know where it is located based on its name.

You heard on Tuesday from Ric McIver about his proposal to rename Calgary-Greenway to Calgary-Bhullar in honour of Manmeet Bhullar, and we support that recommendation and would encourage you to carry it out.

Point 27. There's a map of the current 19 electoral divisions in Edmonton. The North Saskatchewan River is a natural boundary within the city of Edmonton. I say here that two current electoral divisions straddle the river, Edmonton-Riverview and Edmonton-South West, but I forgot about Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, which must straddle the river because the industrial area of Clover Bar is on the east side of the river but is not attached to any other part of the city of Edmonton. So to include it, you've got to straddle the North Saskatchewan.

Edmonton-Riverview: we recommend that you add the portion west of the North Saskatchewan River to Edmonton-Glenora and east of the North Saskatchewan River to Edmonton-Strathcona.

Edmonton-South West straddles the North Saskatchewan. It has a population at 171 per cent of the average. Again, you can split it in two and almost create two new electoral divisions out of it. Leave the portion east of the North Saskatchewan River as Edmonton-South West and add the portion of Edmonton-South West west of the North Saskatchewan River to a new electoral division west of Anthony Henday Drive.

I've included a map of the proposed 20 electoral divisions as attachment D. Again, they all have populations greater than 75 per cent of the average and less than 125 per cent of the average, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview straddles the North Saskatchewan River for the reasons I stated earlier, and they respect all community boundaries.

The subcommittee recommends that the commission rename Edmonton-Centre to Edmonton-Downtown, Edmonton-Strathcona to Edmonton-University, and Edmonton-Manning to Edmonton Northeast, again to avoid confusion with the federal electoral districts.

Rural Alberta. Two electoral divisions in rural Alberta have populations that exceed 125 per cent of the average. Again, I've included a map that shows the two. One is a bedroom community, Airdrie, for Calgary, and then Spruce Grove-St. Albert is a bedroom area for Edmonton.

#### 12:00

You talked about Airdrie on Tuesday in Calgary. The electoral division has a population at 138 per cent of the average. The city of Airdrie by itself is at 132 per cent. So you're going to need to take all of the rural area in the Airdrie electoral division, add it to Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, and then you're going to need to take some of the city of Airdrie itself and put it in with that riding as well in order to get the population down to 125 per cent.

Spruce Grove-St. Albert is at 134 per cent. You'll need to take some of the rural area in that electoral division and add it to adjacent electoral divisions to get the population down to 125 per cent.

Four electoral divisions in rural Alberta have populations less than 75 per cent of the average. Fort McMurray-Conklin is at 37 per cent; Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley is at 49 per cent; Lesser Slave Lake, 59 per cent; and West Yellowhead, 68 per cent. Again, I've provided a map of that.

The subcommittee recommends that the commission solve the underpopulation in Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley and Lesser Slave Lake by eliminating Peace River and adding a portion of it to Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley and another portion to Lesser Slave Lake. As the previous witness said, highway 88 enables an MLA based in Slave Lake to drive to the towns east of High Level and the residents of those towns to drive to Slave Lake.

The subcommittee recommends that the commission solve the underpopulation in West Yellowhead by eliminating Whitecourt-St. Anne and adding Whitecourt and the surrounding area to West Yellowhead to bring its population above 75 per cent of the average. The remainder will need to be added to Stony Plain, Drayton Valley-Devon, and Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock. Again, I've included a map to show what that proposal is.

Fort McMurray-Conklin had a population 17,129 during the census whereas when the previous commission did its work, it was 39,000, showing a loss of 22,000 people. That's not a real loss. Those people were evacuees to the cities because of the wildfire.

I've provided a map of Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, attachment H at the back. Down in the bottom left-hand corner this shows the urban part of Fort McMurray. The line coming in from

the bottom left, the vertical line: that's the existing boundary. Again, it follows the existing boundary through this Thickwood community, that the previous witness talked about, and then goes to the Athabasca River. My proposal is to follow the Athabasca River north there. This portion of downtown Fort McMurray would then be relocated from Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo to Fort McMurray-Conklin.

You can see that a little bit on the next map, which is Fort McMurray-Conklin. It just shows you a different perspective here on the boundary coming in and going out. Then the proposal here for Fort McMurray-Conklin is that as the boundary goes north on the Athabasca River, when you get to the north side of township 91, make the boundary a horizontal line along the north side of township 91 all the way to the Saskatchewan border.

What that does, then, is that it gives Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo an urban portion and a rural portion and the same with Fort McMurray-Conklin. It gives it an urban portion and a significant rural portion. Fort McMurray looks very similar to Grande Prairie in the way that it is divided up. There's sort of a horizontal line in Grande Prairie through the centre of the city. There's an urban chunk with a significant rural area to the north and the same thing to the south. The proposal here is to make Fort McMurray look like Grande Prairie. That's point 44.

Point 45. If the population of either Fort McMurray-Conklin or Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo is less than 75 per cent but more than 50 per cent, we recommend that you make them special electoral divisions under the provision that you have where you can make four of them going down to 50 per cent of the population. The situation in Fort McMurray is special, so it truly fits the meaning of that word. You have the opportunity to recognize it by making those two electoral divisions special if necessary.

Point 46. In Tuesday's hearing you talked to a presenter from Airdrie about: how should Airdrie be split up? Should it be split up on the Medicine Hat model or on the Grande Prairie model? I got to thinking about your question and what the answer is. I've included a map of Medicine Hat as attachment J, so you can see the riding, the electoral division, of Medicine Hat right in the centre. It's totally urban, so it gets up above 75 per cent of the average. There is then a piece of the city of Medicine Hat, again an urban area, and it's attached to all of the rural land around Medicine Hat. That's how the division is for those.

If the growth rate of these two electoral divisions is less than the population growth rate of the province as a whole, then the area here is going to need to expand to bring in more people, probably to the north, into the special areas. Maybe Oyen gets added in here eventually. What's happening: because it's so sparsely populated, to get from Medicine Hat to Oyen is a long distance.

For effective representation I think it would be better, then, to switch from the Medicine Hat model to the Grande Prairie model to make that representation more effective so that each of the two electoral divisions then would have a significant urban population, but the rural population would be divided more evenly rather than being all in Cypress-Medicine Hat, like it is right now. But you don't need to do that right now because of what the populations are. I think that's for a future commission to encounter when that happens.

In conclusion, you have the opportunity to draw the boundaries of the 87 electoral divisions to maximize the effectiveness of the representation of the people of Alberta in their Legislature. My subcommittee's recommendations in this report are ideas that it believes will help to achieve the above goal. Thank you for considering them in your work.

**The Chair:** Thanks very much for such a thorough presentation. We're finding as we go long that presentations with maps attached are very helpful.

I'm going to turn to my left to ask if there are any questions.

**Ms Munn:** I don't have any questions. Thanks.

**The Chair:** Questions?

**Mr. McLeod:** No.

**Mrs. Day:** I just have one. In the beginning, in the general comments, you made a comment about leaving all 87 ridings. So the other suggestions you have later on are if-we-had-to suggestions, but your first position is leaving the 87 ridings as they are?

**Mr. Elliott:** Yeah. Maybe what I mean there are the individual electoral divisions. There are some there that you don't need to change at all. For example, if you look at the map of Calgary that I provided to you as addendum B, I guess it is, you can see the black lines. There are some significant changes to some of the electoral divisions. But if you also look, you will see that Calgary-Bow is unchanged, Calgary-West is unchanged, Calgary-North West is unchanged, and Calgary-Mountain View is unchanged. They don't need to be changed within there to meet the constraints that you are working with. So I encourage you, where you can, to leave those electoral divisions as is.

*12:10*

**Mrs. Day:** Okay. So, just to encapsulate, you're saying, where we can, to leave them where they are?

**Mr. Elliott:** Yeah.

**Mrs. Day:** But you've suggested taking several ridings from the rural and putting them into the cities to equalize the numbers. Is that your position?

**Mr. Elliott:** Yeah.

**Mrs. Day:** Like, when I read this first position, I thought the other information was contrary to it. I'm just trying to make sure that I'm understanding what your position is.

**Mr. Elliott:** Sure. Maybe I should have phrased it differently. Not all of the electoral divisions need to change to meet the constraints that you are working with; for example, the ones in southern Alberta, the rural ones. Highwood doesn't need to change, Livingstone-Macleod doesn't need to change, Medicine Hat doesn't need to change, Cypress-Medicine Hat doesn't need to change, and Drumheller-Stettler doesn't need to change, so don't unless you need to, because it creates confusion. Like, when you change Airdrie by taking out this rural piece, you'll add people to Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. Maybe that will put Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills over the 125 per cent. I don't know. But if it does, then you're going to have to make changes again which ripple somewhere else. But minimize them. That is the point that I was trying to say.

**The Chair:** Okay. Good. Thanks so much.

**Mr. Elliott:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Mr. Piquette.



**Mr. Piquette:** All right. Well, good afternoon. My name is Colin Piquette, and I am the MLA for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater. First, I just want to thank you for accepting my request to present. Actually, I looked up the commission on the website, and there was a little thing to click, and I said: well, why not? You guys got back to me, so thank you. I should say that I respect that you guys have taken on this role. I don't envy you your job one bit. I think this is a very complex endeavour. It's really hard, when you're talking to participants, that we don't see things from perspectives that, you know, would tend to be advantageous to us. Right?

What I'd like to talk about – I don't want to talk specifically about my riding because, of course, I can't set aside my self-interest as the elected official representing it. However, I'd like to leave time in my presentation where as a rural MLA perhaps I can give some insight into some of the things that you might have been hearing from other people in rural areas, right? I think that trying to represent a large rural riding effectively has given me some insight into what some of the challenges are, you know, when it comes to that effective representation.

What I would like to talk about in the time is just to, I suppose, argue for, say, a generous view of the variances allowed under the legislation. I know that there are organizations out there that have been advocating very strongly that you take a much narrower view, that you try to equalize all the ridings as much as possible or, say, for example, like Public Interest Alberta, that you try to aim for a 5 per cent variance. I mean, they're basing that essentially on the whole one person, one vote as sort of a bedrock view of democracy, that that's what it means to be democratic. That's something that I want to – maybe "problematize" would be the word for it. I'm not sure that that's really as straightforward as it makes it appear. That has to do with, I think, the nature of our system and how it's evolved and the reality of representing widespread rural ridings and what's given up when you're looking just at population.

I guess the first thing is that our system is not really based fundamentally on a delegate approach to democracy, where, you know, as long as someone can send me a fax or a phone call or an e-mail and say, "I want you to vote X on this," that's how I'm actually going to represent them, right? We have a party system. We have a system that's based on an old British principle of representative democracy. Representative democracy is the idea that your MLA is more along the lines of a trustee type, where my job is to determine as much as possible what the best interests of my constituents are and act accordingly on that basis.

That type of approach to democracy means that you need to have a very different type of relationship with your constituents. It's not simply a matter of, you know: we think this, and this is where you go. There needs to be a relationship. There needs to be the ability to have kind of in-depth discussions with people and to build relationships. You can build up that sort of trust.

That becomes very problematic when you have areas where you have no clear centre to them. What I mean is that, you know, I've been around politics for a long time. I've knocked on doors in Edmonton-Strathcona and a lot of ridings in Edmonton. I know some of these ridings really well. It tends to be that despite the level of population, there are certain set numbers of access points for people, certain set numbers of organizations that people need to interrelate with. I mean, when you're relating with individuals, it tends to be that you really relate to them through groups, right? They organize their interests, so to be able to represent them, you need people to talk to these groups.

Now, for example, in a riding in Edmonton you might have one school trustee, right? You might have one city councillor. You might have one seniors' centre. You might have a couple of schools. In a rural riding you might have 15 to 20 seniors' centres. You

might have seven or eight municipal councils to deal with. You might have an extra 15 towns and villages to deal with. Even though, you know, it's a very simplistic approach to say that you can just simply trade off 50,000 people in an urban riding versus 50,000 people in a rural riding and that because of technological advances and things like that, it's easy to talk to them, I think that a lot gets lost that way.

I think that the more distance you put between representatives and the people they represent because of this lack of access, the more it attenuates people's overall commitment to democracy itself. I mean, there's one thing that we can say – and this is across the western world – that there's been a problem of alienation of citizens from their governments, and with that, you know, with the growth of sort of your technocratic approach to governance, there's no real role for the citizen or no real way for them to be able to access it, especially for rural people.

What I found that's been really critical is presence, you know, in order to overcome that alienation. I guess my particular thing, one thing I like to make a point of, is that I go to as many schools as I possibly can, and I talk to as many students as I can. Of course, one of the big reasons I want to do that is so that they consider provincial politics and governance and these things as part of their world, as something that they can actually influence. It's not something that's sort of distant. This is something that's very easy to access within urban ridings, but like I said, if you have a riding that is more spread out, it becomes a lot more difficult.

That also speaks to some of the informal roles that MLAs have, and one of them is to be almost like a ceremonial representative. If there's a ribbon cutting or if there's a Remembrance Day ceremony or any of those myriad types of events where people want to have some sort of a dignitary there, that's a role that we play. Now, once again, the larger you make a rural riding, the more you have issues with that because you could have – well, say, for example, I need to make it to two terms if I'm going to have a chance of going to every Legion in my riding for Remembrance Day, right? I mean, I'm going to try, but, you know, I guess that's kind of out of my control.

#### 12:20

Also, because these communities have enough distance that they're not directly competing with other, you'll very often have important events all happening simultaneously. I guess one thing for myself, personally, coming up: I'm a little worried about how the heck I'm going to handle the Canada 150 this summer – right? – because of all these events happening. What's the consequence of that? You have citizens in parts of constituencies that will very seldom see their representative and have a chance to interact with that representative. I think that really, you know, takes the human face off our system.

Finally, I think there's a critical reason for being generous with this variance in favour of rural Alberta. Now, maybe that is a bit self-interested because, of course, I'm from rural Alberta. But I think the reason why we've had this sort of informal, you know, kind of accommodation is because, I mean, it's founded on proper principle. The first principle is that democracies do not work normally when you have a permanent minority or when you have one group that is going to be consistently outweighed by the other group – that's a simple and pragmatic matter – because then your minorities tend to withdraw because, I mean, they're never going to actually have their opportunity.

Now, federally, our system of Confederation is designed around that understanding, so you have Prince Edward Island, that has similar constitutional, you know, rights to Alberta's or Ontario's or Quebec's. That's built into our federal system. Originally, when it

had a bit more power, the Canadian Senate fulfilled that role. Now, some provinces, after Confederation, had provincial Senates, and part of that was to fulfill that sort of balancing function. Without that, we don't really have anything.

Now, one of the previous presenters said that we have three levels of government. This is true enough. Constitutionally, really, we only have two. We have the federal, and we have provincial. Municipal government is a hundred per cent at the discretion of the provinces, so although they're excellent at [inaudible] and balancing that way, they don't have any other balancing role.

I know that's it very imperfect to use variances within ridings to try and make sure that, despite being a minority of it, rural representation is at least, you know, a little bit more balanced as opposed to urban, because there are different concerns. But it's the best we've got right now – right? – to be able to make that balance. I guess those are kind of why I think it's important that if you're going to be making the decisions on, you know, which ones are going to be allowed to be under, which ones are over, you're generous-minded towards rural constituencies.

**The Chair:** Thanks very much. I've got a question. I understand your position about being more generous toward variances in rural constituencies, particularly large ones, but our job is to consider every possibility. When we go through the province and look at each one of the 87 individually – and I'm sure that once we get to Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater and that review, we're going to ask ourselves: should the boundaries be increased to pick up some more population? I don't want to miss the opportunity to ask you that question so that we have your answer to assist us. If we felt that we had to increase the size of this constituency, which way would make the most sense: east, west, south?

**Mr. Piquette:** Oh, jeez. That's a difficult question to ask me because I have people on all sides that are saying that they, you know, would like to actually become part of it, too. Ask a politician: how can I – yeah. There are pros and cons each way.

Now, if you went east, I suppose it would make sense. I know that they've actually, you know, spoken to me, and I think they've spoken with the commission as well. Lac La Biche county has expressed interest in joining with Athabasca. There are good historical reasons for that. I mean, there are a lot of family connections. I mean, the settlement patterns, of course, came from Athabasca Landing through Lac La Biche trail, so you have these family connections through there. I come from Boyle, and I know that there are a lot of sections between the two, a lot of similarities. They share highway 63 as well, you know, on either side. They're similar that way, so that would make sense in that sense.

The thing with Lac La Biche, I guess, for representation would be that they also have two Métis settlements as well as, you know, a lot of other communities to the east. So it would be a challenge to represent these communities, I think, effectively because of how diverse they are. However, I mean, that makes sense in other ways.

The other way, I suppose, would be – and this is something I've heard from our side of Sturgeon county – to take in more of Sturgeon county itself, Morinville and that area. Once again, I mean, it makes sense on some levels, but these are all separate centres, right? I mean, that's the thing. When you have some of these ridings, you have a large centre, and then you have these little smaller communities, but the smaller communities actually feed into the centre. None of that is true about these communities. I mean, Lac La Biche, Athabasca, Morinville: these are centres in their own right, I guess, is the way to put that. But that would make sense.

You said the other direction was going north?

**The Chair:** Well, yesterday . . .

**Mr. Piquette:** You'd have to go a lot farther north to make any significant . . .

**The Chair:** Yesterday when we were in Lesser Slave Lake and I asked the same question there, they were casting their eyes east toward Athabasca, and at least one speaker said that he thought that Lesser Slave Lake had some community of interest with Athabasca.

**Mr. Piquette:** I think it's been more traditionally a competitive sort of relationship between Slave Lake and Athabasca, to tell you the truth. There'd be a lot more, actually, with Westlock than there would be with Slave Lake. You know, not to mistake him, but, I mean, especially if you're talking the community of Athabasca versus Athabasca county, there would be, like, no relationship, really, when you're getting into some of the further parts. Like, what do Slave Lake and Rochester have in common, right? Yeah. I'm not sure about that.

Were there any other suggestions you had questions about?

**The Chair:** I think you've covered them off. When we were in St. Paul, we heard talk of Lac La Biche, et cetera. Lac La Biche is very popular in this conversation. Everybody seems to want to have Lac La Biche.

**Mr. Piquette:** Everybody wants Lac La Biche, eh?

**The Chair:** Yeah, exactly.

I'm going to just turn to my fellow commissioners and ask if they have any questions.

**Ms Livingstone:** Yeah. I had just one. This is again along the same lines as something we heard yesterday. Yesterday we heard that your riding sort of runs north-south, long and narrow, and what we heard was that the northern parts sort of relate north to other areas; the southern parts relate south. We were asking one of the speakers yesterday what the divide line was for where people sort of think to the north, where people think to the south. So two questions. Do you agree with that north-south orientation of where people are relating? Two, if so, where do you think that line is where people sort of relate to communities to the north versus relate to communities to the south?

**Mr. Piquette:** If you give me a specific community that you're referring to.

**Ms Livingstone:** Someone had said yesterday – now I've forgotten. Does anyone remember what the community was?

**The Chair:** Well, that Sturgeon county is more a part of the trading area of St. Albert and Redwater perhaps is more closely aligned with the St. Paul-Two Hills area and Athabasca is more aligned with Lac La Biche is my recollection

**Mr. Piquette:** Yeah. I think that that's not really very accurate. Sturgeon county is really a fairly complex county. It's a rural county, and a part of it is a suburb of St. Albert. The Sturgeon valley along there, places like Riverstone and, you know, around the golf course, like, that area: yeah, their centre is St. Albert. Morinville: there's a lot of commerce in between, but it's a centre in its own right. Bon Accord and Gibbons: like, looking south they'd be much more Edmonton, like, north Edmonton.

12:30

However, they're also quite distinct. They have very distinct interests contraposed to it. I mean, they're smaller communities that

are really worried about being conflated with Edmonton where their interests sometimes would conflict with them, especially their interests in expanding. I'm speaking in particular about Bon Accord.

**The Chair:** Are they concerned about expropriation, eventually?

**Mr. Piquette:** Well, that and being that the capital region planning won't permit them to expand as a community.

Gibbons is happy to be part of the commission, but they're a distinct entity in their own right. Actually, they have a thriving commercial sector. Like, they're a real community. People just don't work in Edmonton. They definitely don't work in St. Albert. They would work in Lancaster Park. They would work in north Edmonton. They would work in Fort Saskatchewan. A huge number, though, would work in the Industrial Heartland area around Redwater. Redwater is much more a rural community. It is definitely not connected to St. Albert in any significant way. If you wanted, you know, communities that historically and familywise and all that Redwater is connected to – I mean, it used to be that Redwater was part of Thorhild county. It was taken out of Thorhild county, actually, over some dispute, but there's a lot of connection between Redwater, Thorhild, Waskatenau, Radway. That area would be where they would go. I meet families, and let's say that they've got seniors. One might be in the Radway auxiliary care. One might be in Diamond Spring. That's kind of how they would work there.

Did you ask about another community?

**Ms Livingstone:** I actually just looked at my map, and yesterday someone had suggested that Thorhild was actually maybe the line, that from that point everybody would relate more to the south than to the communities to the north. Do you agree with that?

**Mr. Piquette:** Do you mean the town of Thorhild? I mean the village, the hamlet of Thorhild. What am I saying?

**Ms Livingstone:** Basically, if we were to draw sort of a line east-west across your riding, they sort of felt that from where Thorhild is to the south, those communities would be relating more to other communities in a southerly direction than in a northerly direction.

**Mr. Piquette:** Well, I mean, that's the thing. As a matter of fact, communities like that – I know that when you look at the size of the province and you see these communities, these communities relate to themselves. That would be the honest kind of perspective on that. If you go to Thorhild, locally they relate to Thorhild, right? Would their interests be represented by putting them in with St. Albert? Definitely not. Culturally and economically they're entirely different types of communities with different interests. As far as similar concerns and interests, the thing would be more: are they rural communities? What's the age? Like, there are all these other factors that I think would be involved in that.

I'm not sure. Like, they want to say that everything, Waskatenau and that area, would all be put – where? With north Edmonton? With St. Albert? I'm just trying to envision where that would go.

**Ms Munn:** Just a follow-up question. This whole issue of taking the north part of the Athabasca riding and putting it into Lesser Slave Lake: do you think the perspective from a First Nations point of view is different? Does that make that suggestion more understandable?

**Mr. Piquette:** It gets really complicated. The other thing, of course, is that we're talking about communities as if they're like these black boxes. These communities are divided. You know, people have different opinions about where they should go. I'll give you an example. Calling Lake within my riding: it's a little bit of the MD of Opportunity. There's the Gambler reserve there. You would think: well, this should be with Wabasca, right? I mean, this should be with Lesser Slave Lake. It would seem to make sense on that ground.

**Ms Munn:** That's basically what we heard yesterday.

**Mr. Piquette:** Yeah, but it depends on who you talk to from Calling Lake.

**Ms Munn:** All right.

**Mr. Piquette:** If you talked to everybody, they'd probably say: well, no. I mean, the level of it is that some years back the people of Calling Lake built their own road to Athabasca because they were denied a road. They actually hired and got their own bulldozers and all that and, you know, built a road that way. That's going back some years, I guess. I used to run an insurance agency in Athabasca some years ago. I had a lot of clients from Calling Lake. Actually, I'd say that probably the majority of clients were from Calling Lake, that area. A lot of people do their shopping there, too.

I mean, even though you would think that because it's a majority aboriginal community, it would go the other way, actually it goes to Athabasca. Plus, they don't want to be lost within the larger Wabasca community, if you know what I mean. There are tensions within that area where because they're part of the MD of Opportunity and the preponderance of population is concentrated on Wabasca, they all feel like they're being sort of left out. If you talk to people there, they have a divided opinion about it.

I wish I could give you an easy answer on that.

**Ms Munn:** So that division isn't based on First Nation, non First Nation.

**Mr. Piquette:** No. I don't think so, not in that particular area.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much. You've been extremely helpful. It's always great to hear from somebody with so much knowledge of a constituency. Thanks.

**Mr. Piquette:** If you have any other questions, don't hesitate to give me a call.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

All right. Our last registered speaker is Doris Splane.

**Ms Splane:** I was going to say good morning, but I think morning has slipped away on us here. I just want to thank you for giving us an opportunity to speak to the issue of the constituency boundaries. I am the reeve of Athabasca county, and I'm hearing lots around here, so I'm very interested in the comments that have been going on.

As a council we do have concerns about any changes to our present constituency boundaries and how those potential changes may affect our residents. Firstly, expanding the geographical size of our constituency would mean less effective representation for our people because, as you've heard earlier, one person would have a much greater area to go around. Athabasca county alone has 6,124 square kilometres, and that's just a part of the constituency.

Secondly, we would like to see the 25 per cent variance maintained as best possible to again protect our people's representative voice. We have concerns about the rural voice, and we need to be able to have a fair voice at the table. That is something that we would like considered.

Thirdly, where possible, we would like to see the constituency boundaries not divide municipalities. I know that is already a part of the new legislation that I think came in '09. In the past this has created confusion, and having multiple MLAs sometimes leads to regional differences within our constituencies as well.

As you can see, our requests are basically focused on not losing any of our representation and continuing to have a strong rural voice. I do thank you for that. Thank you for coming and allowing us to speak to you.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Our pleasure. I'm going to ask you the same question I've asked every other person through all of our public hearings. I understand your position that you don't want to have any change, but as I said to the last speaker, when we get to considering your constituency and our review of all constituencies, we're going to have to ask ourselves: what are our options? One of those options is to move the boundaries so that you pick up more population so that you're closer to the average. If we had to do that, in your mind, what makes the best fit? Moving it east toward Lac La Biche, west toward Westlock, south to pick up some of the areas in Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville? I don't know. Everything's possible. What do you think?

**Ms Splane:** We've just been working on our municipal development plan and land-use bylaw and stuff, and recently we've been doing the agricultural component. There is a very strong back-and-forth with Westlock or that area because of the agricultural people within our area. Listening even reminded me, when Colin was talking about Calling Lake: that is something that we work well with, the Calling Lake people. We have committees with them for vans and one and all for handicap services, things like that. As a municipality, as a council we do meet back and forth with the council from Opportunity. We're actually going up there at the

beginning of March again concerning the bridge across the river at Athabasca, that sort of thing.

**12:40**

We have had meetings with Lac La Biche, not as often. I've been on council now for well over 15 years, and at one time we did have a greater working relationship with Slave Lake, but it just seems to have lost interest. I'm not sure why that happened.

**The Chair:** Thanks very much.  
Any questions?

**Ms Munn:** I don't have any questions, thanks.

**Mrs. Day:** I'm just looking at the map quickly, but I just want to verify with you that Athabasca county is currently fully encompassed within Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

**Ms Splane:** Yes, it is now.

**Mrs. Day:** It looks like it is, but I wanted to make sure. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

Now, I did say at the beginning that there would be room for other speakers. We have gone past our 12:30 time, but I want to honour that promise. If there's anybody else here who'd like to come forward and speak to us, briefly perhaps, please do it right now. Anybody else in the room?

All right. Well, thank you very much. I'd like to remind you again that we will be making a set of interim recommendations that will be filed with the Legislature by May 31 of this year and will be posted on our website, so please check our website on or after May 31 to see what those recommendations are. If you have any input, thoughts, comments, or suggestions about them, please, at minimum, write to us. Otherwise, think about registering to appear in our next round of public hearings.

Thanks very much.

[The hearing adjourned at 12:42 p.m.]







