



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Public Hearings

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## **Legislative Assembly of Alberta**

### **Electoral Boundaries Commission**

Judge Ernest J.M. Walter, Chairman

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Mr. Peter Dobbie, QC  
Mr. Brian Evans, QC  
Ms Allyson Jeffs

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[Judge Walter in the chair]

**The Chair:** Good morning, everyone. Thank you for taking the time out to share your views with us today. I know that I speak for all of us on the commission when I say that we're looking forward to hearing from you.

My name is Ernie Walter, and I am the chairman of the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission. I'd like to introduce to you the other members of the commission here with me today: on my far right Dr. Keith Archer of Banff, next to him Peter Dobbie of Vegreville, on my immediate left Allyson Jeffs of Edmonton, and on the far left Brian Evans of Calgary.

Our task today is that we've been directed by legislation to make recommendations to the Legislative Assembly on the areas, boundaries, and names for 87 electoral divisions based on the latest census and population information. In other words, our job is to determine where to divide Alberta into 87 areas so each Albertan receives effective representation by a Member of the Legislative Assembly. How do we plan on doing this? Over the next few months we will seek community input through a province-wide consultation before developing our recommendations. Through public hearings such as the one here today we want to hear what you have to say about the representation you are receiving in your community.

In carrying out this work, we have to follow the provisions of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. It says that we are to make proposals to the Legislative Assembly regarding the areas, boundaries, and names of 87 electoral divisions. You will recognize that this means that we are mandated to propose four additional electoral divisions in Alberta, which will come into effect at the next provincial general election. We are also reviewing the law, what the courts have said about electoral boundaries in the province of Alberta and in Canada, the work of previous commissions and committees which have studied boundaries in Alberta, and the population information which is available to us.

A brief summary of the electoral boundaries law is as follows. As I've mentioned, our function is to make proposals to the Legislative Assembly for 87 electoral divisions. We have a limited time to accomplish this task. We are required, after consideration of representations made at the public hearings, to submit an interim report to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly in February of 2010 that sets out the areas, boundaries, and names of the 87 proposed electoral divisions and reasons for the proposed boundaries. Following publication of the interim report a second round of public hearings will be had to receive input on the proposed 87 boundaries. After consideration of the input the commission must submit a final report to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly by July of 2010. Then it is up to the Legislative Assembly by resolution to approve or to approve with alterations the proposals of the commission and to introduce a bill to establish new electoral divisions for Alberta in accordance with the resolution. This law would then come into force when proclaimed, before the holding of the next general election.

One way to ensure effective representation is by developing electoral divisions with similar populations, especially where population density is similar. The law directs us to use the populations set out in the most recent census of Alberta as provided by Statistics Canada, the 2006 census, but if the commission believes that there is population information that is more recent than the federal census compiled by Statistics Canada, then the commission may use this data in conjunction with the census information, and we

in fact have. We have for the city of Edmonton and other cities the 2009 data through Municipal Affairs, and we are taking that into consideration. I note that we are also required to add the population of Indian reserves that were not included in the census, as provided by the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, and for the record, where the Lac La Biche-St. Paul riding had shown initially a deficit of 20 per cent in their population, when you now include Saddle Lake, which is within the division, it brings the population deficit down to 9.5 as opposed to 20 per cent. I note that we are required to add the population of Indian reserves that were not included in the census, and we have done so.

In dividing Alberta into 87 proposed electoral divisions, the commission will take into consideration any factors it considers appropriate, but it must and shall take into consideration the following:

- (a) the requirement for effective representation as guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms,
- (b) sparsity and density of population,
- (c) common community interests and community organizations, including those of Indian reserves and Metis settlements,
- (d) wherever possible, the existing community boundaries within the cities of Edmonton and Calgary,
- (e) . . . the existing municipal boundaries,
- (f) the number of municipalities and other local authorities,
- (g) geographical features, including existing road systems, and
- (h) the desirability of understandable and clear boundaries.

10:05

The population rule in the act states that a proposed electoral division must not be more than 25 per cent above or below the average population for all 87 electoral divisions. There is one exception. Up to four proposed electoral divisions may have a population that is as much as 50 per cent below the average population of the electoral divisions in Alberta if three of the following five criteria are met:

- (a) the area . . . exceeds 20 000 square kilometres or the . . . surveyed area of the proposed electoral division exceeds 15 000 square kilometres;
- (b) the distance from the Legislature Building in Edmonton to the nearest boundary of the proposed electoral division by the most direct highway route is more than 150 kilometres;
- (c) there is no town in the proposed electoral division that has a population exceeding 8000 people;
- (d) the area of the proposed electoral division contains a [First Nation] reserve or a Metis settlement;
- (e) the proposed electoral division has a portion of its boundary coterminous with a boundary of the Province of Alberta.

It says in the statute that for these purposes the municipality of Crowsnest Pass is not a town.

This very general overview of the legislation has been added to by the Alberta Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada, and they've also provided guidance. In rulings they have agreed that under the Charter the rights of Albertans include the right to vote, the right to have the political strength or value or force of the vote an elector casts not unduly diluted, the right to effective representation, and the right to have the parity of the votes of others diluted but not unduly in order to gain effective representation or as a matter of practical necessity. These rulings as well as the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act must guide our decisions and, ultimately, the proposals that we will make to the Legislative Assembly.

Now that I've explained the law that we are guided by, we want to receive a very important part of the input, and that's your views. We believe that what we hear from you, the people who will be affected by these boundary changes, is critical to recommending a new electoral map that will ensure fair and effective representation for all Albertans.

Again, on behalf of the commission let me welcome all of you here today. Those of you who will not be speaking can still make your views known in writing by mail, fax, or e-mail.

With that background information I'll now call on the staff to call the first speaker. Each speaker will have 10 minutes to present and then five minutes for questions and answers with the commission. The commission's public meetings are being recorded by *Alberta Hansard*, and the audio recordings will be posted to the commission's website. Transcripts of these proceedings will also be available. If you have registered as a presenter or choose to participate in this morning's meeting, we ask that you identify yourself for the record prior to starting your presentation.

**Ms Friesacher:** Our first presenters are Mrs. Karen Sevcik and Mr. Allan Covey.

**Karen Sevcik and Allan Covey, Edmonton-Riverview Liberal Constituency Association**

**Mrs. Sevcik:** Good morning.

**Mr. Covey:** Good morning.

**The Chair:** Good morning to both of you.

**Mrs. Sevcik:** Thank you. I am Karen Sevcik, and this is Al Covey. We are members of the Edmonton-Riverview Liberal Constituency Association, and we'd like to thank you for giving us this opportunity to present to you this morning. We are here today to encourage the commission to retain our constituency of Edmonton-Riverview as it is with a possible expansion of our southern and western boundaries where some adjustments can be made for the Edmonton-McClung and Edmonton-Whitemud constituencies.

Riverview was first established by the 1995-1996 Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission, and it elected its first representative in the general election of 1997. It was included for review by the 2002-2003 boundaries commission. It has been in existence for 12 years and four general elections. All four elections have had high voter turnout, well above the provincial average. The most recent election saw the highest voter turnout in the province. We feel this indicates constituents' familiarity with Riverview and contributes to the stability and effectiveness of our provincial representative.

I'm just going to talk about some of our physical boundaries. We've included a map on page 5. Physically located near the centre of Edmonton, Riverview borders seven other constituencies: Glenora and Edmonton-Centre to the north, Edmonton-Strathcona to the east, Rutherford and Whitemud to the south, McClung and Meadowlark to the west. With the exception of Whitemud and McClung all surrounding constituencies meet the population criteria of 40,583 set by the commission.

The last boundaries commission used a matrix scoring system to assess the difficulty of representation with possible scores ranging from minus 18, being the least difficult to represent, to plus 18, being the most difficult to represent. Riverview and all the surrounding constituencies have favourable scores ranging from minus 9 to minus 18, so to redraw Riverview would affect all neighbouring constituencies, referred to a little bit last night as the cascading effect. To mess with one, you'd have to mess with them all.

The constituency of Edmonton-Riverview itself comprises 15 neighbourhoods, eight on the south side of the river and seven on the north. The two sides of the constituency are like mirror images reflecting each other in age, income, demographics, and issues. Primarily developed from the late 1940s to the early 1960s, the

neighbourhoods of Edmonton-Riverview are designed along similar principles, reflecting the urban design of the post World War II period. All or most have back alleys, community schools, churches, playgrounds, community halls, and parks. All neighbourhoods have easy access to our ravines and the river valley. Most neighbourhoods have space for small business services, and with two notable exceptions, Michener Park in the south and Whitehall Square in the west, all the neighbourhoods of Edmonton-Riverview are overwhelmingly developed with single-family dwellings and a handful of walk-up apartments and small condominium projects. The southern expansion of the University of Alberta will be a significant factor in the population growth of the constituency in the coming years.

Riverview is a coherent constituency defined by neighbourhoods built in the same era. As a result, the neighbourhoods have more in common with each other than with newer neighbourhoods farther from the river valley. As an example, Al lives on the south side of Riverview, and I live on the north, and although the river separates us, our mutual interests in our community have brought us here today. Another example would be that a mature river valley neighbourhood like mine in Laurier Heights on the north side would have more in common with a neighbourhood like Grandview Heights located on the south side than it would with neighbourhoods farther from the river like those near West Edmonton Mall or Whyte Avenue. The neighbourhoods of Edmonton-Riverview face similar issues: older schools, roads, sidewalks, and utility systems that need renewal; needs for a larger and growing number of seniors; traffic pressures; concerns with petty crime and security; pressures for high-density infill development; and LRT routing.

The geographic heart of the constituency is the North Saskatchewan River valley. The valley is Edmonton's most attractive and desirable natural feature, and most residents of Edmonton-Riverview live within a short distance of it. The residents of Riverview neighbourhoods are drawn together by the river and the river valley, which is a popular recreation destination. Both sides of the river valley are lined with major parks, walking trails, and recreational facilities including the Valley Zoo, the Mayfair golf course, and Hawrelak and Laurier parks.

The two sides of Edmonton-Riverview are connected by three bridges. One is a footbridge, and the other two carry pedestrian and motor vehicles. The main bridge on the Whitemud freeway is currently being widened to facilitate an even better traffic flow and will improve access within our constituency. Recent and planned expansion of the LRT system will also improve access within our constituency.

**10:15**

In conclusion, the constituency of Edmonton-Riverview should remain substantially intact. Its 15 neighbourhoods are a coherent reflection of Edmonton as it grew along both sides of the North Saskatchewan River from the late 1940s to the early 1960s. Today its mature central neighbourhoods share some of the same characteristics, interests, and issues. Its population of 36,569 is very close to the proposed average of 40,583. It has also been established by previous boundary commissions as one of the least difficult constituencies to represent. It is a well-known and well-established constituency. Maintaining its boundaries will ensure that voter turnout remains high and that contact between the constituents and their provincial representative will remain effective. Edmonton-Riverview as it now exists meets the mandate by the commission to ensure effective representation.

Once again, thank you for this opportunity to share our concerns with you today.

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

**Mrs. Sevcik:** You're welcome.

**Ms Jeffs:** Thank you very much for your presentation, Mrs. Sevcik. Riverview is presently just a little under the quotient. I believe you were here for some of the earlier hearings, where there was some talk about some redistribution and potentially new allocation in that area of Edmonton. If the constituency were to grow, did I hear correctly when I heard you say something about some possibilities on the south or the west boundary?

**Mrs. Sevcik:** Yes. Correct.

**Ms Jeffs:** Maybe if you could, you know, talk to us a little bit about that, about what might make sense from your constituency association's perspective.

**Mrs. Sevcik:** Sure. In the area of McClung, located on the west, I believe that the representative from the McClung constituency recognized that those neighbourhoods on that tip would be more familiar with Riverview. It would make sense to almost draw that straight down from 159th Street. My map is quite little; sorry. Then we thought that, actually, you could almost square up Riverview by drawing a southern boundary a little bit further west and then up north to square it up a little bit. The problem for you becomes Edmonton-Whitemud. That would be hard to divide right there. I'm not quite sure how you would do that. But certainly that tip of McClung could easily be included into Riverview, for sure.

**Ms Jeffs:** Okay. So that tip of McClung would be on the west side of the river, of the North Saskatchewan.

**Mrs. Sevcik:** Yes.

**Ms Jeffs:** Any thoughts on the other side of the river, whether any of that might make some sense?

**Mrs. Sevcik:** You could go straight along Whitemud Drive to the ravine. The problem is when you get deeper into Whitemud. I mean, the constituents of Whitemud would have to talk to you about that a little bit. It's a hard division there along roads. Maybe 53rd Avenue or further south. I'm not sure. I mean, when I took a look at it, I thought you were actually dividing a neighbourhood if you went straight through there, but I think there is some room to incorporate some of that northern tip of Whitemud. I know that Whitemud is going to be your problem with its growth in the south. You know, if you look at Riverview, I mean, it would be nice to square it up. It would be pretty on the map, but whether it's effective or not, I'm not sure.

**Ms Jeffs:** How it works on the ground is always a concern, but it sounds like there's a little bit of flexibility there if we needed to grow it a little bit.

**Mrs. Sevcik:** There is.

The other concern we have: we mentioned that around the university farms will be the proposed site for the city of Edmonton's bid for the World's Fair, and there is some consideration there for increased growth. It will be probably some student housing and things like that. So we do anticipate that Riverview will increase its own population without having the boundaries redrawn.

**Ms Jeffs:** Okay. So it's not one of those communities that we should look at as, you know, kind of having peaked in terms of its potential for growth.

**Mrs. Sevcik:** No. Not yet.

**Ms Jeffs:** Okay. Thank you. That's all I have for now.

**The Chair:** Peter.

**Mr. Dobbie:** Thank you. One question I'd have is the issue of the matrix. Just so you know, the matrix to us appears to have been information that was gathered but not heavily relied on by the last commission. It was included. We have not constructed a matrix at this time.

**Mrs. Sevcik:** Okay.

**Mr. Dobbie:** It strikes me that the relatively easy ability of your constituency to be managed would indicate, if there's going to need to be a higher percentage of people in one constituency, that it should be a constituency that would meet some criteria: close, coherent, could be represented adequately even if it was 5,000 above the quotient. So I'm not sure that ease of representation helps the argument.

We are at this stage looking at the city of Edmonton boundaries as being something that we are not planning to go outside of. Within the city of Edmonton the math does indicate at least one new riding. My impression is that you will be needing to provide us some feedback after the first report because if we are adding to the southwest, you'll be affected.

I don't know if you were here last night or if you got a copy of Mr. Kolkman's work that he did on his own.

**Mrs. Sevcik:** I did, yes.

**Mr. Dobbie:** We're not adopting that. We received it at the same time. But it's certainly something to start from. We don't have, as I think you heard last night, the updated numbers for each constituency. We expect that shortly. But we are really in the hands of people who live in the constituencies, to hear from you as to where the natural boundaries are. So even before October 13 if you can get us some suggestions.

**Mrs. Sevcik:** Sure.

**Mr. Dobbie:** I mean, I would suggest to you that most of the constituencies in Edmonton will need to be closer to that 40,000 rather than 36,000. Again, I don't think that arguing ease of representation is helping the existing boundaries.

**Mrs. Sevcik:** Okay. What we would like to say and reinforce to you is that the argument that the river is the natural boundary doesn't necessarily hold true for us. This community and this constituency as it stands now works well. You don't have to necessarily break it at the river, so don't use that as a constraint, I suppose. I think that there is room to grow Edmonton-Riverview on that southwestern border where you have overages in McClung and in Whitemud. I do think that we could incorporate some of those neighborhoods quite easily into our constituency.

**Mr. Dobbie:** Thank you. And, again, I think we'll need help figuring out where that west boundary should be.

**Mrs. Sevcik:** Yes. I agree.

**The Chair:** Keith.

**Dr. Archer:** Thanks. Mrs. Sevcik, I'd like to pursue that line of discussion just a little bit more. The proposal that we received from one of the participants last night suggested a reconfiguration of Riverview that would have the western boundary at 170th Street. Right now it seems to jog a little bit between 156th and 158th. What's your general feeling about that change, moving it further west? Also, the implication of that recommendation was that the river, in fact, would be the boundary on the east, but the boundary on the west would be 170th.

**Mrs. Sevcik:** There is room to grow the constituency further west and, of course, south. What we wouldn't like to see is our boundary broken in half by the river. In fact, we feel that our communities, as I mentioned in our report, are closer and have more similar issues along the river valley than we do as we move further away, so to keep us together as a group who are concerned about the river valley makes sense to us. Although it might not make sense on other parts of the North Saskatchewan River, it makes sense for our constituency right now as it sits. We share very much the common interests, and many people who live on the north side and work on the south side remain within their constituency. We have easy access across many of the bridges, and we don't feel that the North Saskatchewan needs to be the southern boundary of our constituency.

**Dr. Archer:** Right. Thanks. More an observation than a question, I guess, is that this is one of those constituencies that seems to fit pretty well with the population quotient for the province as a whole, and you've made a pretty strong case for there being a commonality of interests amongst these communities. It strikes me as unlikely that any changes to the boundaries would start from this constituency and ripple out. In fact, what may happen is that the changes are starting elsewhere and are rippling, which has an effect on Riverview.

**Mrs. Sevcik:** Yes. When we started to look at it, we saw that problem for you guys as well and, of course, the whole cascading effect. So I'm glad it's your job and not mine.

**Dr. Archer:** Thank you.

10:25

**The Chair:** Brian.

**Mr. Evans:** Thanks, Chairman.

Thanks very much for the presentation. Just a couple of questions for clarification. Last night when we heard from McClung, that area to your south and the west side which is now McClung and would include Patricia Heights, Rio Terrace, and Quesnell Heights: is that the area?

**Mrs. Sevcik:** Yes.

**Mr. Evans:** Absolutely it makes more sense from an access point of view because it's all from the north.

**Mrs. Sevcik:** That's right, yeah. That could easily be incorporated.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. So that's good.

Again, you see an ability to take more of Edmonton-Meadowlark

directly to the west, which I think we could manage by expanding Edmonton-Meadowlark likely to the north.

The other comment that you've made is about the possible significant population growth in the south expansion of the U of A. Are you talking about single family there, or is that multiple family?

**Mrs. Sevcik:** It'll probably be high-rise right now.

**Mr. Evans:** In the university farms area?

**Mrs. Sevcik:** Yes. It is part of the university farms area, in around the new Saville centre, where the new LRT expansion is.

**Mr. Evans:** Right.

**Mrs. Sevcik:** We understand that there have been some proposals for some high-density development in there, and I would assume it would be some student housing as well.

**Mr. Evans:** So that would be about the only area in Riverview where there's a fairly significant tract of land that could be developed?

**Mrs. Sevcik:** Yes.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thanks very much. Appreciate it.

**Mrs. Sevcik:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Karen. I don't want to mispronounce your last name. How do you pronounce that again?

**Mrs. Sevcik:** Sevcik.

**The Chair:** Sevcik. Okay. Is that Croatian?

**Mrs. Sevcik:** It's my husband's name. Yes, Croatian and Czech.

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

**Mrs. Sevcik:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Mr. Covey, thank you also for coming.

**Mr. Covey:** Well, I performed my usual job: I sit and watch the act.

**The Chair:** Well, having been in court with you, I can assure you that you've done very well just being here.

**Mr. Covey:** Well, I appreciate it.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, both of you.

**Mr. Covey:** Thank you very much. It's been a pleasure.

**Ms Friesacher:** The next presenter is Mrs. Irene Hunter.

**The Chair:** Good morning, Mrs. Hunter.

**Irene Hunter**

**Mrs. Hunter:** Good morning to all of you. Good morning to everybody else in the audience and to my co-residents of Edmonton-

Riverview. My name is Irene Hunter. I live in Edmonton-Riverview. I whispered purposely. I'm just joshing you because sometimes I don't think Edmonton-Riverview is heard as well as all the other places and ridings in Edmonton and not just Edmonton; in the Legislature, in rural Alberta.

I'm going to do something that isn't as nice and pleasant. I'm going to talk to you about the implications that the Alberta government has on me. It's different because I don't really want to do it, but I'm affected by it, and so are my neighbours.

Alberta's disproportionate riding sizes are very much an ongoing concern for me. Living in Edmonton-Riverview provides less democratic representation, causes me national embarrassment, creates an additional tax burden on me, and lessens the ability of the opposition, Dr. Taft, to do research. Oh, yes, I've become cynical, uh-huh, about Alberta politics. I truly no longer care. Like numerous other Albertans I've joined the NGOs, where I have an equal voice. That person in Peace River and myself in Edmonton: we have the same vote. I don't have a short straw.

Today I come here before the panel to share my stories and hope to influence you just a little bit so you can do something about the Alberta government and increase the representation for my grandchildren in Edmonton and for my neighbours in Edmonton-Riverview. I ask you to turn up the volume for my friend Marg, who presented at the last boundaries commission and today would've been here. That's why I'm here; not as a speaker. I sent her the last time, but she's recovering at the U of A from a stroke. She really wanted to be here. She wanted once more to present, and she thought that there was hope. But I still didn't tell her about the four additional MLAs and seats that are going to happen. I just didn't have the heart.

I am here for my granddaughter Camryn, a city girl, who I hope in 12 years, when she votes, will have an equal vote to her distant rural cousins. Yeah, ever since I moved off the farm and from my rural community to achieve a higher education, gain employment, and eventually marry and raise children, my democratic voice has been cut down. It's been lessened. I feel like I have been penalized for leaving the farm. My school chums who remain out in the rural area: well, they have a higher volume of democracy than I have.

Throughout Canada Alberta is known as PC country, and I'm not kidding you. This spring I went to an NGO conference in Hamilton, and when they introduced me, the entire audience applauded. Somebody from Alberta. "Oh, we've got a left thinker in the crowd." What they didn't know was that half of the population of Alberta did not vote PC in the last election, but they have 87 per cent of the Legislature seats. No wonder nobody in the rest of Canada hears us or they can't see us. Our voices have been quietened down. Regardless of the cheers, deep down I was embarrassed for my province. Alberta has a diversified population, but through political manipulation half of this province is invisible.

Well, let's just move on to my next complaint. I'm getting very cynical, but those disproportionate boundary sizes, when they are governing PCs, start to tug at my purse strings. Yes, my civic boundary property taxes, the educational portion, are being shared with all rural Albertans. Why? Because they have inadequate school budgets. Busing takes so much money. But I know country folk. They won't raise the mill rate. So, in essence, our city parents who drive their kids and pay for the busing passes are paying for rural kids' buses.

Well, another resentment I have revolves around our democracy becoming a dictatorship and no checks and balances that naturally occur every time a provincial government is elected: 70 years, two parties. The power both times was in rural Alberta. Rural Albertans vote as a pack. This disparity in governance has made my long-time

PC-supporting urban neighbours vote purposely for the opposition. They're true PCers. They don't even vote for them. Last year my friend Marg and I, well, we mailed every MLA individually in Alberta asking their support for a grant or lottery to support opposition research. Well, the Premier and his cabinet and all the other MLAs did not respond except for the opposition. They said that they weren't their constituents, so they weren't going to answer us. I included a letter there.

Well, in our riding, yes, we have pretty good representation. However, it's not that great. It could be a lot better. You know, we're underrepresented, but we still come out. In northern Alberta the reason I found out about this meeting was that it was advertised in rural Alberta. Even being overrepresented, they should be excited about the parliament and everything. In Wood Buffalo 21 per cent came out to vote. In Lesser Slave Lake only 26 per cent bothered voting. Well, our antiquated special boundaries considerations don't provide qualifying northern ridings with more voters, but they provide more representation.

10:35

After the last election I talked to other Albertans who were experiencing cultural pain from blood-brother politics. This summer a Rimbey lady confided in me she was told by neighbours that she displayed the wrong sign in her yard. It was a Liberal sign. She was living in PC country. Well, in her community only PCs can own land. Over the years non-PC candidates' voices have been drowned out by car horns, and some candidates have even lost jobs.

I'm not here to tell the panel that the PC philosophy is no good. No, that's not what it's about. I'm here to tell you that I believe the PCs have retained power in Alberta by giving rural Albertans an unfair advantage to retain political control in the Legislature. This is more than a rural-urban rift. This is simply governing officials choosing their voters, not the voters choosing their representatives.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Brian, do you have any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Well, thank you for your presentation. Mrs. Hunter, you heard from the two representatives from the Liberal constituency association, who did indicate that given the matrix – and they didn't question the matrix; in fact, they were supportive of the conclusion of the matrix – that notwithstanding the size of Riverview, it was not that difficult to represent. I took from their presentation that they felt that there could be easily more than the quotient, more than the average number of constituents being represented by the MLA for Riverview and still result in effective representation for the people of Riverview, which made sense to me. I take it from your presentation that you disagree with that and that, in your view, one person, one vote is an absolute and that any variance from that is contrary to effective representation regardless of other factors. Is that a correct assumption on my part?

**Mrs. Hunter:** Well, there are many considerations. When you go to the special considerations, that are even outdated now, we haven't included the high-rises into the equation of going upwards, the height. We only go this way. Edmonton-Riverview has maybe high-rises they can include for height. The demographics change there. You're asking if I think one vote, equal representation: quite close to but a lot fairer than we have now. We have too many ridings that have a small representation.

The population of rural Alberta, urban to rural, has changed to where they are under 20 per cent and we are over 80 per cent now. These demographics have changed. There have been a lot of

changes from when my grandparents homesteaded in rural Alberta, and being 150 miles away from the capital, you know, there had to be other provisions because you couldn't go talk to my grandfather. You had to use a horse then. There were so many days, and these factors came into play, but now you have phones and e-mails. I am only three blocks away from Dr. Taft's office, and I've never visited him there. What I have done is e-mailed him once, and I got an e-mail back.

So with this communication and other criteria that are being used, I believe the system is antiquated, and we need changes because I am feeling that we aren't getting fair enough representation. Sometimes it's 2 to 1. Yes, our area, Edmonton-Riverview, is easy, very easy, but we could possibly have two candidates for Edmonton-Riverview. That would even be better: one for the north and one for the south.

Let's make it a little fairer so people like me don't become cynical and just go join an NGO, where the vote is a little bit on the fairer scale. We have a problem here, and I don't want to do this, but I feel for my grandchildren and for the other people of Alberta. We've got to look at this: 20 to 80 per cent. We have – how many people? – half of the population that didn't vote Conservative last time, yet they have 87 per cent of the seats in the Legislature. This is wrong; this is not right. It's not the PC philosophy, again I'll say, that I'm against because there's a lot of good stuff there. It's just that I believe governing officials are using – staying in power, I should say.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Well, thank you.

**The Chair:** I note one thing, that you're in Edmonton-Riverview.

**Mrs. Hunter:** Yes, and I like it.

**The Chair:** And you're 10 per cent under the population of the average.

**Mrs. Hunter:** But if I stayed on my farm, you know, where we have our farm – and I'm paying taxes there – I'd have better representation, and I'm still the same person. You know, I don't see a difference.

**The Chair:** Well, ma'am, I don't think there's anything this boundary commission can do to . . .

**Mrs. Hunter:** Make me feel better?

**The Chair:** . . . make you feel better.

**Mr. Dobbie:** A comment and then a question. The numbers that we have been given include the 2009 data provided by the city of Edmonton, the city of Calgary, and some other municipalities. According to the numbers we have, 49 per cent of the population lives in Edmonton and Calgary, in those two cities. Approximately 50 per cent live outside of the municipalities. You know that we don't have a mandate to deal with anything beyond the allocation of the 87 seats. You understand that. We are required to simply divide up the province into 87 ridings, and we have no discretion to change the numbers. If this commission looks at Edmonton and Calgary and allocates the appropriate percentage of the seats there and the other percentage outside of Edmonton and Calgary – and according to our math it's either 50 or 51 per cent outside of Edmonton and Calgary – would you be satisfied with that as a first step?

**Mrs. Hunter:** I'd have to look at the maps because I want something really fair, but if you're even willing to speak to me and even to take my voice into consideration, I thank you, Mr. Dobbie. I really do.

**Mr. Dobbie:** Again, just so you know, we have not made recommendations, but certainly we've heard from the mayor of the city of Edmonton and we've heard from the representatives indicating that the boundaries of the city of Edmonton, and we believe the same for the city of Calgary, should be viewed as – the mayor here said sacrosanct. If we look at Edmonton and Calgary, I disagree with your numbers. The math that we've been provided by the municipalities shows that approximately 50 per cent of the people in Alberta live in those two cities; the other 50 per cent reside outside. So as a first step we're looking at that type of division. Well, I can assure you that it is not going to be possible to make all of the outside ridings equal, but at least the urban ridings and, I guess, the Edmonton and Calgary ridings and the rest of Alberta can be considered as a basis for dividing up the 87 seats, and certainly that's my focus.

**Mrs. Hunter:** Okay. I got my stats from the Alberta website, all of my stats, and they did say that that was the division. I guess they were taking our other cities into account, like Lethbridge, Red Deer, the other ones, just not Edmonton and Calgary. So we make up 50 per cent of the population? That's pretty good. I thought so.

**The Chair:** And you have 50 per cent of the seats.

**Mrs. Hunter:** Fifty per cent of the seats. What about the other cities? That hasn't been brought into the equation. They're not rural.

**The Chair:** The rest of Alberta has the other 50 per cent.

**Mrs. Hunter:** But they're not rural. They're cities, too. They're urban.

**Mr. Dobbie:** But, again, if you look at our material and go to the website – you're obviously web savvy – take a look. Many of those, if I can call them that, smaller urban centres have a rural component as well. It's just, again, in the very remote areas where you will see the underrepresentation.

So I do appreciate what you're saying. I'm just not certain that I agree with your 80/20 argument. I disagree with you that that's the number we're using.

10:45

**Mrs. Hunter:** Actually, it's 17 per cent for rural Alberta on the government website. I just rounded it up.

**Ms. Jeffs:** I don't have any questions, but thank you very much for your presentation. You're not the first person who's raised the issue of looking at how constituencies and votes are allocated between urban and rural constituencies, but I do thank you for that.

**The Chair:** Keith.

**Dr. Archer:** Yeah. Thanks, Mrs. Hunter. I appreciate your presentation as well. More an observation than a question: I think that one of the reasons there's some confusion is that sometimes in the discussions or presentations that come before the boundaries commission, when people aren't referring to Edmonton and Calgary, they refer to the rest of the province as rural. You're absolutely right

that that is a description that doesn't very accurately describe, you know, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat and Red Deer and Fort McMurray, et cetera. The term that we've been using in our work is "the rest of Alberta" rather than urban-rural: so Edmonton, Calgary, rest of Alberta. When one uses those categories, the discussion is very different in terms of the proportional part of the population that each group comprises and the proportion of seats. But, certainly, your position that it's very important to focus on developing seats of relative population equality was expressed very clearly, so thanks for that.

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you, Mrs. Hunter.

There don't appear to be further presenters at this time. Do we have anyone else before the noon hour?

**Ms Friesacher:** Yes, Judge Walter. There's one at 11 a.m.

**The Chair:** All right. We'll take a very short break, then, until 11 a.m.

[The hearing adjourned from 10:47 a.m. to 11:08 a.m.]

**Ms Friesacher:** Our next presenter is Ms Peggy Louis.

**The Chair:** Ms Louis, thank you for being here. We'd love to hear from you.

**Peggy Louis**

**Ms Louis:** Thank you very much. I have only a short comment to make. I was explaining that half of my house and my computer and half of my lights are out at the moment – they'll be fine again by the time I get home – so a presentation in writing I will get to you, but you don't have it today.

I am speaking for myself as an individual. However, I am a regional director for the Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta. I represent the southeast region, which would be Gold Bar, Mill Creek, Mill Woods, and Ellerslie, communities that are just bursting. I also have experience with being president: I'm past president provincially and past president of a federal constituency. I've lived in the southeast area for almost 50 years, but I have had a home and lived in an area south of Wetaskiwin, and I was part of different political groups there as well, so I can compare rural and urban quite easily.

I'm seeing that the only real problem that Edmonton southeast has is that we have a river running through Edmonton-Gold Bar, and that river is causing a dysfunction because we do not have people from the north side and the south side coming together. They don't feel that they have so very much in common, even politically, even the fact that they live in the same city. I know that in the country, no matter what, they get together, but in the city, gosh, there are some stubborn folks. That Capilano Bridge. I know it was built to make everything easier going to Rexall Place now, but it's not getting people going back and forth for things in a political sense. They aren't identifying with each other because I guess they have community interests on the north side and the south side.

So I am here to have you consider, please, when you're redrawing the lines for Edmonton, as I hope you will – there are so many new people – just bringing the northern boundaries for Gold Bar and other constituencies back on the south side of the river and going west. I think that when things run east-west on both sides of the river, they seem to function better than they do when they go north-south. I see that there are so many difficulties in something so simple.

That is the end of my presentation. Please consider east-west, not north-south. If you have questions, I would love to answer them for you if I can. I know I should be giving all kinds of numbers to you of persons from the census – and I've got census numbers at my home – but I think that's your problem. You get to tally up the numbers and organize this and that. But I think that natural boundaries like rivers have to be considered.

Thank you.

**Ms Jeffs:** Well, thank you for that presentation. We look forward to getting your written presentation as well. If, in fact, we were to do as you suggest and unite Gold Bar on one side of the river, then we may have an issue. I see that the riding is very close to the provincial average, so it would lose some population. If we were going to grow it in another direction – I'm sorry; you're suggesting we move east – how much flexibility would there be to move it south a little bit?

**Ms Louis:** A whole lot.

**Ms Jeffs:** A whole lot? So you would be pretty comfortable with that?

**Ms Louis:** Oh, yeah. You can move it south. You can move it west. I think the east boundary is where Gold Bar is, actually, and I think further south it would be Mill Woods. But you can combine. You could go south all over the place and west all over the place, too.

I don't know if you can be projecting into the future when you're putting down boundaries, but a person driving around in south Edmonton would see all kinds of new developments going on out there. I'm sure more folks are coming. They wouldn't keep building if they weren't coming. I believe in developers knowing where they spend their money. I don't always agree.

**Ms Jeffs:** All right. That's the only question I have for now. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Brian.

**Mr. Evans:** Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Hi, Peggy. It's nice to see you again.

**Ms Louis:** Hi, Brian. It's good to see you, too.

**Mr. Evans:** We have heard from others telling us about the Gold Bar issue, so it is something that we're looking at very, very carefully. It does seem to me that moving southward even to straighten up the boundary to make it consistent with the southeast boundary of Edmonton-Strathcona if there is a natural boundary there or natural street division certainly makes sense. What about moving west, as you say, on the west side of 97th Street? That would work as well?

**Ms Louis:** Towards the university?

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah.

**Ms Louis:** Yeah, that would work, too. I will tell you that the federal constituency that I was president of many years ago still encompasses that, to Gold Bar and south to the Mill Woods-Mill Creek area and west as well.

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

**Dr. Archer:** Thanks, Ms Louis. The idea that the river should be an important dividing line between constituencies has come up a few times in the presentations in Edmonton. Interestingly, the group that presented first thing this morning is in Riverview, and they took the opposite position. At least from Riverview's perspective they thought that there was a kind of unifying aspect of having the river run through the constituency rather than being a boundary to the constituency and suggested that there is a commonality of experience on both sides of the river that makes sense in Riverview. I think what you're saying is that whether that does or not in Riverview, it certainly doesn't in Gold Bar and that the river should be an important demarcation.

**Ms Louis:** With the greatest of respect, sir, I believe from my experience federally, provincially, in the city, and in the country that there's a whole lot of what doesn't happen. There is no unifying. The north side of the river, the south side of the river quite simply don't have unified parties, unified persons, unified activities, unified anything. So I'm very surprised at the representatives you had from Riverview, whatever party they're from. That surprises me a great deal because I have heard other comments.

I'm sorry. I'm speaking as an individual, and I know I have my constituencies, all four of them, who'd be quite happy to be divided up in different ways and unified in different ways. But I also know that other constituencies that live on the south side of the river and the north side would be just as happy just to be there on the south side as well and the north side. So that surprises me, and I'd like to take them on. Where are they? Sorry.

11:15

**Dr. Archer:** They're not here any longer.

I take it from your comment, then, that your response is that we should be mindful of the river as an important demarcation not only in Gold Bar but, in fact, throughout the city.

**Ms Louis:** Yes, sir. And I would think that you could still have the same number of constituencies – I know we aren't going to get that many; if we get one more, I'd be surprised – but you can stretch them out differently. I think that the last time this was done was before there was a big population boom, before there was a big anything booming in Edmonton. Bob Clark, right? Mr. Clark was a nice man, a nice politician and all that, but he worked with what he had, as you will be, too. But I am begging you, please, get that river being a boundary, and move it west if you need to.

**Dr. Archer:** Thank you.

**Ms Louis:** Thank you.

**Mr. Dobbie:** I'll ask my mother-in-law, who lives in Gold Bar, for her opinion, but I believe it's the same as yours, that the change wasn't helpful.

**Ms Louis:** No.

**Mr. Dobbie:** I'm wondering if we can move from Edmonton to the

province as a whole. You currently live south of Wetaskiwin. Is that what you said?

**Ms Louis:** No. I did for 10 years. But I've always had a home in the Gold Bar area, and I've lived in other areas of southeast Edmonton, so I'm quite familiar with it.

**Mr. Dobbie:** You've had two opportunities though: you've lived in Edmonton and outside. You know we have the ability to create up to four special ridings that can have up to 50 per cent lower population than the provincial average. In your experience would you recommend that we be pursuing up to four ridings as aggressively as possible? Do you have any suggestions for us in terms of dealing with these large rural ridings?

**Ms Louis:** I believe that the rural ridings haven't been accommodated to the degree that they should have been in the past, and they have grown, too. I believe that in the north, in the Fort McMurray area, Peace River block area, you have a whole lot of folks there that are feeling that they don't have enough time with their representatives. I think that people are feeling they're too spread out to maybe be participating together. That's one. Two, in central Alberta. Well, again, in the Red Deer area there'd be a whole lot happening there too, but I don't know if you're prepared to look at that one. Calgary and further south. I'm not familiar with the demographics that way.

Do I feel that you should be pursuing four? Yes, I do. If there's a reason to go for it now, if you can see even in the next three or four years where it's going to be there, yes, I believe you're obliged to pursue the four.

**Mr. Dobbie:** Thank you.

**Ms Louis:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Any further questions?

If not, thank you very much, Ms Louis. I take it that we will be getting a written submission?

**Ms Louis:** Yes, sir, you will. My computer and I apologize. My brother, who is a fraternity brother of Mr. Evans and who was helping me with my electricity, disconnected everything, and now I've got an electrician's bill to repair what he was helping me with.

**The Chair:** All right. We won't ask you to name your brother, but we look forward to receiving your written submission.

**Ms Louis:** Thank you, sir. Thank you, all of you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

All right. We're then going to adjourn until 2, and we'll be back at 2 o'clock.

[The hearing adjourned at 11:19 a.m.]



