



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings

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Electoral Boundaries Commission

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Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Edmonton

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[Justice Bielby in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. If you'd take your seats, we'll get started. I'd like to start by thanking you for coming out this morning, thanking you for your interest in the work of the Electoral Boundaries Commission and your willingness to assist us in giving some feedback on the 87 interim recommendations contained in our report tabled with the Speaker of the Legislature on May 24.

I'll start by introducing us. I'm Myra Bielby. I'm a judge of the Court of Appeal of Alberta, resident here in Edmonton. My fellow panellists to my left are Laurie Livingstone from Calgary, Jean Munn from Calgary; to my right, Bruce McLeod, the mayor of Acme; and to his right, Gwen Day from Carstairs, Alberta. Together we are the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

Our job is set out in a piece of legislation called the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. It was passed by the government of Alberta in 1990, but we've had some version of it ever since the province was founded, in 1905. The idea of the Electoral Boundaries Commission is to look at the boundaries of each of Alberta's now 87 constituencies and decide whether they properly reflect what's required to achieve effective representation of the people living in that constituency.

This is of interest in particular to Albertans this time around because our province has experienced the fastest growth rate ever in the last eight years, since the last time this was done, in 2010. More than 600,000 people have moved into the province in that period of time, a growth rate of over 14 per cent, and that's net of anybody who left due to the economic downturn in oil and gas. We're the fastest growing. The next fastest growing is Vancouver, at 6.9, so you can see how much faster we've grown even than Vancouver.

The reality is that not each of those 600,000-plus people moved into each of the 87 constituencies equally. Even though eight to 10 years ago the constituencies were relatively equal in size, about 40,000 people each, that's gotten way out of whack right now, so we have divergences of such a nature that for people who live in Jasper, Alberta, for example, if we had an election tomorrow, any vote cast in Jasper would have three and a half times the effect of a vote cast in Calgary-South East, our fastest growing constituency, which is over 200 per cent above the provincial average size. It's grown so quickly, and it's growing even as we speak.

Our job is to see whether we should recommend changes to try to address that situation. We don't have the power to implement those changes, of course. We're just making a set of recommendations to the Legislature, but it's our hope that they will be taken seriously and that consideration will be given to enacting legislation. That's the idea behind creating this process, and that's what's happened in the past.

What is our task at hand? The first step, governed by this act and also interpretations of that act made by the Chief Justice of Canada in something called the Saskatchewan reference case in 1991 – they had the same legislation as we had at that time – and also interpretations by our Alberta Court of Appeal, long before I was a member of the Court of Appeal, has given us a system or an approach to deal with analyzing each individual constituency, and we've followed it.

The first step is to take the population of Alberta as revealed by the 2016 census. We were fortunate in that that census information was made available to us on February 8 this year, so it's pretty current, and we learned that Alberta had 4,062,609 people. Divide that by 87, and you get 46,697. That figure is important only

because that's the starting place in our analysis. It's not that we're aiming at ending up with having that figure in each individual constituency, and in fact none of our recommendations would achieve exactly that result alone. Many of them were pretty close. Some constituencies in Edmonton and Calgary just happened to match the provincial growth rate perfectly, so they are still right at the perfect size according to this approach.

The next thing we do with any constituency is that we take that number and we look at the actual number of people living in the constituency, again, as of 2016, see whether it's over, see whether it's under. If it is significantly over or under, we then look at a series of criteria to see whether we should recommend changes. For example, Airdrie turned out to be 38 per cent above the provincial average. It's got 64,409 people. We knew that we had to make a recommendation for Airdrie because the legislation allows a maximum deviance of only 25 per cent over. So we had to do something with Airdrie. That's an example. Similarly, we've got constituencies that are so much under the provincial average that we have no discretion but to make a recommendation.

But the Court of Appeal in 1994 said that it's not just enough that you have 25 per cent ability to vary; you shouldn't use it if you don't need it. There has to be a reason to go above or below, and we have in our report attempted to give a reason in each of the 87 constituencies for the actual figure that we've identified for them.

9:05

We've done that by taking our average, looking at the amount over and under, and deciding whether we should recommend an adjustment by considering the goal of keeping common community interests and organizations together. These aren't just physically registered, identified organizations, but these are people that have the same interests in a community; for example, people of different ethnicities, people of different languages, people who work in the same industry, that sort of thing. I mean, each one of us belongs to many communities of interest. We can't identify and protect each one of them in this process, but the ones that are land based or geographically attached: we've tried to avoid cutting them up.

That doesn't mean that we have been able to or wanted to avoid putting more than one community of interest in a constituency, because that's been impossible. Obviously, there are lots of communities of interest, but we don't want to divide up a long-term community with a certain ethnic base between two constituencies if we can avoid doing it. That's maybe the criterion that we've applied most often in making our recommendations.

But we also want to consider the specific provision in the act that we should not, in Edmonton and Calgary, divide up neighbourhoods. We've got this lovely coloured map showing all the neighbourhoods, the community leagues in Edmonton, and we'd be very interested in hearing from any of you today if you think that we have crossed these lines, because we've tried not to. Of course, we're not as familiar with neighbourhoods as you are, so if we have done that, that would be one of things that we are trying to learn about in this second round of hearings.

We're also trying to avoid crossing municipal boundaries. For each town and city in Alberta that is under the provincial average population size, we've been successful in our recommendations. We've not crossed any boundaries. We've heard representations from each of Edmonton and Calgary last time that they did not want their boundaries crossed. In other words, they didn't want a constituency that was part in Edmonton and part in the county of Strathcona, for example. We've been able to honour that in our report, and that's what the recommendations achieve.

That doesn't mean that there are no blended constituencies. The problem arises where you've got a city like Grande Prairie, at

63,000 people, or Airdrie, at 63,000, where they're too big for one constituency but too small for two. So we've created blended constituencies in some of those areas with our recommendations. In fact, we've just continued them. They exist now. They were recommended the last time, and there's not much other choice about that in those areas. That's the next consideration.

The legislation says to follow natural boundaries if you have them, so sometimes we followed the boundary of a river or a ravine. That's why one border looks particularly wiggly. That's obviously a sign that that's a river. We've tried to honour highway 2 and highway 16 where we can, the major roadways.

This isn't in the legislation, but we can add other things that we think are relevant. We've also considered growth projections for different areas in the province. Virtually every constituency has grown in size since 2010, but some of them have grown at a much faster rate than others, so we look at different areas and say: "Have you grown a lot in the last eight years? Have you grown above the provincial average?" We will assume, then, that that will continue.

Yesterday we were in Vermilion. We talked to people from Vegreville, and their population growth has not kept pace, for example, with the growth rates in other parts of the province. But then we have Calgary-South East, where the growth rate is just exponential. We've assumed that in places where there has been a really high growth rate and there's still room to develop housing subdivisions, that growth rate is going to continue. In areas where the population has been declining in relation to the rate for the rest of the province, we've assumed that's going to continue, too, unless somebody tells us a reason to not assume that.

Also, we've considered – and this isn't specifically in the act – the ability and ease of communication within a constituency. Some constituencies have geographic boundaries that are big. They are the size of European countries. That is a consideration in determining what effective representation is. Is high-speed Internet available? Does the MLA have to make face-to-face contact with every constituent in the riding, or are there other choices to reach out to constituents?

Those are the criteria that we've considered. Also, the final criterion, public input: we've received terrific public input in the last two days. Particularly helpful, I think, to us are people who've come not just saying: we don't like this because you cut a traditional trading route in half. We've really enjoyed the people who have said, "Do it this way" and produced a map or an idea that would solve that problem not just for the constituency but for the surrounding constituencies. This is kind of like a jigsaw puzzle. If you change the boundaries of one constituency, that has an effect on everything around.

We were playing with St. Paul yesterday. Those people in St. Paul are a problem because it's such a big community up in the northeast. Nobody seemed to want it, you know, but it has to be somewhere.

Similarly with other recommendations for change, if you make them, be prepared to be asked: okay; then what do we do with your neighbour who you've just taken 11,000 people away from or you've just added something to that takes them up close to the 25 per cent?

The goal is to finalize our recommendations. Every recommendation is on the table. You don't have to talk just about the recommendations for the constituencies in the Edmonton area by any means. We've had people coming from different parts of the province at every one of these hearings just depending on what's convenient to them, so don't feel limited. We will be producing a final set of recommendations, which we have to table no later than October 23, and then the situation will be in the hands of the Legislature.

Today please be aware that *Hansard* is reporting this orally and in writing so that if you go to our website, abebc.ca, you'll find as many copies of our interim report as you want and also an oral and a written recording of each of our public hearings. It usually takes a day to get them up on the website, but they're all there. I've been gratified and somewhat humbled by the fact that there appear to be people who've actually listened to these things at home.

This is all ending up, hopefully, in an amendment to the electoral boundaries act at a certain stage.

We're delighted that you're here today to take part. I've got a list of registered speakers. We're going to try to contain everybody to five minutes for their initial comments, and then there'll be questions asked, perhaps, by the panel. In that fashion we can get through every registered speaker by lunch, because we've got another crew coming this afternoon.

Thanks very much. I'll call Mark Nicoll up. If everybody could start by identifying the constituency in which they live.

Mr. Nicoll: Good morning. My name is Mark Nicoll. I live in Edmonton-Glenora and have for about 20 years. I'm wearing my hat as a long-time social worker and community developer and member of community leagues and a former board member of the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues.

First off, awesome job. I used to work at the Legislature in the Northwest Territories. The numbers there were, I think, about between 500 and 1,000 per constituency: huge complications in terms of area and juggling those kinds of things – and that was pre the creation of Nunavut – one-third of the land mass of Canada and 50,000 people. It was interesting.

Anyway, Edmonton-Glenora captures those residential communities, of course, west of downtown. The current boundaries and proposed maintain that. I think that's great. I liked your notion of common community interests, absolutely. As someone who was the EFCL rep for that west, near west end, you know, I heard a lot of comments about that kind of stuff. People shop, socialize within the constituency. The fact that it includes kind of the shopping areas from Mayfield Road to downtown: that's just super. It's a community. I think we've seen that abundant communities, for example, that initiative, which is now in 22 communities across Edmonton, has really taken off because we're trying to reach out to our neighbours, get connected, and stay connected. Great that it continues to include where we work, where we shop, the connection to downtown. With the bike lanes now I know that my wife rides her bike downtown to work and really enjoys those. I think, again, that's a great connection.

You know, we've got a lot of other things, 124 Street. Again, the entirety, really, of that section of restaurants and shops and stuff is contained there, so that's really great. There's some diversity in the constituency, but really a lot of the issues are consistent across the community, the older historic ones. North of 111, of course, there's some intergenerational transfer of ownership happening and people buying the older homes and either renovating them or tearing them down and building new ones. That's great as well.

As I say, I just congratulate you on that. I think it makes good sense, and it maintains an area that I think does have a number of common interests. Thank you very much for keeping it. You know, I think it's a great example of the work you've done.

9:15

The Chair: Wow. Praise first thing in the morning. Thank you.

Mr. Nicoll: The rest of the day is going to be good.

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

Ms Munn: I think he should travel around with us.

The Chair: We want to adopt you and bring you with us. You can be the first speaker every day.

Ms Livingstone: Would you like to praise us on anything else we've got?

Mr. Nicoll: The coffee was good.

The Chair: Thanks so much for coming along. Grateful for it.
Okay. Marie-Laure Polydore.

Mrs. Polydore: Good morning. My name is Marie-Laure Polydore. I am the executive director from Inglewood Business Association, so I am much more representing the business side.

The Chair: Sorry. Could you repeat your last sentence. You're the business director for . . .

Mrs. Polydore: Executive director for the Inglewood Business Association.

The Chair: Inglewood. Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Polydore: Yes. The business association boundaries start at 122nd Street to St. Albert Trail on 118th Avenue and on 124th Street between 111th Avenue and 118th Avenue.

The Chair: I grew up in Inglewood.

Mrs. Polydore: Oh, nice.

The Chair: It was.

Mrs. Polydore: It's changing right now. We are working on phase 2 of our expansion, which was to reach Westmount Centre and Westmount Village. If city council accepts the proposal on the new boundary, then we will be serving the Westmount area and North Glenora, so I'm linking to the gentleman who came before me.

The boundary proposed by the commission continues the trend for the constituency where residents also shop within Edmonton-Glenora. Residents east and west of Groat Road shop at the Groat Road shopping centre and the Costco that is within the constituency. Residents also use Mayfield Common and businesses along Stony Plain Road. More importantly, 124th Street remains unchanged. This street is increasingly becoming an important destination for Edmontonians and especially for residents of Edmonton-Glenora. Shops, restaurants, and bars are walkable for many residents and often full of local customers. So our work is really to stimulate local economy within the area.

As 124th Street continues to grow – and I hope that it's going to continue on in my area as well – and develop and attract new businesses, it's crucial that this street remains unchanged and continues to have one MLA that can advocate for the district's interests and help the district navigate government programs. Right now the MLA doesn't serve Kingsway, and this is what I would like to see because we are sharing the same issues. So like Inglewood, Prince Charles, Dovercourt, and Westmount, Edmonton-Glenora is home to young families that use community leagues, daycare, and schools, et cetera. Parents use their community leagues and the parks with the kids. This is a way to bring livability within the communities.

This reality brings communities together. Parents and children become friends and then use the community leagues to put on events for their entire neighbourhood and the business association as well. It is very important that we not break the communities in

Edmonton-Glenora between electoral districts, which would dramatically change how residents socialize and get involved in their community.

While these communities are diverse, there are common issues that are constant throughout the constituency, especially for the BIA, or business improvement area, formerly called business revitalization zones. The Inglewood Business Association and the Kingsway business district, for example, are facing the same social issues with homelessness and are working to revitalize their respective area. Glenora and Westmount are old district communities that are working to preserve the character of their neighbourhoods. But we need to stay together. That's my main point.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. I'm looking at the map of your area, and there's only one little bit where 124th Street is the boundary between two constituencies, the three blocks south of Stony Plain Road up until you get to Jasper. Is that what you're concerned about in your remarks?

Mrs. Polydore: No. I would like to have Kingsway added because right now we have one MLA for Inglewood. Well, I'm seeing it as for the BIA, so 124th Street BIA, Stony Plain Road BIA, and Inglewood BIA. I'd like to add Kingsway.

The Chair: All right. I'm looking at my map, and I know that Kingsway is on the east side of 109th Street and that the border here is on the west side. Are you wanting to take in the shopping centre there?

Mrs. Polydore: Yes.

The Chair: What do you suggest the boundary be rather than 109th Street?

Mrs. Polydore: I suggest what you have proposed, and I'd add the Kingsway district after, I think, the hospital.

The Chair: Okay. Would that bring your eastern boundary to 101st Street?

Mrs. Polydore: Yes, and that will include the new development of Blatchford as well.

The Chair: All right. Have you calculated the population size of the people that will be added to Glenora if that change was made?

Mrs. Polydore: No, I haven't. I know Blatchford is expecting to have 30,000 families there, but that's in 10, 20 years from now.

The Chair: Right. No, I'm just thinking about right now.

Mrs. Polydore: Oh, right now. No. I don't have the numbers.

The Chair: If we took that chunk out of what we're calling for the moment Edmonton-City Centre, do you have a proposal for moving another boundary within Edmonton-City Centre to recapture that, either to the east or to the north? Like, you want some of them, but how are they going to make up that population loss even if we were to agree? Do you have an idea?

Mrs. Polydore: Oh, no. I don't. I'm sorry.

The Chair: Okay. Thanks.

All right. Questions? Mr. McLeod?

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

The Chair: Mrs. Day?

Mrs. Day: I'm okay.

The Chair: Ms Livingstone?

Ms Livingstone: I've got it on the map, so I understand.

Mrs. Polydore: Perfect. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Ms Munn?

Ms Munn: I don't have any questions.

Mrs. Polydore: Thank you so much.

The Chair: I'll just point this out to my Calgarian. Thanks so much for coming.

Peggy Wright.

Ms Wright: Good morning.

The Chair: Good morning.

Ms Wright: I live, actually, in Edmonton-Gold Bar, but I'm here in a different capacity today. I'm here as president of the Alberta New Democrat Party.

I'm just going to put on my glasses; otherwise, I can't see anything. I did want to begin by thanking you for your time today – I know it's an awful lot of work on a commission of this sort, to get the feedback from hundreds of engaged Albertans throughout the province – and just to express my personal appreciation for the immense and important task which you've agreed to do. I'm a grade 6 teacher, so it's government all year. It's something that's sort of near and dear to my heart.

I'm coming before you today as president of the Alberta New Democrats to share some of our feedback on the interim report. Like most Albertans, I'm certainly not an expert, nor would I ever profess to be one, but again I certainly do appreciate the opportunity to contribute our voice to this particular important task.

We agree in principle with the statements in the executive summary and the approach which you've taken as evidenced by the details provided in your interim report. It's clear that the commission has listened to Albertans in the first round of submissions, explored the issues carefully, and arrived at a balanced and fair analysis of the current landscape of the province. We hope that the commission now continues on this path to consider the feedback you're receiving from the public, stakeholders, and other engaged parties and to weigh it thoughtfully against the considerations which have been adopted in your mandate, which, of course, you referenced at the beginning of the presentation today.

It's evident that the issues of population, voter parity, and effective representation are playing a large role in how you approach this exercise. The commission has indeed begun building a map that will create a Legislature more reflective of the changing face of our province. You're correct to state in your report that the effective representation does go both ways. It should apply in the Legislature as much as it does in the community, but today I'll be speaking primarily from a much more global rather than specific perspective.

One point of concern is that in the attempts to balance population between all 87 seats as closely as possible, the proposed boundaries sometimes make compromises that they perhaps don't need to. While keeping the variation from the quotient – I think it's that 46,000 figure – to a minimum is admirable, we worry that in some cases other important considerations might be overlooked and that

this consideration has not been applied consistently. A narrow variance is sometimes difficult to achieve, particularly when that number, that quotient is as large as it is in Alberta. Even in smaller provinces this practice can be difficult.

9:25

More attention perhaps needs to be paid to ensuring that in trying to balance a thousand constituents here or there, people do not end up cut off from their MLAs or the natural communities and ties which defy arbitrary lines on a map. That was something that you referenced earlier as well. I can't imagine that the work of an elected politician trying to understand the needs and issues in communities and the nuances of the people who live there is made any easier when you're forced to work around artificial borders.

It's true that close to one-third of the approximately 750 submissions from your first round of consultation express support for using population as the primary consideration for constituency boundaries, but I also think – and this is speaking a little bit more personally as a constituent – that no one would argue that an individual should have to drive halfway across Calgary or from the Saskatchewan border to almost the middle of the province just to reach their MLA, and vice versa.

The commission's proposal creates no fewer than six seats which span a distance half the width of the province. In one example under the proposed map most rural voters in Fort Saskatchewan-St. Paul would have to travel for hours to reach an MLA's office. We'd like the commission to please keep in mind that often those who require the services of an MLA's office do not have access to all those tools which might allow them to travel far distances easily, whether urban or rural, digitally or physically.

You note on page 10 of your report that in the 1991 Alberta reference on deviation of up to 25 per cent "interference with voter parity is warranted only to prevent an impossibly large constituency or to prevent undue mixing of different communities." This is where I'm getting a little bit more personal. As a long-time resident of Edmonton-Gold Bar I can tell you that when you try to add a distant and brand new neighbourhood like Tamarack, which is to the south of where I am right now, to a seat that's mostly established with decades-old communities, you are indeed unduly mixing communities. The community, recreation, and trade centres in Tamarack are in its immediate vicinity, not further north halfway across the city. This is one of many such examples in the proposed map.

Other examples include . . .

The Chair: Thank you. I'm going to interrupt you.

Ms Wright: Absolutely.

The Chair: You know, we're with you on our goals, but you need to point us to specific problems and suggest specific solutions to help us. We got nothing, just a little whining here the first time around, so this is the result.

Ms Wright: Okay.

The Chair: We added Tamarack to Gold Bar because we were told that it was a similar neighbourhood, that access would be easily obtained. Again, while population parity wasn't our main goal, the Chief Justice of Canada, who I listen to in my day job, says that that should be our starting point.

Ms Wright: Right.

The Chair: It's our prime consideration, and then we apply these other factors.

We're looking at the population of Edmonton-Gold Bar at the moment, and it is going to change as a result of our recommendations. Where would you put Tamarack, and how many people live in Tamarack?

Ms Wright: I'm not sure about the actual numbers in terms of how many people live there at the moment, but my feeling would be that I think Edmonton-Mill Woods is right there. I think that's what the close one is called.

The Chair: Sure. But how many people would that transfer from Edmonton-East into Edmonton-Mill Woods?

Ms Wright: You know what? I have absolutely no idea.

The Chair: Okay. Leaving that, then, but not to forget it.

We recommend that the name of Edmonton-Gold Bar be changed to Edmonton-East because it better reflects the boundaries of the constituency that we're recommending. What's your view on that?

Ms Wright: In this case I would agree because of where it ends up in the east end of the city. You know, I often refer to myself as an Edmonton southeast resident, so that made perfect sense to me.

The Chair: So what's your next specific concern about the boundary, say, just in Edmonton? I'm looking at the map.

Ms Wright: Just in Edmonton that would be my big one, and mostly it's because of, you know, the locale in which I happen to live.

The Chair: What specific concerns do you have outside of Edmonton?

Ms Wright: If I were to reference one outside, it would probably be the Fort Saskatchewan-St. Paul one.

The Chair: Okay. Well, we heard a lot about that yesterday when we were in Vermilion. How would you change that recommendation? What's your suggestion?

Ms Wright: My only suggestion would be, instead of having the sort of long breadth going that way, to go the north-south route.

The Chair: Like it is right now?

Ms Wright: Like it is right now, yeah.

The Chair: The issue with that is the enormous disconnect between the population east of Edmonton and the need – sometimes that is more than 25 per cent below the average population, so we don't even have discretion. We need to move the boundaries in that area. If we don't do what we've done in our recommendations – we need Vegreville to move into Battle River-Wainwright, which is what we've recommended.

We're all ears. We'd love a solution. We didn't hear one yesterday. If you have one, please share it.

Ms Wright: Other than any other suggestion which you – yeah. No. Sorry.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Wright: Did you want to add anything there?

Mr. Stokes: Yes, if I might.

The Chair: Sure. If you could give me your name. *Hansard* is keen to have the names.

Mr. Stokes: My name is Brian Stokes.

The Chair: Pardon me?

Mr. Stokes: My name is Brian Stokes. I've just been volunteering on this project. I think you'll find that a lot of the localized solutions will be offered by the local EDAs and the MLAs and folks that have a much finer knowledge of that on the ground and have the same concerns that are being expressed by the party. Over the course of the next few days in the hearings that you'll have, you'll probably hear solutions.

The Chair: Well, we didn't yesterday, so just be aware of that.

All right. Anything else you'd like to say?

Ms Wright: There was. One other point, I think, was just to ease back on the whole future sort of 10, 15 years. While I understand – certainly, as a teacher I know that we have discussions every single year about what's going to happen the next year and the year after that and planning for the future. But perhaps just ease back a little bit on that in terms of being so strong a determiner for drawing the boundaries as you've planned to draw them. We've had an awful lot of change and an awful lot of growth over the last number of years here in Alberta, which also is something that you referenced. Just thinking that perhaps the current rather than long-term future might be a little bit more appropriate in terms of what it is your considerations might be.

Again, though, you know, in terms of offering specific solutions, yeah, other than my suggestion for Edmonton-Gold Bar as a constituent there . . .

The Chair: Right. Sure.

Questions? Comments?

Ms Livingstone: I just have one clarification. I just wanted to clarify that we did have a lot of helpful suggestions yesterday from people, so I do think we have a lot of stuff to work with.

In terms of future growth I think we've had maybe some confusion created by words we've used. It's not particularly that we've been looking at anyone's statistical projections for anything, but we've been mindful of the general growth rates that we've seen coming into this boundary review. You know, pretty much almost everywhere in Alberta has grown. Some are just growing at a slower rate, so we've kind of made the presumption that people are going to continue to grow at similar rates, especially in areas where we see lots of new development planned and stuff like that. I didn't want to give the impression that we've been sort of minding statistical evaluations, but we have just been mindful of the rates that we've seen over the last period.

The Chair: If I can add to that. Yeah, some of the MLAs who came yesterday had really good, pinpoint suggestions about borders of their constituency, to move them this way or that way, to capture a community, to move a community someplace that had a better connection. What I'm focusing on is your suggestion that the long, skinny communities we shorten and make them square. We tried, and, you know, there's a problem because of the lay of the land out there where people happen to live. Not that we won't take another go at it; absolutely, we will. But when you're looking over the map the next time yourself, just think about it, move through it numerically, and you'll probably get a feel for what our problem was.

Ms Munn, any comment?

Ms Munn: I don't have a comment.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.
Bruce?

Mr. McLeod: The only comment I would have in relationship to the growth is that we were well aware that it may not have come from the city of Edmonton or the city of Calgary or the city of Airdrie, for example, that this is where we perceive the growth. But when you're driving by those communities heading out of Edmonton and you look at the southwest side of Edmonton, how much it's growing there, or the northwest of Edmonton, and then coming into Airdrie, where they went from – what was it? – 48,000 to 61,000 almost, like, overnight, you have to do something. You have to recognize that there is growth there. When Mattamy Homes is building 1,000 more homes in the southwest of Airdrie on the other side of 8th Street, potentially there is going to be a lot of stuff going on there or where Laurie lives in southeast Calgary, where there are 91,000 people in Calgary-South East. You've just got to look at that. Otherwise, you know, there's something that might come back and bite you.

9:35

Ms Wright: Yeah. That's certainly true. I liken it to, you know, my life as a teacher. Everything comes back to sort of work in the classroom. I have a classroom filled with – I don't know – maybe 30 kids, and I'm expected to differentiate all 30 of those children, sort of group them, which is something similar to what you've done. At the same time you have to really deal with what's going on in that classroom at that moment. You have to assess the kids right where they happen to be right now, not where they're going to be in five or 10 years. I guess that's really the point I'm making. Although we appreciate the fact that those communities are growing and they probably will continue to grow, it seems to me that when you're looking at things like future growth development, expansion of municipalities, and that sort of thing, as much as possible just kind of keep it focused on the present and a little bit nearer rather than further away from where we are now in 2017. That would just be the point there.

Mr. McLeod: Yeah. I don't disagree, but I'll give you one other example. In the village of Acme this year we only had 10 kids in our playschool. Next year we've already got registered 17.

Ms Wright: Things do change, yes. That's true.

Mr. McLeod: So when you're looking at that, there's a growth that's just coming into our little village, for example, that's coming from the rural area around us. There's that kind of growth. We have to take that into consideration for all sorts of resource things. That's kind of how I think we looked at it, too. If we know there are going to be that many homes in there, maybe we should look at how we can set the boundaries so that it would recognize that in future years so that maybe the next time they'd be more even, the constituencies, the number would be on the average with the provincial average, for example. That might help us, too, and it might help the future commissions. Again, as Justice Bielby said, I won't be on that one, you know.

Ms Munn: There are a number of constituencies on the north and south side of Edmonton and on the north and south side of Calgary where that factor with respect to future growth played a small part in determining that maybe that constituency should be under if possible or that we could leave it under voter parity. Are there any

particular constituencies where you think that factor played too dominant a role?

Ms Wright: No.

Ms Munn: Okay. But I hear what you're saying and will pay attention.

Ms Wright: Yeah. You know, the intention certainly would be from my point that, again, the future growth is important. Certainly, as an Edmontonian as well we've been talking about that for a very long time, the fact that we needed another seat here, because we have in fact grown, but that's still dealing with the present, here and now, not what might happen in 10 or 15 years, that sort of thing. That would really be the point there.

The Chair: Growth actually came more into play when we were talking about the constituencies that would be well over the provincial average because their growth rate has been so slow. That's the conversation we were having yesterday. As Mr. McLeod just said, leaving some of those constituencies well above the provincial average will mean that over the next eight years they will just fall down to provincial average. Then in the next boundary commission they will in fact remain the same, and the next commission will likely have to make fewer adjustments. That wasn't our goal in doing this, but that is the result for that whole corridor along the eastern part of Alberta from Lac La Biche down.

Ms Wright: Okay.

The Chair: Any other comments?

Mrs. Day: Thank you for your submission. I hope that you have submitted it so I can completely read what you wrote. Thank you for taking the time to be here.

Ms Wright: Thanks very much.

The Chair: Will you leave your notes with us?

Ms Wright: Absolutely.

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Clerk, these will be an exhibit to this oral presentation. Thanks.

All right. Trevor Horne.

Mr. Horne: Good morning. Trevor Horne, currently Spruce Grove-St. Albert, and I have lived in St. Albert since I was in kindergarten. You know, first, I would like to thank everybody for their really hard work on this. As a political science major I've occasionally what I would term nerded out over the borders and tried to figure out where I would put them. I don't envy the task.

Currently I represent two wonderful communities, Spruce Grove and St. Albert. Spruce Grove is one of the fastest growing communities in the capital region. St. Albert has had a fairly static growth rate over the past 10, 20 years, but there is a lot of development going on that, I suspect, will put that over. Certainly, I understand the need to split those communities. Currently it's – what? – plus 34 per cent of the average.

In terms of Spruce Grove I think I would like to see something – Spruce Grove-Stony Plain would make a great community there. Those two communities mix a lot. The councils work very closely together.

The Chair: I'm interrupting, but we tried that, and it's way over, way, way over. You just have too many people moving into your

beautiful community. That would have been a logical assumption, but that was the reason that we didn't go in that direction.

Mr. Horne: Okay. Fair enough, although there are lots of other ways you can deal with Spruce Grove. You know, keep it south of the county border, for sure. I think that that makes a lot of sense to the residents.

The Chair: What county is that?

Mr. Horne: That's Parkland county.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Horne: In terms of St. Albert the current proposal is to move the blended portion to the opposite end of the city. In conversation with a lot of residents, that is confusing a lot of people. Even though it's been blended for quite a long time, it seems that people are just starting to get used to the fact that the northwest corner of St. Albert is blended. I think that leaving the portion that is currently blended or as close to that as possible makes the most sense.

In terms of where you could pull in the rest of that population, certainly there are a lot of communities to the north – Morinville, Legal, Rivière Qui Barre – that make sense and that naturally mix anyway. These communities also share a lot of history with each other. I was recently flipping through a history of St. Albert, and a lot of those communities were founded because there was no farmland left around St. Albert. A lot of the founding families in that area are still there, and they still come into St. Albert constantly.

The Chair: Have you got a map to show us where this proposed option is outlined?

Mr. Horne: I don't have one on me, but certainly the county borders just north of Legal, I think, would be a logical northern border.

The eastern edge: I don't have as well-defined a spot, but I know certainly that the current proposal is looping in St. Albert with Vilna in St. Albert-Redwater. Those communities: I've never heard of anybody mixing in those communities. There are very few trade networks or anything through there. While historically there is some French language out there, I just don't see the natural mixing anymore. As you can tell by a lot of the names on the western side of Sturgeon county, those are all traditionally French communities. I think that that is definitely an important area.

Based on rough projections, this would leave, depending on what you want to call it, St. Albert-Sturgeon, St. Albert-Morinville, or whatever a little bit under the quotient, but there is a lot of projected growth in St. Albert, a lot in Morinville. If you include the kind of acreage populations just to the east of St. Albert, there's a lot of growth in that area as well. I don't know how long that would take to get up to quotient, but I am optimistic that we would get there.

The Chair: I just have this dated memory. At one time St. Albert adopted a maximum for its city size.

Mr. Horne: Uh-huh.

The Chair: Is that maximum still in place?

Mr. Horne: No.

The Chair: So that's history?

Mr. Horne: Yes.

9:45

The Chair: All right. I'm looking at our St. Albert-Redwater proposed constituency. What part of this area of the province would be added to the remainder of St. Albert to the northeast? It's currently with Stony Plain, but that can't continue because Stony Plain has grown so much. Where would that portion of St. Albert end on what is now the St. Albert-Redwater map?

Mr. Horne: I would argue leaving the 2010 boundary proposal of St. Albert. I think that a lot of people would understand that.

The Chair: Okay. But we can't do that because we're taking Stony Plain out of St. Albert.

Mr. Horne: Spruce Grove.

The Chair: Spruce Grove; sorry. We need to find other population for you if we're going to do that, so is any of this area in your plan for leaving it in place? If we take out Spruce Grove, what do we put back in?

Mr. Horne: The current proposal is switching the blended portion of St. Albert. My proposal would be to leave the current northwest portion of St. Albert that is in Spruce Grove-St. Albert and then looping communities to the north like Morinville and Legal and possibly a little bit to the east in the county. I don't think you have the detail on the map there, but Sturgeon valley is right there, a lot of acreages that shop and work in St. Albert or Edmonton, as do a lot of the farms in that area and Morinville as well.

The Chair: Okay. If we did that, if we moved Morinville out of Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, that constituency would be 50 per cent below the provincial average. Where would we make that population up?

Mr. Horne: I didn't get into too much detail in my research to the north. I was looking more towards St. Albert and Spruce Grove and the feedback I heard from constituents there as well as my own analysis, so I don't have that answer on hand.

The Chair: I went into this thinking that Morinville and St. Albert were a logical connection.

Mr. Horne: Of course.

The Chair: But this is the tripping point in that analysis. Okay. Any other questions?

Mrs. Day: If I may, I just explored the west side. The remainder of St. Albert would be 18,000, and it would take in Sturgeon county, which I believe are Legal and – you may need to come down to the west edge of the city, maybe into Parkland county. Between Edmonton and Spruce Grove is kind of that angle but still on the west side, taking in the west, what is already there.

Mr. Horne: Potentially.

Mrs. Day: I didn't get to have those actual numbers, but it's something that was explored. I understand what you're saying. It takes a while for people to adjust to. Like, that's the 2010 version.

Mr. Horne: Well, I think that portion of St. Albert has been blended for 20 years . . .

Mrs. Day: Oh. Okay. So quite significant.

Mr. Horne: . . . and for a lot of the residents it is just now starting to click that St. Albert is two ridings.

Mrs. Day: Good. Okay. Well, thank you for your input.

Mr. Horne: Of course.

The Chair: Thanks so much.

Mr. Horne: Thank you.

The Chair: Colleen Powell.

Mrs. Powell: Good morning, everyone. I took the liberty of – I did submit this as a written brief, but I didn't like the kind of computer technology. My name is Colleen Powell. I'm a resident of the town of Athabasca, which is currently in Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater, and the proposal is for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche. I'm going to talk about the proposal of Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche and suggest to you why this constituency will not work for the residents and propose a partial solution. I'll leave you to create the rest of it.

This constituency is much like a barbell, with a large population at one end and a somewhat smaller population at the other, with virtually nothing in between. There are a number of scattered communities. I don't think any of them reach 500 people. The southwestern edge of the constituency is 350 kilometres from the city of Fort McMurray, and the city of Fort McMurray is roughly 300 kilometres north of the other major centres in the area. There's only one major road that connects the north with the south – that's highway 63 – and there is a secondary road at the extreme eastern edge of the constituency. So there's not much connectivity.

I'm going to look at article 14 of the act, which lists the factors that you "shall take into consideration," and suggest that perhaps they should be looked at again. First is 14(a), the requirement for effective representation. Now, the fire in Fort McMurray will mean that the MLAs of that area must make the rebuilding a priority. This will entail not only working with the municipalities and agencies within the community but will focus on government responsibilities in that area. By necessity this will have to be the major focus of these people for some time to come. That will leave the areas of Athabasca and Lac La Biche, I think, without effective representation simply because one or two people cannot do all of this work.

Next 14(b), sparsity and density. I guess I'm looking at this perhaps a little differently than the act intended, but the urban area of Fort McMurray is isolated and surrounded by the boreal forest. Three hundred kilometres to the south are the two counties of Athabasca and Lac La Biche – medium density, living in towns, county residential, or on farms – and then, again, a very scattered population north of the counties, most of whom, I believe, orient to the north although I'm not absolutely sure about that.

Then 14(c) – and I think this is the big one – common community interests and community organizations. There are no common community interests between the two areas and, as far as I know, no community organizations that connect the two areas. Athabasca county itself is just outside the capital region, and this is where people in both counties go to get goods and services not available in their area. The economies and jobs in the south revolve around forestry, education, farming, and, yes, oil and gas servicing to both Wabasca and Fort McMurray, but the focus within the counties is on local matters.

Section 14(g) is geographical features, including road systems. I've already said that the landscapes are quite different. Athabasca and Lac La Biche are a mixture of farming, small towns, and forests. Fort Mac is a large urban centre surrounded by forests.

We're connected not by a road system but simply a road that runs through. In order to get to Fort McMurray from anywhere in the country, you either have to fly in or drive on that one highway. The highway runs through the communities; it doesn't necessarily connect them.

So what to do? I'm focusing on Fort McMurray here. I'm proposing that you can create two constituencies within the boundaries of the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, again repeating that the worst natural disaster in Alberta's history will mean that concerted effort will have to go there. Now, according to your figures Fort McMurray-Conklin had a population of 17,000, down 9,000 from before the fire. I think you said that the latest figures you had were in February of this year. This was before any rebuilding could take place.

Meanwhile the municipality of Wood Buffalo has recently done a population projection. It's at the last page of that little thing I gave you. They are guesstimating a population between 75,600 and 77,600 for the regional municipality. Now, this is not a census; it's a projection. But I had a look at what they did, and the methodology seemed sound. I don't think you can discount these figures. You certainly have to take them into consideration.

This would allow you to create two normal constituencies not that far under the 46,000 needed, or you have a basketful of cases. If you use the numbers in your report, you can create two special constituencies. I looked at article 15, and I believe that the area would qualify under all but one factor under article 15 as a special constituency. You created two; you have the ability to create two more. So you could do two normal, two special, or one of each. I would encourage you to talk to or have the municipality and maybe the MLAs talk to you about that kind of possibility.

9:55

So why do this? Again, the area desperately needs concerted representation and focus from their MLAs because of their special needs, and surely this area more than any other in the province is a special case. Secondly, the Lac La Biche and Athabasca areas need MLAs that can focus fully on their particular needs.

I'm going to leave it to you and to others to suggest how the rest of north-central Alberta can be redeveloped.

The Chair: May I ask you what the population of Athabasca is?

Mrs. Powell: The town is just under 3,000. We had a small dip in the last census after more than a decade of 3 per cent growth. Athabasca University, which is one of the major employers, had laid off a number of staff, and I believe that was the reason for the decline. I am a former councillor and mayor of Athabasca, so I'm aware of those kinds of issues. I don't think we'll attain the 3 per cent growth, but I would assume that our area would grow at a 1 to 2 per cent average. The county grew a little more, but again it was 1.7.

The Chair: So not 14 per cent.

Mrs. Powell: Did I say 14 per cent?

The Chair: No. I said 14 per cent for the province over the last eight years.

Mrs. Powell: Oh. No, no, no. But at one point, anyway, the town was the fastest growing community between Edson and Cold Lake. Now that has stopped, but I don't think we're in a period of decline. I think we're in a stable situation.

The Chair: Okay. Just another possibility here – and I just would like to ask you about this – is to add Athabasca back into St. Albert-

Redwater. With 3,000 people, that's totally possible as an option. What do you think about that?

Mrs. Powell: The county of Athabasca has 7,000, so it would actually be an additional 10,000.

The Chair: And those people live between Redwater and Athabasca, do they?

Mrs. Powell: The county of Athabasca goes from Rochester in the south. In the north it's actually Wandering River, and those people might actually be interested in Wood Buffalo. It would be worth finding out.

The Chair: Okay. But I'm just saying: can we just add the town of Athabasca and not the entire county?

Mrs. Powell: Well, you could add part of the county. If you took from highway 63, I guess, west, then you'd be adding 5,000, roughly.

The Chair: So that's 5,000 plus 3,000?

Mrs. Powell: No. That would be total.

The Chair: Okay.

Mrs. Powell: I'm a little unsure of that. The people in the county: there's been a lot of movement from the extremes towards the village of Boyle and the town of Athabasca with county residential.

The Chair: Okay. Just to build on that, if that occurred and we left Lac La Biche as part of our proposed Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche riding – we've heard from people in Lac La Biche, including the mayor yesterday, that do believe that there's a connection between Lac La Biche and Fort McMurray – would that impact Athabasca?

Mrs. Powell: No. I don't think it would. I'm surprised at that, actually, because earlier they had requested that the commission add Lac La Biche to Athabasca. I don't know if they asked you. They certainly made that comment. We were together years ago, but, yeah, if they feel that. Again, there is that huge distance between them.

The Chair: But anybody driving from Fort McMurray – the MLA driving to the Legislature would always have to drive through Lac La Biche because, as you say, it's the only highway.

Mrs. Powell: Yeah, but the poor person will have to have a place to sleep in Fort McMurray, a place to sleep in Lac La Biche, and a place to sleep in Edmonton, and I hope the government can fund him for all of those things.

The Chair: Me, too.

Mrs. Powell: I know it's not in your remit, but if you could add even three more constituencies to this mix, it would make your life a lot easier as well as for the rest of us.

The Chair: Unfortunately, that's the Legislature's job. We have no ability to do that, and it would have had to happen before we started our work.

Mrs. Powell: No. I'm aware of that, but I wanted to say it anyway.

The Chair: Okay. Thanks very much for coming to give us that information about Athabasca.

All right. Our next registered speaker is Estefania Cortes-Vargas.

Cortes-Vargas: Good morning. Thank you very much for doing all of this. Just to reiterate the appreciation that I have for the difficult work that you're doing, I have an affection for maps, but having to redraw boundaries that people feel strongly about is a difficult task and one that – I can understand your situation and the population. I actually just have a lot of generally good feedback. I mean, my constituency is Strathcona-Sherwood Park, and I'm the MLA for Strathcona-Sherwood Park. I just did want to say that there wasn't much change other than one section. That basically was just alignment with the municipal ward in that area. That was the only change, and I can appreciate that that was good.

I just wanted to also mention, specifically because mine is one of the blended ridings that you have within – you gave the example before of Airdrie and when you only have the choice for a blended riding. I just wanted to kind of put something on the record for your consideration. Because Strathcona county is made up of nine hamlets, the most notable one being Sherwood Park, it is one where constituents are used to having that rural-urban blend – right? – because of the makeup. The hamlets do have a lot of the councillors from the urban parts go to the rural parts. You have a little bit more of that dynamic, where, I'm going to say, you know, lovingly, a rural riding is somewhat more appreciated by the constituents. It still has its limitations, of course, as in many cases. But much like your report said in various places, where it's an area where people drive into work into a lot of urban areas, it makes it easier than when you have expanded hamlets and other things. I think that in this case, because of the population in Sherwood Park, where you don't have the capacity to just split to two urban ones, it is actually an appropriate space.

As the MLA for that area I think the one thing that I would ask you to consider is a section by the Yellowhead, and it's Summerwood, Aspen Trails, and Emerald Hills. That area was all built at the same time. It was built as a walkable, sustainable community. I actually grew up in Summerwood.

The Chair: Could you please repeat the names?

Cortes-Vargas: Yes, for sure. It's Summerwood, Aspen Trails, and Emerald Hills. It's just below the Yellowhead, Clover Bar, and that distinction. The municipal ward that goes around that just covers that area – right? – that little section with that weird bump on the other side of the Yellowhead. Do you see that boundary? That one. When that was built, it was all part of a development plan, and it has received a lot of acclamations for its capacity to build a sustainable community, a walkable one. I think there should be just consideration of keeping that community together. You know, at the same time, if the boundaries were to stay as they are, I still think it's effective, but that community specifically was built with that in mind.

For my part, I can also appreciate that my boundaries are mainly – what is it called? – where a lot of residential is, so there are also very limited spaces where I can actually rent an office, you know.

The Chair: If I can just interrupt, just so I can follow what you're saying, you're suggesting that that part of the Sherwood Park constituency north of the Yellowhead be moved into Fort Saskatchewan's constituency?

Cortes-Vargas: Or Strathcona-Sherwood Park. If they can all be kept together.

The Chair: Okay. Did our proposal divide them up? Sorry. The map isn't specific enough to show me that.

Cortes-Vargas: For sure. Basically, the current electoral boundaries are that the Yellowhead is the line between any of the Sherwood Park MLAs and that. But I understand why it's increased to that because it is a development area for Sherwood Park. It makes sense not to add a new MLA to Sherwood Park. That makes sense.

10:05

When it comes to the parts below there, the proposed map has it going into the Sherwood Park constituency or splitting it in half, basically. That's the thing that I want the commission to consider, actually keeping that community together. There's a leisure centre there. The shopping malls have been built there. The pathways are built so that it is like this, kind of live and work in the community. The idea was that if you're, like, a nurse at the hospital, you can live in that community and you can walk to work. All of these concepts were put into place developing it. I think that it's worth while mentioning. I don't think that it would be known from a map that that is a consideration.

The Chair: I'm not immediately picking up what you're saying. I wonder if you wouldn't mind taking my copy of the map and marking on it. Okay. Ms Livingstone has got it figured out, but just seeing as you're here.

Cortes-Vargas: Sure. So we have this area. If I can draw this, this is the current ward map. It follows this little squiggly line. That's the ward, and it has this little section.

The Chair: Okay. So which part is in the wrong place, you say?

Cortes-Vargas: I think that these ones should be all kept together. This would be Aspen Trails and Emerald Hills, and this would be Summerwood.

The Chair: Right. Okay. Right here: what constituency is that?

Cortes-Vargas: That's Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

The Chair: Okay. Got it. Thanks.

Cortes-Vargas: So all on this side of the boundary is Strathcona-Sherwood Park. Sherwood Park is divided in Clover Bar and Wye Road, for the most part.

Ms Munn: So keep them together in Sherwood Park or keep them together in Strathcona-Sherwood Park?

Cortes-Vargas: I think that there would be a benefit in it being Strathcona.

I can go back to the mike right now.

The Chair: Sure. Please do. I'm sure the *Hansard* folks would love that.

Cortes-Vargas: I think that it would be beneficial for Strathcona-Sherwood Park. Because I have the edges of the community, it's actually quite rare that I have, like, a community league or something like that within Sherwood Park. Having some element of that urban core just provides a little bit more sense. If you're going to have that urban, have one section that does have more gathering places and things like that.

The Chair: Do you know how many people live in that area that you've proposed to transfer from your constituency to Strathcona?

Cortes-Vargas: I actually just took a picture of the census. Let me put it up.

Mr. McLeod: Is that the municipal census?

Cortes-Vargas: Yeah. I'm using the municipal census from 2016.

The Chair: You're just giving us a rough idea, but that's okay.

Cortes-Vargas: Yeah. Aspen Trails has a thousand, and Emerald Hills has a thousand.

The Chair: So 2,000 people would be moved as a result.

Ms Livingstone: Just while we're talking about this, right now we're using Clover Bar as the dividing line. I can see where you've marked those communities coming across Baseline Road.

Cortes-Vargas: It should be to Lakeland. Did I mark Baseline? Sorry.

Ms Livingstone: Okay. I'll put the line across at Lakeland.

In terms of the communities that are south of there, I'm just thinking ahead to if we have to do sort of a swap to make those match. Where that line goes down Clover Bar, is it possible to move that line over to, I guess, the boundaries of Sherwood Park? I may have to show you on the map. I'm just wondering: if we have to do sort of a population swap to make those even out and keep those communities together, am I going to be making a mistake by moving the line below that over?

Cortes-Vargas: I don't have the answers for you on that, populationwise and balancing that. I think that that's the difficulty that you have in front of you. I wanted to provide context for that community specifically.

Ms Livingstone: I guess my question is more that because I don't know where the community boundaries are based on the maps I'm looking at right now, am I going to be breaking a community apart if south of Lakeland I were to move the boundary instead of it being along Clover Bar to being over to what looks like highway 21?

Cortes-Vargas: That would be Clarkdale. They are a community in that sense. I mean, the difficult part with Sherwood Park is that you have to look at both what schools they are in attendance to. Yeah. Like, Clover Bar is a natural divider, but most people consider themselves, you know: I'm part of this overall neighbourhood over here. I feel like it's already kind of divided. The communities are divided. I don't know. For the population balance I don't have a suggestion for you.

Ms Livingstone: Okay. Yeah. I'm sure I can figure out what I need if I find a map of the individual neighbourhoods because that's really what I was worried about, if I tried to move something that I'd be keeping one neighbourhood together and then breaking another one apart.

Cortes-Vargas: For sure.

Ms Livingstone: But, yeah, we can find a community map somewhere and check it out. Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thanks.

Any other comments? Ms Munn?

Ms Munn: I have none.

The Chair: Mr. McLeod?

Mr. McLeod: Yes. One.

Cortes-Vargas: Yes.

Mr. McLeod: Urban, rural: as an MLA servicing both, how are you handling it? I've heard these comments from other folks that it's a difficult job. How about yourself?

Cortes-Vargas: Well, you know, one of the interesting things – this is why I wanted to mention the fact that Strathcona county is a specialized municipality, right? So the councillors will attend both AAMDC and AUMA, just as an example. There's this natural idea that you're constantly thinking about both the rural and the urban in order to build a sustainable community, so given the fact that you have that mindset in the framework of the municipality as well, it really supports that work of thinking about: how can some of the activities from Sherwood Park support the activities that are happening in Ardrossan? You'll see a lot of people going back and forth, so I find that there's a capacity to balance that, mainly because there's also that foundation on other levels.

When I talk to councillors that are part of Sherwood Park, they'll also express a lot of interest in and will be active members of the other parts of the community, but that's part of the culture of Strathcona county, right? It wasn't built as just: this is the urban centre. I think you always have the part of the rural commentary of: it is easily forgotten. That's why it's important to elevate that voice and make sure that you're taking the time to really understand the rural aspect.

But I think that for the most part being able to – like, I have one of the smaller rural ridings, right? You know, for me to get across my constituency is 45 minutes. That's manageable. Even if an event is in the morning at one end, I can go to the other end of the rural part and then maybe go to the Sherwood Park area. That's still manageable to me. I mean, the difficult part sometimes is – I considered having an office in the rural part of Sherwood Park, but there's no office space, so when I looked and looked, there were just really no options there. That element, not even being able to have a space out there to talk to people, I think that provides a – maybe we have to get a little bit more creative, right? I mean, that's the solution that has happened a lot of the time.

You know, you have aspects of the Sherwood Park community, like, for example, even a bookmobile. The fact that they have bookmobiles rotating through the community makes natural gathering spaces for people, so if I go out during the bookmobile, I know that I'm going to reach the population of that area. Even if I just go out with some information, a table, and a tent, I'm just able to be accessible. That makes it that capacity. If those natural gathering spaces didn't exist there, I think I would have a bit more of a difficult time.

Mr. McLeod: Thank you.

Cortes-Vargas: Yeah. Absolutely.

The Chair: Thank you.

Cortes-Vargas: Yeah. Thank you so much.

The Chair: Well, thank you. That's been very helpful. Thank you.

All right. We'll call on Sarah Hoffman, and after her comments we'll take a five-minute break.

Ms Hoffman: Good morning. I want to thank you for making sure we had the time to be able to delve into this fully. I live in Inglewood, and I am the MLA for Edmonton-Glenora. First of all, I want to thank the commission for all of the hard work that's been done to date. I have beside my armchair a copy of the report, and I

flip through it most nights for at least five minutes. It is substantive. The work that had to go into this is a massive task, so personally, as an Albertan, I want to say thank you. I know that travelling around the province and listening to the presenters and reviewing all the submissions is a very big job as well, so I want to commend you on the attention to detail and the depth of analysis that you've done and, obviously, your familiarity with the communities to date.

10:15

I want to let you know right off the bat that I think the proposed map for Edmonton-Glenora is right. I am very proud of the riding itself, and I have had a chance over the last two years as MLA and before that as a volunteer as well as a school board chair to meet a number of volunteers and community members. I think it's a really great mix of people and businesses. People build their lives around Glenora, creating communities of interest, as you've heard some of my partners in service identify previously, and I think that benefits the whole area. It was mentioned that we live, shop, and frequent the restaurants and local activities as well as schools and daycares in the neighbourhood, and I think that the benefit is to keep more or less the same boundaries and keep people with those shared experiences together. Definitely, I think you've honoured that in your proposal.

Many parents in Glenora walk or cycle with their children to school and their daycare, and that really brings the communities together. They become friends and organize socially afterwards. There are so many block parties in my constituency. It's amazing. It's not just about the larger community league but, actually, people on either side of the street really engaging on a regular basis.

I want to also reinforce that Westmount Centre, as was noted, Mayfield Common, 124th Street, Inglewood, and Stony Plain Road are the major shopping areas currently in the riding. As Marie-Laure mentioned in her earlier presentation, Inglewood BIA is doing a great deal of collaboration with Kingsway, and your proposed map actually does encompass about half of the Kingsway BIA in the proposal. Kingsway road has a number of businesses, as does 111th Avenue, so I think there would be opportunities for them to build economies of scale in collaboration and working with their MLA in supporting those local businesses. Even the proposed map, if it doesn't go as far east as she might desire, definitely encompasses about half, so I think that that would provide opportunities for those synergies.

In terms of changes, the new properties being developed in the old City Centre Airport, as she mentioned, will be significant, but those are for a future commission to resolve when those 30,000 people move into that neighbourhood. I think that they have plans for sustainable development, which I think flows well with the other communities of interest in the riding currently.

As was mentioned, there are a number of neighbourhoods experiencing significant infill as well as pushing for historic designations on properties, and I think that that mix is really respectful for a mature neighbourhood within the city.

I want to say that the residents of Prince Rupert, which is the neighbourhood that you're proposing be added, are natural allies with the Inglewood and Prince Charles neighbourhoods, that are just to the west of them and northwest of them. I appreciate that the commission was able to keep these communities of interest together and to maintain logical and natural boundaries.

As well, my background being on the school board, to me, it's about where kids typically go to high school. Those are sort of the larger boundaries that are created, and a lot of the children in that area do go to Ross Shep, and that's in the centre of Edmonton-Glenora.

This approach, applied consistently across the city and the province, would allow for, I think, greater representation for constituents in keeping communities of interest together.

I actually used to represent on the school board the area that you're referring to as Edmonton-East, and I do want to reinforce that Tamarack, which is a brand new neighbourhood, built within the last 10 years, is very different from Gold Bar on the north edge. The school in Gold Bar is over 60 years old, so they do have different interests and pressures that they're experiencing. Before they had a junior high and a high school in the south part of the city, there was greater mobility to the north, but now that they actually do have those feeder schools closer to the developing areas, there's less of that. That's just for one of the other mature ridings within the city.

Another one that I wanted to touch on was Calder. I appreciate that the historical significance of Edmonton-Glenora is being honoured within the name as it continues to move forward, and I feel the same way for our neighbours in Calder. I think keeping Calder as a focus within one riding would be of benefit to the other members of the north side of Edmonton.

Doing simple math, not nearly as complicated, I looked north of the Yellowhead, which is not proposed to be in Edmonton-Glenora, took everything north of the Yellowhead, divided it by four, and I think you could get within an 8 per cent variance of the average.

The Chair: Okay. Just to go with that specifically, Calder would no longer be part of Edmonton-North West if we went with our proposed map, so that's why we dropped the Calder name from the constituency. I don't have a good enough map to follow this. Did we put Calder in Edmonton-West Henday? I think we did.

Ms Hoffman: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. Are you suggesting that we rename West Henday Edmonton-Calder, or are you suggesting that we put Calder in Edmonton-North West.

Ms Hoffman: I'm sure that others from Calder – I just have corresponded briefly with some of them – would have greater proposals for the map, but I think that right now Calder is being divided in half, essentially. I think they would have a proposal, just like you did with Edmonton-Glenora, where you kept those communities of interest intact, that would see less variance from today's riding. But I do acknowledge that there is significant growth on the edge of the city and less the closer you get to the core. So I imagine that they're going to highlight that, but I did just want to foreshadow that for the afternoon.

The Chair: Okay. If you look at our proposed map, I thought that we didn't divide Calder. I had thought that it was entirely in Edmonton-North West. Can you tell by looking at Edmonton-North West . . .

Ms Hoffman: Is there an extra copy floating . . .

The Chair: Yeah. I'll just flip to my own.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Looking at this again, with the green marker could you draw where Calder is?

Ms Hoffman: The neighbourhood of Calder itself?

The Chair: Yeah, the neighbourhood of Calder.

Ms Hoffman: I believe it's north of the rail.

The Chair: Right.

Ms Hoffman: I think it's this area.

The Chair: Okay. So it includes some of the area below the railway, which would be in . . .

Mr. McLeod: West Henday.

The Chair: West Henday. Okay. All right. Thanks.

Ms Hoffman: But that's not my expertise.

The Chair: No, no. I understand. But you do have lots of knowledge, particularly of the school board. Any idea how many kids live in that area? I see it in my mind, and it's an older neighbourhood.

Ms Hoffman: It is an older neighbourhood, yeah. With the schools themselves, there are a number of magnet programs, children with special learning needs as well as an Arabic bilingual program. A number of families are moving into those areas who already have roots in the schools, which is not uncommon. If your child is travelling on the bus an hour each way to get to an Arabic program, you might, when a house pops up in the neighbourhood, be interested in moving in. I do know that they have projected growth. I'm not sure if it – well, I know it wouldn't rival the southwest, but I do know that they are planning on growing and that infill is also a trend in that area, as it was in much of the riding that I currently represent.

The Chair: Okay. Thanks.

Ms Hoffman: In general I want to say that I think that Prince Rupert is a really good fit with my riding, and I'd be honoured to have an opportunity to represent them as well. I think that the communities of interest are deeply aligned. I think that with Edmonton-Glenora I'm very pleased.

The Chair: Okay. Thanks.

I'm going to ask if there are any questions. Ms Munn?

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

The Chair: Ms Livingstone?

Ms Livingstone: No. I think I'm just double-checking and cross-referencing the maps here. Yeah. What you're talking about in Calder: it would basically be using the rail tracks, the railroad as the boundary instead of where we've drawn it?

Ms Hoffman: I think so.

Ms Livingstone: Yeah. Thanks.

The Chair: As the southern boundary of Edmonton-North West?

Ms Hoffman: Or whatever name it ends up having.

The Chair: Right.

Ms Hoffman: I imagine that the folks of Calder would love it to be called Calder.

The Chair: Just because you know lots of people in Edmonton . . .

Ms Hoffman: Sure.

The Chair: I think of it as Calder, but I'm old. Do younger people associate that name of that neighbourhood with that area of town? There's been so much growth and so many people moving into that neighbourhood that wouldn't have any memory of Calder as being at the edge of the city. That's why we were leaning toward Edmonton-North West. Do you have a view on that?

Ms Hoffman: Yeah. Fair enough. Just like Glenora is only one small piece within the broader neighbourhood of Edmonton-Glenora – it has some historical significance.

The Chair: Right.

Ms Hoffman: It's home to where the Royal Alberta Museum used to be, and I think that for the most part – regularly, when I do correspondence out in the constituency, I show a map of the area I'm referring to when I refer to Edmonton-Glenora because not everyone in Mayfield identifies as being part of Edmonton-Glenora. But I think that where there are these pockets of historical significance, it's important for us to find an opportunity to honour them. Certainly, Calder, with its economic interests and the connection to the railyard: I think that in some ways it deserves to be honoured as well, you know, as a good, blue-collar neighbourhood of the past and for a lot of perseverance that went into developing and sustaining that neighbourhood. So that's my personal interest. Definitely, I know the children of Calder school quite well, and they would be excited if that were to continue, I imagine.

The Chair: Questions on this side?

Mr. McLeod: No. Thank you.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other questions, comments?

Okay. Thank you so much. Thanks for coming along and being prepared to field questions.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah. I appreciate the interest that you're showing each of the presenters as well and the honouring that you do for our thoughts and our perspective. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

All right. We'll take a five-minute break.

[The hearing adjourned from 10:25 a.m. to 10:40 a.m.]

The Chair: Okay. Thanks very much, everyone. If we could get going again.

The next speaker is Jocelyn Stenger.

Ms Stenger: Hi. Thank you for hearing from me, and thank you for the important work you're doing. I'm going to keep mine quite quick.

The Chair: Which constituency?

Ms Stenger: I live in Edmonton-Strathcona, but I work in Edmonton-Meadowlark. I've been working in Edmonton-Meadowlark for just about two years, and I've been working in constituency offices for about seven years in different ones around Edmonton.

Basically, my perspective, that I'm going to speak to you about, is just from the side of working directly with constituents. I understand that there is a great deal of difference in civic engagement, and it's actually quite a concern, I think, across the board in terms of how much people are getting involved with their

community and their local representative and each other. I think civic engagement and social cohesion are a concern overall. The different socioeconomic factors and things like that that affect the amount of engagement in communities, I think, can sometimes take precedence over other things.

But the reason I am speaking today is because I've been tasked with locating the constituency office space in Edmonton-Meadowlark in the past. We found that it's quite difficult to be centrally located for people and to create that sense of community and to help build community when we do have quite a large poll in the north – I believe it's poll 46 – that is a large industrial and commercial area. There's very little office space available, so recently we moved the office from the Belmead community to more of a centrally located space on 170th Street. The concern is that it's quite difficult to find a central space that is within the residential area.

The concern that I have is that in the proposal to bring the north parts of the current Calder constituency into Edmonton-Meadowlark as West Henday, to cross the natural boundary of the Yellowhead up to 137th Avenue would, I feel strongly, create a very significant barrier for those constituents, who are naturally a part of that more northern side of Edmonton and have connections there. It would be very difficult if not impossible to actually move our office to become more centrally located to service those communities. I think, if anything, we'd need to be wary of how much we would then cut ourselves off from the more southern communities of La Perle and Terra Rosa.

So, then, my first point is just that the natural boundaries of highway – 137th, I feel, is quite far north to stretch this constituency. The natural boundary of the Yellowhead, I think, needs to be strongly considered.

The Chair: Okay. If I can interrupt.

Ms Stenger: Yeah.

The Chair: Just looking at my map, I accept that there's quite a lot of industrial area, the cement plant and so forth, north of the Yellowhead there, but there is some community. How many people reside in the area that you're proposing we hive off from West Henday?

Ms Stenger: There are, I believe, three communities in the northwest part that you've proposed to put in there. I believe they are Starling, Trumpeter. If you don't mind, I don't have the exact numbers in front of me right now, but I believe there are three communities in that area. The proposal does involve putting some of the communities on the eastern, southern part of the constituency back in. Those would include Summerlea, Aldergrove, and Thorncliff.

The Chair: So you're proposing that we hive off – my word – the area north of the Yellowhead and that we add area in the south to make up for that? And the area you want to add is in what proposed constituency now?

Ms Stenger: I believe that what I'd like to keep in the constituency would have gone to Edmonton-McClung. What we're proposing is to keep the boundary along 170th Street, essentially to unchange it except to bring it in to 170th, which would, I believe, cut off West Meadowlark and Glenwood. Sorry. I forgot to bring the map with me.

The Chair: Okay. So if we agreed with your proposal to take away population in three neighbourhoods north of the west Yellowhead, where should we add that population?

Ms Stenger: The other point I would like to bring up is that the communities on the western side of the current constituency are growing immensely, as are others.

One thing I wanted to draw to your attention, regardless of the change, is that there's a mobile-home park in Winterburn. I believe that on the old map it takes up approximately four polls. We've run into some issues where, in fact, Canada Post only has a certain portion of the homes in its file. We've found that there are over a thousand mobile-home sites in that area, in that park, and there are only around 700 accounted for in terms of even the Canada Post system. So I just want to caution that it looks like that area is growing quite substantially beyond what's even sort of been documented in the past. I would argue that those western neighbourhoods are just going to continue to grow exponentially. The brand new schools are going in in the Secord community, and there are lots and lots of brand new families moving in there, so I think the population is going to grow.

The Chair: That's in West Henday, as we've proposed, Secord?

Ms Stenger: Right.

The Chair: Okay. But to go back to my – I don't want to lose this point because later I'll say: "Oh, shoot. I should have pressed that." If we move these three communities out of West Henday that are north of the Yellowhead, where should we put that population? Do you have any suggestion?

Ms Stenger: I would like to see the communities of Calder and Athlone go back into Calder and perhaps the western communities of Stirling and Trumpeter go perhaps into St. Albert.

The Chair: So you're proposing a blended constituency between Edmonton and St. Albert?

Ms Stenger: I think that it sounds like you're running into some difficulties with that one, so that would be just one option, perhaps, that you might want to explore.

The Chair: But we've avoided making any blended constituencies in Edmonton and Calgary because in the first go-round everybody said: don't do it. The mayors of both cities wrote to us and said: don't do it. This is the first time I've heard anybody say: do it.

Ms Stenger: The reason is that if you look at the geographical communities in the west there, Stirling and Trumpeter, they're a bit different. They're different in population. They're different in socioeconomic makeup. They're different in the way that the communities are actually laid out. There is not a lot of densification. It's more of a suburb, but it's also more of its own community. You'll see that they're gathered around a lake area. They are in themselves, in the way that they're made up, sort of a mix between a rural and an urban setting. The people that are moving to these communities: they don't necessarily want to be part of urban life, you know, densified neighbourhoods. They think they are more looking for that halfway point between rural and urban. I would argue that that's actually, particularly why they choose these communities in some cases.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. Anything else you'd like to say?

Ms Stenger: No, I don't think so. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Munn, any questions, comments?

Ms Munn: I don't have any questions.

The Chair: No, hang on for a sec. Don't slip away on us yet.

Ms Stenger: Sorry.

The Chair: Any questions?

Mr. McLeod: No.

You can run away now.

The Chair: Okay. Thanks. Thanks very much.

Brian Fleck is our next registered speaker.

Mr. Fleck: Hi. Thanks very much. My name is Brian Fleck, and I live in the area of Edmonton-Whitemud. I've lived in Edmonton-Whitemud since 1981 and have a great deal of experience with the constituency. Thanks very much for all the work that you folks have done.

My comments are going to be really focused around the one change that is being discussed around Edmonton-Whitemud. I see that if you look at the shape in the last run, Edmonton-Whitemud had really nice geographic boundaries. They were really convenient. You had the Henday, the North Saskatchewan River, and Whitemud Creek. It looks like the kind of constituency that would be very difficult to break up because of those strong geographic boundaries.

10:50

But I'd like to point out, with the change that's proposed, that even though it seems to be sort of a chunk, that Mactaggart-Magrath area, that's been moved out – I don't know if that's going forward still or you're still going with that change – I support it mostly on the basis that it must be the top priority of this committee to have one person, one vote be much higher in priority than all other logistic considerations.

The reason I say this is that I was involved in federal politics. I ran for MP in the 2015 election, and my experience in that same area is that people in Edmonton-Riverbend on the federal level had one-quarter the support of people in Prince Edward Island, for example. We as Albertans are underrepresented federally, and that's because of the hesitation in changing boundaries and these traditions that are always argued in terms of: oh, we can't change this; we can't change that. Now we've got four MPs in Prince Edward Island for our one MP in Edmonton-Riverbend, for example.

So I applaud the difficult decision you have made in excising this Mactaggart-Magrath area. I know it looks funny on the map, but you can get there by Rabbit Hill Road or 23rd Avenue. I know it looks like just sort of this appendix sticking out, but if it's to move towards one person, one vote, I support it because that should be much, much higher priority than all other things because it's the fundamental cornerstone of democracy, and all other considerations should be addressed in other ways. Most people interact with their politicians not through face-to-face contact but through voting. Ninety per cent of people never talk to their MLA in their office, and their one time to interact with politics is voting. If you dilute that, I think it's a mistake. I realize there are other logistic concerns for other areas, but I applaud this change. I know it's difficult to make.

The Chair: Thank you.

Questions or comments?

Thank you very much for coming . . .

Mr. Fleck: Okay. Thanks very much.

The Chair: . . . and sharing your thoughts with us. As we said earlier, we love praise.

Okay. Colin Piquette, please.

Mr. Piquette: Well, good morning. Nice to see you all again. Appreciate you giving me the opportunity to talk to you again after Westlock. Now, I have to say that, you know, it's going to be sort of completely different from the last presenter. I kind of disagree pretty fundamentally with the view that voter parity should be virtually the exclusive consideration. I mean, I think that the legislation is written in a way that very much puts that as that and a number of different variables and provides the tools to be able to provide that variance. I'm not going to spend too much of my time in the presentation talking about this principle this time because that's something that I tried to get through in Westlock.

Of course, I have also submitted a written presentation that also makes that argument. I guess, in short, you know, I appreciate how difficult the job of the commission is, and I appreciate the sincere hard work that was done, but I think that by reading in a very strong concern for voter parity at the expense sometimes of some of the other characteristics – I don't think that accords with the spirit of the guarantee of effective representation in the Charter, nor does it accord with the legislation. But I know that's open to interpretation. I just wanted to make that clear.

Ideally, I agree with the minority report, that the variance should have been used to be able to keep that rural-urban sort of balance kind of more intact rather than being in a situation like we have now with redistribution, where you could have Edmonton and Calgary have a majority government without a single representative from the entire rest of the province, which is the way that we're moving today. So I do find there's a bit of a concern.

I find that is a concern especially since the concerns addressed, you know, expressed in the 2009-2010 Electoral Boundaries Commission report said that this was an issue that needed to be addressed by the Assembly and ought to happen before the appointment of the next commission. This hasn't happened. As well, I mean, the previous commission also made recommendations to ameliorate the issues with effective representation of rural areas, more offices and so on. Those haven't been addressed either. I think that when making recommendations, we have to be realistic about what the actual reality is that's going to be faced. I guess I just want to put that out there.

Now, as far as specific to what's in front of us today – I suppose maybe I should look at my notes here. Five minutes isn't very long. I had the opportunity to talk to, well, had face-to-face meetings with the town of Smoky Lake, county of Smoky Lake, village of Waskatenau, Sturgeon county, county of Athabasca, village of Boyle, town of Gibbons – I'm just making sure I haven't missed any here – and then informal discussions with representatives of summer villages and residents as well. I know that you were specifically asking for feedback on the Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche riding. I haven't found anyone that is in favour of it, so that's one thing. I'm not sure if you've found that. I understand that Mayor Moghrabi spoke in favour of the Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche connection. On my side of the riding as it stands now, I haven't heard anything, and I think, you know, that it tends to be the contrary. I think that's for good reason.

The Chair: Just to clarify: what don't they like about our recommendations, the fact that we've changed the shape of the two constituencies in Fort McMurray?

Mr. Piquette: Well, I mean, I guess the first thing is that in the municipalities that I've mentioned, there was unanimous support –

I mean unanimous, not just that there was a majority vote at all the councils; there wasn't a dissenting voice at any of these – for the status quo, right? They found that that was a workable area. They were happy with the amount of representation that they were able to receive, and they felt that there was a good balance between the communities.

The Chair: Did they know that Fort McMurray-Conklin is 63 per cent below the provincial average in population and know that the Electoral Boundaries Commission has no option but to make a recommendation in light of that? Did you advise those people of that?

Mr. Piquette: Right. Well, what I said is that we should have a plan B because of concerns, but they would say that they wanted the status quo. I mean, they were concerned, I think, much more with their particular area than looking afield, right?

The Chair: Sure. If I can then ask . . .

Mr. Piquette: Sure.

The Chair: We didn't change Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock – it remains the same – but that doesn't mean we couldn't. Would you recommend we make any changes to your constituency?

Mr. Piquette: Now, you know, assuming that using the variances to keep it intact is not an option – I guess it's clear that it is not an option.

The Chair: Sorry. My colleague has just pointed out that I made a grievous error. When you said that you were from Westlock, I thought you were the MLA for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, but that's not the case.

Mr. Piquette: Oh, no. I'm sorry. Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

The Chair: Okay. All right. Got it. You're much more legitimately concerned about Fort McMurray. I understand.

Mr. Piquette: Yes. Like, just speaking as a representative – and I think I mentioned this in Westlock – as it stands now, you know, it's just doable to be able to cover that territory. Adding McMurray in: I guess, Colleen Powell, I think, did an excellent job of enumerating just some of the challenges. I mean, basically, you'd be dealing with three regional hubs plus assorted communities that are quite a distance apart, where you have one community that's quite set off from the other two and has very significant challenges and, not only that, is probably going to be rapidly growing with the numbers coming in from Wood Buffalo.

I mean, you know, what I would suggest would be kind of what she was saying. I think that Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo could accommodate two ridings that way. I think the residents of Fort McMurray would be better served by that as well as, definitely, the residents of Athabasca county, where there's a real concern, and this comes from historical experience. Some years ago Athabasca was with Fort McMurray, and that's when the population differences weren't as great as they are today. At that time there was a real feeling that they never used to see their MLA, and they did not feel represented, and there was a long-term campaign to be able to decouple.

Now, Mayor Moghrabi: I guess, I'm kind of a bit surprised he made the pitch to have Fort McMurray with Lac La Biche. That's a bit different from when I'd spoken to him last, so I guess I can't speak for that side, but as a . . .

11:00

The Chair: Maybe he was just being a politician.

Mr. Piquette: That could well be. That could well be. You know, we're always looking for the best possible, right?

The Chair: Absolutely.

Mr. Piquette: But, yeah, I think that it would be a real challenge to represent that riding. I think that in actual, practical effect part of the riding would be neglected and would not receive effective representation.

The Chair: Okay. What do you think of the idea, which I floated by Mrs. Powell, about adding Athabasca back into St. Albert-Redwater? She says that it's like a barbell with population weights at each end. That would move 3,000 to 5,000 people out of the proposed Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche constituency and into the proposed St. Albert-Redwater constituency.

Mr. Piquette: I mean, that would address – with one important caveat, I would think that would be workable, but it would be problematic to have that large component of St. Albert proper, you know, with that riding. There's about 18,000 people in the St. Albert area. It would just increase. I mean, I think that when I talk about Westlock, if you keep that, there's a huge degree of complexity just because of the number of coherent communities within there. Now, if you add St. Albert, you're adding an extra layer of complexity. You're talking about – you'd be kind of spread very thin. There's quite a bit of difference in outlook and perspectives and needs between St. Alberta and, let's say, Smoky Lake or Thorhild county. They are very different communities.

I'll give one quick example, right? In St. Albert, to me, the immediate problem is increasing school enrolment, and that's where the priority is. In Thorhild and that area the priority is declining school enrolment and the funding challenges that that brings, so if you're representing urban St. Albert and you're representing there, you're almost at war with yourself or can be, right?

The Chair: But it's attractive only in that it would reduce the driving distances enormously, and you started off – and I can completely understand your concern about the size of the Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche proposed constituency. Moving Athabasca out of that would at least solve that problem.

Mr. Piquette: Well, no. I mean, just, I guess, if you could go back, maybe if you added more rural areas, rural communities to the east, you could get closer. If it's a strict voter parity that the commission is looking for, then you could maybe move east, you know, further along. I guess the existing riding with Athabasca combined should get you up to about zero, like, right on the limit, without having to include St. Albert proper.

The Chair: Okay. I'm not following you. I'm just looking at my . . .

Mr. Piquette: Well, I've got a little – maybe this might help here.

The Chair: Please.

Mr. Piquette: This is – we got the assistance of caucus. And don't get me wrong. I mean, I still like Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

The Chair: This is your plan B.

Mr. Piquette: That's right.

The Chair: Okay. So you're proposing to add in part of Bonnyville-Cold Lake?

Mr. Piquette: No. Look very carefully.

The Chair: Okay. Where do I find this on the map of Alberta? I'm sorry. I can't tell, just looking at it.

Mr. Piquette: Oh, I might have something, another one that has a bit more context here. In fact, I do.

The Chair: Okay. I see. There's Athabasca, so it's the area southeast of Athabasca. How many people reside in this area that you've just passed up?

Mr. Piquette: Oh, you mean with the whole new boundaries?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Piquette: Well, it should be right exactly on the provincial average.

The Chair: So this, you're saying, is about 47,000 people.

Mr. Piquette: Yeah.

The Chair: Okay. Where do you get the rest of the people? If you're taking out the 18,000 people from St. Albert, where are you adding back in the 18,000? Are they coming from the proposed Fort Saskatchewan-St. Paul or Bonnyville-Cold Lake? Those are your two choices.

Mr. Piquette: Well, unless the numbers, our math didn't add up, it should be within that proposed boundary.

The Chair: But this is part of your current constituency, and your current constituency . . .

Mr. Piquette: Well, my current constituency and Edwand.

The Chair: And what?

Mr. Piquette: Edwand in Smoky Lake county. Look at the dividing line. It only takes a part of Smoky Lake county. It doesn't include Kikino or Buffalo Lake Métis settlements.

The Chair: Okay. But you're currently 22 per cent below provincial average, and you're taking part of that area and saying that it's at provincial average.

Mr. Piquette: No, I don't – right now there isn't any St. Albert in the existing riding, right? It just picks up part of the suburbs of St. Albert for Sturgeon valley, and then you've got Bon Accord, Gibbons, all that area there. Now, to get up to the average, I'm not really deleting anything although there is room for some adjustments on the St. Albert side. That's with the recognition that you need space to be able to address the issues on the other side of the city, like, you know, going west. That's kind of where the line is there. But adding in two Métis settlements and adding in Saddle Lake reserve and then all that area there should make up that difference and actually bring us up to parity. Now, that being said, this would be a very challenging riding to represent, but it would be less than the Fort McMurray option would be.

The Chair: What would we do with the 18,000 people from St. Albert?

Mr. Piquette: Well, I mean, I think that would give you some options. You know, you were talking about wanting to put St. Albert and Morinville together earlier in today's presentation and how they had a kind of . . .

The Chair: We tried that. It's way over.

Mr. Piquette: Just St. Albert, like, if you took that part from Boudreau Road . . .

The Chair: Between St. Albert and adding Morinville, yeah.

Mr. Piquette: Hmm. Okay. I'm just wondering. I'm depending on assistants to figure out the math of this. My understanding is that our numbers should work. But, I mean, I guess, in general principle you can sort of move it around.

I mean, the big concern I have is where you have a situation where an MLA only really needs to pay attention to one area of their riding in order to stay elected, especially in a riding like St. Albert-whatever – right? – because that's in practice how this would work out. St. Albert-whatever would be the one riding, and the other riding would be Fort McMurray-whatever. Now, going down to St. Albert, let's say that you have three candidates coming out of St. Albert, which could be quite probable, and they're coming out of a particular type of culture, really. You know, you take a person coming out of suburban St. Albert. Are you even going to get them out to Smoky Lake? Are you going to get them out to Abee?

The Chair: Well, you've heard MLA Cortes-Vargas say that it can work pretty well.

Mr. Piquette: Well, she was talking about a specialized municipality, you know, where you had essentially one government, you had councillors, you had focal points where people could connect, where you had that congruence of interest. We're talking about a situation that's spanning multiple municipalities, so it's a bit different that way. Plus, the focus: I mean, there are cultural differences. There are differences in communication. You know, a person from Thorhild county is going to have a different set of priorities from a person from St. Albert and express themselves differently. It's important to have that ability to be able to communicate. I think that's a big part of effective representation.

The Chair: Absolutely.

Mr. Piquette: I mean, ideally, in my first position I already thought the rural ridings were a bit too big. Now, I understand that's a problem. That's just basically an issue and a tension built into the way our system has evolved historically. But the least harm, I think, would be to have it at least where you're not going to be expecting the MLA to have to be all things to all people – right? – where they could be at least some things to some people.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.
Questions?

Ms Livingstone: I just have one comment. I just did some quick math up here just to let you know that if you put all of Lac La Biche county, all of Athabasca county, all of Smoky Lake county, all of Thorhild, and all of Lamont, you are still below the average constituency size. You'd be sort of within range, but that's how much you would have to put together to get to around 43 and a half thousand population.

Mr. Piquette: With deleting how much of the existing riding? I'm kind of missing . . .

Ms Livingstone: No. I'm just saying that in terms of what you've given us here, I don't think your math is correct because you would need all of those counties together to get anywhere close to the average.

Mr. Piquette: So even with Lac La Biche included in this one, the big one, if we're really stuck with zero parity, even that's not at zero?

Ms Livingstone: Not what you've drawn, no.

11:10

Mr. Piquette: Okay. Well, then I would once again say, you know, that variance is your friend, right? I mean, it's in the legislation for a reason.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Ms Munn, any comments or questions?

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

The Chair: All right. Thanks so much for coming and being on the hot seat here.

Jim Ragsdale.

Mr. Ragsdale: Good morning, Chair and commissioners. I'm Jim Ragsdale. I live in Edmonton-Decore. I support most of the boundary changes except for the one to Edmonton-Decore because you're adding Kilkenny and McLeod to us. Edmonton-Decore and Kilkenny have a history together because Kilkenny was in Edmonton-Decore before; McLeod wasn't. Leave McLeod in Edmonton-Manning and straighten up the boundary of Edmonton-Decore down 66th Street.

I'm ready for questions.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. What I'm going to ask you to do, if you wouldn't mind, is to take my copy of the proposed map of the province and draw the line that you say would reflect the neighbourhoods that you want changed. The book is the better map, so if you perhaps – I think we've got a volunteer book here, and here's the marker. If you could just draw on that where you think the boundary should go.

Mr. Ragsdale: Here.

The Chair: Okay. This more or less reflects the way it is currently . . .

Mr. Ragsdale: Except for adding Kilkenny to us.

The Chair: Okay. You're saying that we should make up part of the population change that should result by adding Kilkenny. Where is Kilkenny now?

Mr. Ragsdale: They're in Manning. You're proposing to add Kilkenny and McLeod to us. McLeod is not a common community of Edmonton-Decore like Kilkenny is.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Munn: So the addition of Kilkenny is fine.

Mr. Ragsdale: Yeah.

Ms Munn: What makes McLeod so different? Is it newer? Is it younger?

Mr. Ragsdale: Kilkenny and Edmonton-Decore have a history because Kilkenny was in Edmonton-Decore, formerly Edmonton-Glengarry, before the last boundary change, in 2009-2010.

Ms Munn: Right. So Kilkenny is fine in Decore?

Mr. Ragsdale: Yeah.

Ms Munn: But you think McLeod doesn't belong in Decore?

Mr. Ragsdale: No.

Ms Munn: It belongs in Manning?

Mr. Ragsdale: Yeah.

Ms Munn: Why? Why do you say that?

Mr. Ragsdale: Because of the history that Kilkenny has with Edmonton-Decore.

Ms Munn: Okay. I get the Kilkenny part. One of the reasons we looked at putting McLeod . . .

Mr. Ragsdale: Plus, it isn't a common community of interest with the rest of Edmonton-Decore.

Ms Munn: Okay. I get that for Kilkenny.

Mr. Ragsdale: I mean McLeod.

Ms Munn: But McLeod: what makes it so different? One of the reasons we looked at putting McLeod in Decore is to sort of balance the populations. Do you think it's radically different from Kilkenny?

Mr. Ragsdale: From the rest of Decore, yes.

Ms Munn: Okay.

The Chair: Is it a newer subdivision? Is that why you're saying that it's different?

Mr. Ragsdale: No. Because McLeod works closer with the current MLA than our MLA.

The Chair: Okay. Any other questions?

Mr. McLeod: No. I like McLeod, by the way. It's even spelled the right way.

The Chair: I wanted to point out that some of the commissioners are feeling aggrieved that our names do not appear in constituencies at the moment. Certain commissioners already are covered off with that.

All right. Thanks so much for coming, Mr. Ragsdale, and sharing your thoughts.

Now I've run out of registered speakers on my list, but if there's anybody else here who isn't registered but would like to speak, we have some time.

All right. Then we'll adjourn till 1 o'clock.

Thank you.

[The hearing adjourned at 11:16 a.m.]

