



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Public Hearings

Grande Prairie

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12:59 p.m.

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**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**

**Electoral Boundaries Commission**

Justice Myra Bielby, Chair

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

**Support Staff**

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

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

## **Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Grande Prairie**

### **Public Participants**

Leanne Beaupre, Reeve, County of Grande Prairie  
Adele Boucher  
Gary Burgess, Mayor, Village of Hythe  
Tom Burton, Councillor, Municipal District of Greenview  
Cindy Clarke, Councillor, Saddle Hills County  
Wayne Drysdale, MLA, Grande Prairie-Wapiti  
James Friesen  
Dale Gervais, Reeve, Municipal District of Greenview  
Bill Given, Mayor, City of Grande Prairie  
Leona Hanson, Mayor, Town of Beaverlodge  
Andre Harpe  
Bob Marshall, Councillor, County of Grande Prairie  
Ken Matthews, Reeve, County of Big Lakes  
Dianne Nellis, Constituency Assistant, Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley  
Eric Rosendahl, MLA, West Yellowhead  
Todd Russell  
Lee Suederus  
Chris Turnmire, Mayor, Town of Wembley



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[Justice Bielby in the chair]

**The Chair:** Good afternoon. Thanks very much for coming out to this public hearing of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. You're the first hearing we're having in regard to our second round of hearings, the first hearing we're having to deal with our interim report, in which we make 87 recommendations in relation to the boundaries of the various constituencies, or electoral divisions, in Alberta. I am gratified to see so many people out here this afternoon. We were scheduled to come in January, but instead we spent a delightful nine hours in the Peace River Airport waiting to be able to go anywhere. I'm sorry we missed you, but I'm glad you were able to come out today.

I'm Justice Myra Bielby. In my day job I'm a judge of the Court of Appeal of Alberta living in Edmonton. At the moment I'm also chair of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. I'd like to introduce the other commissioners: Jean Munn from Calgary, on my far left, and Laurie Livingstone from Calgary. Then on my far right we have Gwen Day from Carstairs and Bruce McLeod, mayor of Acme, who round out the commission.

Being the first hearing, you're also being the guinea pigs for this slide show.

The job of the Electoral Boundaries Commission is to make recommendations to the Legislature as to any changes that should be made to the constituency boundaries in Alberta to ensure continued effective representation of Albertans in future provincial elections. Representation by population is a fundamental principle of democracy. As a result, the Legislature in 2009 passed this piece of legislation called the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. It replaced earlier legislation that did the same thing, essentially, and that sets up a review periodically, now every eight to 10 years, to look at Alberta's boundaries to see whether any changes should take place to ensure that we've got continued effective representation in the future.

We had a round of public hearings in the winter. We received 749 written submissions in the winter, which was terrific. From that, we had some deliberations, and we came up with 87 recommendations that we've put out in this report, the hardcover of this report, but it's also available electronically to anyone at our website, abebc.ca. We're here now starting a review around the province of what Albertans think about our recommendations and if they have any suggestions for refining our recommendations or changing them completely. The goal is that by October 24 we will have prepared a final report, which we'll table with the Speaker of the Legislature at that time, and then it will be up to the Legislature to determine whether it should enact legislation changing electoral boundaries to reflect our recommendations or otherwise.

As an introduction here I thought I'd talk about the process that's set out in this act and the process that we've attempted to follow in our work to this point. First of all, we start by calculating the average number of people that each constituency in Alberta might hold if they were all exactly the same size. Now, that's not the test, but that's the starting point. The Supreme Court of Canada has told us that that's where we start. Happily, we have relatively recent population information available to us. The 2016 federal census was published. Population figures became available on February 8 of this year. The legislation requires us to use those figures for population calculation for the entirety of our work, so that's what we've done. That was an easy division. We took the population of Alberta as set out in the StatsCan census, 4,065,000 people, divided that by 87, and we came up with our average figure of 46,697 people. That's important only because it's the starting point.

After we calculate that starting point, we look at the population figures for each constituency as they are right now. I don't know whether you had a chance to look at the map of Alberta at the back, but it contains each of the current constituencies and the current population of each of those constituencies and the percentage by which they're over or under the provincial average. That's relevant to this test because we then look at that, and if they're over or under by anything other than a negligible degree, we then look at other criteria to see whether these criteria indicate that we should leave the boundaries where they are nonetheless or whether they have to be moved, maybe, to ensure continued effective representation.

When you think about it a little bit – I mean, my favourite example is that if we had an election today, a vote cast in Jasper, Alberta, would be worth three and a half times a vote cast in southeast Calgary because of the enormous differential in the rate of growth in those two communities over the last eight years, since the last time this Electoral Boundaries Commission was done. That's the most dramatic example in the province, but there are other changes that require some thought, and that's what we've been trying to do in our work here.

1:05

The legislation says that the criteria that we have to take into account include common community interests and organizations. In making a recommendation for change, we're to try to avoid cutting up communities if possible, not just towns or villages but agricultural communities, mining communities, university communities, business communities, different communities of interest within the province. We're to try to keep them together if possible. That's one of the criteria.

Another criteria is community and neighbourhood boundaries in Edmonton and Calgary. That's specifically set out. They're, of course, the largest two communities that we have in Alberta, and we're to try to avoid crossing those boundaries if we can in coming up with our recommendations.

Next we have municipal boundaries. The act says that we shouldn't cut up municipal boundaries if we can avoid it. We should keep each town and city within one constituency. Now, you know that that didn't happen the last time in Grande Prairie, and there's not an absolute prohibition against that happening. In proper circumstances it can happen, but if those circumstances don't exist, we're to try to keep communities, particularly smaller towns and villages, all within one constituency. Last time – and I'm sure it was a mistake – the boundaries commission cut Tofield in half, and we're going to try to avoid that type of decision this time.

We're to follow natural boundaries if we can, so if there's a river or a highway that suggests a boundary, we should consider trying to use it as a boundary so that people can more readily understand where their constituency is. They can say, "Oh, yeah; we go up to highway 2" or whatever the boundary is.

Another criteria is projected growth rates. Alberta has grown enormously during the last eight years, since the last time the boundaries commission – not us, our predecessors – made a report. We had the fastest growth rate in Canada. We grew by 14.1 per cent. Vancouver grew by 6.9 per cent in that same period, so that gives you a bit of an idea of the rapidity of the growth, and that is net of anybody who might have left because of the downturn in the oil and gas economy. That's a pretty big growth rate, and the challenge for the boundaries commission is that not all of those people moved into each of Alberta's 87 constituencies in equal numbers. They tended to favour certain areas over other areas, and Grande Prairie is one of the areas they tended to favour. Grande Prairie has had a much higher growth rate than other parts of the rest of the province, than Vegreville, for example, or Jasper.

The considerations we've had in the back of our minds as we've done our work is: will a certain area continue to grow quickly over the future next eight to 10 years, until the next boundaries commission, or is that area going to have a lower rate of growth than the provincial average? Virtually every area has grown somewhat. We're not like in the Maritimes, where we're looking at which area has shrunk faster than another. Virtually no area has shrunk, but migration, primarily from eastern Canada, has been rapid in regard to Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer, Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray and not so rapid in relation to the rest of the province.

This is all important because our goal is to try to maintain effective representation by our MLAs. In designing constituencies, we want to keep in mind the goal of trying to maximize the ability of Albertans to contact their MLA, to have access to their MLA, and for their MLA to have access to them, to know what their issues and concerns are so that they can more effectively represent their constituents.

Of course, the final consideration is public input. That's why we've gone around the province in the winter and now we're going around again, to try to get public input, to see what Albertans' views are not just on the whole philosophy of electoral redistricting but also on whether we've got it right for their particular constituency or whether we've made another Tofield-like mistake. Did we cut this up? Did we not keep a boundary of a county together that we could have? So that sort of more granular consideration.

Last time we held public hearings in 14 locations across the province and accepted 749 written submissions. This time we're holding hearings in Grande Prairie today, three in Edmonton, one in Vermilion, three in Calgary, one in Brooks, and one in Red Deer ending a week today. We're still accepting written submissions. We were over 500 the last time I looked, so it's been gratifying, the amount of response that we've had.

All of the recommendations contained in our interim report are subject to change, to refinement based on your feedback, and we'll consider the feedback that you give us here today as well as anything gathered from the written submissions that are made.

Once we've completed the second round of public consultation, as I say, we'll prepare our final set of recommendations and file that with the Speaker of the Legislature by the 23rd of October, five months after we filed the interim report. That's the reason for that date. Then it's up to the Legislative Assembly to decide whether to enact legislation changing the constituency boundaries based on these recommendations or otherwise prior to the next provincial election. Normally, because these revisions are for eight to 10 years, they last through two provincial elections, so our work will probably last through two provincial elections forthcoming if it's accepted by the Legislature. Again, we're doing this because we're required to do it by law, because the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act requires this process to be done this year.

That's what our goal is, and the process that we've adopted here today to try to get as many people up to the microphone as possible is that you've been registering as you come in – you had to register online if you were interested in speaking – and then we're taking you in order of showing up here today and giving your name to the clerk at the door. We will limit each speaker to 10 minutes, and that includes your presentation and any questions or comments the panel might have. We were quite interactive last time because we're trying to get as much information out of you as we can as well as vice versa. If there's any time left at the end, then we'll try to extend an opportunity to anybody who would like to speak who wasn't registered, just depending on how time allows.

Now, be aware that *Hansard* is here. Everything that we say is being taken down in writing, and a transcript will be produced. That will be posted on our website. It usually takes a couple of days.

There's also an audio recording. Last time the audio recording went up later the same day as the hearing, so you can go into [abebc.ca](http://abebc.ca) and hear this all over again if you'd like to later on today.

With that introduction, I'll just point out the maps that we've put around the room. It helped me, anyway, the last time we held these hearings to actually have the maps of the constituencies out so we know what we're talking about. Right up at the front we've got the proposed maps for the redistricting. You've got Grande Prairie, which is entirely within the city of Grande Prairie, and then what we're calling a blended constituency, a part in the city and a part outside of the city, in Grande Prairie-Smoky. Grande Prairie-Wapiti no longer exists as a result of this decision. It's not that it no longer exists. It becomes part of two other constituencies.

If we look at where we're at – I'm trying not to blind anyone with this – these are our current constituencies. If you look at the shape of the two of them, you'll see that the northwest corner here of Grande Prairie-Wapiti is gone, and it's been added to Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley at the back. That's because we're required by law. There's not a question of discretion. The law says that you can't allow any constituency below 50 per cent of the average population, a population of less than 46,697 people.

Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley had a lower population, so we had to look at adding some population. Because it was bounded by Lesser Slave Lake and Peace River, both of which are well below the provincial average, the only place to turn was Grande Prairie. We heard many presenters the first time around saying that the northwest part of the constituency – you may not agree with them, but this is why we did it – of Grande Prairie-Wapiti was agricultural and very similar economically to parts of Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley. So we extended that constituency down to the Wapiti River, the path of the Wapiti River. That's why the border looks wiggly. That's the course of the river. What we have left of the current two constituencies, then, is all of Grande Prairie-Smoky and part of Grande Prairie-Wapiti, which we are recommending be recombined, reconfigured into one totally city constituency and one blended consistency. That's what we're doing in this area on the basis of our interim recommendations, but we're here to hear from you as to what you think about that and why.

With that in mind, I'm going to call on our first registered speaker, Mr. Gary Burgess. If you would come up and take your place at the microphone and tell me which constituency you live in, Mr. Burgess, before you get going.

**1:15**

**Mr. Burgess:** Okay. I'm from Hythe. I'm mayor for the village of Hythe.

**The Chair:** Excuse me, but is Hythe in Wapiti or ...

**Mr. Burgess:** Wapiti.

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

**Mr. Burgess:** Just go ahead?

**The Chair:** Yes, please do.

**Mr. Burgess:** Okay. Hythe village council wishes to register its disapproval of a proposed electoral boundary change noted in the commission's interim report. The removal of our village from Grande Prairie area constituency to the Central Peace-Notley riding does not make sense for Hythe. Our community's natural trade routes and political identity have always been part of the Grande Prairie area. The partnerships we form with other local governments in many areas of endeavour are based on that premise.

Grande Prairie and area were the first group of municipalities in Alberta to form a regional organization to deal with emergency response and management on an ongoing basis. Hythe has been a proud member of GPREP, Grande Prairie regional emergency partnership, since its inception in 2008. When we deal with regional waterlines, tourism promotion, physician recruitment, RCMP administration, or recreation, we talk to regional organizations and intermunicipal communities based in or near Grande Prairie. We have always worked together when it made sense to do so.

We would be quite concerned if we had an MLA that's not familiar with our area or our people. Presently the office of the MLA for Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley is based in Fairview, with a satellite office in Falher. Even if those constituency boundaries are extended southward, we could still assume that the office should be in a central location for all its constituents, so it could possibly remain in Fairview. That's an hour and a half drive from Hythe for us and our residents. That distance is substantially more than what we're accustomed to. It could discourage face-to-face meetings with the MLA.

We appreciate that the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission has a difficult task in dealing with rural population densities and trends and that the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission Act creates conditions that must be respected. Our councillors' first preference would be to stay with the status quo in terms of this area's constituency boundaries, but if the commission must make changes, it should make changes that respect the historical boundaries and the cohesiveness of our region surrounding the city of Grande Prairie.

Thank you for giving time for representation.

**The Chair:** Thanks. I'll lead off with a question. Mr. Burgess, do you have any suggestions for how we could leave Hythe in Grande Prairie but still add to the population of Central Peace-Notley, which is what we're calling it now to shorten the name, to get their numbers up?

**Mr. Burgess:** Yeah. I really don't know how. Like, the way I see it is that if you put us in that constituency, we're still not going to be big enough. You still have to give us special permission, right?

**The Chair:** Right.

**Mr. Burgess:** So why change it?

**The Chair:** Because the act says that we can't go as low as we are. The act says that the bottom is 50 per cent, and Central Peace-Notley is now 51 per cent below and dropping, so something has to happen there. That's what's driven this all, actually.

**Mr. Burgess:** Yeah. Well, I know that my other colleagues that are going to be presenting today – we've kind of had a big meeting, and they've got some more . . .

**The Chair:** Concrete suggestions?

**Mr. Burgess:** . . . yeah, suggestions for that.

**The Chair:** Okay. That would be great. Particularly of interest to me is: could we take part of that triangle that we've added to Central Peace-Notley but maybe not all of it, maybe not the part that contains Hythe – I mean, I'm not familiar enough with the area; obviously, you're very familiar with it – that would solve the problem without moving Hythe?

**Mr. Burgess:** Yeah. Maybe you could if you left Hythe, Beaverlodge, and Wembley where they are.

**The Chair:** But are there going to be enough people, then, to make any difference? That's the whole core of the population in your area, is it not?

**Mr. Burgess:** Right.

**The Chair:** Okay. That's the problem, I mean, just to tell you frankly what the problem is.

**Mr. Burgess:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Okay. Now, before you leave, I'm going to ask if there are any questions from the commissioners.

**Mr. McLeod:** Just a quick question. You probably work a lot with your county, right? Have the county outlines – I'm going to use the word "violated" instead – been disturbed by this new change, do you think?

**Mr. Burgess:** Are they disturbed by the new change?

**Mr. McLeod:** Yeah. I mean, have we split the county? I just need to know. I'm sure the county folks will be making a presentation.

**Mr. Burgess:** Yeah. I think you'd better ask them.

**Mr. McLeod:** Okay. I'm just wondering where Hythe is. What county are you in?

**Mr. Burgess:** We're in Grande Prairie county.

**Mr. McLeod:** Okay. Grande Prairie? Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much. It's hard to be first.

**Mr. Burgess:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** All right. Andre Harpe.

**Mr. Harpe:** Good afternoon. Basically, I'm representing myself today as a voter. There are going to be lots of municipalities out here today and other people representing bigger areas. I strictly look at this as an interested person. I actually live in . . .

**The Chair:** If I can interrupt, which constituency do you live in?

**Mr. Harpe:** I was just going to get to that. I live in Grande Prairie-Wapiti, in a small place called Valhalla Centre, which is on the northwest edge, not too far away from Hythe.

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Harpe:** Okay. Basically, I was just looking through and rereading some of the report today, but a lot of the considerations you take such as voter parity, common interests, and geographical features, to me, you've totally disregarded in getting rid of Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Voter parity. You know, I look at it, and I think, as the previous speaker just talked about, this new riding, if it comes about, is – as somebody that likes to be able to access their MLA on a regular basis, I don't know how I'm going to be able to do that just for the fact that that MLA is going to be so busy trying to meet with different constituents of theirs. Just take, for example, I was looking at the proposed ridings for Edmonton. Basically, I believe there are 20 ridings being proposed. This one MLA would have the same number of municipalities and school boards and other interest groups that they have to look after plus whatever issues the constituents have. I don't know if you don't like the MLA that's

there right now because, like, it's not workable. I just don't understand how it could work.

Geographical interests. There's an area of hills just north of us called the Saddle Hills. There's a wide band of hills there that basically has little population in it. It's a natural boundary. You were asking earlier on, you know: what can you do? I think we should draw a line there.

**The Chair:** And if we did that, if I can interrupt, how many people would be added to Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley?

**Mr. Harpe:** I have to admit, you know, like, I farm for a living. I haven't spent a lot of time trying to figure out where the numbers would go back and forth. I don't know what your budget is, but I think you'll be able to do that much better than I would be able to.

Common interests. It gets back to that we live in the county of Grande Prairie. We have the city of Grande Prairie right beside us. Basically, it's been this way for quite a while. What happens in the county, the city feels, and whatever happens in the city of Grande Prairie, you know, basically affects the county. You've talked about commercial flow lines, and where we do business at is a very natural flow.

It gets back to the same thing. No matter where the MLA's office would be, it is not going to be in the right place for the majority of that constituency. If they were to put an office in Beaverlodge, then Fairview, Falher would have a two-hour travel time if they need to talk to their MLA or vice versa.

1:25

I guess the other thing that you've talked about – you know, you talk about different things and what your job is. I have to admit that it is a tough job, but the big thing that struck me is that you talked about access to your MLA. For myself as a voter and as a constituent that's what I need, access. By proposing such a big constituency, I believe you're taking that away from me.

Anyway, my recommendation is to leave it as it is. It's worked well for the last quite a few years. I don't know why we'd change it.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you. I have no further questions.

Mrs. Day? Mr. McLeod?

**Mr. McLeod:** Not at this time.

**The Chair:** Ms Livingstone?

**Ms Livingstone:** No. I would just say that you may understand from the questions asked to the previous speaker, but right now the Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley constituency cannot by law stay the same.

**Mr. Harpe:** Right. I understand that part, but it gets back to – I guess I pointed out that there are some geographical areas in here where you could draw lines. I understand some changes have to be made, but also at the same time I don't understand why you would have to affect such a huge – the west side of the county, and I'm guessing it's about 8,000 people or so. It's a huge change for a lot of people just to make a change because you have to. You know, I think there might be some better areas that you could draw. Like, at 1 per cent you have to change it from 51 to, say, 50 per cent. How many people do you have to affect to change that?

**Ms Livingstone:** Sorry. I . . .

**Mr. Harpe:** I believe you were saying it was at 51 per cent, and by law you have to be at 50 per cent.

**Ms Livingstone:** At the maximum 50 per cent.

**Mr. Harpe:** Maximum. You can, you know, get special dispensation for it, but how many people do you have to bring into that constituency to bring it up to the 50 per cent or 49? By bringing in the county of Grande Prairie or the west side, you're bringing it from 51 per cent to I believe it's 30 per cent. You know, that's a huge change. Basically, you're affecting a lot of us and affecting our access to be able to talk to our MLA by moving those numbers when you don't have to move it that far.

**Ms Livingstone:** Just so I understand your suggestion, it's to move the boundary the absolute bare minimum to bring Central Peace-Notley to 50 per cent.

**Mr. Harpe:** Yes. Or at the most part leave the south side, the Saddle Hills, in Grande – whatever you want to call it, but I'd like to leave it in Grande Prairie-Wapiti. Like, the two MLAs for Grande Prairie, to me I believe, have been serving Grande Prairie and area very, very well. I don't understand why we'd want to change it. You know, if it's not broken, don't fix it I guess is the easy way to say it.

**Ms Livingstone:** The other question that I'd propose to you. As you know, when we have boundaries, when one moves, it changes the balance of everything else. One of the consistent submissions we've heard is that people feel that the ridings are too large. We can't change the number of ridings, so when we leave a riding at 50 per cent below, that means other ridings have to essentially pick up the slack, that they have to get bigger to accommodate that. You're okay with that, that other ridings have to be bigger so that Central Peace-Notley can be at negative 50?

**Mr. Harpe:** Well, let's put it this way. For us, you know, I live in a rural area. Basically, for a lot of the issues that affect me, I have to talk to my MLA because they are provincial in scope, such as fracking or water and stuff like that. Secondary roads: I access a lot of secondaries. A lot of it's a provincial matter. I've been to meetings, say, in, you know, Edmonton or Calgary where they're talking to two or three MLAs because they're all there together and they're concerned about a traffic light, you know, and I'm going: yes; personally I wouldn't have an issue. It's all got to be balanced, but the rural areas need representation, too.

To me it's unfair for us to have to drive two or three hours, where in, say, Edmonton you have access to up to 20 MLAs within that same amount of drive. I do know that when there are provincial issues, every MLA gets phoned whereas we have access to one. You know, in building a hospital in Grande Prairie, we have two MLAs to work with right now. The city of Edmonton: when they need a hospital built, they have 20.

**The Chair:** Just another point that I wanted to make that I hadn't made earlier is that at the moment the population in Grande Prairie-Wapiti is 17 per cent over the provincial average. That means you're kind of like the people in Jasper or you're kind of like the people in Calgary-South East. Your votes are worth less than the votes cast by people in other parts of the province because you have a larger number of people in your riding.

**Mr. Harpe:** Yeah. I guess I don't consider that. I don't think my vote is worth less than anybody else's.

**The Chair:** I'm just talking about mathematically.

**Mr. Harpe:** No. I know you've got mathematics, but when I go to vote, I go to vote for who I want to and who I want to represent me.



To me, it's not going to be that when I go there, I've got to get two people just to get – because in each constituency a vote is a vote, and I don't think it's worth less.

**The Chair:** Okay. But just so that everybody in the room understands, it will take approximately one vote more in Grande Prairie-Wapiti for every five people to elect a certain MLA than it would in Edmonton-Decore, which is right at par.

**Mr. Harpe:** Yeah. I guess, you know, you were at an interview this morning where you were talking about how there are perhaps more urban people than rural people in Grande Prairie-Wapiti. I live in the rural area. Actually, I live about 60 kilometres from Grande Prairie. I don't have that concern. I'm still – to me, a vote is a vote. I'm very happy with who has represented us for the last few years, and I don't feel that anybody has more votes or less votes.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Harpe:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** The next presenters: Lee Suederus and Allan Rowe. Thank you. I'm sure I've mispronounced your name. I apologize.

**Mr. Suederus:** Close. I'm actually in Central Peace-Notley. We're talking of expanding it. I've got to agree with the last two presenters. Expanding it in that direction is totally not going to work. Our MLA now can't service the area she has. I understand this thing is all mathematical, but we also have to bring other things into this besides straight mathematics, to be fair. In the city of Edmonton one MLA might represent – what? – 10 city blocks, maybe a little more.

**The Chair:** Calgary-North East. Not in Edmonton, but, yeah.

**Mr. Suederus:** Yeah. Okay.

**The Chair:** There are areas of high density.

**Mr. Suederus:** Yeah. Okay. The people there have got – what? – two rec centres, the same park. One guy can look after all those people very simply. Out here, with the miles of land and stuff that they have to look after, it's just not fair. The people in the city get their MLA to vote the way they want. They get 20 in Calgary voting one way, and it could affect us up here, and it leaves our taxpayers on the hook for paying for all the people in the city. Like, if they want to come out and use recreation facilities, if they want different things done in the oil and gas sector, the people in the country have to pay for this, yet we're being dictated to by the more heavily populated areas. There has to be something done somehow to counteract that stuff.

But as far as making Notley bigger, I can't see how you can possibly do it. As one of our other councillors suggested, it ain't broken, so let's not try and fix it.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. McLeod?

**Mr. McLeod:** No. I'm good. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Day? Ms Livingstone?

**Ms Livingstone:** I don't have any questions.

**The Chair:** All right.

Thanks very much.

All right. Dianne Nellis.

**Ms Nellis:** Good afternoon. I'm the constituency assistant for the MLA for Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley currently. She's not here today. She's unable to attend, so I'm reading her notes. Then I have my own presentation as well, but I'll do that at the end, like, if there's time, okay?

1:35

First of all, she says:

I would like to thank the commission for its ongoing work regarding the electoral divisions in Alberta. I know in particular that the rural ridings are a challenge due to their size and population. As a resident of Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley I am aware of these challenges, and I appreciate the attention that has so far been paid to ridings such as mine.

In the report you recommend that the southern border of the electoral division be moved south to the southern boundary of the town of Wembley, up to and including the Wapiti River, capturing Grande Prairie county, and, according to map 54, that Grimshaw also be removed from the riding.

I did listen to some of the hearings, and I would like to echo the testimony of January 19 that Grimshaw is central to our riding. Therefore, I would suggest that the commission consider keeping the electoral boundary of 2010 in this portion of the division.

I would also like to offer an alternative to capturing Grande Prairie county in the southwest portion of the map. I would argue that this area has its own unique challenges that will be better served by either creating an urban-rural riding with Grande Prairie or a riding that makes up greater Grande Prairie outside of the city proper.

Instead, the commission should consider capturing Crooked Creek, Debolt, New Fish Creek . . .

**The Chair:** Okay. Please hang on for a sec. I'm no threat to the court reporter.

**Ms Nellis:**

. . . Sturgeon Heights, and Valleyview in the division given that the infrastructure and highways connect this area to Central Peace-Notley. In this way, areas around Grande Prairie will be better served, as will the areas in the southeast of the division.

This will result in a division 35 per cent below the provincial average, still within the range of the special divisions, but will allow for a division that is connected through common economic shared interests and infrastructure, [that being] highways 43 and 49.

Thank you again for your continued attention to this important matter.

**Ms Munn:** If I might.

**The Chair:** Sure.

**Ms Munn:** Essentially, the recommendation is that for Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley, if the borders have got to be changed, they should be changed on the east side of Grande Prairie, not on the west side.

**Ms Nellis:** It would actually be even further east of Grande Prairie. It would sort of be east of Smoky River.

**The Chair:** In what constituency is that now?

**Ms Nellis:** I'm sorry. I don't know.

**Ms Munn:** Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Ms Nellis:** I think it's in Smoky.

**The Chair:** It's in Grande Prairie-Smoky. So take the northeast part of Grande Prairie-Smoky and put it into Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley?

**Ms Munn:** Yeah, as opposed to that south part down to the Wapiti River.

**Ms Nellis:** That would connect it better.

**The Chair:** Thanks.

**Ms Nellis:** Can I read other comments from her notes here? She says:

[Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley] should not lose its special status or be dissolved into neighbouring seats as has been suggested . . .

These are unique communities of interest, and it would be difficult for the MLAs to effectively represent this area [that's being presented or proposed].

The distance is just so great.

**The Chair:** I'm going to ask our clerk to come forward and post the map again, which just fell down. Great. Thank you.

Any questions?

**Mr. McLeod:** Just one. Would you mind giving those notes to the clerk? That way, we'll have it not only there, but we'll have it in writing. We can review it later, maybe tonight.

**Ms Nellis:** Absolutely.

**Mr. McLeod:** Thank you. I appreciate that.

**The Chair:** Okay. Just hang on for a sec.

Do you have any questions, Laurie? Any questions, Jean?

Okay. If I may say, we're really interested in specific suggestions here. This is a suggestion that would solve the problem and bring the other constituency within the 50 per cent, so it's particularly helpful. We want to make sure we get it right. It's not that we're saying: gee, this is the one for us. It's just that we want to know that we understand what the submission is when it comes down to it. If any others of you have specific ideas or suggestions – and I certainly hope you do – we'd like your notes when the time comes, too.

Thank you very much.

All right. Leanne Beaupre.

**Mrs. Beaupre:** Hon. Chair and members of the commission, good afternoon. I'm Reeve Leanne Beaupre, speaking on behalf of the county of Grande Prairie, which is the rural area, of course, outside of the Grande Prairie area. I'd like to thank you very much for meeting with us today. Personally, I live in the Grande Prairie-Wapiti area, but we also have Grande Prairie-Smoky and Grande Prairie-Wapiti representing our residents.

The county's position is that the commission has aimed for equal representation through population equity, recommending electoral boundaries with this goal in mind. However, the county maintains that when setting electoral boundaries, more than just population must be considered. Effective representation involves many factors, including equalizing population; the economic, social, and cultural interests of an area; the natural geography; weather; transportation networks; communication linkages; and reasonable access to our MLA.

The county's primary concern with the new electoral boundaries in our area is that these divisions group our northwest Alberta communities together in ways that do not properly reflect our communities and the natural boundaries between us. There are a

multitude of mutual issues and interests shared by communities along the corridor that encompasses northwest communities and Grande Prairie-Smoky communities to the east.

Section 3 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms as well as the Supreme Court decision on the topic of electoral boundaries, as referenced on page 9 of the interim report, state that effective representation takes into account factors like geography, community history, community interests, and minority representation.

With this in mind, the county's preferred option is to maintain the status quo, an option also supported by many of our neighbours, some of which you've already heard today, both on the north side of the Saddle Hills, which is a natural geographic boundary, as well as on the south side of those hills.

Our region under the current electoral boundaries has been very effective at developing partnerships that promote shared goals between our municipalities while supporting each municipality's autonomy and perspectives. This success can be measured by our region's strong economy, one of the most robust and fastest growing in the nation, an unemployment rate that sits below the national and provincial averages, and our competitiveness on a global scale. Two MLAs working on behalf of our region, both representing urban and rural voices, have been key to our success and our ability to optimize our region's assets. As many residents live in rural areas and work in urban areas or vice versa, they have shared rural and urban concerns. Under the current division the breadth of the priorities can be represented by both MLAs. These priorities range from transportation and regional health care to FireSmart work addressing mountain pine beetle and emergency services, to just name a few.

We believe that increasing the size of Grande Prairie-Smoky and taking in more communities will make it difficult to achieve proper and fair representation in this rural area. Extensive travel would significantly add to the workload of one MLA and make it difficult for rural constituents' voices to be heard and fairly represented. The city and the county populations continue to see an above-average growth rate, increasing at 13.5 per cent and 13.1 per cent respectively, and it is expected that this high growth will continue in both municipalities. As such, the population increase will be balanced between the two divisions. Under this proposed recommendation Central Peace-Notley would remain below the provincial average population and maintain special status.

While the county's preference is to maintain the status quo, should this not be an option, we present an alternative. This option recommends the creation of an urban Grande Prairie division, as this map will attest, that includes all of the city of Grande Prairie – and I mean all of the city of Grande Prairie, not two-thirds of it – and a Grande Prairie-Smoky division that includes all of the current rural and small-urban Grande Prairie-Smoky as well as rural and small-urban Grande Prairie-Wapiti. While this alternative increases the size of Grande Prairie-Smoky, it does take into account the MD of Greenview's natural boundaries along Valleyview and Fox Creek, which are part of our trading corridors.

**The Chair:** I'm going to interrupt you as you're reading, but I just want to make sure I understand this map. You're still keeping all of the city of Grande Prairie in one constituency, but you're creating a different kind of blended constituency for the remainder of the city of Grande Prairie than the one we propose?

1:45

**Mrs. Beaupre:** No. The one you're proposing actually takes in a third of the city population. It would be outside of the city urban municipality.

**The Chair:** Right.

**Mrs. Beaupre:** The county of Grande Prairie is proposing one rural, one totally urban, so the total population of the city of Grande Prairie – excuse me; I have a head cold – and then the population of the county of Grande Prairie, including that of Grande Prairie-Smoky, all the way to Fox Creek.

**The Chair:** I'm just going to interrupt here because I think that's illegal. We couldn't do that because your population, the city of Grande Prairie, is 63,000-some right now, and that's more than 25 per cent above the provincial average.

**Mrs. Beaupre:** Right. Just slightly above. I think it's 29 per cent, if I read the calculation.

**The Chair:** Maybe, but we have to look toward the next eight to 10 years, too.

**Mrs. Beaupre:** Right.

**The Chair:** But, no, I just wanted to understand because this is a new idea for me. Okay.

**Mrs. Beaupre:** Okay. Thank you. While this alternative increases the size of Grande Prairie-Smoky, it does take into account Greenview's natural boundaries along with Valleyview and Fox Creek, which are part of our trading corridor utilizing highway 43, highway 2, and highway 40, which are very important to our municipalities. This alternative recognizes that sharing common ground facilitates tackling complex problems, taking advantage of opportunities, and advocacy work. An electoral division along an east-west axis aligns with the many current partnerships and agreements we presently have, and aligning the current northwest county with the electoral division to the north would have a significant detrimental impact on the collaboration in our region.

As noted in the city of Grande Prairie's February 8 submission to the commission, the city anticipates that an urban Grande Prairie electoral boundary will require a second urban MLA within 10 years. We are concerned that this additional urban MLA could mean further erosion of the voice of rural Albertans. However, this would not be the case should we remain status quo.

We appreciate that the commission has recommended maintaining the special status of the current Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley and Lesser Slave Lake. These divisions are home to Alberta's prime industries and, as such, play an integral role in Alberta's economy. It is imperative for all Albertans that their voices within these divisions are fairly represented. I would have to say that if there is a concern with, you know, trying to make the population of Central Peace-Notley up to what is recommended, it may be – and with no disrespect to the present MLA – that Central Peace-Notley should be absorbed into the other areas.

**The Chair:** Just picking up on that, if the concern is travel distances, which you've been talking about, absorbing Central Peace-Notley into surrounding constituencies would increase the travel distances for whichever MLA represents the area.

**Mrs. Beaupre:** Representing the residents that I do in the county of Grande Prairie, my constituents, it is our opinion that you are putting them at – to try and effectively make Central Peace-Notley viable, you're putting them in a position that makes it harder for them because they will have to travel through not only the urban Grande Prairie constituency but also the Grande Prairie-Smoky constituency. They'll have to travel through two other constituencies to get to see their representative if the representative

was from the Falher or Fairview area. There's travel through those to get through to see them.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to respond to the recommendations. The county respectfully requests that the commission carefully consider the strengths and the successes of our northwest region, which have been built on partnerships based on common interests and the work of our two MLAs, who, through the current boundary structure, have been able to represent those common interests. This is a formula that reaps benefits that reach well beyond our northern borders and to all Albertans. I must say also that the present MLAs in the northwest, regardless of the political affiliation, work very hard together for our region. The way that they're situated has worked very well and has in the past, when it was a different government, as well.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mrs. Day, any questions? Mr. McLeod? Ms Munn?

**Ms Munn:** Yeah, I do have a question. The county of Grande Prairie is basically saying to leave as much of Grande Prairie city proper together as possible?

**Mrs. Beaupre:** No. We're saying: leave all of Grande Prairie together. If the status quo is not an option, then we're recommending that the city of Grande Prairie have one urban MLA, as they have requested, with all of their population being represented by that MLA.

**Ms Munn:** And if we can't do that because of the numbers – and we are constrained by the legislation – can we take part of Grande Prairie out of that?

**Mrs. Beaupre:** In the past legislation has given special consideration to Central Peace-Notley as well as to Lesser Slave River.

**Ms Munn:** Eventually the law could be changed, but it isn't changed right now. We can't go over 25 per cent with Grande Prairie. If it were at 63,000, we would be way over. We just can't.

**Mrs. Beaupre:** By 4 per cent.

**Ms Livingstone:** Just to be clear, there's an allowance to go below. There's not an allowance to go above in the legislation.

**Mrs. Beaupre:** It is above the 25 per cent, is it not?

**Ms Livingstone:** No. You can't go above 25 per cent. Central Peace-Notley and Lesser Slave are part of a special consideration that allows you to go below 25 per cent below, but there's no allowance in the legislation to go above 25 per cent above.

**Mrs. Beaupre:** So, obviously, the legislation was in place to accommodate the below. I guess what we're asking for is consideration to actually change the legislation at some point to say above 25 per cent if possible, based on population growth, unemployment, natural trading areas, our partnerships, and the geography.

**Ms Munn:** I can certainly understand the temptation to put community of interest above the strict mathematical numbers, but I wanted to ask you: if part of urban Grande Prairie had to be in Grande Prairie-Smoky, would that be possible?

**Mrs. Beaupre:** Why not just leave it the way it is, then? Right now it is split right down the middle, and it's being represented both with urban and rural by one MLA and urban and rural by the other. So if

by taking a third of the city population and putting it into a rural and allowing the city to have a strictly urban population, it then puts the rurals basically on a different playing level. Presently everybody is represented the same based on having an MLA that represents urban and rural interests in a region that has very defined trading areas, partnerships, and community capacity.

**The Chair:** If I can just interject, because I don't want you to misunderstand this point, as we say in the report, in the past, eight years ago, it was possible to create two blended ridings with Grande Prairie and the rural areas surrounding them in which each of those ridings would have about half city residents and half non city residents. Those people who thought that it was a good idea to have a balance of power in each constituency had two constituencies with that balance of power. But that would no longer be the case if we kept what you're proposing here as your second option because Grande Prairie city has grown so much. You'd have two blended constituencies, each of which was 75 per cent city residents and 25 per cent other. So you'd have two constituencies with a city bias. Under the proposal in our draft report – it's not a hill to die on; we're just here to discuss it – you've still got one that is equally balanced between city and country.

**Mrs. Beaupre:** Presently my opinion and the opinion of my council and many of the other municipalities in here is that the MLA is tasked with representing the individual municipality regardless of whether they're urban or rural, so I don't believe there is a bias. I think it is based on, as I have said before, our partnerships, the region that we serve, the residents that we serve. I know that one of my fellow colleagues may say that, you know, if we're talking about representation in larger areas, the province is presently considering city charters that will give the cities of Edmonton and Calgary different dispensation than there will be in other areas. Therefore, there may not be a need for an additional MLA in those areas because they already will be getting the attention that they require and that they feel they deserve. By taking that into consideration, I think that the rural should be able to have the same type of voice or at least have the consideration that we're asking for. Status quo is our request at this point.

1:55

**The Chair:** I understand that. Thank you.  
Any other questions?

**Mr. McLeod:** Just one. You've talked in your presentation in a couple of places and you just stated the forecasted estimate of population growth. Have you got any idea of what you estimate over the next five to six years, let's say? The growth has been roughly about 1,000 individuals in each constituency for each year of the last five years. Do you expect that to continue, or do you feel it's...

**Mrs. Beaupre:** Absolutely.

**Mr. McLeod:** You think it is, eh?

**Mrs. Beaupre:** We're one of the only areas in the province of Alberta – I mean, we have felt the downturn, but we certainly haven't felt it to the degree that they have in other areas. We're presently in a situation where help is hard to find. There are hiring signs everywhere. I would encourage the commission, if you have a chance, to spend some time in our area and see what the difference is between southern Alberta and northern Alberta when it comes to how we work together and as far as what's needed out there.

There's a lot of activity happening in the MD of Greenview on highway 40, which is adjacent to the county of Grande Prairie and travels right through the city of Grande Prairie. A lot of that activity is happening there and west towards Beaverlodge, Wembley, and the Pipestone area. Several different industry organizations have approached all three municipalities and have talked about their plans for the upcoming years and the fact that the regional hospital itself will be looking at, I think, approximately 2,400 new jobs when it opens in 2019. Not everyone will live in the city of Grande Prairie.

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

**The Chair:** Thank you.  
Anything else?

**Mrs. Day:** Just a quick comment, question. In the reviews of submissions and what I've heard around the province the first time and again reading the submissions this last time, Grande Prairie and the blended constituency: you have a fine example of how it works and why it works. It seems to me that it's worked really well. Can you tell me more about why in this specific region the city and rural residents blend so well? Why is it working so well here?

**Mrs. Beaupre:** Well, a lot of the residents that live in the county of Grande Prairie may have businesses that are in the city of Grande Prairie and vice versa. A lot of our industrial areas presently in the county of Grande Prairie – some of the industry that is not desirable to have in the city of Grande Prairie is in the county of Grande Prairie. For example, International Paper is south on Resources Road, which is in the county of Grande Prairie, maintained by the county of Grande Prairie. It sees approximately 700 vehicle movements one way, so 1,400 vehicle movements just down to International Paper. A lot of those residents live in the city of Grande Prairie.

You know, between the partnerships we look at, the county of Grande Prairie has a revenue-sharing agreement with the city of Grande Prairie that recognizes that our ratepayers do use services that the city of Grande Prairie would pay for, not the hospital and those types of things because hospitals are paid by everybody's tax dollars, but whether it's for the library, or at one time we bought fee for service from the city of Grande Prairie for fire service. As one of the other previous speakers said, we also belong to the Grande Prairie regional emergency partnership, which is the first in the province of Alberta and has been used quite a bit by the rest of the municipalities in the province.

The county of Grande Prairie also has an enforcement service, which is a blended service between RCMP members, community peace officers, bylaw, and special enhanced RCMP members, which is a model that the province has used as well for other municipalities, and it has worked very well. If you ask our RCMP how things have been going since we've moved to all of those models, you'll notice that crime reduction has changed the RCMP that we presently fund. One of them has been assigned to the crime reduction unit, and the other one has been assigned to the general investigation unit. You know, crime knows no boundaries, so we know that they will be looking at both sides of the boundaries and into the MD of Greenview.

**The Chair:** Anybody else? Anything else? Okay.

I would like to ask one of our clerks to come forward and take the map...

I take it we can keep this?

**Mrs. Beaupre:** Absolutely.

**The Chair:** . . . and mark it Grande Prairie, Leanne Beaupre, so we can remember later on where it came from, and also in regard to Ms Nellis's notes, which we asked for, if you could mark it the same way.

**Mrs. Beaupre:** Would you like my notes as well?

**The Chair:** Sure. That would be terrific if you don't mind.

**Mrs. Beaupre:** We did have a written submission as well that we sent, but you're more than welcome to my notes if you'd like.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you. All right. Well, thank you very much.

Leona Hanson.

Mr. Clerk, you can take the map.

**Ms Hanson:** Good afternoon. Before I sit down, I have one of our neighbouring communities' mayors, Chris Turnmire. He had registered, but unfortunately it was full. I'm wondering: do you have any objection to him sitting with me? We're supporting the same submission.

**The Chair:** I have no objection to anybody sitting with anybody, but only you can speak now. However, if we have time at the end, he can speak independently if he'd like.

**Ms Hanson:** Okay. We do partner a lot, as you can see.

Good afternoon to Madam Justice and the commission members. Thank you so very much for coming to Grande Prairie. I know the conditions were not favourable in January, and we missed that opportunity. I really appreciate that you've taken the time for a stop here. My name is Leona Hanson. I'm the mayor for the town of Beaverlodge. We're located in Grande Prairie-Wapiti, and our community is one of the communities that we feel would be displaced by the alignment that's recommended in the report that you've presented. Again, on behalf of the town of Beaverlodge I wanted to thank the Electoral Boundaries Commission for this opportunity.

I would like to recognize that we do have Councillor Kokotilo-Bekkerus and Councillor Olson-Lepchuk also with us today from our council. Our council has passed two specific resolutions, which I would wish to share with you: that council not endorse the recommendation in the Electoral Boundaries Commission interim report which would see the town of Beaverlodge and other neighbouring communities consolidated into Central Peace-Notley and that the town of Beaverlodge supports electoral division realignment which would support the existing synergies between our neighbouring communities on a west-east access rather than a northern one. We have brought a map here as well to show where we feel would be more beneficial to have the alignment going more on the west-east, keeping us within the Grande Prairie region and going towards Valleyview, et cetera.

We have discussed and have been supportive and respect that the city of Grande Prairie is looking for urban representation. We do recognize that our region has been well represented with the two constituencies that we have. However, if there is a change, an urban riding and a rural riding, however that population delineation happens, we are open to those for sure, just more on the west-east axis basis. It is our understanding that all communities in our immediate geographic area are not in favour of the potential consolidation into the proposed Central Peace-Notley riding. Our council would recommend that any realignment occur, again, on the west-east axis rather than northerly.

2:05

Some of the challenges that we feel we want to point out are as such: consideration of broader provincial-municipal priorities. The provincial government is moving on its mandate to modernize the Municipal Government Act, that greater emphasis is being placed on intermunicipal co-operation and collaboration. Our region has a solid history of successful initiatives and programs that support the desired provincial themes. Our existing agreements and co-operative frameworks will not align with the proposed boundary shifts in the commission's interim report. Transitioning to new agreements will be frustrated by the lack of proximity. The transition to new intermunicipal relationships and the potential dismantling of existing ones will create challenges for us.

The desire to avoid multiple electoral districts and geographic distances: as a follow-up to the last points, the proposal will compound communication, fracture existing synergies with our neighbours, and require engagement of multiple electoral districts to be successful. Not to say that these cannot be overcome; however, the significant increases in geographic distances will create barriers.

Another item is a broad community interest in relationships. We and our neighbouring communities have worked successfully – you've heard that many times already – in addressing areas of common concerns. We meet often to discuss issues of mutual concern and interest. More importantly, we act on issues. A co-ordinated regional emergency response partnership, purchasing of fire and related services, and the development of intermunicipal agreements on landfill and water-serving capacities are just a few of the things. Our residents and taxpayers also reap the benefits of numerous shared service agreements and facility agreements. In addition, the area has a co-ordinated approach to tourism and economic development.

The fiscal stability of our existing agreements is at risk under the proposals to amend the geographic electoral boundaries. The core strengths of the west-east corridor have served this region well and must be maintained.

We're also concerned about constituent access to representation. Our request for an electoral boundary on the west-east corridor aligns with the natural trading patterns for our residents and area constituents. The commission's proposed move to a northern boundary will cause significant challenges for residents by their having to travel greater rerouting distances to attain access to the provincial government representatives.

In summary, the existing synergies and relationships with our neighbouring communities on a natural east-west interface have served the region well. Displacement on a northerly basis would be radical and still require special status for the amended district. The council of the town of Beaverlodge, again referencing the map that's been provided, supports a west-east realignment.

On behalf of the town council we again thank the commission for coming here today and giving an opportunity for us to present.

**The Chair:** Okay. I'll kick off the questioning. Do I understand your map correctly in that you would not expand the boundaries of the two current constituencies into either Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, Whitecourt-St. Anne, or West Yellowhead but rather are proposing a configuration somewhat like we've just heard, where the city of Grande Prairie would be one constituency and all of the remaining current other area will be the second constituency?

**Ms Hanson:** That could be the option. I understand your comments regarding, you know, the limitations within the 25 per cent. We are open to having you look at what that population number is to – you've talked about blended constituencies. Our greatest concern is

that we remain within a west-east axis as opposed to being shifted over to the Dunvegan-Notley riding on the northerly basis. That's where our illustration here has been left open for, obviously, whether it's blended, what can be most effective in looking at this area of the Grande Prairie region.

A Grande Prairie rural, a Grande Prairie urban: I guess I use those words not to pigeonhole as to what those lines look like around each one of the municipalities within the city of Grande Prairie and the greater Grande Prairie area with the county of Grande Prairie and ourselves but more just for illustration purposes that our desire is to remain in the Grande Prairie region and not to be displaced by moving us into a region where we are looking at great distances not only for the constituents to travel, municipal representatives to travel but also the provincial representative to be able to adequately and effectively represent the riding.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.  
Ms Livingstone?

**Ms Livingstone:** Nothing for me.

**The Chair:** Ms Munn?

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

**The Chair:** All right.

**Mr. McLeod:** Just one question because I'm a little old and blind and I can't see that. What's that northern boundary? Is that a highway, or what is that?

**Ms Hanson:** The northern boundary would be the county of Grande Prairie. The existing Grande Prairie-Wapiti boundary would be the northern boundary, or Grande Prairie-Smoky, Grande Prairie-Wapiti as it aligns right now.

**Mr. McLeod:** Yeah. That's what I needed to know. Thank you.

**Mrs. Day:** I do have a quick . . .

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mrs. Day:** So it's all of Grande Prairie county and then some more? Like, what other county? Are we taking in another one?

**Ms Hanson:** The MD of Greenview is also within the existing riding of Grande Prairie-Smoky, and it is on the west-east axis as well. It goes all the way to Fox Creek, and Grande Prairie-Wapiti goes just by Grande Cache. Looking at it, again, you know, obviously the decision is in your hands, but we're wanting to give some latitude as to where those boundaries would be most effective. The existing recommendation to put Wembley, Beaverlodge, Hythe, and the county area around us within the Grande Prairie-Notley riding would be, frankly, the worst-case scenario for our communities right now.

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

**Ms Hanson:** Thank you again.

**The Chair:** All right. You're leaving your map with us, I take it?

**Ms Hanson:** Yeah. We provided our written submission to your clerk as well.

**The Chair:** Yes. Great. Thank you.

If you could keep those together, Mr. Clerk, that would be terrific.

I'll call on the next registered speaker. Then when we're finished with that, we'll have a five-minute break. James Friesen.

**Mr. Friesen:** Hi. I live in Grande Prairie-Wapiti, and there's really not a lot left for me to say. I mean, they've basically covered it. I live in the Grovedale area, so I'm southwest of the river, but I think what we need to do – Grande Prairie's economic base is not like Calgary's and Edmonton's. Grande Prairie is basically the bedroom of the people that work here. Most people's jobs are located in the country, in the oil patch, in forestry, and in agriculture. For an MLA to fully understand the residents, we need MLAs that represent both the rural area and the city. I mean, that gives fair representation. What's proposed: I think it was demonstrated when the map fell. That was a clear indication of how foolish that plan is.

**The Chair:** The forces were with you on that.

**Mr. Friesen:** The forces are with us on that, as all the speakers have been. You know, there's absolutely no reason to change what's working absolutely fine.

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

Mrs. Day, any questions? Mr. McLeod?

**Mr. McLeod:** No thanks.

**The Chair:** Ms Livingstone? Ms Munn? Okay.

Thank you very much.

All right. We'll take that promised five-minute break.

[The hearing adjourned from 2:13 p.m. to 2:21 p.m.]

**The Chair:** We'll get started again, if you don't mind, just so that we can get as many speakers in as possible. If everybody could sit down, please, that would be great.

Okay. Our next speaker is Bill Given.

**Mr. Given:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair and commission members. I think the clerk is going to bring forward a map for you to reference. My name is Bill Given. I'm the mayor of the city of Grande Prairie. I'm representing a couple of motions passed at a recent council meeting on July 10, so I'll just speak very briefly to that first and reference my comments a little bit more to the map that you've just been presented in a second.

The first motion was to express our council's support for the proposed fully urban city of Grande Prairie constituency, as recommended in the interim report. We appreciate the range of issues that the commission has to try and balance, and we appreciate the recognition of Grande Prairie being Alberta's fifth-largest city and the opportunity for the residents in that city to be treated somewhat similarly to residents in other cities of a similar size. We also appreciate the significant challenge that you have in trying to balance the range of different interests that you've heard here today.

We are in agreement with a number of neighbours from our region that we would prefer to see more of an east-west alignment with respect to the blended constituency that the balance of the city of Grande Prairie would be in. We agree that we need to continue to support the existing partnerships and focus more on the natural socioeconomic region. Therefore, we are not supportive of the inclusion of the west county communities in the Central Peace-Notley district.

The alternate map that I've presented to you makes up our suggestions, submitted humbly to you, that rather than including those west county communities in Central Peace-Notley, Central Peace-Notley alternately be expanded to include the communities of Alexander First Nation, Fox Creek, Valleyview, and Sturgeon

Lake First Nation so that, essentially, the eastern portion of Grande Prairie-Smoky be added to Central Peace-Notley, recognizing the challenge that Central Peace-Notley has with population. We see the benefit of this, obviously, addressing that concern but also that the alignment is more natural in that it builds on the corridor of the highway 43 and highway 49 road connections and that there is a more natural community of interest between these communities.

Additionally, you know, we want to ensure that the focus ultimately is on citizens. After all, that's who votes in elections. It isn't municipalities. It isn't school boards. Inasmuch as municipalities and school boards and these kinds of organizations may create work for MLAs on behalf of citizens, ultimately it's citizens that need to be the focus of the structure of our constituencies. So we hope that this one would be reflective broadly of doing the best possible to reflect the interests of the citizens in the region.

You'll see that the proposed Grande Prairie urban-rural or blended constituency is shaded in a purple colour there. Its northernmost boundary would be the county of Grande Prairie boundary, its southernmost boundary would be to the north end of the proposed West Yellowhead constituency, and its eastern boundary would be generally along the Smoky River to the east and the B.C. border to the west. This area takes in many of those organizations and agreements that you've heard referenced by previous speakers. For example, the regional emergency partnership, the agreement between the city and the county and the MD of Greenview to work for industrial growth along the highway 40 corridor, the tourism agreements, and many, many others that exist today would be supported by this alignment while being able to also meet that interest of ensuring that the residents of the city of Grande Prairie, which continues to grow very quickly, would be respected as it would be in a similar community in another area of the province.

I'm open to any questions.

**The Chair:** Thanks. The prerogative of the chair is that I always get to ask the first one, as you've probably picked up by now. Looking at your map – very helpful; thank you – it appears to me that much of what is currently Grande Prairie-Smoky disappears into Central Peace-Notley. Have you calculated the population size of your new purple Grande Prairie constituency as a part of this process?

**Mr. Given:** We have, Madam Chair. I have to say that these were not exactly back-of-the-napkin calculations but built on the best available data, for lack of a better way of saying it. We would see that that Grande Prairie urban-rural or the blended constituency, I believe, by my notes, would be in that 48,000 population.

**The Chair:** Okay. A follow-up. It's hard to read exactly where on the map the line dividing Grande Prairie would be here. Could you describe for us in words where you would see the north-south boundary dividing the constituencies up within the city of Grande Prairie?

**Mr. Given:** Sure. The city of Grande Prairie is treated exactly the same as in your proposed districts. The fully urban constituency has exactly the same boundaries in our proposal as it does in the interim report proposal. Those don't change. Is that clear?

**The Chair:** I understand. Thank you.

Ms Munn.

**Ms Munn:** Yes. Thank you for this proposal. I think it's very helpful because when we're looking at the other proposals that

suggested a Grande Prairie-Smoky that surrounded the city of Grande Prairie, we just can't put the whole city of Grande Prairie in. I see where it's divided here, and that's helpful.

Now, if we had to shift that division of the city of Grande Prairie – I see where your proposal mirrors the interim report proposal, and I have a bigger picture of that now – if that boundary had to move to the west just for the sake of numbers, how far west could it go?

**Mr. Given:** You're asking – I just want to understand the question – if the Grande Prairie-Smoky or the blended constituency had to encompass more of the city of Grande Prairie? Is that the nature of your question?

**Ms Munn:** Yes. Can I show you a map that I have here?

**Mr. Given:** You're on the commission. You can show me whatever you want.

**Ms Munn:** I have this map here, and this is the highway. If it had to move over that much further, would that make sense in terms of community of interest?

2:30

**Mr. Given:** Yeah. The question was – and maybe I'll even reference that for everybody here – if the west part of Grande Prairie-Smoky or if the city-only constituency was pulled in to come in at about highway 43 north, past the Prairie Mall. It wouldn't be ideal – there would be an even more significant amount of the population, you know, under the Grande Prairie public school district, under the city of Grande Prairie that would be out – but that would be reasonable.

I mean, at that point, again, we appreciate that you need to – one of the overriding principles of our proposal is that we need to maintain the northern voice in the Legislature. We want to ensure that northern and rural areas continue to maintain an adequate voice in the Legislature, so we want to ensure that there are two constituencies in the Grande Prairie area, that Central Peace continues to exist, that Peace River continues to exist, that Lesser Slave Lake continues to exist. That's our primary concern. Sorry; I would say that I guess that's our secondary concern, a close second to ensuring that citizens of the city of Grande Prairie are treated somewhat equitably. If more of the population of the city of Grande Prairie had to go into that constituency to support maintaining that northern voice so that we didn't have to see Central Peace-Notley absorbed, I think that that would be a reasonable accommodation.

**The Chair:** Ms Munn, I know the *Hansard* reporter would like to have the page of the interim report that you were referring to for the completeness of our record.

**Ms Munn:** It's at page 163.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Any questions?

**Mr. McLeod:** I'm good. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Very helpful. Thank you.

Sorry. That was page 163?

**Ms Munn:** Yes.

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

All right. Now we'll go on to Eric Rosendahl.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Good afternoon. I'm the MLA for West Yellowhead. Thank you to the members of the commission for

taking the time to hear the submissions this afternoon from people that live in these ridings.

I'm going to suggest some alternate boundaries for West Yellowhead that I think meet what the commission was trying to do but also recognize the communities of interest and the need for effective representation, and I say that – effective representation in the constituency – because that cannot be overstated.

I've been living in the Hinton area for probably somewhere in the area of 45 years, and I know it's difficult to travel, especially in that region and especially when you throw the winter months in there. Of course, we can get winter in July in some areas in West Yellowhead.

The main corridors that we have in West Yellowhead, of course, are highway 16 and highway 40 north and south. They're the main roads that exist in West Yellowhead. Of course, the rest of it is forestry roads, to the largest extent, so it does make travel in West Yellowhead a little bit more onerous, I guess, and that kind of thing. It does create a problem.

I know the issue of numbers, and it's a numbers game. I know that. I'm well aware of that, and I'm aware that our numbers in West Yellowhead are low. There's no doubt about it. But how do you bring up the numbers without creating a huge expanse of area that, in my opinion, would be impossible to cover? That's the issue.

Whitecourt will just be too hard to represent effectively if it's part of West Yellowhead. It's not that I don't want to represent them – by no means – but there's no way that I could give them effective representation if Whitecourt was included in the constituency. It's just too far out of the way. It's out of the corridor, whether you're looking at the highway 16 corridor or the highway 40 corridor. It's just too far out of the way. While Whitecourt shares a lot in common in what the commission was trying to cover, like I said, it's too far out of the way, and there's no way that the MLA, whoever they are in the next election, is going to be able to cover it effectively. Everyone deserves proper representation, and when you look at the proposal, it's going to be difficult.

The commission was looking at population, and with the map you propose, it's going to be over 51,000. Spread over an area like that, I don't know how we're going to represent them. I really don't. It isn't necessarily harder for rural MLAs to service the higher population than it is for the urban – right? – but you look at what we have in West Yellowhead. Okay. I've got Edson, Hinton, Jasper, and Grande Cache, so I've got four town councils. I've got three county councils right now. I've got Yellowhead, Greenview, and Brazeau to the south. Plus, I've got two indigenous settlements. I've got four co-ops, three enterprises in the Grande Cache area, plus many other indigenous people spread throughout West Yellowhead, and they're not represented by any treaties, by 6, 7, 8, or any of those. There are no other settlements that exist in West Yellowhead. So you add all of that in there as well to the situation.

Grande Cache is very similar, distant from the core of the riding. Like I said, I can service Grande Cache. I mean, it's difficult, especially in the wintertime. You can't get there in some cases because of the road conditions.

For the map I'm proposing, we tried different situations in moving the boundary east along the highway 16 corridor. For the north, we're saying to maybe move it to Pipestone Creek, which will bring in some of the indigenous people north of the Smoky. A lot of those people north of the Smoky have interactions with or connections, certainly, to the indigenous population in Grande Cache and, of course, in that area because they were part of the people that were displaced when they were moved out of Jasper national park. They all have that interconnection, so it's important to be able to service them in West Yellowhead, and that is a proposal that I'd really like to see move forward, for sure. I already have a lot of discussions with them when

they show up in my mobile office, I call it, in Grande Cache on a Wednesday of the month.

The other thing. When we were looking at numbers, we were trying to calculate exactly how far east we needed to go. We're proposing going all the way to Entwistle, including Peers, and jogging it all the way back down through there to try and increase the numbers, which would make sense. Especially along the highway 16 corridor, when I'm travelling back and forth to Edmonton and that kind of thing, it would make it far easier to look after the people and make sure that they're properly represented.

2:40

We are trying different areas in there, and I'm sure that we can probably come up with different maps in trying to bring up the numbers. I know it is a huge concern as far as the numbers, but what we're saying is that Whitecourt and Fox Creek should go to the Barrhead seat. That is what we're suggesting under our stuff. I know it's a problem in trying to balance numbers – I know that – and how you go about it to create fairness I don't know. But we're certainly not happy with the way it's sitting right now because of the huge expanse and trying to give people the proper representation they deserve.

Also, we're suggesting Morinville be put into the Ste. Anne-Stony Plain riding as well to try to help balance things out. That is what we're trying to do. It's not that I'm trying to say that we won't represent them – by no means – but it's just trying to be fair.

When you look at the map and the size of the area that the proposal is suggesting West Yellowhead should cover and the number of people that are being listed there, you're saying that it's going to be up to somewhere around 51,000 people. You try to put that over that huge expanse of area. I'm having difficulty trying to cover it now, and then you add this extra area to it. I don't know how anybody could even do it. It's going to be a problem.

Anyway, if you want to see some of the proposed map changes, I can certainly bring those or get those. I'm willing to try different things to try and bring up the number of people in West Yellowhead. It is important that we do that, but by the same token I can't stress enough the fact that there is a huge difference in urban ridings compared to rural ridings when you're looking at a large expanse of territory and especially in my case because of the Rocky Mountains and that kind of thing. Sure, there are going to be fewer people, but you can't just keep adding huge expanses of area and expect proper representation for the constituents. They deserve fair and proper representation, and I can't stress that enough. That really needs to be looked at very, very seriously.

Population, like I said before, is easier to represent effectively if it's on the main transportation corridors which already exist in the riding. That needs to be thought about and considered. I think that this keeps the communities of interest together in a better way than the commission's recommendation and still keeps the riding close to the variance rate.

With that, I conclude my presentation.

**The Chair:** Okay. A couple of questions. Do you know what the population would be if we moved the boundary north to Pipestone Creek to bring in the indigenous people north of the Smoky and the eastern boundary to Entwistle, including Entwistle? Do you know how many people that would add to West Yellowhead? It is 25 per cent below the provincial average right now. We have to do something. We have no choice but to move the boundary. How many people would that proposal add?

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Well, we didn't have the exact numbers because we're moving the east boundary all over the place to try and bring



the numbers up. I didn't bring the numbers with me because we had probably about 10 different maps and different calculations of population on there, but I can certainly get you that if that's what you would like to see. I have no problem in bringing those maps forward and presenting them to you. I just didn't know how many maps you wanted to see. We had, like I said, different calculations as to where different populations sit in trying to bring the numbers up in West Yellowhead.

**The Chair:** Everybody has until Thursday to make any written submissions, so if you want to submit anything supplementary to what you have to say today, you can send it into our website on or before Thursday this week, and we'll accept it as part of our deliberations. I'll leave that to you.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Just a final question. When you're suggesting moving Morinville into Ste. Anne-Stony Plain, that's part of your suggestion, that if we move the eastern boundary to Entwistle and put Whitecourt into Barrhead rather than leaving it in West Yellowhead, then that would leave Barrhead over, so you're proposing that you move Morinville into Ste. Anne-Stony Plain to make that up. Am I following your logic?

**Mr. Rosendahl:** That's correct. That was one of the proposals we were looking at in trying to make it easier for the MLA in West Yellowhead to service the constituents based on the distance off the main corridor. As you get farther away, it would create a problem.

**The Chair:** Well, I'm sure you realized, as we did, that Morinville has got about 20,000 people, at least, in it, and that made it very hard to move out of the Barrhead constituency. Logically, it might have gone into what's left of Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater, which is a Franco-Albertan area, but it was just too big and growing too fast. Similarly, if we tried to add it to Ste. Anne-Stony Plain, they would go way, way over, like 50 per cent over.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Yes. I totally understand that. Like you said, that's why we had so many maps and so many calculations on the go. Trying to figure out a balance and trying to make it fair is what we're trying to do.

**The Chair:** One of my commissioners has reminded me that the written submission deadline was yesterday, but for you, because I promised, you can have until Thursday to send in your submission if you want to add anything further.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. Just hang on for a sec. Mrs. Day, did you have any questions?

**Mrs. Day:** Just thank you for your presentation and for driving all the way here to present today.

The north-south boundaries haven't changed a whole lot, and you're thinking those are okay, the north-south of what you had. It's just how far coming east is what you're talking about.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Well, we're saying that the north one should be moved farther north in the Smoky because the indigenous population just north of the Smoky should be tied in with the groups from Grande Cache as they're part of that original group that was displaced from Jasper national park, so we have a lot of interaction with those indigenous people north of the Smoky today, even.

**Mrs. Day:** Okay. Yeah. But besides that, you're following what?

**Mr. Rosendahl:** The south boundary is fine. We're okay with it.

**Mrs. Day:** Left the same, pretty much.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Yeah. The south boundary we're okay with at this point.

**Mrs. Day:** Okay. It would just be good to see your maps, so thank you.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Yeah. Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Hang on for a sec. Mr. McLeod.

**Mr. McLeod:** Yeah. I've got one question here. When I look at it and when you spoke, basically you said that Whitecourt is too far and you want to stick to the corridor. Obviously, when I look at the maps, that must be the highway 16 kind of corridor. Would you happen to know what the population of Whitecourt is?

**Mr. Rosendahl:** I think it's somewhere around 8,000. I think 8,000 to 10,000.

**Mr. McLeod:** That's highway 43, if I recall.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** That's highway 43, yes.

**Mr. McLeod:** So would that then be what you would consider, maybe, part of the northern boundary of West Yellowhead?

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Well, I'm trying to get Whitecourt out of there.

**Mr. McLeod:** Well, maybe Whitecourt doesn't want to go anywhere. I don't know.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** I don't know.

**The Chair:** Where can we get 8,000 more people if we take Whitecourt out? That's the problem.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** That's the problem. You know, I know it's a numbers game, right? You're trying to bring us up to 51,000, yet you're adding that huge area – that's the problem – whereas if you stick to the two corridors, 16 and 40, at least we have a chance. That's what I'm saying.

**The Chair:** Ms Munn?

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

**The Chair:** Thanks so much.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** All right. Wayne Drysdale.

2:50

**Mr. Drysdale:** Good afternoon. Wayne Drysdale. I'm the MLA for Grande Prairie-Wapiti. Thanks for being here today, and thanks for all your work. I know it's not easy doing these things. You're never going to make everybody happy. I can tell you that right now today. I think you know that. I appreciate, you know, your giving it a good effort and moving forward and for being here today. I know you couldn't make it last winter, so you have a little bit of a taste for what it's like representing a huge rural northern area.

**The Chair:** A very prosperous and growing one, which has to be a good thing.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Yeah. Exactly. I love it.

I wanted to go last today because I wanted to hear what my constituents had to say and want you to hear it so it's not coming from me; it's coming from the people of my area. You know, it's not about me. It's what's the best representation for my constituents, I guess, unless you're just wanting to get rid of me. It looks like you're eliminating Grande Prairie-Wapiti, so maybe there is a reason.

**The Chair:** Move into Grande Prairie, and you're good to go.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Yeah. I'm sorry if it's a little disjointed, because I had to make notes all day, adding stuff in here. It was a presentation, but now it'll kind of jump all over the place. You know, after saying that I want what's best for my constituency, I think that your recommendation, unfortunately, doesn't make sense for a lot of my constituents. You heard it for the west county. That's a pretty tight area where people work together. They work for the city of Grande Prairie. They work for the county of Grande Prairie. You've heard the different regional co-operation things that are going on. I think this'll really affect that regional collaboration if you start pulling parts of the constituency away.

I like a lot of the stuff that was in the minority report by Commissioner Day. Good work. I'm not going to repeat what's all in there because I'm sure you've heard it and it's in the report, but some of my points reflect some of that.

Just looking at the report, you know, many Edmonton and Calgary constituencies are at or below the average, and then you have huge rural ridings with populations well above the average, which really I'm having trouble making sense of. Like, Drayton Valley and Rocky Mountain House and Drumheller-Stettler are 17 and 16 per cent above average. To me, the large rurals should be under and the dense city ones should be over, but that doesn't seem to be the case. I was having trouble trying to understand the rationale there.

When you said that when you started, you tried to keep communities together, I think that was a good statement, but this doesn't do that. It tears them apart. You know, you said that you didn't want to cut up municipal boundaries, which this does. I guess you've heard different proposals, and it's not up to me to say what should happen, but my recommendation would be to leave it the way it is with the constituencies. We've represented this area pretty well with my different colleagues. I represent the city as strongly as I do the rural, but I guess that's your prerogative here.

I know you say, "Well, what do you do with Notley-Central Peace?" That's not the problem here. I realize, you know, we have the population to sustain the two the way they are, and if Notley-Central Peace needs more, that's the issue up there. Like, you have three constituencies there. I don't want to put in solutions or say that I don't like any different areas because I think they're all great, and I'd like to represent them all. I'm not saying I don't want them, but maybe you could make two out of those three and solve your problem. That's not really my recommendation because they're 40 and 30 per cent low, two of them.

Or else if you have to make changes and can't leave them the same, you know, I can see some merit in the city proposal, where you don't split the city in the middle, you take one just for the city and then one with a small part of the city but then use the county boundaries; like you said, keep communities together in the boundaries, the city representation and one rural MLA for that represents the county of Grande Prairie. Then you'd have to throw

in Grovedale. Otherwise, it's left out, so the county boundaries with Grovedale thrown in. I think that would be close and make a whole lot more sense than the way you split it before.

You know, if you have to take Valleyview and Fox Creek and give them to Notley-Central Peace, it would make more sense than what you have proposed here because the MLA coming from Edmonton to Fairview drives through Fox Creek and Valleyview just to get there. The MLA from Fairview that has to go to Elmworth: it's going to make it really difficult. No disrespect for my colleague in Notley-Central Peace. I've talked to her about it as well, and she's not happy about having to travel that extra mile to represent them. Just the way that is – that's the way it is today, but after the next election the MLA could be from Elmworth. I'm sure the people from Clear Hills or Fairview or anywhere else wouldn't be happy about that as well. I think it's just too far apart. It's over 300 kilometres to drive from Clear Hills to, say, Demmitt. That would be like a person living in Calgary saying that they have got to drive to Edmonton to see their MLA. That wouldn't go over very well. I know that for sure.

You know, hopefully, you'll look at it a little better than that. I never heard, actually, one person here today support the proposal that you had presented. Maybe you have, but I didn't hear any today, so I don't think it's the best solution.

When you look at logistics, too, you know, I've been in elections where you have polling stations where your boundaries don't make sense. People get confused and upset, and the poor volunteers working at the polling station – if you can say that you live in the county of Grande Prairie, people know where they vote, but if you start splitting city blocks, where one guy on one side of the block votes somewhere and somebody on the other side and there are no community boundaries, it really causes problems. That's just a point I wanted to bring up.

Something else you said earlier. I'm not here to cause trouble, but you said originally that, you know, Grande Prairie-Wapiti and Grande Prairie-Smoky were split 50-50 with rural and city. That's never been the case. It's always been way more city people than rural. I don't know what the exact per cent was, 75-25, but it's never been 50-50. So I don't know where that comes from. But even at the start the cities always had more people in my constituency than the rural, and it's never seemed to be a problem for us.

The last one I will say – and all respect to my colleague from West Yellowhead. I wasn't sure when he said about coming north to Pipestone Creek, but if he's including Grovedale in West Yellowhead, I know there must be a lot of people that wouldn't agree with that. Pipestone Creek is past Grovedale. I'm not sure where he wants to draw that boundary, but it wouldn't make a lot of sense for the people in Grovedale, where I happen to live, 20 kilometres away, to have to go to West Yellowhead. So I wouldn't be supportive of that one.

Maybe I'll just leave it at that. I don't want to repeat everything that everybody said today or that's in the report. I'm just thinking of my constituents and how they're best represented and what's easier for trading patterns and working together. You see things like the dinosaur museum. That's supported by the county and the city and the town of Beaverlodge. If you start putting them in different constituencies, it doesn't help that situation.

Thank you very much, and I look forward to your release.

**The Chair:** Thanks. Well, you've made many good points here. Just to say and not to sound defensive, but our recommendations are based on the submissions we received in writing the first time around. We got a number of written submissions from people in this area, and that was the proposal that was made. That's why we went in that direction. You know, we just didn't necessarily come up with

it on our own. As an Edmontonian I feel always aggrieved when I have to support Calgary in any way, but I want to make it clear that the average population of the constituencies in Calgary is larger than the average population of the constituencies in rural Alberta under our proposal. They're about 800 people over, and rural Alberta would be about 650 people over the provincial average if you took them all together. So I don't want to leave the impression that somehow Calgary is getting a particularly good deal here.

That said, I'm going to turn to my colleagues. Any comments?

3:00

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

**Mr. McLeod:** No. I'm good. Thank you very much for taking the time.

**The Chair:** All right. Thanks so much. Very, very helpful.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Just don't get hung up on the exact numbers, because you see them now. Like, Central Peace and Lesser Slave are 40 and 50 per cent under and have been for a long time. You don't have to have Grande Prairie-Smoky or Grande Prairie-Wapiti, whatever you want to call it, and the city of Grande Prairie at exactly the same numbers because they're not anywhere else.

**The Chair:** Oh, not at all. But right now you're close to the maximum. You're very successful in Wapiti. You've grown more than anywhere else in Alberta. But, you know, there's a downside to that, and that's what we're seeing here today.

Thanks very much.

**Mr. Drysdale:** It's a good constituency. Don't wreck it.

**The Chair:** Okay. I promise.

Now, I know that Mr. Drysdale wanted to be the last speaker, but in fact people have come and registered after him. I'm going to call on Todd Russell.

**Mr. Russell:** Hello. My name is Todd Russell. I'm a citizen of the Grande Prairie-Smoky constituency right now. Thank you very much to the commission for all your work so far and to everyone involved, obviously, in this boundary review. It's obviously a really hard exercise, as you've heard today from everybody's feedback, and it's totally an exercise in compromise. There is no perfect solution.

With that being said, for the Grande Prairie region your recommendations are to create one urban riding in the city of Grande Prairie and to change the boundaries of the existing rural ridings to account for the population change that that would bring about. While we respect the intent of this proposal and applaud the commission for recognizing the need for an urban riding, in Grande Prairie we do not feel that it adequately addresses the concerns of the citizens of the area, nor does it give due concern or respect to the area around Grande Prairie as a whole and its role in the northwestern part of Alberta. Grande Prairie is a vital hub for both businesses and families, with a primary trading area population of over 250,000, with strong retail, health, and education opportunities not available to most of those people for hundreds of miles in any direction other than GP.

The city of Grande Prairie and the county of Grande Prairie are an economic and social unit that deserve to be recognized as such and not be split up or dominated by other areas. This will be the result of the changes recommended by the commission. The area to the west of Grande Prairie, which it is connected to by both major transportation routes and by the commonality of interests, is recommended to be allocated to the Central Peace-Notley

constituency. This creates a situation of people living 20 kilometres outside of Grande Prairie being lumped in with people who live over 200 kilometres away and of their representative being 150 kilometres away. The area to the east of Grande Prairie will similarly be lumped in with people who live 200 kilometres away, in Fox Creek.

The county of Grande Prairie, within which the city of Grande Prairie resides, creates a natural catchment area for the interests of representation. That municipal boundary, if used as a rural riding for the Grande Prairie area with a part of the city involved, answers the criteria of respecting commonality of interest, existing municipal boundaries, partnerships, and natural transportation corridors and trading areas.

We make these points because, as was pointed out in the public submissions to the commission and as is evident if you live anywhere in the area and in what you've heard today, the people of the city of Grande Prairie and the surrounding area are heavily intermixed and share not only a commonality of community interests but also schools, colleges, recreational facilities, hospitals, and highways. Any proposed boundary change that splits the area into three provincial constituencies not only fails to recognize the strong connections in the area but also makes the task of effectively representing the citizens of the area around Grande Prairie inordinately difficult.

Within the city of Grande Prairie we recommend the following boundaries be established. We recommend that the western, northern, and southern municipal boundaries be followed, and on the east side of Grande Prairie we recommend following your recommendation to split the city. We recognize that it's tough, and we'd like all people in the city to be under the same person, but we see the limits of the legislation and where your hands are tied. We feel that creating a second constituency in the area in line with the municipal boundaries of the county of Grande Prairie will not separate the urban part of the city from the rest of it or separate the people who live around the city from the city itself.

As the commission itself has stated:

Where a blended constituency would combine two disparate communities of interest for the MLA to represent it should be avoided if otherwise possible. This concern may not arise where those living in the suburban area largely work within and access services in the adjoining city. The residents of each are likely to have common interests.

The people and communities around Grande Prairie constitute such a case, where many of them work and access services in the city. Creating ridings that put these people in with others in dissimilar situations should be avoided.

Thank you very much for considering the recommendations.

**The Chair:** Okay. I'm afraid I'm a little confused, probably because you're the last registered speaker and it's been an intense afternoon. Are you supporting our proposal for the one constituency that is completely urban, completely part of Grande Prairie?

**Mr. Russell:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. What do you want for the second constituency?

**Mr. Russell:** I think that the natural boundary of the county as it sits right now works quite well. Those communities in Beaverlodge and Hythe and Wembley: you've heard from them today. I've got friends that live out there that we visit regularly, and they all want to be involved in Grande Prairie. They live, for all intents and purposes, in what I call the Grande Prairie region, where they're in those individual communities. So I think the boundary of the county would serve as a very good starting point.

Now, if you need to balance populations – I don't have all the future growth projections; I understand that you guys are taking those into account – you know, there are small towns on either side of those boundaries that could be moved either way. This would also help. If Valleyview and some of those areas were moved into Central Peace-Notley, they would actually be closer to representation at the Falher office than they would be in Grande Prairie.

**The Chair:** Okay. But one of the points that has to be spoken about is that there is a population in Grande Prairie-Wapiti 17 per cent higher than the provincial average and about 8 per cent in Grande Prairie-Smoky, so just simply keeping the two together without expanding the boundaries in any direction is still going to leave you way over in the fastest growing constituency in Alberta, very close to the maximum 25 per cent. You're likely to reach that well within the next eight years, so we have to take that into account. We are going to take that into account.

I understand the position of what I'm now calling the Wembley triangle in the northwest: leave it alone. But if we do that, how do we deal with effective representation in terms of equality of vote, making the votes of the people in both constituencies closer to the value of the votes of people in the rest of Alberta? In other words, where do we take people out of the two constituencies? It's been suggested that we could take them out to the north in Grande Prairie-Smoky. Have you thought about that?

**Mr. Russell:** Depending on where you're talking about taking them out of, it's not a really dense population area. The towns north of Sexsmith start to get smaller, so there are not a lot of, I guess, voters or meat to take away there and add to. I understand that you need to make Central Peace-Notley larger. GP-Smoky currently encompasses all the way to Fox Creek, so there are a lot of decent-sized towns, Valleyview, and there's the Sturgeon reserve, and there's Fox Creek itself, DeBolt. A lot of those areas that are outside the county boundary or the current municipal boundaries could go into either Whitecourt or Central Peace-Notley.

**The Chair:** So you're saying Fox Creek or Valleyview?

**Mr. Russell:** Yeah. Those are both outside the county's boundaries right now but within the Grande Prairie-Smoky district.

**The Chair:** Thank you.  
Questions?

**Ms Munn:** I don't think so.

**Mr. McLeod:** No. I'm good.  
Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thanks so much. Very helpful.

All right. That's my last registered speaker. Is there anybody else here who's registered who hasn't been called on? Ma'am, are you registered? Did you register online?

**Ms Boucher:** Yes.

**The Chair:** And did you check in with the clerk when you arrived?

**Ms Boucher:** Yes.

**The Chair:** What's your name?

**Ms Boucher:** Adele Boucher.

**The Chair:** I'm just checking. Oh, I see you are written in here. I do apologize, Ms Boucher. Please come forward.

**Ms Boucher:** I actually am in the town of Grimshaw, which seems to have been forgotten in the discussion about changing Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley. You have moved us into Peace River. Grimshaw has been shuffled two or three times in the past 20 years. We're tired of being shuffled. That doesn't then help in increasing the population in Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley. It's decreasing it in one area, then trying to put in Wembley, Beaverlodge to counteract that. I don't see any purpose in either one of those. That's all I want to say about the boundaries.

3:10

I'd like to talk about, basically, the theory of this whole commission. To begin with, the number system, I think, is being highly overrated. That population count really is only for the purpose of casting votes. After that, when we have our MLA, regardless of what party they represent, every MLA is the MLA of everyone in the province in that constituency.

Voting is by far the smallest part of government operations. I sort of equate it to my own situation over at Grimshaw. I buy my car in Peace River, and I pay a few bucks more because I want my car serviced in Peace River so I don't have to drive to Grande Prairie. I think this whole issue is about lack of service when you change the boundaries. For example, we hear about the north of Alberta in comparison to the south. We hear about the rural populations in comparison to the urban numbers. As a constituent – and I've been a candidate a few times, so I've heard a lot of opinions – we in the north feel we're getting shafted a lot in government because we are very rich in resources, and our input into the operation of this government is being overlooked by the fact that we are low in population.

Population numbers aren't really important here. To me, it is the representation. Whether you call it service or you call it effective representation, I think the issue here is that once we have a government in place, it is the duty, the role of that MLA to represent the area they come from. Whether it's 15 per cent over or 15 per cent under, we do want to have access to our MLA. We do want that MLA to be familiar with our area. That generally means what most of these other people have said: common interests, the geographical lengths in terms of the highways, all that sort of thing.

The boundary commission here, I think, is being governed too closely by the legislation that says that these numbers have to add up. It may not be your role to change that, but I've heard from a couple of MLAs here who certainly agree with that. Maybe we in the province of Alberta also need to be looking at the changing of the legislation which mandates what the sizes should be.

Also, I don't feel it's fair to compare the average size of city constituencies with the average size of rural constituencies because of that geographical distance. It's impossible, as a couple of the MLAs have said, to think of how you can have access to people that are 300 kilometres away. It takes up all their time in travel. Time is money. Time is also lack of service. Therefore, I believe that we need to seriously consider looking at what is most effective for the servicing that the government is offering to the people and forget about this number. I realize you're not going to be able to do it all in one batch.

I keep hearing how Grande Prairie and the areas over here are being shuffled, very little talk about what's happening in Peace River and Dunvegan on the other side of the Peace River itself. We have a lower population, but we do have a variety, again, with the indigenous people. That whole block of Notley territory that is on the far east is a French community. A lot of those people culturally

and historically have been together for a long time, and some of these shifts are going to cause a lot of rifts among people. It does cause some great disorganization between those partners that work together in terms of the counties, the municipalities, the school boards, the hospital boards, all that.

It's great to live in the north. We all like that. From Grimshaw I come to Grande Prairie for two or three reasons: first, health care; second, for the airport; third, for the good restaurants. I have a sister in Beaverlodge. That's the only reason I go to Beaverlodge, not any of those other reasons. I think that's what many people around here are saying. We want to be left to deal with where we find the commonalities in terms of our needs, whether they be historical or economic.

And when you talk about Grande Prairie being the city with the largest growth factor in the future, I think the solution is that you have to add a constituency here when you add that many people. Forget about that silly average. At some point Grande Prairie city is going to need to be two constituencies just for the urban area, and we still need those two rural areas around them without cutting into the existing ones.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Day?

**Mrs. Day:** No thanks.

**The Chair:** Mr. McLeod?

**Mr. McLeod:** No, I'm good, I think.

**Ms Boucher:** I'm just opinionated. I don't have any map changes for you.

**Ms Munn:** Just to be clear, you're glad that Grimshaw is now in Peace as opposed to – you don't think that Grimshaw should be in Peace?

**Ms Boucher:** We've been in and out of Peace River. At one time it cost us a hospital because there was a boundary line between the little towns of Grimshaw and Berwyn. Now we have the hospital in Grimshaw, and we have the seniors' care all working in that area. Yes, we go to Peace River to shop and to do a few things, but, again, Grimshaw is a rural town. We don't have as much in common with the town of Peace River. Peace River: it's really weird there. Look, Peace River is also the centre for High Level. Look how far away they are, and they have nothing in common. We almost need more smaller rural constituencies to represent the needs and the interests of the people. I know you're going to say that the legislation doesn't allow that, so to the MLAs that are here: get that darn legislation changed.

**Ms Munn:** Okay. But I just want to be clear on your position, that Grimshaw . . .

**Ms Boucher:** We're happy to be with Fairview and those other little towns around there and with Falher. Again, that does relate to the highway system. Sometimes the talk of the river is just because you're forced to drive down that hill and use the bridge there. You know, we don't use the river anymore in terms of our travel, but when there's talk of boundaries that relate to the Peace and the Smoky and whatnot, I'm more liable to support the idea that Saddle Hills is a divide line rather than the river, you know, as a marking line.

**Ms Munn:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you. Sorry I missed you on the first go-around.

**Ms Boucher:** No problem. I was glad to have the last word.

**The Chair:** Well, maybe not.

Any other registered participants here?

Okay. Please come forward, sir. Sorry we missed you.

**Mr. Turnmire:** My name is Chris Turnmire, and I'm mayor of the town of Wembley, the third part of the triangle. Thank you for allowing me to speak today. The difficulty with going last is that pretty much everything has been said. However, I would have to support our municipalities that have come before from the west in terms of not being able to support the recommendation of Hythe, Beaverlodge, and Wembley moving over to Central Peace-Notley. I think it's for the very reasons that you put on the board right at the start: the values, the geographic, et cetera, et cetera. It went on, and I'm sitting there going: if that was the case, we've missed the boat on that particular thing. We will support an east-west alignment. I'm a little worried when we look for suggestions. I feel uncomfortable when you start carving out somebody else's municipality and that, but I think it made sense for Valleyview, Fox Creek, and that to go to Central Peace because of the corridor and for the MLA driving through that area, coming and going to the Legislature.

The rest of it has been said in terms of the natural partners, the collaboration, the intermunicipal situations we've got going. Staying within an east-west alignment just makes sense for our residents and, I believe, for the west county.

That's all I have to say. Thanks.

**The Chair:** I'd like to explore what you mean by an east-west alignment. Are you supporting the suggestion that the entire population of Grande Prairie be in one constituency?

**Mr. Turnmire:** No.

**The Chair:** Okay. What do you mean by east-west alignment?

**Mr. Turnmire:** I think it's been suggested and put forth in terms of Valleyview, Fox Creek, and that going over to Central Peace.

**The Chair:** And then there being two blended constituencies but reconfigured on an east-west axis?

**Mr. Turnmire:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Where would you run the line through in the city of Grande Prairie?

3:20

**Mr. Turnmire:** That's where, again, I don't like speaking for other municipalities. I think where the line on the interim report was is aligned.

**The Chair:** Thanks.

**Mr. Turnmire:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Ms Munn?

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

**The Chair:** Ms Livingstone? Mr. McLeod?

**Mr. McLeod:** No. Thank you.

**The Chair:** All right. Mrs. Day?

**Mrs. Day:** No.

**The Chair:** All right. Thanks so much.

**Mr. Turnmire:** Thanks very much.

**The Chair:** Okay. Now, not registered on the Internet but appearing today and speaking to the clerk and indicating they'd like to speak if we have time, we have Dale Gervais. Mr. Gervais.

**Mr. Gervais:** Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the commission. My name is Dale Gervais. I'm the reeve for the MD of Greenview. I'm feeling really torn. Everybody wants to tear us apart, you know, a piece here and a piece there. That doesn't work that great for us. I know that you kind of had a glimpse of the light at the end of the tunnel with the MLA for Central Peace-Notley with her suggestion. However, again, that's a north-south divide, and our business and commerce are from Valleyview to Grande Prairie. It's east-west.

**The Chair:** So your MD includes Valleyview?

**Mr. Gervais:** Yes, and Grande Cache and Fox Creek. We're the third-largest rural municipality in Alberta, about 8 and a half million acres. I just thought I'd throw that out there.

I have a very nice presentation done up here, but pretty near everything has been covered through the day. I certainly don't envy you in your job. You know, as MLA Drysdale said, you're not going to please everybody, and that is a given.

I would like to make a few points. The rural areas of our province are the engines of our economy. Without having a strong representation of rural voices, the decisions made in the urban settings where our provincial MLAs meet will never adequately account for the full impact those choices have on the environment, the economy, and the quality of life in our rural communities. I think people that live in our rural communities are very independent by nature. You know, it's evident that we would want our own representation. However, I realize you have your numbers to work with, and whatever the commission and the government decides we'll learn to live with.

But considerations for these super rural ridings are – you know, some of the things in the rural settings: we don't have access to the same number of social service agencies, programs, and other supports which are readily available in Alberta cities. That means that the constituency office is the first point of contact for our residents and is involved in many interactions with the provincial government and other services that would be redirected or provided by social service agencies and provincial offices in Alberta cities. You know, it's somewhat tough. It's a different way of life in the country. We're perfectly willing to put up with fewer services, but access to those services we still have to have, and usually that is through our MLAs.

You know, the rest of everything else that I have written has been touched on. The other thing that I would like to point out is that, as Gwen Day has outlined in appendix A of the interim report, in Canada's parliamentary tradition and case law effective representation is not the same as equal representation.

**The Chair:** Thank you.  
Any questions?

**Mr. McLeod:** Yeah. Just one. Currently the municipal district of Greenview, as you say, is one of the largest. How many MLAs do you have to deal with currently?

**Mr. Gervais:** We deal with three: Grande Prairie-Wapiti, Grande Prairie-Smoky, and West Yellowhead.

**Mr. McLeod:** Okay. And that relationship is pretty good, is it?

**Mr. Gervais:** Yes, it is good. The main two are the two Grande Prairie-Wapiti and Smoky and also West Yellowhead through the town of Grande Cache and that area. We CC all of them on everything.

**Mr. McLeod:** Is there an advantage to having three MLAs?

**Mr. Gervais:** I can tell you that there's an advantage if one of them is in government versus opposition.

**Mr. McLeod:** We're nonpartisan. I don't even pay attention to that. But you have three MLAs.

**Mr. Gervais:** Yeah. Two in opposition and one in government.

**Mr. McLeod:** Okay.

**The Chair:** All right. Thanks so much.

**Mr. Gervais:** Well, thank you for taking the time.

**The Chair:** Sure.

Now, the next person who didn't sign up on the Internet but signed up with the clerk is Cindy Clarke.

**Mrs. Clarke:** Hello. Thank you for allowing me the time to sit here. I'm Cindy Clarke. I'm a councillor for Saddle Hills county, just northwest of Grande Prairie, and I am a voter in the Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley riding. I didn't submit anything, and I wasn't prepared to speak today, but listening to what everyone was saying, I just had some ideas. I'm kind of an out-of-the-box thinker, and what I've heard today over and over again was numbers and people and numbers and people and the act and the law and all that. Maybe the recommendation of the commission is that it's time to change the law to have effective representation.

One of the questions that you had asked was: how do people in the north have such positive collaborative relationships? It's a survival mechanism. We need each other to work together to develop and encourage development in our areas, and that's something that we're all striving for up in the north, economic development and population growth. We need effective representation, and we can't have that with expanding the area to meet the numbers. Like, I don't think the numbers work anymore for our province, and maybe the law needs to be looked at, not just the electoral boundaries but the law itself and to find a different formula. That's all.

That's just what I thought today. Thank you very much for letting me say it.

**The Chair:** Our pleasure.

Questions?

Thanks very much.

Bob Marshall.

**Mr. Marshall:** Thank you, commission, hon. Chair, members. Bob Marshall. I'm a county councillor in the Wembley, Beaverlodge area, which is GP-Wapiti. Like the previous lady, same thing: I wasn't prepared to speak here today. The same thing I'm hearing: you guys are bound by the act. There are boundaries that you have to work within. I think it's time to change the act.

It's all about the numbers. As you've heard here in the north, if you look at the NADC area, we're 60 per cent of the province, we're

only about 10 per cent of the population, but we represent probably 30 per cent to 40 per cent of the resources and taxes that come and fuel the province. The MLAs aren't only a representation of the people; they're a representation of the land and the resources. When you start diluting the people that are there in the big area that they have to represent, are they going to do an effective job?

So I think my challenge to you, as the previous lady said, is that I would like to see a recommendation come back from this commission to say that the act needs to represent today's reality as to what is going on and proper representation. One suggestion would be that maybe you need to have a weighted formula around people and distance travelled. When you have a city constituency and you can reach it within 15 to 20 minutes, everybody within your constituency, and you've got another one where you've got to travel an hour and a half to reach everybody, there's a significant difference. It's been stated previously, the amount of time that's wasted on travel to get to see those individuals. That would be my challenge.

3:30

The other part, too, is that my son used to work up north, but he was flying out of Edmonton, and he has a number of friends that were flying into the camps in the north, so the economics. You look at the camps in Fox Creek, the camps up at Conklin, all up in the Fort McMurray, Red Earth area. A lot of those people are living in our large urban areas, but they're working in the north. Again, it's the resources in the north that are fuelling the province, for the large part. That is my challenge to the commission, to maybe come back with a recommendation to change the act, as the previous lady stated.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thanks.

Now, Dianne Nellis spoke before on behalf of an MLA, but she's asked to speak on her own behalf. Nobody else had signed up, so I said that we'd deal with her at the absolute end.

Ms Nellis.

**Ms Nellis:** I spoke previously. I am the constituency assistant for the MLA for Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley, so I have been able to recognize and participate in trying to get the MLA out to these outlying areas. Honestly, adding this new area, if you were to take from the Elmworth area up to Clear Hills, it would take her her whole day just to cover from one end to the other. They're not even connected, only through highway 2, which goes right through the middle of the other proposed constituency.

The absolute size of this proposed constituency is just not going to give effective representation to the citizens. I feel badly for the citizens now where they're not getting to see their MLA for even up to six months, you know, wanting to get an appointment. With her being a cabinet minister, it's very hard to get those appointments for her to get out to her people.

I know that within your report it talked about the new era, that with social media, with skyping and things like that the MLA would be able to do appointments that way, but in reality there are places within the Dunvegan-Central Peace area right now that do not have high-speed Internet. There are even places where there's lack of communication with cell towers. There are places that can't even get land lines dug in because, like, there are two years on the waiting list to get land lines into some of these places where people are actually trying to get moved in and live there. So there are a lot of challenges in that regard, too.

I think that's all I had to say. Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** Ms Munn, do you have anything?

**Ms Munn:** I don't.

**The Chair:** Ms Livingstone? Mr. McLeod? Mrs. Day? Okay.

Now I'll throw the floor open to anyone who hasn't registered in any way but still would like to speak today. We still have a few minutes left before our scheduled adjournment time. Is there anyone who'd like to say anything? Please come forward, sir. We'll deal with people who haven't spoken yet.

**Mr. Burton:** Welcome, commissioners. Tom Burton. I'm a councillor with the MD of Greenview and a director with the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, so you are in my area, that I represent. The area, if you don't know the boundaries, takes in Greenview, the county of Big Lakes, the MD of Opportunity, Wood Buffalo, and everything north. That is a large geographical area to cover and have effective representation. Fortunately, we do have meetings with all of the elected councils, but a lot of the concerns you've heard today have been based on population, the distance that you travel, you know, to provide fair representation.

I've been a director for nine years, so I've travelled the north. I've travelled the province. You cannot, as you've heard from the people, base everything on population. You need to start looking at a formula with geographic areas plus population base, as some of the speakers have stated. Also, I was going to mention technology, but the previous speaker has mentioned that. There are good portions of our great province here that have not got the technology in place to provide adequate representation that way if you want to do it by teleconference or Skype or whatever that's here today.

You know, some of these constituencies that you're talking about breaking up: you've heard the concerns of all the people in the areas. You've heard how we in the north love to have our voice heard. When we start losing more MLAs from the north, our voice is not heard. I can attest to that, travelling the province and being part of the organization I am a part of. When you start talking to people in places, they said, "We're in northern Alberta," and they reside in Edmonton. I said: "You're not even to the centre of the province geographically yet. You've got to travel north there another couple of hundred kilometres before you even hit the centre of the province."

I know our province does not have the population in the north, but as some of the members here have stated today, we are the economic engine to the province, and we need that voice to be heard in the Leg. Like I said earlier, if we start losing the MLAs – I'm sorry, but we feel we're losing that voice, and we need that voice to be heard. I live in the little hamlet of DeBolt here. Everybody seems like they want DeBolt for some reason even though they know I live there. You would think they would just get rid of that. You know, it's part of that corridor that everybody speaks about where you have that traffic that goes by, whether it's the MLA for Grande Prairie-Smoky or the MLA for Grande Prairie-Wapiti. Even the MLA for Dunvegan, sometimes maybe the MLA for Peace River will come through that way. You're on that corridor, so you can have pretty good representation no matter which area you want to throw us into, but you've got to take into consideration the geographical areas of all the other constituencies.

I understand the population side of it and the shadow populations, as some of the people have mentioned here. As a councillor for the MD of Greenview we have been struggling big time with a shadow population that has, you know, provided a lot of, I guess, both positive and negative to our MD, positive by the resource that they're there extracting. However, they're also putting a burden on the communities that they're beside, whether it's the emergency services or even the grocery stores. I know that in Fox Creek there

are times when the residents there cannot even purchase milk off the shelves because some of the shadow population have taken all that before the residents even actually have a chance to take that in. You've got to watch how you figure on this population side of it, too.

I don't know if there's anything else to add here, but I figured I should say something because I'll get cornered otherwise by the people I represent if I don't say something.

**The Chair:** Just to make it clear, we're not recommending that any constituencies be removed from the north. That's not part of the proposal in the report.

**Mr. Burton:** Well, you eliminated the Grande Prairie-Wapiti one.

**The Chair:** Sure, but we've got two constituencies there now, two blended constituencies. We recommended that there be one entirely urban constituency and one blended. That's still two constituencies. It's just dividing up the map in a different way.

**Mr. Burton:** I understand that part. I apologize for that side of it.

**The Chair:** I didn't want you to be frightened unnecessarily.

**Mr. Burton:** It's more so, I guess, with the rural voice versus the urban voice that you hear across the province. I guess that is what I meant by losing that voice. It's not so much – and I guess it depends on the MLA that is elected, if it's successful, in the urban boundary of the Grande Prairie, if that's what you want to call it, boundary. You've heard today from my counterparts on how this region all works together, so if you do get, you know, a good MLA that understands the whole region that's in the urban side of it, we're fortunate. But being a part of the other association, I've had to counteract a lot of the urban MLAs and educate them on how the rural side is an asset to the province of Alberta.

3:40

**The Chair:** Thank you.  
All right. Questions?

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

**The Chair:** Okay. Thanks.

**Mr. Burton:** Oh, come on.

**Mr. McLeod:** You want a question?

**Mr. Burton:** Why not?

**Mr. McLeod:** Where do you want to be? Which constituency? You're saying you don't ...

**Mr. Burton:** I prefer the way it was originally, the status quo.

**Mr. McLeod:** The way it was.

**Mr. Burton:** I understand that, you know, we've got to look at growth, but in your opening comments, when you stated that there are other criteria that you've got to use and common community interests, you said only Edmonton and Calgary.

**The Chair:** No. Just to not divide up internal neighbourhoods within Edmonton and Calgary and to try to avoid cutting up other municipalities at all. But obviously there are some municipalities like Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Fort McMurray, and Red Deer that are bigger than 46,687, like, considerably bigger. You then have to go to two full constituencies. You're not there yet, but you will be

soon, okay? We're talking about this interim period. What do we do in the interim period? You've got the Fort McMurray solution, which is what you have right now, or you can have the Medicine Hat solution, which is what is proposed in the interim recommendations.

**Mr. Burton:** So I go back to the point: what is your definition of community? You know, does community mean just a two- or three-block radius within an urban boundary, or does a community mean a border? I'll use the example here, say, from Beaverlodge to Valleyview. That could be a community that has, you know, interests. To hang up on this definition of communities for just your urban areas: I kind of struggle with that a little bit. I'm sorry.

**The Chair:** You don't have to worry about that. We accept that communities are communities of interest however you define them.

**Mr. Burton:** You betcha.

**The Chair:** It's neighbourhoods in Edmonton and Calgary. You know, like, there are community leagues in Edmonton. That's what were talking about in Edmonton and Calgary. But elsewhere in the province it's what we call communities of interest, people who have the same interests. You can belong to many communities of interest, one person, just depending on how they live their life. So there are a variety of things going on there.

**Mr. Burton:** I understand that side of it. It's just that when you said "community and neighbourhood boundaries" and you said "Edmonton and Calgary," so to speak, in your opening comments ...

**The Chair:** It's Calgary's fault ...

**Mr. Burton:** Buggers.

**The Chair:** ... because they call them community associations instead of community leagues.

**Mr. Burton:** See, there's the other part.

**The Chair:** If they had, then we would have been with neighbourhoods all around. But thank you.

**Mr. Burton:** No. I tried. I'm good.

**The Chair:** No, no. If that caused you concern, I'll change my remarks for tomorrow because I don't want other people to be concerned that way.

**Mr. Burton:** Well, as you understand, when you get outside of those boundaries, the definition of community changes drastically on that side of it. I know you stated that sometimes when municipal boundaries are just a line in the sand, so to speak, a lot of people don't understand where the municipal boundary is. As stated earlier today, some people don't even understand where they're supposed to vote because it keeps changing around from election to election. Then you have your provincial, federal, and municipal elections. If they all happen in the same year, you've got lots of fun then.

That's all I have. I thank you very much for travelling to the north.

You found out, like MLA Drysdale said, that we have our struggles in the wintertime with access. That's something that you have to face if you are an MLA as well.

**The Chair:** For sure. Thank you very much. Thank you for coming forward.



**Mr. Burton:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Now, is there anyone else here? We've got another five minutes here. Anybody else here who would like to speak who has not yet spoken? Yes, sir. Please come forward.

**Mr. Matthews:** Good afternoon, commission. I'm Ken Matthews. I'm with the Big Lakes county, the reeve of Big Lakes county. There is just one point I want to make when we're talking about representation by MLAs. In the urban areas I would suggest that most MLAs are home in their own beds at night. Our MLAs from the north and rural areas have another home when they're in the city, so they're that much farther away for how many months of the year that they're not available in their constituencies. That just makes the travel distance that much more difficult because when they're home, they have to try and catch up. I know that our MLA spends one day a week when legislating in her own constituency. She travels from Tallcree in the north and works out of Slave Lake and High Prairie. It's a huge area for her to cover. How she can possibly do it or how anybody would want to do it is more than I can imagine.

I agree with the rest of these people that the population thing is way overrated. When you talk about the quality of person you need, in the city I would suggest that they don't worry about agriculture, forestry, energy, streets, roads, bridges, whereas for the MLAs in

the rural areas all those are a topic of concern for them, every one of them. Can you represent more people if you live in an urban area? I believe you can and likely should be expected to because you're there with them. I realize that Calgary people have the same problems as rural ones. But I believe, again, what some people have said here, that maybe it's time to go with a recommendation back to the government and say that the way the rules are, the way the regulations are, the way the law is today, there's no fair way we can break these boundaries up, and until that is determined, leave the boundaries where they are.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Great.

Any questions?

Thank you so much.

All right. Well, on behalf of my fellow commissioners I want to thank you very much for coming today, for staying through the whole thing, for being so helpful and so well prepared in your remarks, for the maps, for the visual aids. I certainly am coming away with many ideas that I didn't have before. We'll see what we can do. This is just the first step in a journey around the province one more time. Thanks very much for all of your input today and your good attitude and your willingness to co-operate. Thank you.

[The hearing adjourned at 3:47 p.m.]





