



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
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Electoral Boundaries Commission

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[Judge Walter in the chair]

Mr. Horner: In the interest of the commission's time, Mr. Chairman, if you'd like, I can start my opening comments and talk about my constituency, which was really what I wanted to do at the outset here.

The Chair: Okay. Sure. Let's do that. For the record, Doug, could you give your name for *Hansard*?

Mr. Horner: Of course.

The Chair: Oh, and here is Dave.

Doug Horner, MLA
Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert

Dave Hancock, MLA
Edmonton-Whitemud

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My name is Doug Horner. I'm the Member of the Legislative Assembly for the constituency of Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert currently. I'm presenting tonight both on my constituency's behalf and the president of my association's but also here to answer questions with regard to a report which we presented to the commission in writing, which was a compilation of many of our caucus members' contributions when they went back to their communities and had some time to talk with their constituents and their local municipalities, many of the folks such as, in my case, the Sturgeon county, some of the residents of Rivière Qui Barre as well as residents within Alcomdale and the colony and those sorts of places.

My presentation is going to be fairly brief because I was going to let you know the response that we had during those discussions during what we call our constituency week, when we were out of the Legislature and able to meet and greet many of our constituents. I can also add that over the course of this past weekend I was at a trade show in St. Albert and a trade show in Spruce Grove, so I had an opportunity to again meet with a number of constituents as it related to not only involvement in, you know, the democratic process but also the boundaries as they were put together.

I would also say in terms of the binder, or the submission, that was sent to the commission, which was a compilation of what all of our members heard from their constituents, you will note that the maps and the compilation here don't add up to a nice, perfect match for the commission's ease. We recognize that you have a very, very difficult job, so our intent as a caucus was simply to compile it in one spot so that the commission had the comments that our members got from their constituents as they related to their particular area.

As it turns out, in some of those areas – and you'll no doubt be aware of them after review of the submissions – the maps that were presented as possible changes do actually match up and, you know, could conceivably be used. In some other areas we recognize there are some conflicts, and we did not give, you know, any kind of saying that we wanted to do it this way or that way. Simply, the presentation is the compilation of the responses from our members. I'd be happy to answer any questions as to how we did that or how the presentation was prepared and what we did.

Minister Hancock is accompanying me as well because I have some knowledge of the intricacies of the rural areas and the rural members' comments; however, on the city side of Edmonton and certainly the area that you're getting probably most of your presenta-

tions on today in Edmonton, Minister Hancock can answer questions as it relates to that. I think Dave wanted to do a presentation in terms of his own area as well.

With the committee's indulgence I'll just talk a little bit about Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert. I guess one of the first principles: in our opening letter to the commission we did talk a little bit about how we kind of tried to keep everybody on the principles the commission was using. If there was no apparent desire for change or need for change, why would we change it? On first blush, in fact, on the map that you have on the screen right now, you'll note that the biggest change that's visible is the fact that the top of the constituency is kind of hacked off just lower than the Alexander reserve. There's really no commercial or geographic or municipal reason for drawing the line across – I can't remember the highway that it draws across there from highway 2 heading east from west.

The original boundary, the boundary that currently exists, actually runs along the Sturgeon county boundary on the north. The reason that I think most residents are comfortable with that is that when you ask them where they are and they say, "Well, we're in Sturgeon county," you say, "Are you west of highway 2, or are you east of highway 2?" It's a very easy thing for them to identify with that area from a voter perspective and also from a representative's perspective. That is one of the things that we believe residents of the area would appreciate, having that northern boundary being the county boundary because that is coterminous with the county.

The other area of concern for us in the constituency really was as it related to growth in the area of St. Albert. Certainly, my riding has experienced some fairly significant growth over the past few years. The commission noted that, and I appreciate that. But what happened with the commission's recommendation in the St. Albert area – and I don't know if you have the map of the St. Albert portion of my riding. We actually removed an area that is going to be limited growth in the Lacombe Park area of the riding and added into it an area that is actually across the highway. You can kind of see. I believe that's the St. Albert riding as opposed to the Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert portion of St. Albert, but it does the trick.

6:10

What you see here on the map, members, is that this area up here actually got added into the Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert riding. This is highway 2, which, again, is almost like a river to residents because you understand that you're either on the east side or the west side of highway 2. This area is a very high-growth area for St. Albert. There is going to be a substantial amount of new housing built in this area and to the north of that as well as some commercial activity in this area in here.

This area that used to be within – it's probably an area about like this here because McKenney Avenue is the street we used to use as the southern boundary of my St. Albert portion. That area is pretty much locked in terms of any future growth. So by doing this, I actually am ending up with a situation of high growth on the northwest side of St. Albert, high growth on the northeast side of St. Albert, and the high-growth areas of Spruce Grove. In effect, what will happen is that I will grow faster than the St. Albert riding will grow in terms of the numbers.

I believe St. Albert is probably going to present or has presented you with kind of the same idea. I know that a number of the constituents and members in that area are presenting that. So, basically, members, what we're saying is that if you put it back to where it was, we recognize that I will still be somewhat over, but I think I'm still within the guidelines in terms of numbers that the commission has put forward.

This riding has changed a number of times. It was a brand new riding in '93, I believe. It changed again in 2004, albeit small

changes in St. Albert. Folks are just getting adapted to the polls and where they go to vote. We had probably more complaints about polling from people on the St. Albert side, on the east side, looking for a place to go vote. This would actually draw them into a constituency that's on the west side of St. Albert Trail, on the west side of the highway, which would also cause them some consternation. In essence – and I believe you will hear it again from others – we're looking at status quo as an option that we would like to present to the commission simply from the perspective that the folks in the riding are comfortable with the areas in St. Albert. Spruce Grove and area is not a problem.

If we could go back to the last map, there is one other area that concerned us, and we tried to figure out why it might be. If you note on the far western boundary of the new boundary – and I don't know whether this was intentional or in error – it has actually added an area of Lac Ste. Anne county to the boundary of this constituency, effectively bringing in another municipality that one would have to deal with in terms of representation because the county boundary of Sturgeon actually runs just under this line and is only about two miles to the west of 779, the fifth meridian.

The county boundary is right about there, if I can hold my hand steady, and runs straight up to the southern portion of Alexander. The actual Sandy Beach community is not currently within the riding, but if I've got the lines right on the map that I was looking at, I believe we've actually added in a piece of Lac Ste. Anne county, which would then mean the representation would include Lac Ste. Anne, Parkland county, Sturgeon county, Spruce Grove, and St. Albert as well as the small communities of Villeneuve, Calahoo, and, if you were to add the Sturgeon county boundary back in, Rivière Qui Barre and Alcomdale. I don't know whether that was kind of just because it made a nice straight line, which it doesn't today. So I would request that you might want to review that as well simply because then you're not looking at another county or municipality added into the thing.

I don't know, Dave, if you wanted to add some comments to the overall presentation. I'm done with mine.

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Chairman and commission members, if I may, there is one area that I would like to correct in the submission that Mr. Horner referred to that went in, and that is relative to the maps on Edmonton-Decore, Edmonton-Manning, and Edmonton-Clareview. The Edmonton-Decore and Edmonton-Manning maps deal with it one way, and the Edmonton-Clareview deals with it another way. So if we were to refer to the constituency, 32 is probably the best map to refer to what I'm talking about.

I won't go into the process. There have been a number of suggestions in the north end primarily around the divide of 97th Street, which is a major divide in that area, and the request from our communities and from the north end to try to keep the Castle Downs communities together because for the Castle Downs recreation area the Castle Downs communities have worked very strongly together.

I'm sorry; can we see constituency 32? If you look down at the bottom, this area right here, in the submission that we've made in the book, the suggestion is that this area go back into Edmonton-Castle Downs, that this area go into the northwest, and we would request that you call it Edmonton-Calder – sorry; that this area be part of Edmonton-Decore, I mean, and that this area go from Edmonton-North West into Edmonton-Castle Downs. I had it backwards. Then this piece here we're suggesting should go back into Edmonton-Clareview. That's south of 137th Avenue. It's currently in Edmonton-Clareview, and those communities associate with the communities in the Clareview area rather than with those in the north.

Where our submission is incorrect is this piece here, this community in here, which should be associating with the communities to the north of it rather than the communities to the south of it. We've drawn the map wrong in our submission on Edmonton-Decore and Edmonton-Manning. I'd just ask that when you look at it, you consider that piece going into Edmonton-Manning as opposed to going into Edmonton-Clareview as has been suggested on those two maps.

Other than that, the north end piece, I think, is fairly straightforward. It's about keeping Castle Downs together because if there's a strong community of communities in Edmonton, it's the Castle Downs recreation community. They've coalesced together to build a recreation centre with the Y right in here. There have been strong efforts together.

This piece here is the Griesbach barracks, which hasn't really developed much as yet, so arguably it doesn't necessarily have community connection yet although it would connect to the north.

This community here is very clearly part of the Castle Downs community, so putting that back into Edmonton-Castle Downs, putting this back into Edmonton-Decore, respecting the barrier that is 97th Street would make sense. Then to balance the population, moving this back into Edmonton-Clareview and that piece into Edmonton-Manning makes sense. I just needed to focus on that because our map is wrong on that point.

The second piece that I'd like is really more of a personal one, and that is Edmonton-Whitemud, which is constituency 46. On the south end of Edmonton-Whitemud – and I have permission from Dan McKinley, the president of the constituency association, who made the representation to the committee. We talked about the principles and the natural barriers. You did everything he asked you to do in this, and for that we thank you.

What we hadn't really intended although I think is explicit in the instruction – as I say, I've spoken to Dan McKinley and have his permission to say this on his behalf and on behalf of the constituency association. The Anthony Henday, while normally it would be a barrier, is so new that it's not yet the barrier that an arterial like 97th Street is. The communities south here, Windermere and Ambleside, which only have 580 people in them, still trade north. They still associate with the Riverbend community, so to take them out of that area doesn't make sense, in our view. The boundary should be the Whitemud Creek to the city limits, which would give that constituency a little bit of expansion room.

Now, that, obviously, moves into the major portion of the concern that we'd like to present. What we do have in the interim report is an Edmonton-McClung constituency which picks the bottom half of Callingwood and the south end of the old Edmonton-Whitemud here and puts it into a new cross-river constituency. There is no question that the people on the west side of the river associate north with Callingwood in the existing Edmonton-McClung. The people on the south side of the river operate north-south on Terwillegar Drive in the area I just mentioned and on the other side on 111th Street north-south.

Twin Brooks as a community league – and I can say this because I was the membership chairman of the Yellowbird Community League, which is over here – was sponsored by Yellowbird. Its association is there. The school association is north-south; 111th Street is the connector rather than the barrier in this case.

It makes more sense from a community connection and representation perspective – and all of this is speaking against interests because I would dearly love to keep them all in my own constituency, but I know I can't. It makes sense to take the south piece east of the Whitemud Creek and align it with the Edmonton-Rutherford constituency here, which means that in order to achieve population

numbers, align at the north end, which is shown in the book, at approximately 34th Avenue and then create the new constituency. Instead of creating the new constituency on the north side of the river, create the new constituency on the south side of the river.

6:20

What we are suggesting is that the river is a major barrier. Rather than create a new cross-river constituency, we ought to eliminate the existing cross-river constituencies as you've done with Edmonton-Gold Bar. In trying to balance the west end, you've created a new one rather than eliminating them. With respect, it would be our view that Edmonton-Riverview, whatever it's called, could exist as a whole constituency on the north side of the river if the west boundary is moved out to 170th Street. The cohesion of communities on 170th Street is not that strong. You could balance population numbers along the 170th Street boundary and create a new constituency there of Edmonton-Riverview or Parkview or whatever you wanted to call it. Edmonton-McClung could then be north of the river with that 170th Street west boundary and the Whitemud freeway as its north boundary. That is a cohesive community. That's the community that's grown up together.

Again, for the populations on the west side of the Anthony Henday, in another boundary review 10 years from now the Anthony Henday may well be a barrier, but right now it's not because the trade is still across and the kids still come across to go to school. All of the interest is across that road.

Our suggestion would be to create a new north side constituency with the north half of Edmonton-Riverview and move the boundary out to 170th Street. Leave Edmonton-McClung more or less what it is except to borrow from it to fill that new constituency's population, and bring the riding that's called Edmonton-La Perle – and we hate to lose the Meadowlark name because it has had a lot of historical reference – back down to pick up the Lewis Estates portion, which had been transferred into this rather strange-looking riding called Edmonton-Callingwood.

Instead of having a new riding called Edmonton-Callingwood, we would really submit that let's respect the river as the major fundamental barrier between communities and build a constituency of Edmonton-Riverview on the north side. Then build a constituency on the south side, which I in the submission have optimistically called Crawford for obvious reasons, because he represented exactly that area for so long. Historically the Edmonton-Whitemud constituency or the Edmonton-Parkallen constituency started at the north end and came all the way down south.

Again, if you talk about community of interest, the Southwest Area Council of Community Leagues represents all of those community leagues that start from the north end all the way south to our area. There's a community of interest; there's north-south trade; there's association with the university. There are a whole bunch of rationales to suggest that there's much more cohesion north-south with those communities even if you have to cross the Whitemud freeway, which you'd have to pick up the Aspen and Westbrook areas from the current Edmonton-Whitemud and the north end of what's called Rideau Park and Greenfield and Duggan from the current Edmonton-Rutherford. Even picking those up and even crossing that, there's still a greater association there because they're all part of the Southwest Area Council of Community Leagues.

I would submit to you that in Edmonton community leagues are fundamental organization bodies of our communities. I've worked with community leagues; I grew up with community leagues in the south end. The association of how we play sports in terms of our kids and standing on the sides of soccer fields and those sorts of things: those are all north-south connections. So in my respectful

submission it makes a better alliance of communities and areas and representation of interest doing it that way. It has the other added advantage that it actually puts the community of Rutherford in the constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford, and that reduces confusion.

I could go on at length, but I'll stop there and be prepared to answer any questions you might have.

The Chair: All right.

Dr. Archer: Well, thanks, ministers Horner and Hancock. You've certainly given us a lot to talk about over the next few minutes, so much so that we could probably spend the rest of this evening talking about the constituencies that you've identified for some further discussion. Let me just focus on a couple.

Minister Horner, you started by talking about some changes within your constituency, and the net effect would be to increase your constituency size from about 9 per cent over the provincial average in the interim report to I think you said about 14 per cent or 15 per cent above the average. For us that would be certainly starting to push towards the upper end of the variation that we've been proposing in ridings, particularly the ridings that are more centrally located around Calgary and in Edmonton. I guess that's my initial feedback, that that variation would start to look a little bit large for us. I understand that Sherwood Park is up in that range as well, and that has received some commentary from several also.

Just so that I fully understand the impact that those changes that you've suggested will have on the adjacent ridings, have you had a chance to make the calculations as to what would be the final population in the St. Albert riding if that part of the constituency that's east of highway 2 was moved back into the St. Albert riding – I think that was the suggestion – and then the impact on other constituencies of expanding sort of north, northeastward for your constituency as well?

Mr. Horner: Dr. Archer, through the chair to you, I do not and many of our members did not have numbers when they did their submissions for the submission that we did jointly. I know that in Edmonton they've got some very good numbers as to when they move a community or community league over, those sorts of things. We did not have the really, really tight numbers, although I will suggest to you that for the presentation you'll be receiving from the St. Albert group, they have done a lot of research into the numbers.

To the numbers that you mentioned, I agree that 14 per cent or 14.5 per cent is on the higher end of what the commission was hoping to achieve. However, if you leave the boundaries the way they are designed in the proposal, within very short order the riding will be up there in any event because, again, what you're giving the riding is all of the high-growth areas and taking away one of the areas that actually has very limited growth, which is that central part of St. Albert, the Lacombe Park area. I don't have any illusion in my mind that if trends continue the way they are in St. Albert and Spruce Grove and that whole area in there, in the next boundary review that you do, there will definitely be probably a fairly major rejig of the St. Albert area, potentially even two St. Albert MLAs. I could see that potentially happening.

The way that it's set up right now, when you look at the highway 2 or St. Albert Trail boundary, really, for many residents in that area you're either on the east side of St. Albert Trail or west side of St. Albert Trail. For the schools, many of the kids are going either side of that trail as well. The Lacombe Park area has a number of smaller schools that service that entire area. Most of those kids are still going to those schools, or those neighbourhoods that are still developing are going into those schools.

We recognize that populationwise it might be a little high for the riding. I think that from a representation perspective, given the matrix that the commission uses, it doesn't add to the difficulty level as much as one might think in terms of the overall riding. That's what I would say.

Dr. Archer: Thanks. Just one further observation on that. What we'd probably want to do is to have a pretty close look at what happens with the Athabasca-Sturgeon constituency size with what I take to be the change in the northeastern portion of the riding, if that's going to expand a bit.

Mr. Horner: I'm not asking for any expansion of the north – well, sorry. The north side is basically taking the boundary that you have and moving it up to the county line. The population bases, if you will, that are up there are Rivière Qui Barre, which is not a community of its own; it's a community of the county. There's a small school there, Camilla school, which many of the residents of Calahoo, Villeneuve, and those areas attend. In fact, Alexander reserve has a number of students at the Camilla school in Rivière Qui Barre.

6:30

On the east side of highway 2 currently that's the Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock riding. Then if you go another I think it's four miles, you actually hit the Athabasca-Redwater riding. Nothing that we're doing in ours affects the current boundaries of Athabasca-Redwater. It does affect the Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock riding, and I've had conversations with members of that constituency. They see no real issues in putting the boundary coterminous with the Sturgeon county boundary. A lot of folks that I heard said, "Why don't you just leave me in the county, use the county line?" those sorts of things. No effect on that one.

Dr. Archer: Okay. Thanks.

Mr. Hancock, if I could pursue the change in the Edmonton-Riverview constituency, which seems to be a bit of a key point to what happens in the west and south constituencies from there. We've had presentations this morning, for example, which suggested to us that there's a strong community of interest that straddles the river in the Edmonton-Riverview constituency. If that constituency is retained in its present form, as is proposed in our report, then one of the implications is that you do end up with a riding like Edmonton-McClung.

We've had situations not unlike this in Calgary in which the newer parts of the city, the high-growth areas, at least in this report, tend to be a little bit larger and to a certain extent a bit of a catch-all. As the population fills out in those areas, there's an expectation that some natural constituencies will emerge, but in the interim we recognize that, for the time being, sometimes just achieving some level of parity in constituency sizes requires us to spread them out a little bit. I think it's more a commentary than a question to you, but that was the basis of our thinking in Edmonton-McClung. Like I say, it was used as the basis for some of our constituencies in Calgary as well.

Mr. Hancock: If I may, I certainly appreciate that and understand that because when you take a look at what currently is the existing Edmonton-Whitemud constituency, which I think has the largest population in the province at the moment, you really have to do something with it. The bulk of the south population is on the east side – there are about 25,000 in the areas of Twin Brooks, Rutherford, MacEwan, Southbrook, and Blackburne – and then you have a developing area in the middle, the so-called Windermere-Ambleside area, which is only emerging now.

Then you have McClung on the north side of the river, which has a population that has a sort of split of the Callingwood community north-south – and I forget the name of the community just for the moment – and then the potential growth area outside the ring road.

To put that all together and say, "Well, that's all emerging growth; therefore, it doesn't have a community of interest yet," and you could justify it in that way, I would argue that that's not correct. There are communities of interest. In fact, Twin Brooks is fully developed. MacEwan is pretty much fully developed. Rutherford has been a rapidly developing community and has a community of interest; it has a new school going into it. Certainly, the Southbrook community – that's the developer's name for it; Blackmud Creek is the legal name for it – which is south of Ellerslie Road and essentially east of 111th Street, is fully developed on the north part of it. There's still the Seven Oaks golf course area that's developing in the south. That all is a community of interest which coalesces around 111th Street on the north-south. The kids go north to school; some of them still go east to school in Ellerslie, but there is a community of interest.

If we're going back to first principles, I would argue that the proper delineation is north-south rather than east-west for those areas. Recognizing that Edmonton-Whitemud is a problem constituency, to have Whitemud go down to the city limits, west to the creek makes sense because there is some growth potential, and that's their community of interest. East of the creek, the community of interest is again north-south. Twin Brooks certainly was spawned by Yellowbird in terms of the community league. In early days kids went to school north of the creek. They now have a school in that area.

Of course, the elephant in the room is Edmonton-Riverview and what you do with Edmonton-Riverview. I understand that people are making submissions saying that they have a community of interest, but I would argue that their community of interest is essentially their interest around the river valley whereas most of the activity relates to the community leagues and how the community leagues of Belgravia and McKernan integrate.

If you take a look at the biggest issue in that particular area, it's the University farm and the potential for development, and Grandview and Lansdowne on the west side with McKernan on the north all have an interest around what happens with the development of the University farm. If you take any of the issues that they'll have to deal with but for the river valley – which I would argue is a city interest, not just a constituency interest – the representation, clearly, would have it on a north-south boundary, with Windsor Park, Belgravia, and McKernan associating to the south with Lansdowne, Grandview, and Malmo and then even further south to Aspen, which actually does have quite a similar personality.

I can say, having represented Grandview, Lansdowne, and Aspen, that those communities have similar personalities and similar areas of interest, and they do trade north-south. Historically, that's the way they've always been aligned. Until Riverview was created, that constituency, the original Edmonton-Whitemud constituency, started at Windsor Park and moved south, and then gradually, as there was growth, there was the Edmonton-Parkallen constituency that was created in there, and Edmonton-Strathcona picked up the top piece for a while. But that association has historically been north-south, and with due respect to earlier commissions, two commissions ago when they created Edmonton-Riverview, they really violated the first principles of keeping communities of interest together and crossing that barrier, which is the river valley.

All of Edmonton has an interest in the river valley. The fact that there's a constituency that's on both sides of it or two constituencies on either side of it – the river valley is a jewel. It's something that

Edmonton is proud of. All of us in Edmonton, whether we abut the river valley or not, have an interest in representation around what the river valley does for our city. I would argue that that's not the cohesion of interest in terms of the main issues of representation.

If you go forward, one of the most significant issues of representation for that whole area that I've suggested be put together and called Edmonton-Crawford is how the south end of the University farm piece gets developed and how that impacts the communities. There are provincial issues around that as well as municipal issues around that; for example, the issue of Expo 2017 located on the University farm. Those areas of interest are all there along 114th Street south and 119th Street and 111th Street as you get to the south end of it. That's a much stronger community of interest than the fact that both sides of the river view the river valley.

Sorry for the long answer, but it is a core question.

The Chair: Peter.

Mr. Dobbie: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Minister Horner and Minister Hancock, it sounds like we're beyond the time limit already. The challenge that we have as a commission is to weigh these competing interests. I'm mindful of the fact that at our initial hearings in the fall, before the interim report, we heard a number of representations that asked us to distinguish Edmonton-Riverview from other constituencies, so it is helpful to hear what you've had to say.

The challenge will be that the changes are significant in terms of what's being proposed compared to what's in the interim report. I'm just wanting to make sure that you're aware that I hear you loud and clear. The weighing that we have to do as a committee is to determine where we start from. If we start from a principle as you've set out, Minister Hancock, we would see Edmonton-Riverview changing. If we accept the proposition that it's a compelling argument that they made earlier on, it stays. That is the main issue that will drive the determination of what happens in the south and the west. We're well aware of it, and I think we will, as Dr. Archer says, have lots to talk about.

Thank you for your submissions.

The Chair: Allyson.

Ms Jeffs: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, gentlemen, for coming this evening. I'm not going to flog this horse, but just on the issue with Edmonton-Riverview we had a fairly lengthy discussion about this, and it's clear that the government caucus proposal for Edmonton is to have a no-straddling-the-river principle, and that's articulated there.

6:40

I think that if there's one thing that certainly has been clear to me in terms of this process, it's that there are the odd exceptions that prove the rule. We had very, very clear representation over in the Gold Bar area about not straddling the river there, and we've had exactly the opposite from those communities in Edmonton-Riverview. You know, with all due respect, I think they know what their interests are and what their communities of interest are. Now, having said that, we do understand that it's going to create some issues for division.

I actually have a question in all of this. I note that there are some numbers in the submission. I'm hoping that they take into account the correction to the data that we had. I mean, we clearly have to do something with Edmonton-McClung now because we had inaccurate data when we drew the original boundaries. We will be taking a look at that. Are the numbers there correct?

Mr. Hancock: Yes. In fact, I had some real trouble reconciling the numbers with your numbers.

Ms Jeffs: That would be why.

Mr. Hancock: I discovered the errata that helped us align them, so they should all be on your latest numbers.

Ms Jeffs: Okay. I would find it very helpful if you could walk me through the changes you went over early in your submission regarding Edmonton-Decore and where you would correct the maps that we have. I think you were saying that there was an error in the caucus submission on Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Hancock: Yeah. The best map to look at is the Edmonton-Decore map.

Ms Jeffs: This one here?

Mr. Hancock: Yes. There's an area in red on the bottom right-hand corner that says, "from Edmonton-Decore to Edmonton-Clareview." There should have been a line at 137th Avenue, which would have those bottom two communities go back to Edmonton-Clareview, where they currently are and where they have their community of interest. Again, 137th Avenue is one of the major barriers. North of that, that piece should align with the communities just north of it, which are in Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Jeffs: Okay. So there should be a line here at 137th Avenue so that the bottom two communities would go back to . . .

Mr. Hancock: To Edmonton-Clareview. Then the north piece would go up into Edmonton-Manning. But that's predicated on the idea that you make the adjustment on the northeast side to move that piece back into Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Jeffs: Into Edmonton-Castle Downs. So then that would equal it.

Are those the only two? I find that if I don't write this down on the map, then I'll be confused when we go through this later. That would be the main correction, then.

Mr. Hancock: I don't think that requires a population adjustment, but if it did require a population adjustment, one of the things that wasn't said in the submission is that the appropriate place to do that is down in the Rundle park area because that's an area that's been moved between Edmonton-Highlands-Beverly and Edmonton-Clareview. It could be moved back if it was required, but I think that with the latest numbers it wouldn't require an adjustment.

Ms Jeffs: I just had a general question on the government caucus submission with respect to what Mr. Horner was saying early on about it being sort of a compilation. We've heard from some of the MLAs who came out in central Alberta that there had been some cohesive discussions at least on part of it, but I take it that it's not an overarching one. It certainly sounds like there was a coherent sort of Edmonton discussion. Is that correct?

Mr. Hancock: Yes. We tried to have a discussion primarily around – I don't want this to sound the wrong way, but MLAs are very closely connected to their communities. If you're talking about community of interest, who you talk to and what interests they raise, you probably have a better understanding of how those communities

connect. To talk to MLAs about what's happening in their area – in some cases an MLA would be very reluctant to make a presentation because you don't want to say: I don't want those people; I'd rather have these people.

It really has to be and we talked about it being around first principles. What are the principles that should be adhered to, understanding that sometimes there's competition between principles? In our view numbers are not the highest priority issue. The priority issue is keeping communities of interest together. That was the type of discussion we had and then, based on that, taking a look and saying: what recommendations would we make relative to what our communities say and do and where they play or where they come together?

Mr. Horner: I would add, Mr. Chairman, that one of the things we talked about was the principles that were set out by the commission as to the decision process. We suggested to all members that they should go and talk to their communities, talk to their neighbours, talk to those folks and say: what is it that you would like to see different? In some cases, as you say in the report, there is no change. It's just that, yeah, everybody kind of went: good. In other cases it would be like: well, we don't understand why the name changed. We'd kind of like to go back, you know, and say: well, nothing changed my boundary, so why not keep my name the same? Of course, the mayor in the community – these comments would come back, and that really is what you've got in the report.

You will be getting, as you already have, a number of MLAs that will present on their individual ones. My assumption is that they're going to be the same as what they gave us. We've tried to compile this so that you could get a feel for what the provincial one was, but there was never an attempt to say, "Well, we're going to redraw the map for you" because as you've already seen, there's a lot of discussion that you're going to have. We're just trying to give you a feeling, as Dave said, that we hear a lot from our constituents. We wanted to let you know what they said.

Ms Jeffs: Thank you very much, gentlemen.
I have nothing further, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Brian.

Mr. Evans: Mr. Chairman, thank you. Thank you, gentlemen, for your presentation. It is very extensive, and you've recognized right off the bat that it's not without conflict. There are some conflicts, and that's where the real challenge is going to be for us. Edmonton-Riverview is one major challenge. The Edmonton-Decore, Edmonton-Castle Downs, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview areas I don't think will create any issues. But, you know, we will continue as a principle to try to keep the variance to a reasonable differential, either positive or negative, and we do accept your comments that that's not the number one principle.

Minister Hancock, you are representing substantially higher than the provincial average at this point in time, and I don't think it's breaking you down. Again, that may have something to do with the fact that much of your constituency is suburban, and the variances of the issues that you deal with every day would be more community-based than individuals and the kinds of issues that are faced by the more inner-city constituencies and those areas that are further afield from the major centres and are much more remote. That's the magic of what we hope we are going to be able to put into the final submission that we will put before the Speaker and into the Legislature.

We thank you for the input that you've given us, which is really quite comprehensive. Thank you.

The Chair: I thank both of you very much. We've certainly appreciated your input here. We'll take it under careful consideration, and we'll come to our decision. Thank you both very much for coming here tonight.

Mr. Horner: On behalf of our caucus and all of the members who have an opportunity for input, I don't think any one of them would want your job because we recognize the amount of hours you've put in and the amount of work that this is. Thank you for doing what you're doing for the people of Alberta. Really appreciate that.

The Chair: Well, thank you.

Ms Friesacher: Our next presenter is Mr. Steve Benson, Edmonton-Meadowlark PC Constituency Association.

The Chair: Welcome. We would ask for *Hansard* that you give your names and the groups that you represent.

Mr. Gillis: Sandy Gillis, Edmonton-Meadowlark, president of the PC association.

Mr. Benson: Steve Benson, vice-president of memberships for Edmonton-Meadowlark PC association.

The Chair: Thank you.

Steve Benson and Sandy Gillis, Edmonton-Meadowlark Progressive Conservative Constituency Association

Mr. Benson: All right. My name is Steve Benson, and I'm representing the Edmonton-Meadowlark PC Constituency Association. This will be our second proposal to the boundaries commission. Our first was to leave our constituency as is, but we do realize that with the new constituency proposals coming into Edmonton, some compromises on our part must be made.

After reviewing the commission's interim report, we were a little confused with the outcomes. Our original proposal took into account all of the aspects which the commission asked us to keep important: natural boundaries, population variances, and so on. However, in your interim report it seemed to us that in the case of Edmonton-Meadowlark these criteria were either overlooked or not taken into account.

6:50

Although we were not expecting the commission to take our proposal and institute it as law, we were also not expecting the commission to change our borders so significantly as to add 37 blocks on one side of the constituency, taking us over not one, not two, but three natural boundaries, including Stony Plain Road, 118th Ave., and the Yellowhead Trail. Also, we were not expecting the movement of our boundary over to the east, as opposed to a natural boundary of the city limits, to the Anthony Henday freeway and then to increase our area to the west and take it right back over the city limits boundary at the north side of Lewis Estates.

Your newly constituted boundaries would increase the size of our constituency by more than 240 per cent, taking it from about 1,486 square blocks to about 3,570. At the same time, the removal of the Lewis Estates community from our boundary significantly changes the socioeconomic balance of our residential constituency as well as expounding on the loss of the east-west traffic and business flow in our area. The inclusion of Lewis Estates into the existing Edmonton-Meadowlark boundaries provides our constituency with

a much-needed socioeconomic balance. We currently benefit from having both higher and lower income communities as well as a more diverse blend of ethnicities and age groups.

The proposed Edmonton-La Perle constituency would make it one of the lower income constituencies in Edmonton, and we believe that this new proposal would have tremendous impact on the uptake on government funding programs and constituency services to the area. We also feel that with the removal of Lewis Estates, that balance is lost.

The added residential area north of Stony Plain Road is mainly populated by young families or elderly persons, a lot of them who would have high social needs and a general lack of resources. We are already having a hard time getting the funds from the CIP and the CFEP grants for the amount of need in the Edmonton-Meadowlark area as it is presently drawn up. We feel that these new borders will increase significantly the needs in our constituency while at the same time removing the base of economic stability that we have now from the inclusion of the Lewis Estates community.

In our riding we do have West Edmonton Mall and the Misericordia hospital, which require a significant amount of time and effort to deal with the problems created from these entities. With the newly proposed boundaries almost the entire business community of the west end of Edmonton is in this new proposal, which is pretty substantial: commercial, light industrial, and medium industrial. We are going to be dealing with these important issues concerning businesses that for the most part are going to be managed and run by people who do not reside in our constituency and, therefore, are not able to vote for or against the sitting MLA. While the MLA is there to help everyone in his riding, spending multitudes of time with people who cannot vote in our riding will take significant time away from those who can. We feel that we are here to help all of the voting public, not to just placate business interests.

In the near future if the proposed Edmonton-La Perle riding is implemented without changes, we are going to be dealing with the west-end LRT expansion, and a constituent who lives as far over as 137th Avenue is not going to be impacted in the same way as the community that runs down Stony Plain Road or 156th Street or 87th Avenue, which is the proposed route. The proposed LRT line is probably going to terminate at Lewis Estates, but that has not been finalized. For this fact in itself it would make sense that we keep Lewis Estates in our constituency, not only to keep a congruent tackling of the issues by one MLA and a united community, but because this will also enforce the already overwhelming traffic and shopping patterns that exist in our riding.

Our natural traffic, business, community league, and school patterns run from east to west and west to east, not north to south. With this boundary change our east-west riding has been cut in area by almost half, and the north-south expansion has been immense, going against our traffic and business patterns, resulting in the piecing together of unrelated areas, issues, and ideologies.

This rework of the boundaries also creates a second cross-river constituency in Edmonton-Riverview and Edmonton-McClung. I did hear some of your comments before, but as a constituency association we were looking for the reasons that that might have occurred.

The changing of the name of the constituency. The meetings that we had just from the different community leaders that we had seen got pretty heated. They all basically, except for La Perle, said: why wasn't our name used? Basically, what we are saying is that we suggest that the Edmonton-Meadowlark name either be kept or something that would encompass the entire constituency, which would be, for example, Edmonton-West.

We have consulted and worked with surrounding constituencies and, through this, have discovered that Edmonton-McClung will also be submitting two different scenarios to the commission, and neither one of their proposals includes Lewis Estates in their reworked orders, which, from your proposal, they would be on there right now. Therefore, we do not see any issues with leaving Lewis Estates within our constituency borders as long as you accept Edmonton-McClung's ideology.

To address the natural community connections, traffic and business flows, the required population thresholds, and to take into account the need for some movement on our part, we recommend the following boundaries for Edmonton-Meadowlark. The southern boundary would be the Whitemud freeway. Sorry; there's a map. Let's see. I've got it labelled Edmonton-Meadowlark existing commission proposal. It's on the back one. The Edmonton-Meadowlark new proposal would be the map that we are proposing for this new one.

So the southern boundary would be the Whitemud freeway. The western boundary would be the city of Edmonton city limits from the Whitemud freeway to the Yellowhead Trail. The northern boundary would be from the Edmonton city limits east on Yellowhead Trail to 170 Street. The western boundary would go south on 170th Street – this is where it gets a little odd – from Yellowhead Trail to 95th Avenue, east on 95th Avenue to 163rd Street, south on 163rd Street to 87th Avenue, and east on 87th Avenue to 159th Street. From there, south on 159th Street to the Whitemud freeway. So that part basically stays the same. We would only be removing one small residential area, which would be – I have to find it here – going from 170th Street to 156th Street between 95th Avenue and Stony Plain Road, which is currently in our area.

Then to offset that, because with your numbers we would be 6 per cent above, there's a small trailer park. Then what we have is growth potential. Now, Lewis Estates is our major growth potential. They have definitely slowed down a lot in the last few years, but there is still growth potential. Hopefully, when the economy picks back up, they will start growing in there once again.

We feel that this proposal will help solve the problems in our area of the city that the commission is facing while still increasing our constituency size and scope. In our estimation this is a workable solution for all of the involved parties.

I'd like to thank you for your time and consideration and also let you know that I do realize how difficult your job is because I'm on a committee at work. I work for a major courier company, and we do the reroutes, so I know how difficult this is.

The Chair: Thank you.

Brian.

Mr. Evans: Thanks, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, gentlemen, for your presentation. Looking at the map and from your presentation, it's about 6 per cent over?

Mr. Benson: From your numbers from last time it was about 6 per cent over. Now, I did not get numbers for this new area because I could not find the actual population in that area, but from our guesstimate – and that's why I didn't want to put it in the proposal, because it was just a guesstimate – we would probably be about 2 per cent over at that point. But it is just a guesstimate.

Mr. Evans: Thank you for that. Did you have a chance to consider what the impacts would be on the constituencies on the boundary of your proposed Edmonton-Meadowlark?

Mr. Benson: Well, on the one side, the west side, there would be no issues whatsoever from the fact that we aren't really changing very much. But on the Edmonton-McClung side – we met with Edmonton-McClung a couple of times and had worked out that this is how we both would like to proceed with it on our boundary on this side. Now, on the east side, I tried to get in contact with them, and I never received a call back.

7:00

Mr. Evans: It's fairly densely populated in that area that you would like to take out of Edmonton-Meadowlark, at least in the south part of it.

Mr. Benson: The density in that area – I would say that between 170th Street and 163rd Street that's mostly businesses in there. There are two larger hotels that about half their people actually live there. Now, once you get from 163rd to 156th, that would be mostly low density until you hit 156th. Along 156th you have a lot of three- and four-storey walk-ups.

Mr. Evans: A lot of seniors' housing in that area, is there?

Mr. Benson: Yeah, a lot of seniors' housing or young families.

Mr. Evans: Thank you for that. The only other comment that I'd make and, I guess, ask the question is about where you got your information. You've indicated that a number of businesses would have, if you will, absentee people from the point of view of not living in the constituency. Did you do any specific questioning of that, or is it just intuitive?

Mr. Benson: Well, a little bit intuitive, but I do work in that area, and I do deal with a lot of the businesses in that area on my own. Of the people that I know – I probably know about 40 per cent of the people who work in that area because I deal in the sales area over there, and I'm in a courier company, so I'm dealing with almost everybody – I would say that 5 per cent of them live within our constituency.

Mr. Evans: All right. Well, thank you for your presentation. It's very well done, and we'll certainly take it into consideration. Thank you.

The Chair: Allyson.

Ms Jeffs: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, gentlemen, for coming. I guess my main concern is this populous area on the east side. You know, all of these boundary changes have a bit of a cascading effect. If I understand you correctly, you don't have sort of numbers as to what you're taking out.

Mr. Benson: Unfortunately, I do not, no. I was trying to use my work stuff, but we don't deal with residential stuff very much.

Ms Jeffs: Understandably so. Have you looked at the La Perle shifts that were part of what has been identified to us as the government caucus proposal? It looks like they're very close.

Mr. Benson: I may have, just not knowing who put it together. I looked at quite a few different proposals.

Ms Jeffs: I think there's just a difference of a few blocks with respect to the western boundary. I think you've chosen 231st Street; they choose 234th. But it's relatively close.

Mr. Benson: Oh, okay. Well, I may be wrong on this, but I think 231st is the Edmonton city limits.

Ms Jeffs: Okay. Here it looks like the western boundary is 234th, so that could be interesting, but that could simply be a typo.

In terms of the eastern boundary, it looks very, very close. I just wondered if you'd had an opportunity to talk.

Mr. Benson: I could have because we took a lot of different proposals into consideration. You know, we realized that there's going to be a cascading effect and we were going to have to take over some stuff that we – I'm not going to say: didn't want to take over. You have to work with what we have, right? There's going to be something that we're going to have to take over.

Ms Jeffs: My recollection is that this piece at the top – I'm going to use this map. This part at the north that you're looking at: do you have any sense as to how populous that is, or is that really primarily business/industrial?

Mr. Benson: Right now that is very, very little. There's business. It's mostly business/industrial. Once you get over in between there, there are some I guess you'd call them larger acreages, probably six to eight acres each as opposed to a three-quarter acre or two acres. Until 10 years ago those weren't even in the city limits. For the most part you'd be looking at – well, let's see. On that one part here there's a dump there, some cement companies, and such. In that part you'd be looking at medium to heavy industrial.

Ms Jeffs: Okay. So we're primarily transferring business if we move that. All right. Thank you. Those are all my questions.

The Chair: Just for the record it's 231st.

Ms Jeffs: Oh, it is 231st?

The Chair: Yes.

Ms Jeffs: Okay.

The Chair: All right.
Peter.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, gentlemen. Mr. Benson, if I understand the summary of your presentation, it is that we have failed to adequately take into account the community history and the community interests in the existing constituency, and your proposal would see those concerns adequately addressed.

Mr. Benson: That's what we're hoping. Yes.

Mr. Dobbie: I think that for my part it is helpful to get the kind of presentation that we got from you, that gives us some input from someone residing in the constituency. We are in a bit of a situation where we have had to make some assumptions about the trade-off between community interests and geographic barriers.

It will mean more work for us to really assess this, but the better data that we have and the more detailed input we have, the better job we can do. Again, in the ideal world, if we had these kind of

representations at the start, our job would be easier, but at that stage you had nothing to respond to and weren't anticipating the changes, so I understand why it's coming now. Again, as I stated earlier, I want to be mindful of the fact that we should not overly protect our interim report, and we should be open to this kind of feedback because that's exactly what we've asked you to do. Thank you.

I just wanted to offer you my copy of the Edmonton neighbourhood populations because I think it would be of assistance to this commission if within the next seven days you could look at the numbers more exactly. I'm prepared to give you my copy at the end of your presentation.

Thank you.

Mr. Benson: Absolutely. I'd love that.

The Chair: Thank you.

Dr. Archer: Thanks, gentlemen. Mr. Benson, this is one of those suggestions that, I guess, perhaps inevitably, changing one constituency has quite a substantial impact on some of the surrounding constituencies. By my reckoning, if we adopted your recommendation, that would have an impact on at least four different ridings. I'm just trying to understand from your perspective what that impact would be.

For example, the northern part of the proposed riding of Edmonton-La Perle in your proposal is separated, and presumably that would probably go to Edmonton-North West. As long as one stayed with the Yellowhead Trail as the dividing line, it looks like that's not going to bring in very much of a population shift to the northwest, and it's largely an area shift.

In the other areas it seems to me there's going to be quite a substantial population shift. In particular, the ridings of Edmonton-Glenora, Edmonton-Riverview, and Edmonton-Callingwood are all going to be impacted, potentially with Edmonton-Glenora and Edmonton-Riverview by leaving open the possibility of increasing their population and then for Edmonton-Callingwood by decreasing their population. Do you have a sense of how large of an impact that would be overall? Given the variances that the commission is working with, the legislative variance of plus or minus 25 per cent but the de facto variance in Edmonton of plus or minus 10 per cent at the moment, would your changes be compatible with that kind of variation within these three ridings?

Mr. Benson: From the discussions that we've had with them – and unfortunately to the east I was not able to contact them, as I said before. With all the others, between our presentations and their presentations we all felt that we could keep our variance within your prescribed, and it was not the 25. I believe Edmonton-McClung had said that their variance would be 8 per cent. Ours would be under the 6 because we would be losing a little here. That's plus 6, too, so ours would be less than the plus 6. I'll be able to look at this, and it would be nice to get some actual numbers, but like I said, probably plus 2 for us. Through Edmonton-Glenora, they were the ones that I could not contact. On the north side there isn't much population in there, so the population impact is not going to be extreme in that area. Like you said, it would be more of an area shift.

7:10

What we wanted to do when we put our proposal together was: yeah, we're almost doubling the size of our constituency. We didn't want to triple it or quadruple it right off the start, and what we figured, too, is that by the time the next commission is instated in eight to 10 years, Lewis Estates will hopefully have developed to the point where we could almost basically go back to where we were.

Dr. Archer: Thanks. When you say Edmonton-McClung, are you thinking Edmonton-McClung as it's contemplated in the interim report, with Edmonton-Callingwood and Edmonton-McClung ridings, or are you thinking of Edmonton-McClung in terms of the current configuration?

Mr. Benson: That would be with the discussions we had with Edmonton-McClung as to what their proposals to you would be. I don't know if they have presented yet or not.

Dr. Archer: So I think that has to do with the current configuration.

Mr. Benson: Yes. It would have to do with the current and what they are going to be presenting to you, because they are going to be presenting some changes as well.

Dr. Archer: Then, implicitly in your proposal are you suggesting that the Edmonton-Riverview constituency would be all on the north side of the river or the west side of the river, whichever way you want it, as opposed to straddling the river?

Mr. Benson: I'm trying to think of Edmonton-Riverview. Edmonton-Riverview is the next one over. Unfortunately, I can't answer that one because I don't have that proper paperwork in front of me.

Dr. Archer: Okay. Thank you. That's all I have.

The Chair: Thank you, gentlemen. We'll take into account what you've presented to us here tonight.

Mr. Benson: Thanks.

Ms Friesacher: Our next presenter is Ms Laurie Blakeman, MLA, Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Hi, everybody.

The Chair: For *Hansard* would you be so kind as to give your name and the constituency.

Ms Blakeman: I will, of course. My name is Laurie Blakeman. I'm the MLA for the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre.

I believe I have 20 minutes. Is that correct?

The Chair: We try to look at 10 and then 10 for questions.

**Laurie Blakeman, MLA
Edmonton-Centre**

Ms Blakeman: Okay. The timer is running. Thank you very much for that.

Thank you all very much for the work that you're doing on this committee. There must be days when it's not a lot of fun, and please know that the citizens do appreciate the work that you're doing despite the grief that we're probably all giving you today. So thank you again for all of your volunteer effort over many, many months.

What I want to talk about today are the proposed changes to Edmonton-Centre, the matrix and that effect on constituency office funding, the urbanization of Alberta and the preservation of a rural voting privilege, the related effect on city and the effect on government policy.

The proposed changes for Edmonton-Centre, which is now up on the screen. Thank you so much. You are essentially removing a pie-

shaped piece that runs from 105th Avenue north to 111th Avenue and from 97th Street west to 101st Street. On the top right-hand corner there you have a little zag; you took that out and added it onto the neighbouring Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. That's an extremely high-risk, high-needs area. Actually, that includes our two largest men's shelters, the Herb Jamieson and the Spady Centre. The Hope Mission and a number of other areas are in there. That's fine. You know, I've had it; Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has had it. Okay. If that's what you needed to do, that's fine. We'll get along with that.

It was much more important to me that the communities be kept together, and I have five communities, none of which are easily removed. The numbers are too high. As soon as you start taking one community out of there, you've removed more than you needed, or you're going to break a community in half. I asked you to leave it, and you more or less did that, and thank you very much for that.

I have a tremendous amount of new infill housing that's being built and rejuvenation, and I imagine that by the time the next boundary commission rolls around, I'll have another 12,000 to 15,000 people in the constituency. Then you will have high enough numbers. You can take a whole community out and move it if that's what you decide to do. I think we've done well this round.

If there's anything you'd like to do, I'll mention again that I wouldn't mind a name change, seeing as we have a federal Edmonton Center, without a dash and an "er" at the end, and a provincial Edmonton-Centre, with a dash and an "re." As you've noticed from the presenters, it's difficult for people to grasp the differences between the three levels of government, and when you have a provincial and a federal riding that have, essentially, the same name and currently have the same name from its representatives – Laurie Blakeman, Laurie Hawn – it does get really, really confusing for people. If you wanted to change it to one of the Famous Five that we don't already have, I would happily take Edmonton-Murphy, Edmonton-Parlby, or Edmonton-McKinney, just, you know, if you have a spare second.

Thank you for listening to and taking into consideration the need for my communities to stay together. It's hard for them, and I appreciate your not creating an additional barrier for them.

I want to move on now and talk about the matrix and the effect on constituency office funding. It appears that the matrix, unless I missed something, is gone from your proposal. Thank you for that. As you know, I feel that is very appropriate. That is work that is more rightly done by the Members' Services Committee of the Legislature.

Currently with the way it's done, I think it really penalized the ridings in Edmonton because it was based on their proximity to the Legislature Building, which doesn't have a lot to do with the complexity or diversity of representing people in Edmonton ridings. I think we need to fight that one out in the Members' Services Committee and, frankly, to get it on the record why decisions are being made that way. I still face a preponderance of votes from the other side when I get there, but at least I can fight it out in *Hansard* and in public. Thank you for taking the matrix out.

I'd like to talk now about the urbanization of Alberta and what I call the preservation of a rural voting privilege. I'm sure you've heard about this and probably from the opposite side. I believe that we should not have increased the number of seats to 87. I think that masked for most Albertans the fact that you were handed a job to do that really disguised that enormous inequity between the value of a rural versus an urban vote. It allowed you to deal with the growth in the cities without having to really take something away from the urban ridings. Frankly, I think you should have. Your own numbers: I'll get to those a bit later.

The government insists on maintaining the same number of rural seats even though the population is static or declining. I think that seats should be redistributed from rural areas with static or declining populations to the cities. I don't know if I said this before, but I think two seats should be going to Edmonton, three to Calgary, and at this point that would mean you'd need to cut an additional two seats from the rural areas.

When I look at page 9 of the report, you actually note that 75 per cent of the citizens are in urban areas, but we don't have 75 per cent of the seats there to support them. It's right there, the second sentence in: "When the population living in urban communities of 10,000 or more is considered, more than 75% of Albertans were resident in medium to large urban communities." So right there, 75 per cent of the population. We do not have 75 per cent of the seats representing urban voters, and there's the problem. We would need to be over 65 seats in order to be representing those urban voters on a basis with what's been distributed to the rural seats.

You have option 2 listed here – and I think that's supported in the minority report – with Calgary having 26 seats, Edmonton with 20, and then you talk about the rest of Alberta with 41. Frankly, 41 seats for the rest of Alberta: that's including two seats for a number of cities. Inside of what is supposed to be thought of in this report as rural, or the rest of Alberta once you take the two major cities out, you're including two seats for Medicine Hat, two for Red Deer, two for Fort McMurray, Leduc, two for Lethbridge, Grande Prairie, Peace River. Let's call it 11 urban seats that are included in that 41. If you take those out and add them, we're going to have at best 57 urban seats in what you're proposing here, not 65. So we're still underrepresented in what we have for people living in cities.

7:20

I think that if you look at the averages that you're giving in the chart that's available on page 11, where you talk about the quotient, you have a quotient of minus 2.8 per cent as an average of the rest of Alberta, which again includes these cities: Red Deer, Lethbridge, Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat, Fort McMurray, et cetera. When you combine all of these cities with the rural areas and present it as the rest of Alberta – in other words, rural areas – I think that's misleading. I don't think you meant to do that. I don't think anybody started out to do that, but that's how it reads. You've got Edmonton and Calgary, which are the metro areas. You don't take out the rest of the cities and then give us rural. You give us everything else with those cities mixed in, and I don't think that's appropriate.

I'm very mindful of my previous colleague Minister Lyle Oberg, who was very fond of averaging everything as a justification. By his reasoning and with an average of the poor mixed with the rich, there were no poor children in Alberta, so there were no programs that needed to be put in place for them because everything averaged together meant that there were no poor children. That's a bit of what we're looking at with that Edmonton, Calgary, and the rest of Alberta. So the rest of Alberta appearing to be just minus 2.8 but still including those cities I think is a justification to preserve a rural privilege and an advantage.

I'm going to go to page 16 of your report. There is one metropolitan constituency below minus 10 per cent, but there are six rural constituencies that are under and sometimes way under that 10 per cent mark, which I just chose as arbitrary. You've got one that's 15 per cent under, 39 per cent under, 29 per cent under, 11 per cent under, 12 per cent under, and 23 per cent under. If we go to minus 8 per cent, we add in two more, so that's eight rural constituencies that are more than 8 per cent under your quotient but only one that is a rural one that is in the same boat, once again a huge inequity between the rural and urban seats which is not being addressed.

I think it's an inequity that upholds rural privilege, and it's manifest in which government policies are successful in the House and which even go forward. I'm going to give you one recent example. The majority of Albertans surveyed support protection for grizzlies. They want it listed as an endangered species, and they want steps taken by the government to protect grizzly habitat. The government flatly refuses to do that. I've now sat in the committees, and because there is a strong representation from rural MLAs that they want to shoot the grizzlies that are interfering with their cattle, we have no grizzly protection. It matters when you have a preponderance of rural seats that are out of proportion to what the people in Alberta want.

At a minimum, again, I argue that two seats should be supporting Edmonton, three to Calgary, and one to Fort McMurray, and that's one of the options you're examining. Obviously, I would like to push you much further because I think we're still out by a significant number of rural to urban seats there. Which ones should be taken from rural? You are far more versed and better briefed in that and have more resources, frankly, to decide which ridings those would be, but I think it's a small start to recognize that Alberta is urban centred but that our riding distribution is not.

Two just small, miscellaneous points to close. I note that there's a submission that is titled the government submission, which, I would submit, is rather naughty of the members of the Tory caucus and/or the Tory Party because I think it is bad manners to be presenting a government submission to this committee when what is driving them is clearly partisan. We are currently overwhelmed by government MLAs in Edmonton, so it's very hard for us to get out there and have the resources to wrestle back. I mean, looking at that submission, that Tory caucus has done a give-and-take on boundaries, a barter and bargain: "You take this, I'll take that, a little bit here, a little bit there, and now we're all happy with it." Well, guess what? The rest of the citizens didn't get a say on that, and neither did the rest of the elected officials in this province. I can't make that point strongly enough.

The government submission was particularly naughty of them. You really see that manifest with Edmonton-Riverview, where the people of Edmonton-Riverview have been very clear in saying one thing, but we have MLAs and constituency associations from outside of that constituency commenting on how they think it should be configured. If the people of Edmonton-Riverview have been clear, why should others work against them?

I've gone a bit over my time. I apologize for that. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Keith.

Dr. Archer: Well, thanks, Ms Blakeman. I think you've given us a lot to think about for our report.

Perhaps just a couple of comments, well, firstly a question on the issue of special ridings. One of the factors that has led our category "rest of Alberta" – and I'm going to come back to that issue – to be below average by about 3 per cent, I think 2.8 per cent, is that the legislation on which we're operating enables the commission to create up to four special constituencies. You know the criteria that are used to assess the eligibility of areas to be a special constituency. This commission has recommended two, and of course those are the two ridings that are populationwise the smallest in our report. Dunvegan-Central Peace is one. It's about 40 per cent below the average, 24,908 people. Lesser Slave Lake is the other. It's about 30 per cent below the average, 28,807.

In assessing, at least part of the issue of urban-rural is this notion of special districts, districts that can be more than 25 per cent below

average. What's your view generally on boundaries commissions availing themselves of the possibility of creating special districts and doing so? Then if the commission opts to use a special district, to a certain extent the question becomes: who pays the price for that special district? Electoral boundaries is a zero-sum game, right? We know at the outset what the population is. We know how many ridings there are going to be. So if there are going to be some that are much smaller, some have to be larger.

The question for us is: if we go with that idea of creating special boundaries, where are there going to be larger ridings? I think the trade-off you can see within our report is that one of the Calgary ridings, or potential ridings, has been used to provide for special districts in two other ridings. Calgary has one fewer constituency than its numbers would warrant, than its population would warrant, Edmonton has the right number that its population would warrant, and the rest of Alberta has one fewer than its population would warrant. Our decision could be seen as one in which the Calgary population has sort of given up that seat to ensure that we have two special districts. The two-part question is: what's your view on special districts generally, and if special districts are created, where does that population come from?

Ms Blakeman: Well, clearly, the legislation anticipates that there may be need of a provision that gives you the process to develop a special area. It actually gives you up to four to recognize that sparsity of population in certain areas. Actually, the legislation anticipates where it's going to be because it also gives you the stuff about, you know, "contiguous with," so it's farthest flung, essentially, on the far reaches, particularly of the north. The legislation creates it so that you can use it if you need to. Also, as always with legislation, when you're given something, what goes with it is the expectation that it's used as sparingly and as carefully as possible.

7:30

You are indicating that, well, it ends up being a bit of a negotiation, a bit of a barter that happens between trying to keep the numbers down everywhere else and using those special areas in order to reach more of a mean across the rest of province if I'm understanding you. I mean, I would have said that you've done a fairly good job with two. I'm sure glad it wasn't more than that because I think every time that happens, it creates bigger problems. You know, it would have been nice if it could have been one, but I don't know how you could have done that, so I think you've done the best you can given the provisions that you had there.

And, yes, you're right. You're going to end up with some that are a little higher. If you look, you know, most of the ones in the two metropolitan areas are higher. Very few of them are under. Most of them are over. That's where the give-and-take happened, and to a certain extent that's appropriate. You had me here going, "Please don't tear my districts apart; I'll cope with the extra population." I'm sure you heard that from other people in urban areas: we'll cope with it. Where you start to get into the disparity that I'm talking about, where we have a percentage of people that lives in urban areas and we don't have the number of seats that support that, I think there's a larger problem there.

Do I think you should put more special divisions or considerations in place in order to try and get the numbers down elsewhere? No. I think two is as high as we should go, and the next time there's a commission, it's going to be even harder because the disparity of population, the sparsity of population in northern Alberta is going to be worse.

Frankly, I think we could have all done with more constituents. I mean, looking at the number of constituents they have on average in other provinces, they're much higher than us. We could have

done it without doing that. What you're trying to do is get an equality between the different ones and, I argue, between urban and rural.

I don't think I answered your question. Sorry about that. I did the best I could.

Dr. Archer: No. That was a great answer. Thanks. In the interest of time I think I should stop there. Thanks.

Mr. Dobbie: Ms Blakeman, to the point at hand, which is the 87 seats, with respect, your calculations do not take into account the number of municipalities that are in the range of 10,000 that are part of a 'rurban' riding. We have no option but for a town of 10,000 or 20,000 to have it as part of a constituency. So when you do your math and you tell us that there are, it sounds like, at least 10 too few seats representing urban centres, I think you have failed to count the number of half-seats, the number of seats that would have a proportion of the constituents who are from a town of 10,000. I think the point you're making is understandable; I simply disagree with the mathematical basis for the numbers you've come up with.

In quickly counting up the ridings that you've talked about, you haven't talked about a number of municipalities within there that are too small for a seat on their own but would be in that 10,000 or over range. I would ask that you, if you could, have someone take a hard look at the numbers, and if you care to, you can provide us with some updated numbers. I think the fractional seats are important. If you're using 75 per cent of the population as an average and you don't use anything for seats where there's a city of 10,000 as part of a constituency, I think, again, it's not a helpful analysis. It ignores the fractional constituents.

In my view, the challenge that we've had is that we have heard clearly from the mayors of Calgary and Edmonton and now Red Deer that urban issues are so distinct that it's important that we not create urban and rural constituencies. We've heard from Red Deer: "Thank you for the offer to give us two and a half constituencies or two and a third. We'd rather have two larger ones and have MLAs represent us for now."

The parsing of the data, if you take it at too superficial a level, can draw the wrong conclusion. We have been very careful to take into account these partial constituencies that are both urban and rural. Again, I would think that if you look at that, the numbers aren't as bad as you're suggesting.

Ms Blakeman: I think you and I are going to have to agree to disagree because I'm not going to agree with you. I think there is a tremendous disparity between the value of a rural vote and the value of an urban vote, and I absolutely agree with the mayors of the urban areas that have presented that say, "Urban issues are different," and "No, we don't want a piece of our city hived off to be attached to what is essentially or quintessentially a rural area because the issues are very different, and therefore, we'll take a higher number in the city in order to keep our people together." I know exactly what they're doing. I just did the same thing with my own riding, right?

What's happening to you, especially with the collegial redistribution that the Tory caucus has become involved with, is that it's now creating even more of a problem for you outside of that Edmonton-Calgary corridor. The cities are going higher, which is pulling that population away and making it even more sparse as you move from that Edmonton-Calgary corridor out to the borders, which is once again underlining the fact that the sparse areas are in the rural ridings, and it makes those rural ridings even more valuable.

So, yeah, it's a tough time for you guys, and what you've been handed to do is very difficult. Nonetheless, there should not be

reiterated and entrenched a privilege for rural areas that exists for another 10 years. We've already had that. I gave you a demonstration of how that affects the will of the people in Alberta versus the number of MLAs that are in place.

I'm not backing down on that. I worked from your data. If you have a problem with the data, then it's in this report because that's where the numbers were. I looked at how the distribution worked and the over-under quotient that's available on page 16. Yes, I take your point that in some areas there is a town or what you would consider a small city at 10,000 people, but – I'm sorry – it's still not justifying the disparity that we have in Alberta between what a vote is worth in rural areas and what it's worth in the city.

Mr. Dobbie: Well, again just for your edification 32 of the 40 constituencies that are not special consideration are within 10 per cent of the provincial average in our interim report.

Ms Blakeman: Is that being averaged again?

Mr. Dobbie: Thirty-two out of 40 are within 10 per cent of the provincial average. Again, I'm just asking you to consider the fractional numbers when you do make that kind of presentation.

Ms Blakeman: Yeah. I'm sorry, I don't have the resources to go back and have somebody crunch these numbers. It's me. You're looking at it, and I'm back in the House. Now I find out we've got a night sitting tomorrow, so that's my life.

Thanks.

The Chair: This is our life here.

Ms Blakeman: Yeah, I know.

The Chair: Allyson.

Ms Jeffs: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you very much, Ms Blakeman, for highlighting the issues, as you know, on the urban-rural split. The way we as the commission have chosen to look at this with that rest of Alberta, we've been hearing some feedback that that's creating some problems. It includes constituencies that are double digit above quotient and some that are double digit below, and then, lo and behold, when you average that, you're very close to the average.

On your point on the dilemma that the cities are facing, just to add to what my colleague Peter Dobbie has said with respect to Red Deer, they have come to us and asked us to have two urban seats in the neighbourhood of 10 per cent each above rather than be hived off. We, you know, sort of understand from them that that is very much their preference, but again it starts to feed that inequity with respect to the others.

On the issue of special consideration ridings – and, you know, I lived in Calgary for a long time, so I understand how everything affects Calgary – when I drafted the minority report and looked at adding two seats to Edmonton and reducing rural Alberta by one, my thought process at that point was that I felt that there was a justification for an additional special consideration riding and that the weight of that should perhaps be borne by the rest of rural Alberta. Do you have any comment on that as sort of a principle in looking at this? In other words, an additional special consideration, recognizing that that permits a riding very much below the quotient: if you look at the rurals as a demographic in the province, should that demographic bear the freight on that?

7:40

Ms Blakeman: Well, clearly, that's how I feel. I don't think the city should bear it. It's an inequity, and I believe that that inequity was entrenched last time and was not fixed, if I can use very plain language, and I'm worried that it's going to be further entrenched this time. There are 130,000 people in Edmonton in the growth that Edmonton has had that don't get an MLA if we go with the presentation of the commission that there's only one seat in Edmonton.

You know, those special seats are very special. I think if we have to accommodate them, then they need to be accommodated out of the rural areas because that's where the population growth has declined or been stagnant. Where the growth is in the cities, so why should the cities have to pay for that?

Ms Jeffs: I don't have anything else, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much for coming this evening.

The Chair: Brian.

Mr. Evans: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you again, Ms Blakeman, for appearing. Glad to hear that you are satisfied with the changes that we made and probably the changes we didn't make to Edmonton-Centre, and thank you for the suggestions about the name.

I just want to make one comment about your assertion that we're preserving rural voting privilege. It really comes back to this whole issue of what the urban MLA can/should be representing in terms of gross numbers relative to the broader concept of effective representation, which is really what we've heard over and over again. The relative number is not the absolute factor that we should be basing our decision on. Quite frankly, it works both ways – okay? – both more than the quotient as well as less than the quotient. It's much more complex than that. What it does involve is: what is effective representation?

We have heard – and this goes back to last fall and throughout the spring as well – that there are differences. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that there are differences in the mindset of rural and urban constituents in terms of how they wish to relate to their MLAs, how they have historically related, how they feel they should relate in the future. What this commission has tried to do, each and every one of the members here, is focus on individuality, not take a broad brush and say that everything urban should be dealt with one way; everything rural should be dealt with another way: why don't we just broad brush everybody in the province because they live within the province of Alberta? I personally don't think that we've heard from very many people that that broad brush for everybody in Alberta is the right way to go.

When we are talking about number variances, it is because this commission is convinced that what choices we have made that have gone into our interim report and what will go into our final report are based on creating effective representation for each and every one of the 87 areas that we are articulating in our commission report.

I just had to say that because I'm afraid that part of your view is more oriented toward that absolute number, and that absolute number, while a principle, is not the most important principle. The courts have recognized that, and I believe our provincial legislation recognizes it as well. So it's obviously more of a comment than a question, but if you have any comments on that, I'd be happy to hear them.

Ms Blakeman: Yeah. I hear what you're saying. Clearly, I'm going to disagree with you. I think when I read some of the submissions that came from constituency associations and MLAs in

rural ridings, it reflects what they have currently. I mean, I was reading that there's an expectation that they could, you know, phone and get an immediate meeting with their MLA and chat with them face to face and things like that. Yeah, my folks would like to do that, too, but they don't get the same kind of opportunity to do that because I'm dealing with more people, and it's not possible for me to organize my representation of people in that same way. If my people had the chance to do it the way some of the rural people were talking, I'm sure they'd take it. They'd say, "Absolutely I want to be able to operate that same way and have that same kind of relationship with my MLA," but that's not what's available to me as an urban representative.

I do my best to give the most effective and thorough representation to my people, and I think I'm pretty good at it. So far the feedback's been very positive. But when I look at how I'm going to continue to do that in the future and whether it's equitable and whether my constituents or any urban constituents are going to get the same or even approaching the same level of time and consideration and representation from their MLA versus what's possible in some of the urban ridings, the answer is no, and I don't see where the justification for that is. I don't. I don't see why their vote should be more special and get them more stuff than a vote in an urban riding. I just don't see a justification for that. There's an overriding principle there, and there's a representation principle there.

I understand what you're saying to me. But I think the government did you guys a nasty by not, you know, making it clear that that was what was underlying what you were trying to deal with, and by giving you those four extra seats, you didn't have to deal with it. The problem is still there. It was there for the last boundary commissions. It's still there this time, and it'll be even worse next time. I don't see why I should back down and say that my people's vote is worth less and their time with me is worth less. I'm not backing down on that one.

Mr. Evans: Fundamentally, it comes down to you and I having a different description, a different definition of what effective representation is. I think it really comes down to that.

Ms Blakeman: Yeah, and I have to deal with a certain reality because of the choices that have been made. I have to do different things and have less resources to deal with my constituents because of decisions that have been made. I'm willing to work with what everybody else is working with; I'm not willing to have my people work with less. That's where I'm coming from.

Mr. Evans: We'll agree to disagree.

Ms Blakeman: I think we will.

Thank you so much for all of your time. I really do appreciate the effort that you individually and your families have given to this process. It's an important, important process. You can see I'm passionate about it. I don't know if your passion is still aflame, but thank you so much.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Blakeman. We'll certainly have *Hansard* to say what you've told us.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Friesacher: The next presenter is Mr. John Kolkman.

The Chair: Mr. Kolkman, since we're on *Hansard*, could you just for the record give your name?

John Kolkman

Mr. Kolkman: Yes. My name is John Kolkman, and I'm appearing tonight as an interested citizen. I thank you very much for the opportunity to make this presentation. You may recall that I did present to the first go-around. I kind of came up with a map of Edmonton, and I did see some of what I suggested sort of reflected in the map that the commission developed in the interim report.

I must say that in addressing the Edmonton boundaries, I think, you know, within the constraints that the commission had, you did a good job. I did, however, notice a mistake in the populations of – I can only claim credit for finding the mistake in the populations of the proposed Edmonton-Highlands-Beverly and Edmonton-Clareview electoral divisions. Then I think your own people found that you had also made a mistake in the populations of a couple of other Edmonton ridings.

I'm just going to address what I think could possibly, you know, rectify those particular inadvertent mistakes. With the corrected population, the proposed Edmonton-Highlands-Beverly electoral division would be 13.8 per cent above the provincial average population, and the proposed Edmonton-Clareview electoral division would only be 0.46 per cent above. This is greater than the 10 per cent variance that I think you were trying to achieve, at least in the urban ridings in the province. I think it's a variance that should be addressed and fixed simply because I think that if you look at both of those ridings, they are largely built-up urban ridings. I wouldn't expect that either would grow more rapidly than the other in coming years.

7:50

The Chair: Could I just interrupt you for one second. Have you seen Mr. Mason's submission?

Mr. Kolkman: Yes.

The Chair: And the changes he had proposed?

Mr. Kolkman: Actually, I did see that online, yes.

The Chair: Oh, okay.

Mr. Kolkman: Actually, I think I have the same view that he does of it, that the best way to fix the discrepancy in the population is to shift the neighbourhood of Beverly Heights from the proposed Edmonton-Highlands-Beverly electoral division to the proposed Edmonton-Clareview division, so essentially the new boundary would become 50th Street all the way to the North Saskatchewan River. I think his view on how to fix that is the same as mine.

I think there are a number of other reasons to do that in any case. I think that making that change also better reflects community of interest because it would bring all of the neighbourhoods in the historic Beverly district of Edmonton into the proposed Edmonton-Clareview electoral division rather than being divided between two divisions. And 50th Street is also a more logical boundary between these two electoral divisions than you would get with 36th Street, 111th Avenue, and 34th Street with the existing alignment.

I would also suggest that with none of the Beverly neighbourhoods within its new boundaries, the proposed Edmonton-Highlands-Beverly division should revert to its existing Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood name. With all of the historic Beverly

neighbourhoods within its new boundaries, the proposed Edmonton-Clareview division should also revert to its existing Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview name.

The result of this recommended change is as follows: the proposed Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood electoral division would have a population of 43,169, or 5.6 per cent above the provincial average, and the proposed Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview electoral division would have a population of 44,443, 8.7 per cent above the provincial average, bringing both ridings within the 10 per cent variance.

I also would make a few brief comments about the other incorrect population data for the proposed Edmonton-McClung and Edmonton-Whitemud electoral divisions. One option here is to not change the proposed boundaries of the affected division. You know, you might consider that because the proposed Edmonton-McClung division is made up of almost all new and rapidly growing neighbourhoods on both sides of the North Saskatchewan River. In the coming decade, Edmonton-McClung is likely to grow more rapidly in population than the proposed Edmonton-Whitemud division, which is made up of neighbourhoods that are closer to being fully developed.

However, there is another option, and that would be to have as the boundary – to basically move the neighbourhoods of Magrath, with a population of 1,566, and Mactaggart, with a 2009 population of 934, from the proposed Edmonton-Whitemud division to the proposed Edmonton-McClung division. Interestingly enough, if you did that – and I'm not exactly sure how the mistake was made – it would restore the population of the two divisions to what was originally reported in the interim report prior to the error being discovered.

Finally, just commenting on these two divisions, the commission may also wish to consider which option better reflects community of interest. Whitemud Creek as a boundary, as it is currently, likely reflects community of interest better than a boundary that follows Rabbit Hill Road and 23rd Avenue. Really, I think that either option could be done. It really depends upon how much variance, you know, the commission thinks is appropriate.

I'd certainly be happy to answer any questions on this or, certainly, any other questions that the commission may have. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Brian.

Mr. Evans: Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Kolkman. Your initial presentation to us was very helpful in terms of giving us something to begin with, and we thank you very much for that. Your further submissions are very helpful as well. I won't speak about the two specific recommendations that you've made. The one that Mr. Mason brought forward as well seems eminently reasonable to us, and we'll spend a little time on the Edmonton-McClung and Edmonton-Whitemud recommendation.

I would like to ask your comments on this issue of how many seats are appropriate for the city of Edmonton, just get your comments on that. We've had basically two positions on this: one, recognizing that if you take a look at the overall population, one more seat, 19 seats in total, is reasonable; the other, which seems to refer back to some historic issues as well as anticipated growth in Edmonton, saying that there should be two seats in Edmonton notwithstanding that the current population doesn't justify that and that we're very close to the average of 40,880. May I ask your opinion on which one of those two alternatives you'd recommend that we follow?

Mr. Kolkman: Well, in my initial submission I had indicated that I thought one additional seat for Edmonton was the appropriate number. Certainly, with the updated population data that the commission has for 2009, I think one additional seat for Edmonton, as is recommended in the interim report, is the right number.

In fact, I was a bit struck by Keith Archer's point about, you know, if you were going to use strict equality of voting, the city of Calgary should actually have another seat. As he pointed out, the reason that it doesn't is in large part because of the two special consideration ridings and perhaps a couple of other ridings that are also closer – there's really only one, I think, that's close to the 25 per cent; that's West Yellowhead. We do have to recognize respecting sort of municipal boundaries. I suspect maybe that riding will have to be adjusted next time, but I think to leave it as it is for one more considering it's geographic size – I'm talking about West Yellowhead – is probably justified.

I guess the folks in West Yellowhead and Dunvegan-Central Peace and Lesser Slave Lake owe a bit of thanks to the generosity of Calgarians. But, I mean, the numbers simply don't support, you know, two extra seats for Edmonton, only one. Edmonton does have equality of voting power when you compare its population to the average.

I guess the other argument is that if we all knew that Edmonton was going to grow more rapidly in population than the provincial average, that might be a justification. But, I mean, if you look historically, if anything, you know, the reason Calgary has tended to pick up more seats than Edmonton is that Calgary has grown more rapidly than the provincial average.

I guess suffice it to say that in my view the commission made the right call in terms of the distribution of seats.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you very much for that clarification. That's my only question.

The Chair: Allyson.

Ms Jeffs: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to follow up a little bit with Mr. Evans on: have you given any thought to sort of the overarching issue about the urban-rural vote? I think you were here when Ms Blakeman was making her representations with respect to that. Looking not just at Calgary and Edmonton but at the other seats and at the areas in the province where we do have declining populations and we are looking at drawing boundaries that will be substantially below quotient, if not 23 per cent as in West Yellowhead, certainly 12, 14, 15 per cent, do you have any commentary on that?

Mr. Kolkman: Well, you know, I have to sort of agree with Mr. Dobbie's point. Really, I personally think that from commission to commission we've kind of closed that rural-urban gap. I think you could've probably made the argument 15 or 20 years ago that there was significant disparity in voting power. If you do look at some of the rural ridings, there are also some that are – well, certainly outside of Edmonton and Calgary. Admittedly, they are, perhaps, mostly in the surrounding regions around Edmonton and Calgary, but there are ridings outside of Edmonton and Calgary that are significantly above average in population. In fact, I seem to recall that Sherwood Park with the proposed boundary would be something like 15 per cent above average in population. That's also true, I think, of some of the seats surrounding Calgary.

8:00

I think there's a certain amount of mythology that has kind of built up about the fact that there is still this huge disparity in voting

power. I think what there is, you know, in my personal opinion, just speaking as a citizen and as an Edmontonian, is probably justified if you look at the Supreme Court decision of a number of years ago. I mean, some of these ridings are huge, and they're somewhat remote in some cases, and you can't even drive everywhere in them, right? You've got to get there by plane or whatever. I personally think that in terms of the distribution of ridings, you know, whatever little tweaks and adjustments you may still wish to make, as far as the basic distribution of seats between Edmonton and Calgary and the rest of Alberta, you've gotten it largely right. That's my view.

Ms Jeffs: I have another sort of a more arcane microquestion, and that is: can you please identify for me on the map where Magrath and Mactaggart are? I'm sorry. I don't know the communities well enough.

Mr. Kolkman: Oh, okay. I guess there's supposed to be a pointer.

Ms Jeffs: We're going to challenge your technological skills, Mr. Kolkman.

Mr. Kolkman: Yeah, right. Exactly. I was told there was a pointer.

Ms Jeffs: I'm sorry. There's always a catch.

Mr. Kolkman: Let's see. Which do I push? This one?

I think, basically, in those two neighbourhoods the boundary would run along 23rd Avenue and then down Rabbit Hill Road, which I believe now also extends to the Henday. I think it does extend to the Henday. It would be Rabbit Hill Road and then 23rd Avenue, and that would go into the Edmonton-McClung riding.

If I can express another personal view, I was not a fan of cross-river ridings. At the same time, the sense I had was, you know, that both the folks from Edmonton-Whitemud, if I recall, a number of the constituency associations didn't particularly care for how much of Riverbend would have to go into Edmonton-Riverview if we didn't have cross-river ridings. So, basically, by keeping Edmonton-Riverview as a cross-river riding, you are almost forced, it seems to me, to have a second cross-river riding in the southwest quadrant of Edmonton.

In fact, there actually is another very good map that was produced by a demographer who e-mailed me a while back. There's a fellow called Alan Hall. I don't know if he presented in person. He was number 265, I believe. He did up a map for Edmonton. His option 1, which I thought was really good, like my map would have gotten rid of the cross-river ridings.

I think you are trying to accommodate, you know, the wishes perhaps expressed on the part of constituency associations and others in Edmonton-Whitemud and Edmonton-Riverview, and that's why we've ended up with the two cross-river ridings. If people in that part of the city are not unhappy about that, then I guess that's fine.

I am really pleased that you were able to rectify the situation sort of more in the east side of Edmonton. Apart from that little adjustment of moving Beverly Heights to the Edmonton-Clareview riding, I think you've come up with some pretty good, a lot clearer, logical boundaries that respect communities of interest.

I did just want to make one more comment since Ms Blakeman had brought it up about Highlands, the loss of that little piece between 97th and 101st Street. I'm glad you did that because the previous boundary did not respect neighbourhood boundaries. The boundary between Central McDougall and McCauley is 101st Street. It's not 97th Street. So you've rectified that, which is, I think, good. I believe you've followed neighbourhood boundaries in every instance in the city, so I think that's good.

Ms Jeffs: Those are my questions, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.
Peter.

Mr. Dobbie: Thanks, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Kolkman. Just briefly, it is very helpful to have someone come in who's clearly interested and experienced in the area. The challenge that I'm grappling with tonight when we're hearing the representations on the west Edmonton proposals is that we have an unscientific poll that we take when we take submissions at these hearings. In the first round we heard a lot from people associated with Edmonton-Riverview, and I'm not certain whether we have made the proper call. You've seen our report, which would see the two split constituencies, the river dividing two of them. Would you recommend to us that we go back to your proposal for west Edmonton over the one we've made?

Mr. Kolkman: Or perhaps the proposal of Mr. Hall. His option I was fairly close to what I had recommended.

You know, that's kind of a tough one, right? That's a tough one for me to answer. When I presented, I believe one of the constituency associations from Edmonton-Whitemud also presented, and I don't think they cared for what I had done with the Edmonton-Whitemud riding, which would have taken the boundary, you know, at least as far south as about 23rd Avenue and then basically put everything north of 23rd Avenue in Edmonton-Whitemud into the Edmonton-Riverview riding. I believe Mr. Hall's map does something similar. So it's really a judgment call.

Yeah, you're right. Obviously, people who are involved in the political process have, you know, an obvious interest in where the boundaries are. One of the things that I found interesting – and I haven't seen this government proposal – is that MLAs fall in love with their own ridings and with their existing boundaries, and they don't want change. I guess that's good, right? But the fact is that population shifts, and changes have to be made. In a sense, that's your job, and you try, I think, to do it in the best possible way. But we have to be careful not to see the representations of the politicians and the constituency associations as – they're the most engaged in the process. But you also have to come up with what you think are clear and logical boundaries with still somewhat minimal variances in population, right?

I saw something in the paper when I was coming over about the government saying: well, you could leave the boundaries of rural ridings roughly alone. Well, I don't see it that way. I mean, you have a riding like Airdrie-Chestermere, which if you go with 2009 populations – I can't remember how far above average it was, but it had to have been at least 50 or 60 per cent above. So you had to fix that, right? In fixing that, it has cascading effects on a number of surrounding ridings. Then I do think that in terms of some of the rural ridings you did have to make some adjustments. I think what you tried to do, what commissions have done, also the previous commission to this one, is that you've tended to bring some of the ridings that are a little bit further away from the Edmonton-Calgary corridor, you know, put their boundaries a little bit closer in to Edmonton and Calgary, where the population growth has taken place. So change is inevitable.

Having said that, you know, there's one rural riding where I did notice overwhelming concern. That was the county of Newell.

Mr. Evans: We noticed that, too.

Ms Jeffs: We picked that up.

Mr. Kolkman: Yeah. Especially when schoolchildren start writing you, maybe you have to start paying some attention.

But I did kind of wonder on that one, the new Chestermere-Strathmore riding – you know, these suburban communities are growing very rapidly – whether you couldn't perhaps adjust that boundary a little bit to the west to take in at least more of the county of Newell, perhaps all of it. I haven't worked out the percentages there. That's an example of the kind of change that I think I would make. I mean, to sort of start over again after doing what I think is a pretty credible job: I don't know if that's the best approach for the commission either.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you again. Those are my questions.

The Chair: Keith.

Dr. Archer: Yeah. Mr. Kolkman, I found both your written submissions and your oral presentations really helpful and thoughtful. I don't have any further questions. Thanks.

Mr. Kolkman: Okay. Thanks very much.

8:10

The Chair: Thank you very much. Your submissions have been very, very good, and we do appreciate them. Thank you.

Mr. Kolkman: Thank you.

Ms Friesacher: Our next presenters are Mr. Ian Murray and Mr. Richard Martin, Edmonton-McClung PC Constituency Association.

The Chair: Since we are on *Hansard* and being recorded, if you would both give your names for the record.

Mr. Murray: Ian Murray. I'm the president of the Edmonton-McClung PC Constituency Association.

Mr. Martin: I'm Richard Martin. I'm one of the board members.

The Chair: Thank you. The floor is yours.

Ian Murray and Richard Martin, Edmonton-McClung Progressive Conservative Constituency Association

Mr. Murray: Thank you. We will go through the process of referring to the document that we had submitted to you. I think it's dated April 2. But we won't follow it precisely; we'll bounce around a little bit, so bear with us.

First of all, we appreciate the opportunity to go through this with you. Richard, obviously, is very involved in our constituency association. He had volunteered to manage the first round of presentations, and we're tag-teaming this one partially because we didn't seem to do so well last time, so we think maybe two of us might have a greater impact on you than one did the last time. Richard will be interrupting, I'm sure, whenever I miss something, so we'll just go on that basis.

We do have some problems with what we saw related to the split and how the ridings are being managed between the new Edmonton-Callingwood and the sort of broad east-west riding called Edmonton-McClung. We'll walk through our reasons. It's one of those rare instances in an organization where you have absolute unanimity. At our board meetings and in all of the discussions we've had with folks we've engaged with, we've had absolute unanimity in terms of the

opposition to the proposal or the document that came forward. Particularly, there's a concern related to the nature of the new Edmonton-McClung riding and its east-west geography, going across the river and spanning some considerable distance. There are some other issues as well we'll get into.

To start with, we really do think that you have to start these things based on principles. I'm sure you've heard this before from many folks, but we do think that there are a couple of key principles that are really germane to the discussion on the issues we want to talk to you about.

First, a community of interest is important. We don't think community leagues should be cut in half. We think wherever possible the ridings should include groupings of people that have common interests.

Secondly, we do think that natural geographic boundaries should be in the first instance recognized as natural barriers and ways in which to identify groupings of people and communities of interest. The proposed approach that we see we think directly contravenes both principles.

We would like to sort of take a step back to our first presentation that Richard made, where we recognized that our riding, the existing Edmonton-McClung, has a large population. We had proposed that reluctantly we would see the easterly portions of the Edmonton-McClung riding carved off and moved to an expanded Edmonton-Riverview. This is consistent with our view now. We're articulating this now, that we actually think that in order to clarify some of these issues, you should just move Edmonton-Riverview north of the river and expand on that side of the river and create a brand new riding – well, it depends which side of the river you are, where you are – in the further southerly portions. It's actually to the east, in the area of Whitemud, where there should actually just be a new riding for that southerly portion. Allow adjustments to take place south of the river to accommodate.

Essentially, what we're suggesting is: do not have two ridings across the river. Have the various ridings adjust so that we would maintain basically the present overall configuration but with several of the ridings north of the river giving up population to allow for an expanded Edmonton-Riverview north of the river.

The areas we had offered up in the first presentation included the Patricia Heights, Rio Terrace, and Quesnel communities. They are actually basically physically separated from the rest of our riding as it stands now because of the ravine. The people in those areas shop in the Meadowlark area and have commonality of interest in the Meadowlark area. Everybody else in the riding largely focuses their community activity and their commercial activity to the west. We think that that's a natural break point, so to use the Whitemud freeway, the ravine system – it goes by different names, but it's the ravine system – between Patricia Heights and the Westridge-Wolf Willow area and the river. You'd have those sort of large geographic boundaries.

Now, we recognize that that remaining riding is considered by some to still be too large. It's about 47,000 people, we understand, even after we lose those areas. This has caused us considerable discussion within our constituency association as to how we deal with that, so in the presentation that we provided, we actually provide you with two options. We provided a high-population option and a low-population option.

We'd like to take a moment to just argue why this may be one of those cases where it may make sense to go with the high-population option going forward for the next eight years or so. That area of Wolf Willow, Westridge, and the country club would move the population roughly 4,000 people one way or the other. I think it's four and a half thousand. I think it could take us from 47,000 down

to about 42 and a half thousand. However, that area has very little commonality of interest at all with the folks on the other side of the ravine. If you took a poll of folks in that area, they would probably say that they don't feel that their democratic rights would be overly challenged if they were left in a larger Edmonton-McClung riding just because everything – where they shop, the schools they go to, the recreational areas – is all to the west.

There, frankly, just is a natural kind of commonality of interest if you could see yourself to allow a riding that has 47,000 people in it, which I understand is about 15 per cent or so higher than the target average that you have. If you see the population being a problem – really, this is based on your view of growth. You know, if you really see a boom coming, if you really think that we're going to get eight upgraders instead of two, whatever the perspective is, then we felt that we had to be reasonable and give you a second option, which is the lower population option at the 42,500 level.

Now, that option is certainly not our preferred one because the areas we're cutting off, you know, are sort of moved into Edmonton-Riverview, but that option is one that we're presenting as reasonable if that was necessary. We sort of put it to the panel that if you think that growth is a big problem, then you can choose our second choice, but realize that there are probably 4,500 people where a large portion of them would prefer you picked the first choice. I think that that's just sort of a practical reality with what we're dealing with here.

Other things we'd just like to point out as we step back and take a look at the sort of broader recommendations. We do feel that it makes sense to put the other riding in south Edmonton east of the river and to make other further adjustments at that end. That is the area with the largest growth. It avoids this sort of weird thing that's been created. You know, frankly, to expect somebody in Lessard to be going to constituency meetings down by Calgary Trail is not really very practical in today's world, and I don't think it would be, you know, an effective riding. I don't think there's any real need for you to have a riding covering that type of east-west geography. I think there is a solution that you could get to on the basis that we're speaking about.

8:20

Essentially, that's our position. There's one other thing. If for whatever reason you don't agree with anything we've said and you go back to something like what you've presented, which we'd like to reiterate we don't like, then flip the names around. Make sure that the riding where most of the existing population is retains the name McClung, and give the new kind of hodgepodge riding at the south a new name. We think that would be at least something that would make things less confusing, if nothing else. I think those are the main things.

Richard, do you have anything else to add?

Mr. Martin: Just one minor comment. Listening to Mr. Kolkman a couple of minutes ago, the proposal that we've listed as our lower population is very, very similar to his proposal and to the first go-around with the exception of one neighbourhood that flips a little bit. Very, very similar thought processes to what he presented to the first committee hearings.

Dr. Archer: Well, Mr. Murray and Mr. Martin, thanks for the presentation. I think this is a presentation we've heard already today. We had a presentation this morning by Mr. Xiao, the PC MLA for Edmonton-McClung. Then we had a presentation after dinner by Mr. Hancock, who was presenting part of the government caucus omnibus presentation to the commission. He focused on this part of Edmonton in his discussion. I'm wondering if there's

something in your presentation that is significantly different from what they have presented because I think we've been through most of the issues in those two presentations to this point.

Mr. Murray: I think there is. I don't actually have knowledge – and, Richard, I don't know if you do – of the details of those other presentations. We have spoken with our MLA, Mr. Xiao. He knows generally the thrust of the constituency association, but we did arrive at the information independently of that. I'm not aware of what Mr. Hancock's position was, but often good ideas have common sponsors. I would suggest that the big difference ours probably has is we're getting into granular detail around, you know, some specific neighbourhoods and whether these specific neighbourhoods are in Edmonton-Riverview or whether they're in the old Edmonton-McClung.

In particular, there are 4,500 people who this granularity probably would focus on. I anticipate that our MLA, David Xiao, would have sort of gone through options, but I don't know whether he conceded the fact that you have to move to 170th Street as the boundary or whether he was focused on the – it looks like we're still fighting a rearguard action, trying to keep the other 4,500 people in the Edmonton-McClung constituency rather than moving them to Edmonton-Riverview. You know, we wanted to make sure that we made the case for that.

Also, I think that we maybe are providing a little more colour around the concern with the proposed new Edmonton-McClung. As one of the people who would be part of the new Edmonton-McClung, I find it kind of untenable to try to put together any sort of community organization, you know, running across the southern part of a growing urban riding with folks that don't have much in common with each other related to schools and traffic issues, et cetera.

Dr. Archer: Right. I think that when the ministers were presenting the government caucus omnibus presentation, they had suggested it was a compendium of presentations that the constituency associations had put together. That's what led me to think that it may be either the same or very similar. Your oral description of your preferences sounds consistent with what we've heard previously.

I guess I don't really have much to add in terms of a question. I would provide you with a comment that I provided earlier, and that is that there were a couple of ridings in Calgary and this one in Edmonton in which we're looking at areas on the outskirts of the city subject to considerable growth. In this round of devising the electoral boundaries, we have put together in some cases communities or nascent communities that are geographically a bit dispersed with the understanding that over the next five years, 10 years there's likely going to be considerable growth.

These ridings will likely change in the next iteration. For now what we've done is ensure that there is a relative consistency in variances across the urban constituencies. In Edmonton, for example, virtually all of the ridings are plus or minus 10 per cent from the provincial average. Again, this is a solution that I see as transitional to a longer term solution given the demographics of the province.

We also heard that in the event that we keep with something similar to what we have at the moment, something that we've proposed, the name "McClung" may best fit in what we're currently calling Edmonton-Callingwood. We'll certainly have a conversation on that issue.

Thanks very much.

Mr. Martin: If I can comment on your thoughts. In the previous distribution there were two ridings that were left for growth, both Edmonton-Whitemud and Edmonton-McClung. I see that if the potential exists that we could use the river as the dividing line, then you would have growth in both the riding that goes along the south edge of the city as well as in Edmonton-McClung, which would be taking the growth in the west end. So instead of having all of the growth in what's proposed as the new Edmonton-McClung, you would have it in two different constituencies. Instead of having one that starts at negative 13 and grows up to and probably surpasses the average, you have two that start at close to the average and then have the growth in both of those two.

Dr. Archer: No further questions. Thanks.

The Chair: Peter.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you, and thank you, gentlemen. It's helpful to me to get the arguments laid out as you've done it. I think you've been here a while tonight. The challenge is going to be determining which change to start from. The information we've received today and likely will receive tomorrow certainly brings a lot more to my attention than I was aware of before, so thank you for the detailed presentation. I don't think there's any way that I could support a 47,000 constituency in that area if it's going to grow as well, so good luck with that.

Mr. Murray: We certainly are presenting this, that we would go with our alternative (b) before we want to go with the proposed east-west split.

The Chair: Allyson.

Ms Jeffs: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, gentlemen, for coming out this evening. I would echo Peter Dobbie's remarks about the 47,000 constituency. I think that's going to be a bit of a tough sell.

The other thing that makes it very, very difficult is that we've had so many presentations from areas outside the Edmonton-Riverview constituency who think Edmonton-Riverview should cross to one side of the river. The Edmonton-Riverview constituency seems to have a different view of it and how their community of interest works, and that is going to create some significant challenges for us, as I think you can imagine. Having said that, we've certainly heard the message that the present configuration for Edmonton-McClung is problematic for you, and I appreciate that. I appreciate the clarity of the discussion.

I really just had those two comments. I have nothing further, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you.
Brian.

Mr. Evans: Thank you, Chairman. My only comment, gentlemen – and thank you for your presentation; it was very clear – would be to again look at that Edmonton-Riverview constituency because that is a big issue for the alignment that we've created for Edmonton-McClung, let's face it. I didn't hear you say that you'd had a lot of comments from people in Edmonton-Riverview – and perhaps you didn't seek out comments from people in Edmonton-Riverview – who did have a particular issue with that constituency being on both sides of the river. The net result of that is that it's virtually essential that you're going to have another constituency that's on both sides

of the river, and you're looking at yourselves, right? Was there any attempt to engage people in Edmonton-Riverview in a conversation on that topic, anything you can add to what we've heard thus far?

8:30

Mr. Martin: In preparation for the first presentation I had an in-depth discussion with the president of the Edmonton-Riverview PC association, and his belief was that it would be better to have it on one side of the river. Now, I don't believe they made a presentation to the first go-around, and I'm not aware of their presentation, if any, to the second one. He was a strong believer in community of interest and believed that the Pat Heights-Rio Terrace portion of the current Edmonton-McClung constituency was well suited to be added to the Edmonton-Riverview constituency.

In our previous presentation we were talking about more of a McClung-centric dialogue, so we had consulted with them related to those neighbourhoods. From the discussions that I had, it was my understanding that his belief was that it would be better if the constituency was all on one side of the river because it makes it easier to deal with all the population. Now, I'm not sure what presentations have been made subsequent to that.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thanks, Mr. Martin.

Mr. Murray: Maybe if I could just point out one other thing. I think that there was a comment in one of the previous presentations that people get sort of entrenched with the existing systems and relationships, and it makes sense because they form relationships and work together on common causes to do with schools and community leagues. I think the idea that you're going to take a situation where they're on both sides of the river now and they've

learned to live with it although it's probably not normal and then you're going to go and create another abnormal situation – and the problem is not just going across the river. Where the line is drawn on 62nd Avenue, Callingwood Road, which is sort of the north-south break, you're going right through community leagues, right? There's no natural nature to the 62nd Avenue cut. To be honest, there is really no natural cut except the Whitemud freeway and major, major roads like Henday or maybe 170th Street, which is what we've defaulted to.

I think that to some extent, you know, in your effort to preserve some tradition around Edmonton-Riverview, where these folks have maybe worked hard to accommodate what is an impractical situation – let's not make another impractical situation.

Mr. Martin: Just one further comment. One of the new schools that the province is building at the current time is west of the Anthony Henday. In the way that the boundaries are proposed, the new school would be across the constituency line from the population of the kids who would be going to it.

Mr. Murray: If you take a look at the implication of that road that goes east-west, all the way along the road, from the very edge near the ravine running all the way into the Enoch Indian reserve, there are all sorts of complications where you're dividing communities and schools all down that road. It's just totally artificial.

The Chair: All right. Thank you both. We'll certainly take account of what you've presented us with.

We're going to adjourn to 9 tomorrow morning. Thank you all.

[The hearing adjourned at 8:34 p.m.]

