



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Edmonton

Tuesday, July 18, 2017
6:58 p.m.

Transcript No. 25

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

Justice Myra Bielby, Chair

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

Support Staff

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

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

Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Edmonton

Public Participants

Gabrielle Blatz
Lori Blatz
Katy Campbell, Constituency Assistant, Edmonton-Gold Bar
Bruce Ehmg, Edmonton-Ellerslie NDP Electoral District Association
Joel French, Public Interest Alberta, Democracy Task Force
Laila Goodridge
Bart Guyon, Reeve, Brazeau County
Duncan Kinney, Executive Director, Progress Alberta
Patrick Kobly
John Kolkman
Andrew Koning
Glenn McLean, Mayor, Town of Drayton Valley
Mary O'Neill
Jamie Post, President, Glenwood Community League
Mark Smith, MLA, Drayton Valley-Devon
Garett Spelliscy, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview NDP Constituency Association

6:58 p.m.

Tuesday, July 18, 2017

[Justice Bielby in the chair]

The Chair: Hello, everybody. Welcome very much to this first hearing in Edmonton of the Electoral Boundaries Commission, round 2. Thanks very much for coming out this evening and for indicating that you're wanting to participate in this democratic process. We're very glad that there's been such a level of interest, particularly on this second round of public hearings.

I'm Myra Bielby. I'm a judge of the Court of Appeal of Alberta, but at the moment I'm also chair of the provincial Electoral Boundaries Commission. To introduce the rest of my panel: on my right is Bruce McLeod, mayor of the town of Acme, and on his right is Gwen Day from Carstairs. On my left is Laurie Livingstone from Calgary, and on her left is Jean Munn, also of Calgary. Together we form the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

At the moment we've been mandated to look at the province's provincial constituencies and make recommendations to the Speaker of the Legislature as to any changes that we think should be made to the boundaries of those constituencies to ensure continued effective representation of Albertans by MLAs.

In May we finished the first stage of this work. We presented our interim recommendations to the Speaker – we tabled those – containing 87 recommendations, one for each of Alberta's 87 constituencies, talking about the boundaries, the area, and the name of each constituency. We haven't recommended changes for each one of them by any means, but as we soon found when we undertook this job, once you make changes to one, there's a ripple effect through the neighbouring constituencies, and you have a much bigger adjustment task on your hands than you may have thought at the beginning.

If you don't have access to or you haven't yet seen our interim report, you can go online at abebc.ca. That's our website, and the interim report is available for anybody to look at. Also, that report contains our written submissions.

On the first go-round we had 14 half days of public hearings around the province, and we received 749 written submissions, which was terrific. This time we're having – yesterday we were in Grande Prairie, this morning we were in Vermilion, and this evening, tomorrow morning, and tomorrow afternoon we are in Edmonton. Next we have three half days in Calgary. Brooks is on Friday, and then on Monday next we're having a hearing in Red Deer. Those are our public hearings this time around. I don't have a final total for the number of written submissions, but as of last Friday it was over 500 as well. So we're having a good response in regard to getting people's specific feedback on the specific recommendations that we've made.

Of course, we're here tonight looking to get your input as to our recommendations and any changes that you think should be made to our recommendations, big or small. This afternoon in Vermilion we were gratified by certain recommendations where people had gone around the boundaries of their constituency and critiqued them about, you know, whether it should be one road or another road that should be added and gave us specific input. I think we learned a lot. We certainly learned a lot about Vermilion and the surrounding area, but we also got some detailed feedback as to how their constituencies could be better designed. We're looking forward to the same thing here this evening. Of course, anybody is invited to make any comment they want about any constituency, not just the one in which they live.

Now, I thought we'd go over the criteria that we're obligated to use by law in making our recommendations so that you might better understand why we've made the interim recommendations we did.

We're governed in our activities by a law passed by the provincial Legislature in 1990, and there has been a similar law ever since Alberta was created in 1905. It gives us some rules to follow. Those rules say that step 1 is to figure out what the average population size is for the constituencies in Alberta. That's relevant only because it's a starting point in our analysis of each constituency. The goal is not to set the population of each constituency at that number but to have that in mind as we go forward in making our analysis.

We got the Statistics Canada population information for 2016 in the federal census on February 8. That told us that Alberta's population was 4,062,000 and change. Divided by 87, that turns out to be 46,697, which is the average population size of a constituency in Alberta. No constituency is that exact size, but a surprising number of them are actually quite close. Taking each constituency in turn, we looked at their actual population as of the census data. We compared it to the 46,697, saw how close it was to that average, and then looked at the criteria set out in the act to see whether we should recommend that it either grow or shrink to come closer to the average number.

One of those criteria is that we're to look at common community interests and values, and this might be the most important of the criteria. Our rules are to try to avoid cutting up communities of interest if we can. That doesn't mean just towns and villages. It means people who have the same interests, perhaps, because they earn their living in the same way: agriculture, forestry, service industries, education, whatever. Communities of interest are also because of certain ethnicity, et cetera. Every Albertan belongs, no doubt, to several common communities of interest, but we're to keep those in mind, in a geographical sense, when we make our recommendations.

That doesn't mean that we can't include more than one common community in a constituency. In fact, every constituency has many common communities, but we're to try to avoid cutting them up. For example, we heard this afternoon from an indigenous community in the St. Paul area, making a request that they be moved from one constituency into another and giving us some good reasons why that should happen. Cutting up reserves or Métis settlements is one of the things that we're trying to avoid doing, certainly inadvertently, so we welcomed the suggestions made by that presenter. That's one of the criteria.

7:05

Another criterion is community and neighbourhood boundaries in Edmonton and Calgary. If you're from Edmonton, you know about community leagues. There is often a community league to represent each community – I call those neighbourhoods – and in Calgary they have the same thing with community associations. So for the two largest cities in the province we're to try to honour community boundaries, neighbourhood boundaries if we can. We haven't always been able to do that. There are some neighbourhoods in Calgary that have well above 46,697 people in them, very dense in certain areas of Calgary, but where we can, we've tried to honour those boundaries. Maybe we'll hear some input this evening from people who think that we failed to do that in Edmonton. We certainly are very interested in hearing about that.

We're directed by the act not to cross municipal boundaries if we can avoid it. For example, we received letters from the mayors of Calgary and Edmonton asking us to keep the constituencies within those two cities entirely contained within the city so that we not have blended constituencies part in Edmonton and part outside of Edmonton, and we've attempted to honour that request, as was done the last time. The current electoral boundaries in Alberta do not have blended constituencies between Edmonton and Calgary and the country. This is also true for other towns and villages. We try

not to cut up towns and villages. Inadvertently, the last time the line went through Tofield, and people in Tofield were split between two constituencies, I'm sure unintentionally, so we're going to try to avoid having that happen a second time.

We're directed to follow natural boundaries where we can. These are primarily rivers and major highways. For example, we have attempted to avoid crossing highway 2, to make a constituency that crosses highway 2 south to Calgary until we get to Airdrie. We couldn't avoid doing it in Airdrie. Some of Airdrie is on the east side of the highway, so we had to deal with that. Otherwise, we've been able to honour that natural boundary of the highway.

Another factor we've considered is projected growth rates. Virtually every current constituency in the province has experienced growth over the last eight to 10 years since the last electoral boundaries review in 2009-2010, but some have grown at a much faster rate than average. Of the 600,000-plus people who have moved into Alberta in the last eight years, disproportionately those people have chosen to live in Calgary, Red Deer, Edmonton, Grande Prairie, or Fort McMurray, so that means the growth rates in those communities have soared in certain circumstances, and the growth rates in some parts of the province have not at all equalled the 14-plus per cent growth rate in those major cities. So we're looking at growth rates, and we're looking at what will happen in different areas of the province if future growth occurs at the same rate and pace as past growth.

For that reason, in Edmonton and Calgary, in some of the new areas toward the outside edges of the cities, where there's lots of construction ongoing and people are moving into those areas, we've projected that there will be future growth in those constituencies that are not fully built out now. We have in some cases recommended that those constituencies be set at slightly less than the average number to allow for that growth rate, though I have to say that in Edmonton it was interesting that the average provincial figure, 46,697, divided almost equally into the population of Edmonton to produce 20 constituencies. All of the constituencies that we recommend in Edmonton but one are within 5 per cent of the provincial average, so there isn't a whole bunch of deviation even for the new areas at the edge of the city.

The other factor that we've been considering in our work is communication within a constituency. Are there particular challenges in certain areas of the province that make communication more difficult? Is communication easier because people live more densely and have more access to high-speed Internet? So that sort of thing.

Those are all of the factors that we've considered in coming up with our draft recommendations, including public input, the public input we received the first time around and now, of course, your public input and the public input of other Albertans as we go forward. Where we're going from here: what we're going to do is that we're obliged to file a final set of recommendations with the Speaker of the Legislature by October 23, 2017, about three months from now, and we either confirm or vary our 87 recommendations and say why. Then it will be up to the Legislature to decide when and whether to implement legislation to change the provincial boundaries so that they're ready for the next provincial election.

That will produce legislation. We don't pass that legislation. We're simply a body making recommendations. It's up to the Legislature to decide whether to enact our recommendations. That said, over the past several provincial boundary commissions the Legislature has chosen to pretty well enact the recommendations of the Electoral Boundaries Commission's report, so we're reasonably confident that they'll at least consider doing that in our situation again.

Thanks very much for coming out, as I say. I'm pleased that so many of you have chosen to take part in this process. Please be aware when you make your comments tonight that we have a *Hansard* reporter here, and he's taking down everything that we'll say. It'll be posted on our website for anybody to hear, both an audio recording and also the written transcript of what is said tonight, probably in a couple of days for the written transcript. Maybe the audio will go up tomorrow, so people who aren't here can listen to what's happening. I was pleasantly surprised the last time at how many people had actually dialed in and listened to what had happened even if they couldn't come out to the hearing themselves.

The process that we're going to follow this evening to make sure we have time for all of the registered presenters is that I'll call people up in the order of registration. You'll have five minutes to make a presentation orally, and then the commissioners will ask any questions or make any comments that we think will help us better understand what you're saying. Then, of course, you're more than welcome to stay and hear what everybody else has to say about their particular views about our recommendations.

Our first registered presenter is Terence . . .

Mr. Ehmig: Ehmig.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ehmig. It's not your name. It's the clerk's handwriting. It's almost as bad as mine.

If everybody could start out by saying the constituency in which they live.

Mr. Ehmig: Hello. I'm Terence Ehmig from Edmonton-Ellerslie NDP EDA. To consider the electoral division boundary issue in the Edmonton-Ellerslie area, we formed a three-person committee, and after much discussion this is the consensus of what we came up with. My discussion is pretty much centred around the electoral division of Edmonton-Ellerslie.

We agree with the Electoral Boundaries Commission that certain areas of Edmonton are growing rapidly and that a rebalancing of population needed to be done. We disagree with how the recommendations regarding the electoral division of Edmonton-Ellerslie were done in the Electoral Boundaries Commission 2016-17 interim report. What we would like to see done is that the neighbourhoods of Ekota, Menisa, Meyokumin, and Sakaw remain in the riding of Edmonton-Ellerslie.

The Chair: Okay. I'm going to ask you to go more slowly. I've got Ekota. What after that?

Mr. Ehmig: It's that Ekota, Menisa, Meyokumin, and Sakaw remain in the riding of Edmonton-Ellerslie. Our MLA has his constituency office in the neighbourhood of Meyokumin, and the previous MLA, Naresh Bhardwaj, had his in the very same place as well.

As for the electoral division history, the neighbourhoods of Ekota, Menisa, Meyokumin, and Sakaw have been in the riding of Edmonton-Ellerslie since it was created in 1993. Keeping the older, established neighbourhoods of Ekota, Menisa, Meyokumin, and Sakaw in the electoral division of Edmonton-Ellerslie will give the riding some voter stability as these areas are not high-growth areas, and it will result in the likelihood of the electoral division boundaries not having to be moved during the next reassessment of electoral boundaries.

The Edmonton neighbourhood of Laurel is a high-growth area and has the potential to add quite a bit more population in the future. Edmonton-Ellerslie already has the neighbourhoods of

Summerside, Walker, and Charlesworth and areas to the south and east of these areas, adding high-growth potential to it.

7:15

I'm just going to go from there to – in summary, the solution to address our concerns regarding the Edmonton-Ellerslie electoral division proposed boundary adjustment as per your 2016-2017 interim report is to keep the neighbourhoods of Ekota, Menisa, Meyokumin, and Sakaw in the electoral division of Edmonton-Ellerslie and move the neighbourhood Laurel out of Edmonton-Ellerslie.

I'm just going to end there. Thank you.

Ms Munn: That was Laurel? The three last ones?

Mr. Ehmig: Basically, we just recommended Laurel to go, and we wanted to leave it up to your commission to decide what else to do.

The Chair: Okay. Just to build on that a bit, where did we put Ekota, Menisa, Meyokumin, and Sakaw?

Mr. Ehmig: You put them in Edmonton-Mill Woods West.

The Chair: And Laurel is where?

Mr. Ehmig: Laurel you gave to us.

The Chair: Where would you propose that it move? "Where is it located?" I guess is what I should be asking.

Mr. Ehmig: It could go to either Edmonton-Mill Woods West or Edmonton-Mill Woods East. Myself, I'd be more apt to rebalance things along giving it to Edmonton-Mill Woods West.

The Chair: Okay. Where is it on the map? Is it in the middle, north of Edmonton-Ellerslie? Could you give us a street location?

Mr. Ehmig: On the map it's located basically to the north. It's almost in the central. Like, it's almost really close to the central. You actually took out one neighbourhood nearer to that, and you gave that to Edmonton-Mill Woods East.

The Chair: Okay. Have you approximately an idea of what would happen to the population of Edmonton-Ellerslie of 48,063 if we took out the four neighbourhoods that you suggest?

Mr. Ehmig: Okay. Well, you already took them out.

The Chair: Sorry. I'm not asking this very well. Your population would go up.

Mr. Ehmig: If you added them back in?

The Chair: Yeah.

Mr. Ehmig: I've actually got the right number here. It's like 12,000 and something, 12,286 to be exact.

The Chair: Okay. And if we took out Laurel, what effect would that have?

Mr. Ehmig: We get minus 7,413.

The Chair: Seventy-four hundred and thirteen people in Laurel.

Mr. Ehmig: Yeah.

The Chair: So your size will go up in net of about 5,000 people, which would make your population at 54,000. The reason we're

asking is that we can't go over 25 per cent above the provincial average as a mandatory maximum, totally aside from other discretionary considerations we might have.

Mr. Ehmig: I totally understand where you're going here.

The Chair: Okay. Why do you think this should happen?

Mr. Ehmig: Well, the first reason I would give is that, one, you guys took away our constituency office when you did that. Two is that they have been in the riding since 1993, right? I think that they have a history there. Places such as Summerside or Laurel don't have as much history in the riding. Really, if you look at it on the map, it looks like a real weird shape right now, with a little bit of a gouge out of there where you took another area out.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

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

Mrs. Day: I'm just wondering if you have a map that we could take a look at. My map doesn't include community names on it, which, Aaron, perhaps you have. Yeah. Thank you.

The Chair: Our clerk can give us one later, but do you have a map with your community names on it?

Mr. Ehmig: Sure.

Mrs. Day: That would be great.

The Chair: Can we keep this map?

Mr. Ehmig: Oh, that's my best map. Can you make a copy?

The Chair: I don't think we have the facilities here to make a copy.

Mr. Ehmig: Yeah, you can keep it.

The Chair: Okay. We can take a photograph of it, and that will become part of the record.

Mr. Ehmig: Can I just mention one other thing? On page 48 you have certain writing about Edmonton-Ellerslie. On there it said, "It is recommended that the western border of Edmonton-Ellerslie be moved east to 66 St." You guys actually moved it to 50th Street. I just want to make that point.

The Chair: The map is at 50th Street?

Mr. Ehmig: Yeah. It's actually at 50th Street. It's not 66th, as mentioned in the report.

The Chair: But on the map it's shown to be at 50th Street.

Mr. Ehmig: Absolutely. Yeah. But in your write-up in the interim report you guys said 66th. We'd like it at 66th.

The Chair: Thank you for bringing that to our attention. There have been other disconnects pointed out between the maps and the text description. We were aware that this possibility would happen because the report went to the printer before the maps were added to it, so we do have a statement in there that if there is any discrepancy between the map and the text description, the map governs, but we will correct this in the final report for sure, so thanks.

Mr. Ehmig: You bet.

The Chair: All right. Thanks so much for coming.

All right. Then our next registered speaker is Garrett Spelliscy. Again, if you could start by saying the constituency where you reside.

Mr. Spelliscy: I'm here representing the Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview NDP Constituency Association. Just off the top, personally, thanks very much for your work on this commission. I think the measure of success is not making one particular group or party happy with this but to make everybody equally unhappy, and I think you've been very successful at that. It's just a joke. I'm sure that's what you're feeling at these hearings over the last couple of days.

Our constituency association has met and discussed this interim report, and we have a few general comments and a few comments specific to the constituency. Although, from my understanding, it's not a mandated consideration or a primary consideration, the commission has taken upon itself to make being close to the average population a primary goal of their work. Second to this are the considerations of keeping communities together, clear boundaries, and effective representation. Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has benefited from clear boundaries, cohesive communities, and effective representation while also, happily or luckily, being very close to the population average. So given the first three points of cohesive communities, effective representation, and clear boundaries, we do support the proposed boundaries, which would result in no change in general.

Now, there are a number of neighbourhoods that could have been brought into another constituency. We've seen the neighbourhood of Beverly proper, Beverly and Rundle, so everything south of 118th Ave that used to be part of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. You could have done something with the areas north of 137th Avenue, which have been part of different ridings. We're happy to hold on to those.

7:25

We also have the neighbourhood of Belvedere, which sort of forms a triangle west of Fort Road and east of 66th Street and is kind of our most sticky-outy neighbourhood in the constituency, but it maintains natural boundaries. The social and economic situations or circumstances for families in those areas are cohesive with the rest of the community, so we support keeping those communities in our constituency.

However, we do have concerns with proposed boundaries affecting other constituencies and splitting up neighbourhoods and communities in the name of getting close to the population average. As I said, we have a few neighbourhoods like Belvedere or neighbourhoods on the north side of 137th Avenue that do cross those major corridors. They might not be corridors in your terminology, but in an urban riding in the northeast of Edmonton they are corridors: the Yellowhead, Fort Road, 137th Avenue, 144th Avenue, 66th Street. I'm thinking particularly of a little jut-out in between 144th Avenue and 153rd Avenue in the old Edmonton-Decore – actually, I don't know if you've changed the name – that goes across 66th street, taking a sort of lump out of a neighbourhood where 66th Street is really a corridor for that community. I think about the way that politicians, elected representatives, and campaigns communicate with constituents often using Canada Post, and I'm just wondering how the people in that neighbourhood are probably going to get mail from ...

The Chair: From multiple MLAs?

Mr. Spelliscy: From everybody because it's very different. It's very juttu-outy. I'm making up words here, and I'd like to see what that looks like in *Hansard*.

What we wanted to say is that although we are in general in support of the proposed boundaries for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, because you're grappling with issues of population that are really affecting the other constituencies in the northeast, should there be a recommendation in your final report to move a neighbourhood in a cohesive way into Beverly-Clareview, because we're actually below the average right now, there are clear neighbourhoods that you could do this with. The neighbourhood of York, which is north of 137th Ave on the east side of 66th Street up until 144th Ave – it's above our little triangle – would fit very naturally along natural boundaries into Beverly-Clareview. The neighbourhood of Hairsine actually straddles 144th Avenue. It goes all the way up to 153rd, but it's in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview and Edmonton-Manning. It's sort of that middle section of the north boundary. Hairsine could be placed altogether in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

The Chair: Sorry. I don't mean to interrupt, but I don't want to miss this point. Is Hairsine not two neighbourhoods? My memory of it is that there is a west Hairsine and east Hairsine or north and south, is it not?

Mr. Spelliscy: Well, it's all called Hairsine. They have one community league, but it is kind of two neighbourhoods because it's on both sides of 144th. In the boundaries before 2012 the southern part of Hairsine was part of that northern constituency. It was split in 2012.

Then I was just going to say that the neighbourhood of Fraser, which is on the other side of Victoria Trail on the east side, is a cohesive neighbourhood going up to 153rd Avenue. So any one of these three neighbourhoods. Please don't quiz me on the population size as I don't have that information. But my estimate was that if you're trying to deal with a balance in constituencies like Edmonton-Decore, Edmonton-Castle Downs, and Edmonton-Manning, there are going to be ripple effects in the different areas that from a layman's perspective might look gerrymandered. But we could take cohesive neighbourhoods with populations of maybe 2,000 to 2,500 people. That might free up some other neighbourhoods so that they could stay more naturally in their areas in the northeast.

I also wanted to mention that the proposal to rename Edmonton-Gold Bar Edmonton-East could cause confusion with people that live in our neighbourhood because our constituency actually goes farther east than Edmonton-East, and the former federal riding of Edmonton East encompassed Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, and a number of other provincial constituencies, none of which were the former Edmonton-Gold Bar. So it's a confusing name. Our recommendation would be to either keep it the same or find something a little bit more descriptive.

That's my presentation.

The Chair: Okay, then. I'm going to ask you some questions in backward order. Because Gold Bar is such a small part of what we're now calling Edmonton-East, we thought it wouldn't be descriptive in the minds of the average citizen to call it Edmonton-Gold Bar. If we were not going to call it Edmonton-East – I didn't think of the fact that you're further east than they are, but yes, indeed, you are. Just in case we don't have somebody from Edmonton-East to fill us in, what do you as an Edmontonian think we should call it?

Mr. Spelliscy: I actually think of that Gold Bar-Capilano area as Gold Bar. In general, when we look at the naming of constituencies, I think there's an opportunity to consult with indigenous partners about meaningful names for the land that these constituencies represent. Calling things "east," "west," while it might seem cut and dried and very clear – and that's positive – it seems like a missed opportunity. I don't have something off the top of my head for Gold Bar because I think of it as Gold Bar.

The Chair: Okay. Then going back to earlier comments, we haven't regarded population size as the most important criteria but, rather, a starting point. Virtually no constituency is exactly on the exact population size. The test is: should we recommend a change? If so, which of these criteria is that change being recommended to accomplish? If the answer is that none of them are met by that, then we are, you know, hard-pressed to recommend a change. I wanted that to be clear, and I think you understand that there are all these other criteria that we've taken into account. But if there is no good reason for moving off the average size, then that is most likely, in our minds, the way to go to achieve effective representation in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview and other places in the province.

In regard to the multiple mailings from different MLAs issue, I appreciate that that's a problem. We heard about that in the first round of hearings because MLAs, I guess, can get a reduced mailing rate if they choose to send out a flyer to everybody in a certain postal code.

Mr. Spelliscy: It's just using unaddressed ad mail. Businesses and politicians use this, right? It's not sending somebody an addressed letter; it's sending a whole neighbourhood the same flyer, right?

The Chair: Right. But to deal with that, to avoid that problem is difficult because Canada Post changes those as population changes, independent, we're told, of what the electoral boundaries are in a particular area. Maybe not in your particular area but, for example, in Edmonton-Manning, as it grows, those areas change. They can change every year. So to try to deal with that relatively irritating but small problem through the electoral boundaries review might not be very satisfactory.

Mr. Spelliscy: They're going the way of superboxes, but they will in general use natural boundaries because letter carriers aren't going to cross back and forth over 66th Street or whatever. They're designed on what letter carriers can effectively deliver, right?

The Chair: Right. Thanks.

I'm going to ask my fellow commissioners if they have any questions. Mr. McLeod?

Mr. McLeod: In the particular area that you're addressing here, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, is there potential for growth in that area?

7:35

Mr. Spelliscy: Well, absolutely. I would say that compared to other neighbourhoods in the northeast, there is less new development in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. I think that if you lined them up all next to each other, it would probably be on the lower end.

Mr. McLeod: But there is potential for growth in the neighbourhood.

Mr. Spelliscy: Yes. We have new neighbourhoods in Clareview in particular.

The Chair: You're not fully built out yet.

Mr. Spelliscy: That's right.

Mrs. Day: For the communities you're asking us to consider bringing into Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, you're asking that because of – I don't want to put words in your mouth – how they're meeting which criteria?

Mr. Spelliscy: Looking at the map for the northeast of Edmonton, the changes that are recommended to other constituencies seem not to follow, in my mind, the best ways of following natural boundaries and keeping communities together. For those three neighbourhoods that I mentioned, I'm not recommending necessarily that that change be made. I'm saying that as a group, should that recommendation be made, that would make sense to us, if the neighbourhoods came all together to our constituency. The commission seems to be grappling with trying to find the right balance in the northeast, particularly getting growing communities close to the population average, and that might be an opportunity. If you were to say, "Okay; Edmonton-Manning no longer had Fraser" and that came down here, that might mean it was easier to keep boundaries in Edmonton-Decore and in Edmonton-Manning and in Edmonton-Castle Downs and even in Edmonton-Calder. There would be a ripple effect so that we could keep natural boundaries in those other constituencies. Is that more clear?

Mrs. Day: You're suggesting it because of the numbers for potential growth further in the northeast and because they have like communities with your communities.

Mr. Spelliscy: All three of those neighbours have like communities, and they have natural boundaries that would make sense on a map and make sense within the community, that they would be part of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. So rather than trying to – and I don't know the name of the neighbourhood, but I'm just thinking of that very small part of Edmonton-Decore that juts out across 66th Street. That might affect those decisions that make a little bit more sense in those other constituencies.

Ms Munn: So what you're saying is that Fraser, Hairsine, and that little jut ...

Mr. Spelliscy: And York, yes, the three neighbourhoods.

Ms Munn: ... could fit comfortably in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Spelliscy: Yes, if you were stuck in the northeast and you thought ...

Ms Munn: And if we're not stuck in the northeast?

Mr. Spelliscy: Well, I think you're stuck.

Ms Munn: Because?

Mr. Spelliscy: I think that there are some changes to some very straightforward constituencies that follow natural boundaries that now have neighbourhoods that cross corridors, and I think that should be avoided and that this would make it easier.

The Chair: All right. And by "corridors," you're talking about larger roads within Edmonton.

Mr. Spelliscy: Larger roads, yeah.

Ms Livingstone: Sorry. The one you're talking about being concerned with where Edmonton-Decore juts out: do you know

what neighbourhood that is, or are you just concerned because of the shape?

Mr. Spelliscy: Well, it goes across 66th Street between 144th Avenue and 153rd Avenue.

Ms Livingstone: Yeah. I know where you're looking at. I'm just wondering: do you actually know what the communities are in there?

Mr. Spelliscy: I don't know the name of it. It's quite a small – and just from looking at the map, I didn't think it was the entire neighbourhood.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. Spelliscy: Thank you.

The Chair: All right. Mary O'Neill.

Mrs. O'Neill: Thank you. May I ask if you have maps in front of you of numbers 79 and 80?

The Chair: Which constituencies are those?

Mrs. O'Neill: St. Albert and St. Albert-Redwater as you've proposed.

The Chair: Can you tell me the constituency in which you reside?

Mrs. O'Neill: Well, I currently reside in Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

The Chair: Thank you.

Okay. I think we all have the maps.

Mrs. O'Neill: Madam Justice Bielby and members of the boundary review commission, thank you for this opportunity to speak with you this evening. I'm making my presentation to you with the precise purpose of requesting, indeed of pleading with you to reconsider your proposed boundaries for Alberta's electoral divisions St. Albert, No. 79, and St. Albert-Redwater, No. 80, specifically as they relate to the city of St. Albert and precisely to keep the city electorally united and reunited.

My presentation in support of this plea is made from a personal perspective. I was the MLA for the constituency of St. Albert from 1997 to 2004, two terms. Living in the city and representing St. Albert, I have experienced the strengths and the deficiencies of our current boundaries.

On the strengths side, I represented a very strong, vibrant, historically older but fast becoming younger community which includes one municipal government, two publicly funded school boards, and a host of active volunteer organizations. Unlike my rural colleagues, I could drive from one end of the constituency to the other in 10 minutes west to east, north to south. Unlike many of my legislative colleagues, I lived within driving distance of the Legislature, which meant that I could often meet with a constituent or a group on their turf and attend meetings in my office at the Leg. on the same day and return home each evening late at night when the House was in session.

On the deficiencies side, as a result of a previous boundary decision which hived off the northwest corner of our city of St. Albert and plunked us into the constituency of Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, as it was originally called, I lived a mere distance of 12 houses outside the boundaries of the constituency I served and the community I knew very well. As MLA and resident my provincial interests were grouped with others whose issues I did

not share. St. Albert residents in the constituency of Spruce Grove-St. Albert felt alienated.

Why am I speaking of this personal situation? Because while I know and understand your democratic desire to realize the principles that every vote should count or of one person, one vote, et cetera, I now ask in this 21st century that you consider a more sophisticated algorithm, a mathematical construct that factors in density and distance and, I might add, the human factor to accompany them.

On my last point in support of democratic engagement by voters and in support of elected representation, my overarching consideration is the human element of face-to-face encounters with individuals and groups. Such encounters enable mutual feedback and the somewhat mundane matter of travel convenience. As you know, rural and urban matters are often quite distinct. I believe it is the MLA's job to reconcile those differences for the good of all when working with the issues under the dome. It's hard enough that we're communicating and brokering agreement between the two in the parliamentary system we have, but to do so within a rural constituency is even more difficult, time-consuming, and often duplicating.

7:45

I believe the relationship between an MLA and their constituents should be an open, transparent, and accessible two-way relationship. Therefore, using the word "beg," I beg you to keep the city of St. Albert's neighbourhoods of Pineview, Parkwood, Kingswood, Woodlands, Oakmont, and Erin Ridge . . .

The Chair: If you could just go a little bit more slowly.

Mrs. O'Neill: Okay.

The Chair: Pineview . . .

Mrs. O'Neill: Parkwood, Kingswood, Woodlands . . .

The Chair: Okay. Hang on. Kingswood . . .

Mrs. O'Neill: Woodlands, Oakmont, Erin Ridge. They're all east of Boudreau and, where Boudreau meets St. Albert Trail, east of it as well, that area that you have in the interim report placed in St. Albert-Redwater, I might add, a little, itty-bitty corner of the map of St. Albert-Redwater, I think it's called, an itty-bitty, bitty corner of a rural constituency. I ask that you keep those communities – they are very much a part of St. Albert – within the constituency of St. Albert, number 79, and, as you have so well proposed in your interim report, bring the western neighbourhoods of Lacombe Park, North Ridge, Dorchester, and Deer Ridge back into the St. Albert constituency, number 79.

As the adage goes, two wrongs do not make a right, or to put it more clumsily, alienating some folks to make room for previously alienated others doesn't please anybody. I believe that in St. Albert there's room for both.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. O'Neill. Just so I understand what you're saying, in summary, you're asking that the entirety of the city of St. Albert fall within one constituency?

Mrs. O'Neill: Yes.

The Chair: Our problem is that St. Albert has a population, based on the census, of 65,589 people. It would be 40 per cent – I just calculated that in my head – above the provincial average, which is well above the maximum 25 per cent over permitted by the act, even

independent of the other tests that we're supposed to apply in our job. That would be illegal, and we could not do it.

Mrs. O'Neill: I remember the piece of legislation, but is it specifically mentioning a variance of 25 per cent?

The Chair: Yes. I'll read it aloud to you.

Mrs. O'Neill: Well, then, if it is, which I believe – I couldn't remember it specifically saying that; I remember it recommending but not demanding – my concern is that there is a density and a distance, both a distance within the boundaries of St. Albert, but there is also a distance in proximity to the Legislature, which is a factor as well, which is not shared by those other constituencies which are represented at quite a distance away.

The Chair: Okay. If I can ask a follow-up question, at the moment the city of St. Albert is split by, as you say, taking the northwest corner and adding it to Spruce Grove. In response to, may I say, probably the most submissions we received on any issue in the province on the first go-around, we've recommended that that change and that the eastern side of St. Albert be, in fact, part of the blended constituency with Redwater, respecting the traditional francophone aspect and historical nature in the St. Albert and Athabasca regions. Do you think that's a good idea, or should we go back to excluding you from the constituency?

Mrs. O'Neill: No. In fact, my second request was that you bring us back into the fold because I can tell you that a rural constituency is very, very difficult to accommodate when dealing with issues, okay? By taking the eastern side – and those are very significantly St. Albert neighbourhoods. To put them as a small part into a very large rural area does not a marriage make, in my estimation.

The Chair: What solution would you recommend?

Mrs. O'Neill: My solution is, quite frankly, to factor in density, to put into it an algorithm that factors in density and distance, and to make those considerations with the community of St. Albert. Because you've put it so wisely . . .

The Chair: We can't do that. We can't amend the act. We're stuck with it. The Legislature passed this in 1990, and we have no ability to do anything other than to follow its requirements.

Mrs. O'Neill: Well, then you're forcing me to compromise my position here. My position would be that, first of all, I'd ask you to make a corollary recommendation that perhaps there are some communities in this province, like the city of St. Albert, that are one community for the next go-round. I won't be living then, but maybe somebody will be concerned about it.

My other one would be that it's not an equal separation of St. Albert. Why not, if you're going to do that, then include what is close around the boundaries? There are a number of acreages, on the west side Silver Chief, that is part of Sturgeon or Parkland or whatever. On the east side there are Manor Estates, Upper Manor Estates, Viscount Estates, all those. Divide the city of St. Albert equally if you are saying that you need to make it into two, but make it inclusive of the acreages that touch the boundaries, not the rural component of those wonderful communities of Redwater and Smoky Lake, et cetera. Do you see what I'm saying? In other words, it's . . .

The Chair: Yeah. I'm just frankly wondering whether that would solve the problem. I mean, obviously, I haven't looked at the maps and the population, but the acreage population is relatively low.

When you look at the size of area that we have to go out to to come to the legal requirements for a constituency, we are going all the way from part of St. Albert up to close to St. Paul. I doubt that we could make up that population by simply taking in the acreages from Spruce Grove and from the area that we've already added to this constituency. I mean, that's just our problem. I'm just explaining what our problem is.

Mrs. O'Neill: I understand your problem, but what I'm trying to say is that perhaps, then, if you're going to do two, make it proportionately and closer in, and maybe the variance could be the minus 25 per cent rather than going to the two. You know, I can tell you that it stung a lot when I found out, for instance, that I had to get many more votes than my rural colleagues had to get, but I understood it because they travel so far. They meet with multiple municipalities. You would know that, Mr. McLeod, very well. My former rural colleagues have a phenomenal job and a difficult job because they deal with so many municipalities, they deal with so many rural villages, et cetera. What I'm saying is that perhaps taking two, even making two – I can't let go of making it one, but if making it two as such, then create, as you said, the cultural, the neighbourhood, the industry, the economics, the patterns, et cetera, rather than the differential of the rural.

7:55

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Livingstone, any comments, questions?

Ms Munn, any questions?

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

The Chair: Mr. McLeod?

Mr. McLeod: I'm good.

The Chair: Mrs. Day? Any questions?

Thank you. Thanks very much for coming along. It's nice to have somebody who knows the area so well.

Mrs. O'Neill: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Our next submitter: Katy Campbell.

Ms Campbell: Hello.

The Chair: Hello. Could you tell us the constituency where you live?

Ms Campbell: Yeah. I am the constituency assistant for Edmonton-Gold Bar, and I am actually going to make a lot of the same points about the name change that Garrett made earlier tonight. That is my first point. We would like to keep the name Edmonton-Gold Bar as it is. For a lot of the other constituencies that were changed, it was because the community they were named for was moved out of the constituency, and that's not the case. It has been Edmonton-Gold Bar since the early '70s and has a long electoral history here in the province. As Garrett had pointed out, it's not the farthest east constituency, so the name Edmonton-East maybe wouldn't make the most sense there.

As far as other changes that we would like to see to the proposed boundaries, we would like to have the community of Bonnie Doon moved back into the constituency and have the communities of Tamarack and Maple moved into the Mill Woods East constituency, where there's a better fit for those communities. So the community of Bonnie Doon moves back into the constituency

of Edmonton-Gold Bar, and the communities of Tamarack and Maple move into Mill Woods East.

The Chair: Do you know what effect that would have on the population?

Ms Campbell: On the population? Yeah, I have those numbers. Bonnie Doon and Tamarack are roughly equal in terms of size. They're about 4,500 in population. The Maple neighbourhood was just over 1,000 in the last census, so it would set the constituency back about 1,000 in the equation there.

The reasons we would like to propose this are natural boundaries and community interests. Currently Bonnie Doon would be added to Edmonton-Strathcona and cut off by Mill Creek, which is a natural boundary that really makes a lot of sense. There's only really one way in and out of the community that would get them to Strathcona, which is Whyte Avenue, and most of the community does make use of a lot of the schools and other neighbourhood-type amenities that are part of the rest of Edmonton-Gold Bar.

The communities of Tamarack and Maple would be separated from the rest of the constituency by a fairly large chunk of industrial park. All the way from Argyll to Whitemud is industrial park. Those are communities that really don't have a lot of common interest with the rest of the constituency and, I think, would be better served as part of the Mill Woods area.

We are fine with the addition of – the area from Argyll to Whitemud was a proposal. Really, the only two neighbourhoods in there are two smaller trailer parks. The catchment for that area would put them in the schools within the current constituency. They are kind of part of the community anyway, so that part makes sense. It's just Bonnie Doon and the little kind of tail on the end there that really makes it a bit awkward in terms of natural boundaries and also just having similar community interests.

The Chair: Is that it?

Ms Campbell: That's it.

The Chair: Okay. As I'm sure you know, making recommendations for one constituency's boundaries affects the boundaries of the neighbouring constituencies. If we were to take 4,500 people from Bonnie Doon and add them to your constituency under whatever name, where do we make that up for Strathcona?

Ms Campbell: That's something I haven't really looked into, what would make the most sense for Strathcona to add that population in. Something else I wanted to mention in terms of growth for the Gold Bar area: I mean, the population has been fairly static over the last few years because there are older neighbourhoods in there, but with the addition of the valley line LRT going through the neighbourhood in the next few years here, the city has made it a priority for more high-density growth in housing. There's a proposal, for example, in the Holyrood neighbourhood right now, that's before city council, for a fairly big development that would double the size of that community, so there are at this point some proposals that would increase the community beyond kind of the outskirts of typical development you would see.

The Chair: Thank you.

Any questions?

Ms Munn: I don't have any questions.

The Chair: Okay. Thanks so much.

Mr. McLeod: Thank you.

Ms Campbell: Thanks.

The Chair: All right. Moving along. Jamie Post.

Mr. Post: Good evening. My name is Jamie Post. I'm a resident of the Edmonton-Meadowlark constituency and the president of the Glenwood Community League, Glenwood being the sort of little foot neighbourhood of the current Meadowlark riding. The neighbourhood boundaries are 95th Avenue to Stony Plain Road and 156th Street to 170th Street. Glenwood along with our neighbouring communities of West Jasper Place, Britannia Youngstown, and Canora form part of what used to be the old town of Jasper Place. It's obviously been a long time since the amalgamation with the city of Edmonton happened, but we still do share a lot in common with these communities. We share a lot of the same socioeconomic issues. We share a Jasper Place area redevelopment plan. We share planning for the upcoming valley LRT line. We've shared a city-sponsored community revitalization initiative, the Stony Plain Road business association, and the revitalization around that. We're often consulted together on issues, the most recent one being the repurposing of the MacEwan campus in the west end.

This congruity, which is obviously quite well recognized at the community level and by the city, however, has not been replayed at the provincial level. You see this on the map, where right now Jasper Place is split between three different constituencies. We are part of Meadowlark, West Jasper Place is part of Riverview, and Britannia and Canora are off in Edmonton-Glenora. For Glenwood this has put us in the position of – we in Meadowlark are the only mature neighbourhoods in a riding that is built up of neighbourhoods that are brand new, houses still being built, and neighbourhoods that were built 20 or 30 years after us. We traditionally have not shared much in common with our fellow constituency mates.

When we saw the map, we were quite pleased to see that while Jasper Place is still being split up, it will be two ridings instead of three, and Glenwood will be moving more in line and will be combined with West Jasper Place, Sherwood, Crestwood, Parkview, you know, mature neighbourhoods that were built around the same time as Glenwood. We do share very much the same issues, whether it's community revitalization, neighbourhood redevelopment, preserving neighbourhood schools, infill development, you name it. You mentioned communities of interest, Madam Chair, in your opening remarks, and that's really what brings us out. We're quite pleased to see that with this small change it really does quite a bit to unify the Jasper Place area and really combines communities of interest.

I heard some concern that, you know, the river may be seen as a bit of a dividing line, and I had some thought around that. It was actually at a meeting of mature communities through the EFCL, our umbrella organization, and it was between west end reps and communities from the Central Area Council of Community Leagues. We were kind of sitting there and thinking: over the years, how many times have we all been in the same meeting room talking about the same issues, completely in agreement about the things that affect our neighbourhoods? It's heard that the river is a dividing line. We really don't see that as a concern. We see the important theme being that mature neighbourhoods in the city of Edmonton sort of in the central west end, central Edmonton, south central are actually combined together to be represented together, that issues that we all face together are represented within the same boundaries and by the same MLA.

8:05

Just one other comment I wanted to make. As community leagues we're obviously about community programming. You know, we're also a bit of a political operation, working with councillors and MLAs and MPs to discuss issues and programs that matter to people in our communities. In the city of Edmonton there are 157 community leagues plus their umbrella group. It's one little, small section of nonprofits. We're quite glad to see that finally Edmonton is getting at least one extra seat. We looked at the previous boundary submissions at that time, 2010 and 2011. The city council had actually wanted to see 20 seats in the city of Edmonton, and at that time the city's population was about 800,000. It's over 900,000 now. By the time that this process rolls around next time, it'll be over 1 million.

MLAs in a dense city: their time is split not just between individual constituents but groups like ours, the litany of nonprofits that you find across the urban environment, for-profits, you name it. There's just so much in a city to divide the time of an MLA and their assistants. As a group that also has to work at a political level, I mean, we're really glad to see that Edmonton is finally going to get that extra seat and that extra bit of representation.

On behalf of the board of directors that's about all I have to say, and I'll take your questions.

The Chair: Thank you. You notice as the chair I get to always have the first question. Thank you. It's nice to have pleased somebody.

When we were going around the province the last time, we were longing for contributions from different community leagues. We were hoping they would have come out to our public hearings so we could have got more actual information from them about what they thought about how the city was growing and common communities of interest.

I'd like to leave some suggestions for eight years from now. It won't be us – that's for sure – but whoever is doing the electoral redistricting there. My question is in relation to how we could best contact community leagues to participate in the process. They weren't contacted directly at all on this occasion. We just wrote to the cities, well, other parties, too, you know, a form letter to different cities. In hindsight I deeply regret not contacting at least the Federation of Community Leagues. Do you have any advice for us on how to better contact community leagues next time to get them involved?

Mr. Post: There are really two recommendations I'd make. One is to definitely go through the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues because, you know, they do have the contact information to get that out there and can certainly blast out anything you send them through the newsletter or the contact list to presidents, to civics directors, you name it.

The other option, perhaps the most direct way, is to work through the city of Edmonton. The city of Edmonton has what's called a community recreation co-ordinator assigned to each league. This is somebody who liaises with the league, works with them on programing, and, most importantly, attends every meeting of the league executives. Anything they receive from the province requesting a feedback consultation is something they can bring up at meetings directly with boards of directors.

The Chair: Okay. Thanks. That's very helpful.

All right. Any questions?

Mr. McLeod: Actually, maybe not quite a question. It's really quite strange. We've been in rural Alberta, Grande Prairie, then Vegreville, Vermilion lately, and the rural folks are saying to us:

"It's so hard because I've got to travel 250 Ks, you know, a couple of hours. It's really tough in my constituency." But I'm just hearing you state that the MLA in an inner-city constituency is just as busy, only it's in a smaller area. Is that what you're saying to me?

Mr. Post: Correct. I kind of bring the perspective of both. I've lived in urban. I've lived in rural. The first time I actually voted was in Whitecourt-St. Anne. The first time I ever chased after an MLA on an issue was in Whitecourt-St. Anne. You know, I used to do the commute, one hour each way, every day. I certainly appreciate the chunk out of your day that goes to commuting. Just based on my experience volunteering in the country, volunteering in the city, really the MLAs' time in urban Alberta, in the city, with all the stakeholders they need to juggle, all the various issues coming at them, from an older resident living in an older home wondering about long-term care to a community league thinking big, "What's going to happen to our neighbourhood school?" – in the city of Edmonton I've just seen their time getting divided so much in so many different ways.

Mr. McLeod: Thank you.

The Chair: Questions?

Thank you so much for coming. We appreciate it.

Mr. Post: Thank you.

The Chair: All right. Next, John Kolkman.

Mr. Kolkman: Hello. My name is John Kolkman. I'm here as private citizen. I live in the Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood neighbourhood, but I don't really have any comments specifically on the boundary there, the proposed boundary. I think it's a reasonable boundary. The addition of Killarney to the riding, I think, is fine. It's, I think, socioeconomically fairly similar to, you know, most of the neighbourhoods in that particular riding.

I wanted to actually address the big picture. I think in terms of the big picture that the interim report gets it exactly correct. I think adding one electoral division each to the cities of Edmonton and Calgary brings our two big cities close to voter parity with the rest of the province. Similarly, rapid population growth in suburban communities near Calgary warranted an additional electoral division in this area as well.

I also support the interim report's recommendation that the two existing special consideration ridings be retained. Not only are Central Peace-Notley and Lesser Slave Lake geographically large ridings, but their populations tend to be spread out rather sparsely throughout the electoral division. Moreover, Lesser Slave Lake is the only electoral division in the province with a majority indigenous population, and this is a characteristic that will be reinforced with the proposed inclusion of the Calling Lake First Nation in Lesser Slave Lake.

The loss of three seats in rural areas of the province is unfortunate but necessary for achieving the goal of ensuring that the votes of all Albertans are roughly equal in the provincial Legislature. Constituencies don't belong to their MLAs or to political parties; they belong to the voters. You know, unless there's a reason, there should not be a systematic overrepresentation in some constituencies and a systematic underrepresentation in others.

The only change I recommend to the overall approach taken in the interim report is to not subtract 9,180 people from the proposed riding of Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche and instead use the population figures from the 2016 census. The supplemental count done in Fort McMurray last fall that led to this subtraction was taken in the immediate aftermath of the wildfire and fails to

recognize the massive amount of rebuilding that is taking place. For instance, CMHC data shows that 135 homes were already under construction in the last three months of 2016 in Fort McMurray, mostly in that southern part, and construction started on a further 785 homes in the first six months of 2017. This addition could be done without requiring a change in the boundaries of the proposed Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche riding, but instead of being 23 per cent below the provincial average, this riding would only be a few percentage points below the average. Now, this change may seem symbolic, but I think symbolism is important. I actually thought it was rather offensive to remove those folks in the immediate aftermath of the wildfire.

I want to conclude by making a few comments on the proposed boundaries of electoral divisions within the city of Edmonton. The interim report does an impressive job of equalizing the populations of all the Edmonton ridings. In fact, it was done so zealously, you know, that I would actually argue that in a few cases it actually unduly sacrificed community of interest. The best example is the proposed West Henday riding, in which the northwest neighbourhoods of Wellington, Athlone, and Calder are combined in a riding with neighbourhoods as distant as Lewis Estates. The boundaries of the four electoral divisions north of Yellowhead Trail could be adjusted to include these three northwest neighbourhoods while keeping the resulting variance from the provincial average within about 5 per cent.

I have not created an alternative map of electoral divisions, but I believe the commission should be open to those who have developed such maps so long as relative voter parity is maintained. I also appreciate the difficulty and the challenge of trying to accommodate so many, often conflicting suggestions for boundary changes.

I certainly wish you the best in completing this difficult task of redrawing the electoral map. I'd be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

8:15

The Chair: Thank you. You said that in addition to your Edmonton-West Henday comment you might have some other suggestions as to where we could have been a bit more forgiving in our recommendations. Can you outline them for me?

Mr. Kolkman: Well, I mean, I think there are a few different examples. I think one was mentioned earlier, the inclusion of that little spear that you took in the Edmonton-Gold Bar riding, in the proposed whatever it ends up being called, into the very east side of southeast Edmonton.

I also think that in terms of trying to create very equal populations, like, in terms of the Edmonton-West Henday riding, I think you can take that entire set of outer ridings – Edmonton-McClung and then Edmonton-South West, Edmonton-South, and Edmonton-Ellerslie – and perhaps adjust the boundaries there so that perhaps the populations are a little bit below average. We know that with the growth taking place, particularly in south Edmonton with the annexation that's coming, you know, those ridings are going to continue to grow rapidly. A good example of that is Edmonton-South West. In the 2010 redistribution it had a population 13 per cent below the provincial average, and six years later, in 2016, it had a population 78 per cent above average. So I think maybe taking advantage of making some of those ridings that we know are going to grow rapidly a little bit below average might be a way of, for example, keeping the neighbourhoods that I mentioned in Calder and Athlone in sort of the north Edmonton ridings.

I mean, there are lots of different approaches. I think the same thing. If I was going to give an example of a rural riding that I think is a little bit odd, it would be Fort Saskatchewan, where there's this little thin band that goes all the way east to the Saskatchewan border. There might be a way of reconfiguring several ridings where it's a little bit more compact. Again, I didn't develop such a map, but I would just argue that the commission just needs to be open to, you know, alternatives. I suspect you're going to probably hear about that one as well because that one struck me as being a bit of a strange one.

The Chair: We heard lots about that this morning when we were there.

Okay. Questions?

All right. Thanks so much for your comments and for coming out tonight.

All right. Now, I must say that I personally had been hoping that we would have somebody from Fort McMurray here tonight or tomorrow to help fill in the answers to some of the questions we specifically asked in our report. I'm delighted to see that Ms Goodridge is our next speaker. She came during the first round of public hearings and gave us an awful lot of information about Fort McMurray at that time, so I look forward to hearing her comments tonight.

Ms Goodridge: Hi. It's Laila Goodridge from Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. While there are many successes that you guys made in your interim report – and I'll commend you on fixing a lot of the errors that have previously existed – I'm extremely concerned about the proposed changes to the Fort McMurray ridings. As mentioned by the previous presenter, I believe that removing the 9,000 people that the census removed is absolutely unfair. It is unprecedented. Many of the people that had initially stated they weren't going to go back to Fort McMurray have indeed returned to the community, so it's a really inaccurate number.

To go back to this, one of the major challenges when you're creating a boundary is getting an accurate representation of population, which becomes especially challenging when you can't get an accurate count of what the population is. It becomes even more challenging when there's a community that has a large shadow population. When you factor in the largest mass evacuation in Canadian history, you're pretty much left with the worst possible numbers you could ever ask for.

The largest shadow population in all of Canada exists in a community in the riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka in Ontario. That's due to the seasonal recreation, like the cottage country. As an exemption for that community they actually allow the overall population to be set at a much lower rate than everywhere else in the entire country, so both provincially and federally Parry Sound-Muskoka sits at about 96,000 permanent residents whereas the rest of the country sits at about 130,000 residents. This has been the case for many, many elections and through many different boundary redistributions. That takes into account that the shadow population still uses the services of the MLA, still uses all those things.

It's to note that the only three places in the province that we track shadow populations are in Lac La Biche county, Bonnyville county, and the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo. So including two-thirds of those communities in one riding is, in my opinion, a very bad decision because it puts the vast majority of the shadow population within the entire province into one riding.

It is also to note that your proposed Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche riding includes three community colleges, which is more than any other riding. There are 26 colleges in the entire province, and you're

putting three major colleges in one riding, which I think is going to make it very difficult for an MLA to represent.

I would strongly urge that you maintain the boundaries of the two ridings to include just the RMWB, so just the municipal boundaries of the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, and equalize those two populations. Instead of using the river, which has never been used as a dividing line of the ridings, use their communities. Split it so that it's Thickwood, which is what I'd suggested to you last time, so that we use the roads of Dickins Drive and Real Martin to create that separation, which would add 6,600 people to the riding of Fort McMurray-Conklin. If you didn't remove the 9,000, it equalizes it back out. If you were going to remove the 9,000 in total, you're still able to use it as a special riding because you could move the community of Athabasca into Lesser Slave Lake. Slave Lake and Athabasca have much more commonality than Athabasca and Fort McMurray. As well, you could put Lac La Biche back in with St. Paul, where they have very similar oil and gas but as well agricultural ties.

That's probably about it. I assume that you probably have some questions.

The Chair: I do. I wrote Mayor Blake recently and said that we would invite her specifically to help us with this question of the 9,180 people because we, like you, suspect that that's too generous an estimate for the reduction of population in Fort McMurray-Conklin. Just because somebody's house burned down didn't necessarily mean their family would move out. If my house burned down in Edmonton – God forbid – I wouldn't leave Edmonton. I'd rent someplace while it was being rebuilt. That may be happening in Fort McMurray as well. I thought: well, what other ways, what other information is there that we can test that 9,180 figure against? Can we look at school enrolment figures? Can we look at admissions to the emergency department in the hospital? Can we look at electricity usage? I mean, is there something out there? I'm wondering if you have any of that kind of information for us.

Ms Goodridge: I don't. However, I believe that the regional municipality still keeps what the province considers pretty hokey information on water usage. In the last federal boundary redistribution they presented an entire presentation on water usage. That's how they try to calculate the shadow population. There's a standard usage of water per human, and the regional municipality actually keeps all of this. I tried contacting them to get the information. Unfortunately, I ran out of time, and they weren't able to get it to me, but one stat that I do have is that there were about 2,500 homes destroyed. There have already been 881 approved rebuild permits, and 774 of those are foundations in the ground. We're just a year out of the fire, so this is huge. Those were stats as of June 16. Every week the number climbs. Every single week that number climbs.

There were so many homes built between the last boundary redistribution and this that I really find it impossible that there are 9,000 people that are gone from the community. You go into the Safeway, you go into the Sobeys, and there are still lines. You go into any parking lot; there are still tons of people. It is not a ghost town. It is not like when you went to Tumbler Ridge in '95 and you couldn't see a car. I'm really imploring you. There is legislation that allows you to have four special ridings. Please, please be on the right side of history here. Please give Fort McMurray this exemption. You will not regret this decision.

8:25

Ms Livingstone: I think that's probably what Justice Bielby is looking at. If there's a community with more than 8,000 people in

it in a riding, it cannot be a special. That's why the Fort McMurray area can't be a special riding.

The Chair: We tried to take you up to 23 per cent below, very close to the maximum below that we could go without it being a special constituency.

Ms Goodridge: Then what you could do is change around the boundaries for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, change around the way you put that so that Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, instead of being over, is under. You could look at removing or moving around some of the rural communities. As well as that, there are 6,600 people in the community of Thickwood within Fort McMurray. You can move 6,600 people very easily, and if you said the divide line was, "Everyone in Thickwood is now in Conklin," everybody in Fort McMurray would understand what that means. Right now it goes up a river, and it splits in a weird way. Nobody understands currently. You don't have to worry about that. You could remove some of the rural northern communities and put them back into Conklin, which is where they've been previously.

The Chair: Okay. Just off that topic but another Fort McMurray issue, another special question for public consideration that we put out in the report is drawing different shapes for the two constituencies up there. Totally aside from whether we go outside the current boundaries of the joint constituencies, we threw out there the possibility of making them go east-west rather than north-south, so instead of two long rectangles we sort of have two squareish looking constituencies. What's your view on the wisdom of that proposal?

Ms Goodridge: Six of one, half a dozen of the other. Honestly, there are very few people that live in those areas, if any. I think there are, like, six people that live in Fort Fitzgerald, so I really don't think that that's a major consideration, but I know that there's quite a bit that you could do to move around the boundaries within the community of Fort McMurray. The river, while it would appear like it is a major divide line, it really is not something where people say, "Oh, I live north of the river," or "I live south of the river." Nobody really cares. It's similar to many of these Edmonton communities where the commonality of the communities – Thickwood is the oldest of the communities on the north of the river, so they have the most commonality with the downtown, Abasand, Beacon Hill, Waterways.

The Chair: Thank you.
Questions?

Mrs. Day: Just thank you for your presentation and for your information. You know, this has been, as you can tell, a really difficult area of Alberta, and yes, some of us really looked at, you know, the opportunity to be another special riding. It makes sense: far north, just like the other northern. But that part of the legislation didn't allow us to do that.

Ms Goodridge: I really appreciated your minority report.

Mrs. Day: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. McLeod?

Mr. McLeod: No, thanks.

The Chair: Ms Livingstone?

Ms Livingstone: I would just echo what Mrs. Day said, that we had every hope in the world that there could be a special consideration, but like she said, the legislation simply didn't allow us to make a special riding because of the size of Fort McMurray itself. It's not that we didn't consider it had we been able to.

The Chair: And we did what we could with what we have by bringing it right up to the maximum limit below.

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

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We'll take one more presenter, and then we'll take a five-minute break. The next presenter is Andrew Koning.

Mr. Koning: Hi. Andrew Koning, Edmonton-Riverview. I'd like to begin by thanking all the committee members and staff that have worked tirelessly on the Electoral Boundary Commission and on the commendable work that you did on the interim report. My main, I guess, suggestion relates to Edmonton-Riverview and then with an additional number of recommendations on naming for some of the city ridings.

I'll begin with Edmonton-Riverview. Currently the proposed southern boundary between Edmonton-McClung and Edmonton-Riverview east of 170th Street is Whitemud Drive. This results in the communities of Rio Terrace, Patricia Heights, and Quesnell Heights being located in the Edmonton-McClung electoral division.

The Chair: Okay. Hang on for a sec. Rio Terrace. And the other two?

Mr. Koning: Sorry. Rio Terrace, Patricia Heights, and Quesnell Heights.

The Chair: In Edmonton-McClung?

Mr. Koning: Yeah. They're currently in Edmonton-McClung.

The Chair: Right.

Mr. Koning: My suggestion, recommendation is to move the boundary from Whitemud Drive to the ravine separating Westridge and Patricia Heights. I believe it's called Rio park. I make this suggestion because there's no driving access between Westridge and Patricia Heights. My experience as a former resident of Patricia Heights was that the residents of Patricia Heights, Rio Terrace, and Quesnell Heights end up having more connection to the communities north of Whitemud Drive than with the communities west of 170th Street. The library – I don't know how many people now access it – is north of the Whitemud as well as the main grocery stores, which were the things that I was primarily concerned with as a resident.

According to the 2016 city of Edmonton census there are currently 3,011 people in the communities of Patricia Heights, Rio Terrace, and Quesnell Heights. Moving the border would result in Edmonton-Riverview having a population of 49,799. I will admit to making a mistake; I've based all of my calculations on 46,698, not 46,697, so there will be a minor error. Edmonton-Riverview, with a population of 49,799, would have a variance of plus 7 per cent. Edmonton-McClung would have a population of 45,082 and a variance of minus 3.

My preference would be to live with those, but if the commission is unable to accept a population change of such an amount, I do have two possible solutions that would result in a lower population transference. Option 1 would be to move the boundary from 170th Street between 87th Avenue and Whitemud Drive east to 159th

Street. This would result in the community of Elmwood moving from Edmonton-Riverview to Edmonton-McClung. Option 1 would result in Edmonton-Riverview having a population of 47,078 and a variance of plus 1 per cent and Edmonton-McClung having a population of 47,803 and a variance of plus 2 per cent.

Option 2 would be to move the boundary from 170th Street between Stony Plain Road and 95th Avenue east to 163rd Street. This would remove half of the community of Glenwood from Edmonton-Riverview to Edmonton-McClung. Option 2 would result in Edmonton-Riverview having a population of 47,262 and a variance of plus 1 per cent and Edmonton McClung having a population of 47,619 and a variance of plus 2 per cent.

As far as proposed names for constituencies go, I will admit to strongly disliking the idea of naming constituencies and would rather we forgo names altogether and simply refer to the district by its electoral district number. However, I'm under no illusions that despite my well-reasoned position against the current naming practice I have any hope of convincing yourselves or the rest of Alberta. Instead, I submit what I consider to be minor changes to the naming convention criteria to sharpen and improve electoral boundary names in Alberta.

I believe there should be some constraints around naming conventions. Constituency names should be limited to two identifiers – examples would be Edmonton-Glenora and Drayton Valley-Devon versus Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills or Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood – and should only use the most populated or well-known areas in the constituency or the name of a well-known and established landmark.

8:35

Second, I believe that naming constituencies after historic and noteworthy Albertans is commendable. However, I agree with the commission when it said in regard to the request to rename Calgary-Greenway after former MLA Manmeet Bhullar that his legacy would have more enduring and effective tribute when recognized in other ways such as through local schools, neighbourhoods, et cetera.

Third, I believe that using directional names such as north, south, east, and west should be avoided as they are simply too broad and easily misunderstood. For example, Edmonton-South West is actually located in west Edmonton, and Edmonton-South is located in southwest Edmonton.

I suggest the following names for constituencies, that Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood be renamed Edmonton-Commonwealth or Edmonton-Highlands, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview be renamed Edmonton-Beverly, Edmonton-Riverview be renamed Edmonton-Jasper Place or Edmonton-University, Edmonton-City Centre be renamed Edmonton-Centre or Edmonton-Oliver, Edmonton-North West be renamed Edmonton-Cumberland, Edmonton-South West be renamed Edmonton-Hamptons or Edmonton-Windermere, Edmonton-South be renamed Edmonton-Airport or Edmonton-Blackmud, Edmonton-Rutherford be renamed Edmonton-Twin Brooks, Edmonton-Mill Woods West be renamed Edmonton-Mill Woods, Edmonton-Mill Woods East be renamed Edmonton-Mill Creek, and Edmonton-East be renamed Edmonton-Ottewell or Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Thank you, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

The Chair: Okay. My question is about the nature of the Elmwood neighbourhood. Now, I understand this is just your alternative to your first suggestion, but the little I know about this suggests to me that Elmwood is a neighbourhood of a vintage similar to Rio Terrace and Patricia Heights in comparison to the other neighbourhoods in Edmonton-McClung. So if we look at common community interests

as being perhaps neighbourhoods that were built at a similar time and thus have a similar demographic, would you agree on that basis that Elmwood should remain in Edmonton-Riverview?

Mr. Koning: Certainly. Like I mentioned, I am personally more than happy to live with a plus 7 and minus 3. However, I do recognize the diligent work that you did in keeping most of those constituencies in Edmonton to closer to the average. I would suggest that, for the very reasons that you mentioned, in keeping Edmonton-Riverview boundaries and simply moving them to include Patricia Heights, Quesnell Heights, and Rio Terrace, the community interests outweigh the population. However, I am sort of grasping at straws because I don't particularly like either option that I proposed. Number one would result in 290 people moving and the second in 474 people moving versus 3,011. Like I said, I would prefer to keep it all the same and then just move the boundary from Whitemud Drive to the ravine separating Westridge and Patricia Heights.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.
Questions?

Ms Livingstone: I don't have any. That was a tremendous amount of information, which I think is very helpful, so thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Koning: I'm not sure if I can give you these, but these are maps.

The Chair: It would be terrific if you would. We'll make this an exhibit to your presentation in our record.
Any questions, Ms Munn?

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

The Chair: Mr. McLeod?

Mr. Koning: I do have one question.

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Koning: It's something that I've been wondering for a long time, and this seems like the perfect time to ask it. My understanding is that when you refer to a direction as northwest, that's one word. It seems to be that the practice in naming electoral divisions has been to separate the words "north" and "west," "south" and "west," and I'm wondering why.

The Chair: I think that we specifically attempted to avoid changing names. We, too, had difficulty with some of the names, and if a mandate to rename the entire province of Alberta was being formed today, we might make different choices to avoid unnecessary confusion. Where the constituency is remaining essentially the same or where the landmark or area for which it was named remained in the constituency, we would not recommend a change. In the past the naming convention followed by Elections Alberta seems to have been to separate these, so that's what's happened this time. I think that's perhaps the only explanation.

Mrs. Day, do you have any questions?

Thank you. We've learned a lot about cartography in the last six months.

All right. We'll take five minutes, and then we'll come back. The next speaker will be Gabrielle Blatz after the break. Thank you.

[The hearing adjourned from 8:40 p.m. to 8:56 p.m.]

The Chair: All right. Thank you very much for those of you who have been patient enough to stay. I'm sorry that that break was a little bit longer than I indicated it was going to be.

I'd like to call on Gabrielle Blatz.

Ms G. Blatz: Good evening. My name is Gabrielle Blatz. I wanted to talk today about Wetaskiwin-Camrose. I've lived in Wetaskiwin county my whole life and just recently bought a house in town. In the past couple of weeks the people I've heard from in my community agreed that the core area of Wetaskiwin and Camrose is a solid basis for the constituency, so it's more of a question of what other areas are included.

I appreciate the route the commission has gone in bringing together Maskwacis into one constituency. I note that there were submissions made in the first round of consultation focused on the Cree nations in this area and specifically around including Ma-Me-O Beach in the constituency. Unity is an important concept to the indigenous peoples who live in our community. As a Métis woman this concept is also strong within me. The First Nations communities in our area have a close relationship with one another, and having our MLA easily accessible in a central location makes it easy for those communities to connect.

Having Ma-Me-O Beach in a different constituency along with Pigeon Lake causes division between those communities come election time. Maintaining close relationships with one another becomes difficult when these communities are separated in different boundaries. With Pigeon Lake reserve's governing body in Maskwacis it only makes sense to expand their boundaries to encompass them. Having these nations together will build a stronger sense of identity for all involved, and having the same MLA for these individuals to contact will ensure that all their voices and concerns will be heard by the same person. Establishing an area that creates a unified voice between the First Nations communities in our area will strengthen their culture and sense of belonging.

In terms of layout of this area I'd like to emphasize, if we pull up a map of the area, that highway 13 provides an amazing corridor from Camrose all the way through to Pigeon Lake. It would be a matter of wrapping the boundaries around Pigeon Lake and back towards Camrose along the top of the boundary. It should be easy to accommodate this request and still keep the population of the seat to a reasonable level. The bottom line is ensuring that we have the most effective representation for these people in keeping alike communities together, which I know the commission has been focusing on quite a bit.

Thank you for letting me present today.

The Chair: Okay. Just so I understand – I don't have a big map of Alberta in front of me. Okay. Thank you, Ms Livingstone. Looking at the map of Devon-Parkland and finding Ma-Me-O Beach on it, it is – gee; we used to go camping there all the time when I was a kid. I should be able to just pick it up. Okay. I can see where Pigeon Lake is, so it's relatively there.

You're suggesting that we go along highway 13, which is – I don't see it marked on this map. You're asking, essentially, for a long, thin arm to go into the proposed Devon-Parkland constituency and then pick up Ma-Me-O Beach at the end of that so that can be added to Wetaskiwin-Camrose?

Ms G. Blatz: Essentially, yes. Basically, we would be bringing Ma-Me-O Beach and Pigeon Lake into Wetaskiwin-Camrose along that border.

The Chair: So we'd have to cross highway 2 with that addition?

Ms G. Blatz: Yeah.

The Chair: Okay. The reason that we recommended against this is that Alberta's Chief Electoral Officer, who sets up and runs elections, says that in the past there has been a noncontiguous part of Maskwacis in Devon-Parkland. There's another little bit of Devon-Parkland that's part of Wetaskiwin-Camrose, and he thinks that he can't properly do his job in relation to that part, given the demands of what's going on during an election. It's easy to say that he should work harder or get more staff, but the reality is that you've got one little bit that's out there, and everything else is in the big part of Wetaskiwin-Camrose. He didn't want the people to feel underserved during elections because of the difficulties in his office.

What you suggest would also add another little bit of a different area to Wetaskiwin-Camrose and might pose the same kind of problem. I'm just making this as an observation, just something to think about. But thank you for your submission. It's an interesting one. We haven't heard that before.

Any questions on this side of the table?

Okay. We'll get a better map, and we'll look at this.

Ms G. Blatz: Yes. For sure. Just to note that the Pigeon Lake First Nation has always been a part of Maskwacis as well, so separating them from Maskwacis as a whole is just kind of unfeasible because they're separated from the rest of their culture and their community. But they have easier access to our MLA in Wetaskiwin than they would in the Devon-Parkland area because they have transportation from Pigeon Lake to Wetaskiwin but not to Devon and Parkland. They rely on a lot of their family members from Maskwacis to help take them to Wetaskiwin.

Ms Livingstone: The only question I had was: if we extend the Wetaskiwin-Camrose riding in that direction to capture them, do you have any suggestions, based on your knowledge of the area, for the other boundaries that we might move in that riding to account for capturing all the people to get over to Pigeon Lake? We'd be capturing everybody in between as well.

Ms G. Blatz: Yeah. Basically, what I was thinking was that if it's an issue, instead of having Leduc county have the proposed Rolly View, we would remove that as, to be quite honest, a lot of people from Rolly View just end up going to Leduc. They're more a part of Leduc county than they are a part of Wetaskiwin, so it would just make more sense to add Ma-Me-O and Pigeon Lake to a part of that instead. Also, highway 13 is a faster link to bring constituents from the Pigeon Lake region to Wetaskiwin. It's just an easier route for them if we can connect it all the way around.

The Chair: Are the people who live on the Pigeon Lake reserve members of the same band, as in one of the four bands in Maskwacis, in Wetaskiwin-Camrose, or are they a different band?

Ms G. Blatz: To be quite honest, I'm not too sure.

The Chair: Okay. When you say that their administration – that isn't the word that you used. You said that they were governed by the people who live in Maskwacis. Is that because of an association that they belong to, an indigenous peoples association?

Ms L. Blatz: Hi. Do you mind if I answer?

The Chair: Not at all. Could you give me your name?

Ms L. Blatz: My name is Lori Blatz, and I'm actually her mother.

The Pigeon Lake reserve was originally the fishing station set up by the four nations of the Maskwacis land base or reserve – okay? – so the governing body of the Pigeon Lake reserve is the same four

nations as Maskwacis. When they elect their officials, it's the officials governing them out of Maskwacis. It's the same family, the same nation. It's the same. It's just the fishing station, what it was originally to be, okay?

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Questions?

Okay. All right. Our next speaker is Mark Smith, MLA.

9:05

Mr. Smith: Well, I think you've heard that I'm Mark Smith. I'm the MLA for Drayton Valley-Devon, and I'm here to address some of the concerns within two constituencies, the proposed Drayton Valley-Rocky Mountain House constituency and the Devon-Parkland constituency.

I would like to start, though, by thanking you for your hard work and for your efforts on behalf of Albertans as we strive to ensure that we have an effective and a healthy democracy. I think we are all in agreement here that that's a very important thing.

As the MLA for Drayton Valley-Devon I wanted to share with you some of my observations regarding the proposed boundary changes within those two constituencies. I think that when we look at this issue, we're all in agreement here that every Alberta citizen has the right to effective representation by an MLA. The proposed electoral boundary changes that remove Drayton Valley from the present Drayton Valley-Devon constituency and place it in the new Drayton Valley-Rocky Mountain House constituency I believe will have a serious impact on the effectiveness of the MLAs in both the new Drayton Valley-Rocky Mountain House constituency and the Devon-Parkland constituency.

By placing Drayton Valley and the surrounding area to the west in the new Drayton Valley-Rocky Mountain House constituency, I think the following issues will arise that will impede effective representation. First, I believe that the effectiveness of the MLA that will represent the Drayton Valley-Rocky Mountain House constituency is going to be impeded. My understanding is that the new constituency will be about 17 per cent above the population threshold, so once again that will impede an MLA's effectiveness. You've simply transferred an unacceptably high population base found in some of the urban ridings and recreated it in the new rural riding of Drayton Valley-Rocky Mountain House and, on top of that, added the burden of immense geography to the issue of representation by population where they're going to be above the threshold.

I believe that the Drayton Valley-Rocky Mountain House constituency is just too large for one MLA to reasonably represent all of the communities across the length and the breadth of this constituency. The many town councils, the county councils, the school boards, all of the things that an MLA has to make a representation to and for – they're just huge – and that this rural MLA will have to represent will be impeded because of their ability to be aware and to understand the local issues of the local populations. I realize that MLAs can come from anywhere within their constituency, but presently Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre goes all the way down to Sundre, and now he's got to go all the way up to Lodgepole in the north. That's a massive distance.

Creating the two new constituencies of Drayton Valley-Rocky Mountain House and Devon-Parkland will make the new MLAs less effective because I believe that it ignores community history and community interests and trading patterns. The west country was opened by oil, so the traditional trading patterns in our constituencies flow east-west and not north-south. We see this evidenced in co-operation between the communities, for instance,

along highway 39. I'm not sure if you've been made aware of the 39/20 Alliance made up of Calmar, Thorsby, Warburg, and Breton. Those communities are all coming together to work together to share costs. They have a very tight relationship with each other.

We see the east-west relationships when we look at an initiative that has happened in the last two years or so in my tenure, the creation of the Alberta hemp alliance. I just got back from Holland, where we had the mayor of Devon, the mayor of Drayton Valley, the mayor representing the 39/20 Alliance, the reeve of the county of Brazeau, and businesses from across the constituency – there were about 13 of us that all went over to Holland – working on creating the trade relationships necessary to build the industrial hemp market in this region. There's a close working relationship that goes east-west and not particularly north-south.

These historical links, I believe, these kinds of working relationships allow an MLA to really work for their constituents, and when you start changing those trading patterns, it makes it much more difficult both for the communities as well as for the MLA. Rural constituencies already battle sparsity of population and distance, and the commission, I believe, needs to ensure that the historical links are not ignored and thereby begin to frustrate the rural populations. Already they are telling me that they're wondering about their voice and their capacity to have a voice provincially. If we only consider the concept of representation by population and we don't consider the natural trading patterns and the historical relationships that these communities have, I believe you're going to begin to, again, frustrate the rural population and begin to make them feel as if they don't have that voice.

Lastly, I think that you can solve the problems found in the creation of the two new constituencies, as outlined by the minority report, by simply moving Drayton Valley and that area surrounding Drayton Valley back into your present Devon-Parkland constituency. You may need to make some adjustments. You were talking a little bit earlier about the Pigeon Lake area. You may want to take a look at arranging some of those. I was going to suggest that they go in the Drayton Valley-Rocky Mountain House constituency that you're proposing, that it be that area. It's a natural trading pattern that already exists there, that doesn't necessarily exist between Rocky Mountain House and Drayton Valley. I believe that moving that population from Drayton Valley and the surrounding area west of it back in would make the new Devon-Parkland constituency about 5 per cent above instead of 2 per cent below, as outlined in your report.

The Chair: Just to interrupt, what's the population of Drayton Valley?

Mr. Smith: Drayton Valley is about 7,500. But if you take the surrounding area, with the county of Brazeau, I think that we're looking at about 11,000.

The Chair: And that's what you're suggesting we do?

Mr. Smith: That we move that into the present Devon-Parkland. What it'll do for Rocky Mountain House is to take it from being that 17 per cent over. I believe it takes it back down to about that 5 per cent above.

The Chair: That would take Drayton Valley-Rocky Mountain House down to 5 per cent, but it would put Devon-Parkland way over.

Mr. Smith: No. It would actually make it – right now Devon-Parkland is about 2 per cent below.

The Chair: Right now it's just 45,640, so if we added 11,000 people, that would be 56,640. That would be about 20 per cent over.

Mr. Smith: That's why I suggested that you may want to adjust some of that by taking the natural trading pattern around the Pigeon Lake area and putting that in the Rocky Mountain House constituency. I think what that does is that it recognizes a little more the natural trading pattern, while at the same time it doesn't create, I believe, any new problems for any other constituencies. One of the advantages of Devon-Parkland and the new Rocky Mountain House constituency is that they border on the west, so by moving Drayton Valley back in, you're not affecting significantly any other constituencies, and you're not creating, as you mentioned earlier, that ripple effect.

9:15

The Chair: Okay. The south end of the constituency around Pigeon Lake that you're suggesting could be moved into Drayton Valley-Rocky Mountain House: how many people live there?

Mr. Smith: I believe it's around 4,000.

Ms Livingstone: And just to be clear, because we've heard many submissions about Maskwacis wanting to stay together and that including Pigeon Lake: are you suggesting moving all of that group over to Rocky Mountain House, or are you suggesting just the Pigeon Lake area?

Mr. Smith: Just the Pigeon Lake area. I think that putting Maskwacis in with the Louis Bull and with that area probably is a natural thing to do. It keeps the common interests together there, across highway 2. Maskwacis across highway 2 was a part and is a part of my constituency presently, but I think the decision to move that and then put it together into Wetaskiwin-Camrose probably is a good choice. It is a good idea.

The Chair: Right. Any other questions?

Ms Livingstone: I don't think so. I think I understand.

The Chair: All right. Any other questions, Ms Munn?

Ms Munn: I don't have any questions.

The Chair: Mr. McLeod?

Mr. McLeod: No.

The Chair: Mrs. Day?
Thank you very much.

Mr. Smith: Thank you.

The Chair: All right. Our next presenter is Joel French.

Mr. French: Thank you very much. I'm here this evening representing Public Interest Alberta and specifically our Democracy Task Force, whose chair, Larry Booi, sends his regrets. He wasn't able to be here. He was here with me at the initial presentation that we made in the last round.

I want to start by saying that the principle of representation by population is, in our minds, the most important factor to consider. The two recommendations that we made in the first round, which we think are very important for this round as well, are, one, to limit the variance in constituency population to 5 per cent above or below – and I'll speak in a little bit about how the report does that in many cases – and to not exercise the power that the commission has to

create special constituencies or to maintain special constituencies. The second and final recommendation that we made was to recommend that the Legislative Assembly strengthen supports for MLAs to assist them in effectively representing their constituents and addressing their varying needs. That goes for all MLAs. I realize that the commission only sort of has a certain amount of scope here to suggest things, but in a second I'll get to what we think of how the interim report did that.

Getting to the interim report itself, our Democracy Task Force commends the commission on the immense amount of work that you've done. Even just being in the room listening to the sort of wide array of presentations tonight, I think, gives everybody an appreciation for how complex and difficult this task is. So thank you for the work that you're doing. It's clear from the interim report that you've listened closely to the wide array of viewpoints that you've been hearing not only at these hearings in the city that we've been at but in hearings around the province.

We maintain that the full implementation of the two recommendations we made in the first round would greatly strengthen the democratic nature of Alberta's electoral system. Saying that, we do believe that the commission is headed in the right direction with the way that it's going when we compare it to the previous arrangement, specifically taking the right approach or the right direction in representation by population by – there was a phrase that jumped out at me in the interim report – calling it “a fundamental underpinning of any democracy.” The fact that you've used that as a big part of what's guiding you in your work, I think, is commendable. I think it's commendable as well to reject the approach of viewing this as a balancing act between what are called urban interests and rural interests and keeping it to the factors that you're looking at rather than those somewhat vague and sometimes misleading, in my view, terms.

The commission's suggestion to the Legislative Assembly, in line with our second recommendation, I thought was very well put and is a welcome alternative to large disparities in voting power. Talking about addressing the specific costs and looking at staffing resources and the ability to open satellite constituency offices we view as a very positive recommendation in that respect.

Getting back to representation by population, I wanted to note the number of constituencies that have a greater variance than 5 per cent; 34 of the 87 still fall outside of that variance. While that is a smaller number than the previous commission's work, we believe it is still too many, and that includes 16 with a variance of greater than 10 per cent and two with a greater variance than 30 per cent. In our view, those large variances violate the principle of political equality, by which votes should be counted as equally as possible.

To give an illustration of that, I had a look at the constituency with the most voters, which actually is the one that the previous speaker was speaking about, which has over 54,000 voters. Comparing that to the one with the lowest number of voters, Lesser Slave Lake, which has over 27,000, a single vote in Drayton Valley-Rocky Mountain House, according to this new map, will be worth roughly half the weight of a single vote in Lesser Slave Lake. I think that illustration, comparing those two, is a powerful illustration of a direction of part of, I think, what you've done that still needs to be adjusted and still poses a challenge. We strongly believe that population variances of greater than 5 per cent should be reduced to within that margin.

In conclusion, the interim report recommends a direction that would strengthen democracy, so we are, by and large, happier than we might have been if it was closer to the previous commission's report by reducing the overall disparity in population between constituencies. But we do believe that the commission should go further and in its final report recommend that the populations of

constituencies all fall within the variance of 5 per cent of the average.

The Chair: Okay. I'll respond by saying that we're obliged to follow the law. As we've been saying all day to people who are looking at it from the other perspective of not wanting to have to increase the size of their constituency to bring it closer to the provincial average, that's also true with setting criteria that aren't in the act and don't follow the direction of the Supreme Court of Canada and other courts in how we're to apply that act. We can't limit our discretion by saying that we're not going to consider the other criteria in the act. We have to consider all of the criteria. None of them says 5 per cent maximum. So you have to look at each constituency individually and see what its circumstances are.

Having heard me say that, do you want to convince me that I'm wrong?

Mr. French: I guess I look at our neighbouring province of Saskatchewan, which does have two exceptional constituencies, but they actually have legislation that does keep each of their other constituencies, aside from those two, within a 5 per cent variance. I mean, I know a little bit of their electoral map but not the whole thing, but I don't think there's anybody there that believes that that violates any of the other criteria that you may be looking at. I know that it's not a direct analogy because we have different legislation here, but I don't think that there would be gross violations of anything or violations of anything at all, any of the factors that you are mandated to consider under the act, by keeping the variance within 5 per cent.

The Chair: I think the key problem is they have a different act completely than we have. They have the 5 per cent, and we have the 25 per cent, but for application of these other factors – I mean, I'm not expecting you to come up with something that doesn't exist, you know. I'm just saying I want you to understand our limitations here.

9:25

Mr. French: I think that in my view or in our view as an organization, the act here gives the commission a huge amount of leeway in how it considers which factors and, specific to population variances, in what it makes those variances to be. Again, the previous speaker's constituency or proposed new constituency being 17 per cent above: I think that's a problem. I would agree with him that changes need to be made there, but it's a problem that's going to be created when you have another constituency that's 40 per cent below. I understand that there needs to be some variance, and I think there are good reasons for variances of some amount, but I don't believe they need to be nearly as wide as some of these variances currently are.

Ms Munn: That point is well taken, and I think we will be looking at that more closely, including in places like Drayton Valley, but Alberta, unlike Saskatchewan, has two huge metropolitan areas. Almost unanimously we've heard that MLAs that if they were required to represent a rural-urban metro – I'm not talking necessarily about the smaller cities – their job would be difficult and their effectiveness would be significantly limited.

By the time that you say, “All right, well, the boundaries of metro Calgary and metro Edmonton are going to remain static,” it's very, very difficult to make sure or to attempt to have a 5 per cent variance. The only way that that's going to happen is with that mix of metro-rural, which nobody wants.

I understand the point. One of the things that they did in Saskatchewan, even without the huge metro problems, is turn a

number of constituencies into these pie-shaped constituencies that people in Alberta don't want to see. They don't want to see the mix of metro-rural.

Mr. French: To be clear, you're talking constituencies that take in part of a big municipality as well as part outside, correct? Just to be clear.

Ms Munn: Yes.

Mr. French: To be clear, that's not what I'm advocating for.

Ms Munn: But if you don't do that, you can't get to 5 per cent.

The Chair: That's the only way.

Ms Livingstone: That's the question I had. Has your organization gone through the process of drawing a map that only has 5 per cent variance?

Mr. French: Thankfully, I have not had to do that.

Ms Livingstone: I would encourage you to give it a try.

Mr. French: I do give you some sympathy there.

I know the federal ridings fairly well, and I know that at the federal level in Edmonton we have eight federal ridings that are completely within the boundaries of Edmonton. We have a ninth one that is partially within. I think if that was something that the commission had to recommend, that one constituency include part of a metro area – although I'm not convinced that with 87 constituencies you have to do that, because you have in a way a lot more flexibility than the federal commission had with 34 constituencies for the entire province.

The Chair: Why don't you try to go around the map yourself just with a pocket calculator? You're just saying: let's mathematically go around and draw little squares, each of which are 46,687 people. See if you could do that.

Mr. French: That's not what I'm saying.

The Chair: But that is what you're saying, or within 5 per cent of that, so let's say between 45,000 and 49,000. If you try to do that around, there's no solution but to go to blended constituencies in Edmonton and Calgary.

Ms Munn: I think the concept is correct, and we have been applauded and derided for looking at voter parity first. We will continue to do that as we hear from people about their particular areas and how they should be fixed. It's a point very well taken, just that we can't be compared to Saskatchewan. We have these two huge metro areas and a very large rural area, and it makes it very difficult for us to get that close to absolute parity.

Mr. French: If I could follow up with one last comment, it would just be that I think you did Edmonton actually very well, in that I believe there's only one constituency that's outside of that variance. It's not...

The Chair: That's just because the numbers worked exactly. It fell into our laps.

Mr. French: I just wanted to say that I don't have a problem with how you've done the city. It's not the city that I'm concerned about.

Ms Livingstone: That was just mathematical happenstance that it just fit.

The Chair: In Calgary we've got it half a constituency over, so we can't deal with that on your scheme without making a blended rural-urban constituency there.

Any other questions?

Mrs. Day: I'll jump in here for a second. It's an interesting ideology, and if we didn't have to take in community interests and if people didn't care about the community interests, we could divide up – we wouldn't need people. We could just do that with some sort of computer algorithm. It could be done. I don't think people would be happy with it, but it could be done throughout the province. My question to you would be: do you believe, federally, that we live in a democracy?

Mr. French: I think that's a complex question, but, by and large, yes.

Mrs. Day: Okay.

Mr. French: We could probably have a chat all day about it, though.

Mrs. Day: If you google for yourself the ridings across Canada – I spent a little time on that a couple of days ago, and I found it very fascinating how in Canada our smallest riding is 20,000 people in Labrador with one MP. Here in Alberta we have 110,000 with one MP. And there's everything in between, absolutely everything in between. We believe that we live in a democracy, and we do not have voter parity in Canada. So be careful what you cry for in that regard. We could talk about voter parity because when we talk about the census and population that we're looking at, that's one number. Voters is another number.

When I google the federal ridings, they show population in one column and next to it electorates, which is a different number, and then next to that the geographical area in square kilometres. So when you have a small number of people and one MP and you have this large geographical area that's noted beside it, it's understandable. We have a vast land, and we can all figure that out; we can accept that. The voter parity thing: I'm saying that it's something to think about if you look at it federally. Just google it and spend a little time on that yourself.

Mr. French: I've seen it. Thank you.

The Chair: Bruce?

Mr. McLeod: No.

The Chair: Okay.

All right. Thanks very much.

Our next presenter is Duncan Kinney.

Mr. Kinney: Hello. Yes, my name is Duncan Kinney. I'm here as the executive director of Progress Alberta. I just want to start off by commending and thanking the commission for what is an extremely hard job. Trying to balance the mandate of the commission along with all of the public input that you are getting and creating a balanced map of the province is an enormous task, an enormously complex task, and one that we feel the commission has done a very good job at and has come very close to achieving in its initial proposal.

Overall, we are in agreement with the statements laid out in the executive summary of the interim report and also with the recommendations of the majority in most cases. Your effort to unite indigenous and Métis voices in concentrated numbers in electoral districts is particularly commendable. Concentrating these

communities in certain ridings gives more electoral weight to these communities and will result in more effective representation and, hopefully, a greater say in electoral outcomes.

You know, one thing that has consistently come up in this process is this kind of urban-rural question. I don't think there is a question that the addition of urban and suburban seats to reflect the changing population distribution of Alberta was the right move even if it might be met by some resistance from certain individuals and groups. The commission should be cautious, however, in how it proposes solutions to the now larger rural electoral districts. Not all rural communities or individuals have access to high-speed Internet or dependable roads and travel routes, and since the commission can't increase rural MLA budgets in order to allow them to have extra staff and offices and resources, we're not going to recommend that action. However, the commission is correct to acknowledge that this change must come and that the idea of what effective representation looks like for rural constituents might have to change. Accessibility to an MLA can come in many forms, and we can look to neighbouring provinces and communities to see how elected members can be effective representatives and how constituents can maintain access to their representative and those services despite a larger geographic territory.

The commission has also done commendable work in its application of blended or rural electoral districts. I think you've ensured that neither rural nor urban voices are diminished when a blended seat is required, only using those blended seats kind of when they are absolutely necessary.

9:35

The kind of doughnut-shaped riding, or a kind of central, urban core surrounded by suburban, ex-urban, and rural areas, is often the best compromise in a lot of these cases. I think we can point to what's been done in Medicine Hat and Grande Prairie as the right call, and that could perhaps be applied to an area like St. Albert as well. That same principle could also be considered with regard to Fort McMurray, which, as we know, has brought a lot of hard work in regard to the population and also represents a rather unique circumstance because it is so far away from everything. A core urban and blended seat would gather together the communities of the region and recognize the city as a major economic and population centre but one that is isolated and distinct from other communities like Athabasca and Lac La Biche.

There's also a question I had as to why communities such as Spruce Grove were not recognized as urban centres. It could be easily combined with Stony Plain to create a much more contiguous urban-suburban seat, and those two kinds of suburban cities have more in common with each other than they perhaps have in common...

The Chair: It would be over the legal limit of 25 per cent.

Mr. Kinney: Fair enough. I didn't create a map this time. I did create a map on the last go-round, but I didn't have the capacity this time.

The Chair: Oh, I appreciate that.

Mr. Kinney: I also think the commission has made the correct move in creating Airdrie-Cochrane and maintaining Leduc, Beaumont, and Okotoks as the centres of their seats, but we should look at this as perhaps a founding principle for these kinds of suburban areas.

I'd also like to respond to the specific questions for public input that you put in the interim report. In regard to the special status for Lesser Slave Lake and Central Peace-Notley I think it's

unquestionable that you kind of have to maintain those and that those are necessary due to the massive geographic area as well as what John Kolkman talked about earlier in regard to the indigenous population in Lesser Slave Lake.

With the questions on population figures around Fort McMurray and it being such a difficult issue, I'm still going to suggest that there is an opportunity to create an urban and a blended seat in that area, perhaps going only so far south as Conklin and using the southern boundary of Wood Buffalo as the border. You know, again, these are suggestions. I haven't done the math with the maps like you and your staff have, but it's something I would like to put out there.

The move to consolidate rural seats in the east and southeast was also a necessary move on the part of the commission. Drumheller-Stettler was nearing the requirements for special status with its shrinking population relative to the province.

Finally, I just, again, would like to thank you for the work you've done and the careful and deliberative approach you've taken to this extremely important task, and I want to congratulate you on your compelling and well-thought-out interim report. We hope that our input and the input of all these folks will help guide you in your remaining work and offer useful insight and feedback. We look forward to your final report.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Any comments or questions?

Ms Munn: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Praise is always welcome, particularly two and a half hours into a public hearing. Thanks.

Mr. Kinney: Thank you.

The Chair: Our next registered presenter – we have three left – is Glenn McLean.

Mr. McLean: Good evening. I am the mayor of Drayton Valley. Not surprisingly, I have some recommendations regarding the Devon-Parkland and Drayton Valley-Rocky Mountain House proposed constituency boundaries. Mr. Bart Guyon is the reeve of Brazeau county, and ours is a joint submission. I don't know whether his name immediately follows mine on the list, but he would like to speak after I do if that's agreeable with the commission.

The Chair: Sure. Absolutely.

Mr. McLean: Have you got maps of Devon-Parkland and Drayton Valley-Rocky Mountain House?

The Chair: Why don't you pass out your maps? They're larger than the ones we have.

Mr. McLean: I would like to begin by thanking the commission for its work. There are many jobs that interest me; yours is not one of them.

The Chair: We've gotten to meet lots of interesting people.

Mr. McLean: No doubt.

I would like to begin by referring the commission to section 14 of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, which I am quite certain you know by heart at this point. Specifically, paragraphs (c), (e), and (h) are what I will attempt to speak to in my comments. The travelling, trading pattern and access to services within what is

currently Drayton Valley-Devon is east and west, and that will continue. There are many things that connect the communities along highway 39 in particular, but throughout the constituency of what would now be Devon-Parkland – the villages of Breton, Warburg, the town of Thorsby, the town of Calmar, the town of Devon, and indeed Brazeau county and much of Leduc county – there are some communities of interest that extend to recreational activities, as I said, trading patterns, access to services. Government services is what I have in mind here as well as medical services that go both east and west along that corridor.

In addition to that, other communities of interest exist. Our MLA, Mr. Smith, referred to the 39/20 Alliance. That refers to highway numbers in the constituency. They're member communities. Drayton Valley has recently been asked to join, and council is currently considering joining that alliance. It's essentially a tourism-based alliance along that corridor. The Alberta hemp alliance, which Mr. Smith referred to, is a development over the past many months, and it comprises nine municipalities. With the exception of Drayton Valley and part of Brazeau county all of those municipalities would be in this Devon-Parkland constituency. That effort is also a partnership with industry and with the nine municipalities. We are working to develop the supply chain in the industrial hemp industry in this region. It's an extraordinary undertaking but also extraordinarily rare in Alberta that that many municipalities in a region could get together on anything and make a concerted effort and make progress. That sort of underscores my point about there being significant communities of interest.

With respect to paragraph (e), section 14, which refers to existing municipal boundaries – and the reeve may speak more to this – essentially what the commission has done is used a naturally occurring boundary in the form of the North Saskatchewan River as a dividing line to remove Drayton Valley and a portion of Brazeau county, thereby breaking up Brazeau county. I would add, too, that there's a very functional bridge across that river, so the river really isn't a dividing line between our communities. Our trading patterns, as I say, are historically east and west. Although there is a highway, there is almost no activity, relatively speaking, that goes north and south.

The suggestion that I believe the commission heard earlier was to essentially carve – sorry; let me back up – include Drayton Valley and that portion west of Brazeau county, west of the North Saskatchewan River, into the Devon-Parkland riding and effectively carve off the communities around Pigeon Lake, essentially drawing the line from highway 616 in the south of Devon-Parkland, just above where it says “Brazeau County Boundary.” If you drew the line straight east to highway 2, Pigeon Lake and the communities around it and some portion of Wetaskiwin county would then fall into Rocky Mountain House.

9:45

The suggestion by the earlier presenter regarding joining the communities around Pigeon Lake with Maskwacis: that would also work. The difference, I guess, in our submission is that what we want to do is to not take too much population out of Rocky Mountain House so that we've compromised that on the low side. It is currently very high, above average. By taking the communities around Pigeon Lake and that area of Wetaskiwin county, putting it in with Rocky Mountain House: our estimates have it at about 5,000 or 5,500 in total population. The total population of Drayton Valley and the western portion of Brazeau county would be about 11,000, so the net gain to Devon-Parkland would be about 6,000.

The Chair: Just so that I'm following what you're saying, Drayton Valley, you suggest, should be part of Devon-Parkland rather than

Drayton Valley-Rocky Mountain House even though that would put Devon-Parkland over the provincial average by a considerable amount unless we move the Pigeon Lake people somewhere. But even if we did that, you'd still be over by 15 per cent, roughly. I've just done that in my head. You can live with that?

Mr. McLean: I can live with that for two reasons: one, because it gets us into a constituency where we have a very strong community of interest; two, part 2 of this presentation is the reeve of Brazeau county. Would you like to hear from him now?

The Chair: Would you like to just come up here?

Mr. McLean: He has a comment regarding the northern boundary of the proposed Devon-Parkland riding. As you know, part of Parkland county lies north of highway 16. You've drawn the boundary at highway 16. I understand that. It's a major freeway through that part of the country. But the reeve is going to address where the northern boundary of Devon-Parkland might otherwise be located.

Mr. Guyon: I'm not quite as articulate as my lawyer friend here, the mayor of Drayton Valley. I'm not a doctor, so I don't have the patience that you folks have. I am here because I'm very concerned about our community and where we're going. We've worked very hard, which is really strange in the last – well, I've been in politics since 1992. It's taken a long time to remove that river as a barrier in our community, but we've been effective in doing so and joining Brazeau county together, actually, because we've been quite a fractured community.

In regard to this whole proposal the numbers are important, but communities are more important, from my point of view. We do have a working relationship that's really evolved, and that's the nine municipalities working together on the Alberta hemp alliance. We're now looking at another initiative with deep-well geothermal. We've got all kinds of things with alternative energies going on collectively. That trading pattern is part of who we are even though that's not one of your real criteria.

Natural boundaries: I haven't seen a single riding anywhere that uses natural boundaries. Highways aren't natural, and certainly political boundaries aren't natural either. Glenn has mentioned that the river is not a natural boundary because we've got a bridge. Keeping our community together in one intact entity is far more important to us.

The numbers that Glenn has thrown out there do put us over 15 per cent. I believe that the same rationale for Pigeon Lake going to Camrose – you talked about the thin sliver that that would create. It's exactly identical in size to the existing thin sliver that's east of Wetaskiwin. If you take a look at the existing boundaries of Wetaskiwin-Camrose – and you've got that sliver on the right-hand side – including Pigeon Lake would create that identical sliver on the left-hand side. It's not really a sliver. It's really the same size. Those numbers there are out a bit, but if you actually include Wabamun in Parkland county and all the surrounding communities that have all worked together, that's going to take 2,000 or 3,000 out of that population that we talked about, that 15 per cent variance. Including Wabamun in the riding that it was in would actually help to bring those numbers down significantly.

The Chair: You mean Pigeon Lake, not Wabamun.

Mr. Guyon: No, both. So Pigeon Lake going to Wetaskiwin. The current boundary: you've got about 43,000. Add another 4,000 to 5,000 to take them to 48,000, so you're kind of within the existing boundary. You're going to have to be doing some other shuffling. I

understand, you know, that every time you shuffle, like the balls, they ...

The Chair: We're already 5 per cent over in Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Guyon: That's with the proposed boundary.

The Chair: Right.

Mr. Guyon: Your current boundary of Wetaskiwin-Camrose is at 43,900, if my memory serves, or close to that. Adding another 5,000 from Pigeon Lake takes you to about 48,000, 49,000.

The Chair: Minus 11.

Mr. Guyon: Yeah. So you've got that, and then if you take Wabamun – I don't know those numbers exactly, but you're going to add 2,000 or 3,000 people to Lac Ste. Anne, and that will actually help you bring their numbers up, bring our numbers down, and help to create another balance. None of this is going to be perfect, but you've got the northern stuff that you said is already way out of whack, and you're not going to be able to fix that.

Mr. McLean: Effectively, what the reeve is saying is that if we shifted the northern boundary of Devon-Parkland from highway 16 down to highway 627 for at least a portion of that, to encompass Wabamun and the communities around Lake Wabamun, that goes a long way to addressing the population overage problem by adding Drayton Valley and Brazeau county to Devon-Parkland.

The Chair: Sure. Wabamun has how many people, roughly? Do we know?

Mr. Guyon: I don't know. They've got all those summer villages all around, so I honestly don't have that data. I mean, I've got land all around the place, but I don't know what the numbers are. They were going to call it Bartland county, actually.

The Chair: Okay. All right. Good idea.

Mr. Guyon: Well, I don't know. It's, you know ...

Mr. McLean: No. It's a good idea.

The Chair: It's certainly worth thinking about, for sure. I mean, I have to say that I think what was going on in our minds when we came up with our interim recommendations, knowing that nobody made any submissions on this – you were kind of leaving us; you were taking your chances. Rocky Mountain House is less likely to grow at the average provincial growth rate in the future than Devon is, so we were trying to protect the growth potential in Devon by leaving their numbers under. You know, that might be simplistic, but that was the thought. But we'll certainly consider the option.

Mr. Guyon: We have such a positive relationship with Devon. I mean, here is a country boy getting along with two urbans. I mean, this is unheard of, but it's such a positive initiative that's going on. They've got different politics in Devon, but still we get along very well.

Mr. McLean: We are breaking new ground. If there are any questions ...

Ms Munn: These suggestions have been very helpful in working out what is obviously an anomaly.

The Chair: Sorry. Is it highway 627 that you're suggesting the boundary move down to?

Mr. Guyon: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. Any questions on this side of the table?

Mrs. Day: That's fine.

Mr. McLeod: I've got one.

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. McLeod: You talk about this coalition that you've got going, the group of nine municipalities. I'm going to be blunt and to the point. Good. It works real well. Is that going to change if the constituencies change? You just said that you have a good partnership. Just because the constituencies change and the MLAs – you may have two or one or whatever; I'm just speculating here now – is that coalition going to change?

Mr. McLean: Part of, well, the history of the Alberta hemp alliance: the idea actually came from the MLA for Drayton Valley-Devon. That would be, I would suggest, less likely if there were more than one MLA representing those same communities. Now, in this new configuration, if Drayton Valley and Brazeau county are added to Devon-Parkland, then we've kept a burgeoning initiative and something that is – again, I have not seen in municipal politics in Alberta this many municipalities working as closely on an economic development initiative. Yes, I do think it would jeopardize it.

Mr. McLeod: I was just interested because it's quite unique that, actually, Brazeau county and Drayton Valley are getting along, so that's a good move, too. Thank you.

Mr. McLean: It is. Unique is an understatement. I take it as a compliment, though.

Mr. McLeod: Country boys. Agreed. Well, they were all put in municipal politics a very long time.

Mr. Guyon: If I agreed with Glenn all the time, we'd both be wrong.

This really started with alternative energy initiatives and working together with Drayton Valley and Devon. That was kind of the initial phase where we started to get along, saying: you know, let's start doing something different regardless that we're in an oil patch down in Brazeau county. We won the race to the bottom when it came to the economic downturn because we had 10,000 oil wells, 7,000 people, and when the oil patch dried up, we were hit the hardest. So we won the race to the bottom. We've overcome that, we're overcoming it, and we've overcome these political sorts of issues that are out there. We've built an alliance, a synergy with all these other folks, and it's something that's got some momentum. Regardless of how these boundaries are, we want Alberta to grow, and we think we can be a part of that.

9:55

Mr. McLean: All of these communities that I've mentioned: we are all oil and gas towns, all oil and gas municipalities. We are all agricultural municipalities as well. So there's a lot of commonality of interest. It's just how we arrive at solutions, and we are working on some solutions, finally.

Mr. Guyon: And you know that stigma that you talked about, of Drayton Valley and Brazeau not getting along? That was more of a speculation. We are one of the most generous municipalities, cost sharing with the urban municipality, like, over 3 and a half million, which is unheard of, and there's not a single thing that we don't cost

share in anymore. There's that perception that we don't get along, but in fact we actually work very well together. Like I said, there isn't a cost-sharing agreement that we don't partner with. I understand that stigma that's out there, but sometimes it's not always totally true.

Mr. McLean: And more to the point, sir, we are working together now, and we'd like to preserve that.

Mr. McLeod: Thank you.

The Chair: Indeed.
Comments? Questions?

Ms Livingstone: I have a couple of questions just on sort of the fine details of what you're proposing for the area so that we don't draw lines in the wrong place if this works. I thank you for proposing that because I was going to ask about Wabamun, and you beat me to it. If we were going to come across 627, should we come across 627 and then go north on 31 to make the line, or should we just keep going right across to Moon Lake there?

Mr. Guyon: Probably all the way to 31, for sure, because then you're going to include Seba Beach, which is on the east side there. That would make sense, to go over there; 31 doesn't quite make sense because that's 759 that goes north of Tomahawk.

Mr. McLean: It might make sense to go over to Moon Lake. I would defer to the reeve on that. He knows that country better than I do.

Ms Livingstone: And you guys certainly know it better than me. That's why I'm asking.

Mr. Guyon: Well, except 31 doesn't quite make sense because 759 goes north of Tomahawk, and it carries on right to highway 16. So 31 must be going east-west a little bit because Tomahawk – you keep carrying on straight north, and that's 759 that goes all the way to the Yellowhead highway. Then you've got some options there to slightly move that boundary, depending on what sort of population you want to shift.

Ms Munn: What are the options? Tell us.

Mr. Guyon: Well, I mean, you know, you can go north of Carvel if you don't have enough population there. You can go right over to 522. I don't have those numbers specifically carved out, but if you use 627 as the boundary to keep that community intact, you can move your boundaries east and west a little bit to balance your populations.

Ms Munn: Okay; 627 would be the ideal?

Mr. Guyon: Ideal, yeah.

Ms Munn: Yeah? Okay.

Ms Livingstone: And then one other question I had was just that if we are extending over to bring Drayton Valley in, where would you suggest we draw the line in order to bring – should we be bringing just Drayton Valley in, or should we be, you know, sort of heading over towards I think that's the Pembina River there?

Mr. Guyon: You go even a little further. You go to the Brazeau dam. That's the current Brazeau county boundary. We include the Brazeau dam, which is another initiative. They're going to build a \$2 billion, you know, pumped hydro project. Anyway, you've got

the Brazeau boundary, which is – that way we're not interfering with Yellowhead either. The Brazeau dam is right on the edge, and that includes the 4,500, roughly, or 4,000 of the Brazeau county population with Drayton Valley. Basically, it keeps our municipalities intact.

Ms Livingstone: Okay.

The Chair: Okay. So just looking at – oh, I see the Brazeau dam. Thanks.

Ms Livingstone: My last question: is anyone in Wabamun going to yell at me if I do this?

Mr. McLean: I think not. I think the important thing is that the community in Wabamun is kept whole. I would suggest that they've got more in common with some of the lake communities north of highway 16 than they do with the rest of this riding.

The Chair: With Lake Isle and what have you?

Mr. Guyon: Yeah. If they've got issues, those issues are going to stay the same – right? – because we're not changing that, that lake sort of synergy.

Ms Livingstone: Great. Thank you very much. This is really, really helpful information.

The Chair: Thank you.
Ms Munn?

Ms Munn: I don't have anything.

The Chair: Okay. Thanks so very much.

Mr. Guyon: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.
And our last registered speaker is Patrick Kobly. Thank you for waiting so long to speak.

Mr. Kobly: Madam Justice Bielby, commissioners, thank you for the opportunity to speak, and I'd also like to thank you for the massive amount of work that's represented by your interim report. I think the interim report in general goes in exactly the right direction. I think there are a couple of specifics with respect to Leduc-Beaumont that I'd like to address today.

The Chair: Where do you live, sir?

Mr. Kobly: Sorry?

The Chair: Where do you live?

Mr. Kobly: I live in Beaumont. I'm a 38-year resident of the town of Beaumont and a current mayoral candidate in the town of Beaumont.

The town of Beaumont is the fifth-fastest growing community in the country. We've got 18,320 residents. I'm unaware of any submissions, whether written or verbal, that you may have received from town of Beaumont elected or administration officials, so I may cover some ground that has previously been covered.

On January 1, 2017, Beaumont annexed nine quarter sections of land north of township road 510 along with 12 more west and south of town. Since that point Leduc county has agreed with Edmonton on some land surrounding the land north of township 510 as well as other areas. Edmonton has announced their intention to annex the nine quarter sections of land that are currently part of the town of

Beaumont north of township road 510. Unfortunately, the interim report of this commission presupposes the outcome of an annexation application that's not even before the MGB at this point. At this point, with respect to the annexation – and I don't want to obviously litigate an annexation before this commission – all incumbent elected officials and all of the declared candidates within the town of Beaumont are united in our opposition to Edmonton's annexation, and it will not be going through prior to, certainly, the next election and well into the future.

With respect to common community interests of those landowners north of 510, those individuals currently all use Beaumont schools, other facilities within the town of Beaumont rather than primarily facilities within the city of Edmonton. Those landowners by and large oppose annexation, and presently the majority of them are still the original homesteading families from those places. All of that land is currently agricultural reserve in active farming use.

With respect to the population metrics, currently the population is negligible in number – we're looking at less than 50 individuals – and given that Beaumont is a fast-growing community, we do anticipate some level of growth. However, based on the developer interest in lands pre and post Beaumont's annexation, we would anticipate that the majority of that growth pressure would exist west of range road 243 and in the southeast corner of the town before the land north of township road 510 develops and produces more pressure on population.

Absent the annexation by the city of Edmonton, which, as I've said, again, is not yet before the MGB, township 510 does not form a natural boundary between the two ridings, and the obvious boundary is the municipal boundaries as they exist or as they're proposed and agreed to exist. So my suggestion to this commission would in fact be to amend Edmonton-Ellerslie and Leduc-Beaumont to allow the boundary between those two ridings to carry along the current municipal boundary of the town of Beaumont.

I'd be pleased to take any questions that you may have.

The Chair: Sure. I think this might be my fault because, again, we did not have any information on this during our initial round of hearings, and there was press to the effect that the city of Edmonton had reached an annexation agreement with Leduc, so I may have assumed that that also covered the land between Edmonton and Beaumont. But you tell me that that's still an open question.

10:05

Mr. Kobly: At present Leduc county covers the land between Edmonton and Beaumont with the exception of those nine quarter sections, that we just received in annexation, north of 510. You can see in your maps that the current town of Beaumont's boundaries jog up and over to the east.

Ms Munn: Do you happen to know what the population of those nine quarter sections presently is?

Mr. Kobly: It is certainly less than 100.

The Chair: Three hundred and twenty-four, I was advised by the Chief Electoral Officer when I asked him.

Mr. Kobly: This is surprising to me. Okay.

The Chair: Oh, I'm not sure how they came up with that number.

Ms Munn: But that's going to change.

The Chair: Okay. Could I ask you a question just off topic?

Mr. Kobly: Yeah.

The Chair: Leduc-Beaumont is a problem constituency because, based on our recommendations, we're leaving you at 11 per cent over the provincial average and you're a high-growth area. That occurred because of the nature of the communities that surround you. Without crossing highway 2, everybody surrounding you was either quite a bit over the provincial average population size as well, or it would lead to a blended constituency with part of Edmonton, and I'm sure you've heard the discussion about that this evening. Now, if we were to accede to the prior request of putting Devon-Parkland up to 15 per cent over, even if we crossed highway 2, that wouldn't solve the Leduc-Beaumont problem. Do you have any possible solution as to where we could move a boundary to reduce the population to a little bit closer to provincial average, or do you think that's not a particular problem for you?

Mr. Kobly: Well, ultimately, I recognize that there are some real challenges with Leduc-Beaumont and some much larger challenges with the constituencies that surround Leduc-Beaumont. A blended constituency would not be favourable to us. Our experience with a blended constituency federally in the Edmonton-Wetaskiwin constituency has not been a particularly positive experience for the community, and we would not be favourable to that on the provincial level. Ultimately, you're at a spot where if you're seeking to lower the Leduc-Beaumont population, you'd significantly be increasing the surrounding populations, and there's just no way to draw those lines.

With respect to being in an overpopulated constituency, we've had this experience in the past quite significantly when we were a member of Wetaskiwin-Leduc. It hasn't been of great concern within the community. We have had the benefit of phenomenally great representation from our MLAs over the past time, and they've risen to the challenge of addressing those disparities.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Okay. Any comments?

Mr. McLeod: Just one, if I may. We were under the understanding – I'm going to set aside the annexation, but the growth area in there: if we changed the boundary back to the actual city boundary as of January '17, that would add a significant amount of population to what our recommendation was. I'm just trying to – as we said, if we do that, then how do we do the rest of it? That's the problem. Do you have any suggestions?

Mr. Kobly: I understand the concern. I'm not actually asking to bring it back to the city's boundaries as of January '17 because that pulls us back to 41st Ave, which is significantly north. What I am asking is that – Leduc county and the city of Edmonton do have an agreement, and the city of Edmonton's boundaries will be changing towards the south, okay? What is at question are very specifically those nine quarter sections immediately north of township 510. Yeah, the little bump off the edge.

Mr. McLeod: The little bump, yeah. I'm looking at that.

Mr. Kobly: Yeah. We're seeking to move the boundary to being what the town of Beaumont's boundaries were as of the middle of January of this year.

Mr. McLeod: Okay. What's in that little bump?

Mr. Kobly: That little bump is presently all agricultural reserve and active farms.

Mr. McLeod: Okay. Agricultural reserve?

Mr. Kobly: Yeah.

Mr. McLeod: Okay.

Ms Munn: And that's what we think is 324 people?

The Chair: Yeah. I'm just wondering whether what the electoral office told me was in fact talking about the entire area between the northern boundary of Beaumont and the southern boundary at the city. That's more likely.

Mr. Kobly: I would suspect that that's actually the case, having worked on a number of provincial campaigns in this riding in the past. The poll districts in that area, which is likely the smallest subdivision that the electoral officer has, did at the last election stretch from 510 up to 41st Ave.

The Chair: Okay. Thanks.

Mr. McLeod: Okay. That helps. Thank you.

The Chair: Anything else?

Okay. Thanks. You've been extremely helpful.

Ms Livingstone: Thank you very much.

Mr. Kobly: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. With that, I'd like to thank the people who've remained and watched us through this evening. Thank you very much for your interest in the work of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. We're back tomorrow at 9 o'clock if you want more of this.

[The hearing adjourned at 10:10 p.m.]

