



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

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Electoral Boundaries Commission

Judge Ernest J.M. Walter, Chairman

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Brian Evans, QC
Allyson Jeffs

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Brian Mason, MLA, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood
Lorne Olsvik, Councillor, Lac Ste. Anne County,
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[Judge Walter in the chair]

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

My name is Ernie Walter, and I'm the chairman of the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission. I'd like to introduce you to the other members of the commission here with me today: to 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 end, Brian Evans of Calgary.

Our task is that we have been directed by legislation to make recommendations to the Legislative Assembly on the areas, boundaries, and names for 87 electoral divisions, which is four more than at present, 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 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 the boundaries in Alberta, and the population information which is available to us.

A brief summary of the electoral boundaries law. As I've said, we are to make proposals to the Legislative Assembly for 87 electoral divisions. We have a limited time to accomplish this. We are required, after consideration of representations made at public hearings, to submit an interim report to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly by 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 held 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 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 do have that information for the city of Edmonton, the city of Calgary, and

other areas. 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.

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.

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 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 goes on to say that for these purposes the municipality of Crowsnest Pass is not a town.

2:05

That's a very general overview of the legislation, but the Alberta Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada have also provided guidance. In ruling, 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 make to the Legislative Assembly.

Now that I've explained the law that we are guided by, we want to receive some very important input, which is 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 you here today. For those of you who will not be speaking, you can still make your views known in writing by mail, fax, or e-mail.

With that background information I will 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 website. Transcripts of these proceedings will also be available. If you have registered as a presenter or choose to participate this afternoon, we ask you to identify yourself for the record prior to starting your presentation.

Ms Friesacher: Lorne Olsvik will be our first presenter.

The Chair: I did see him earlier there. Perhaps we should go to the second one.

Ms Friesacher: Next is Joe Yurkovich.

The Chair: All right. I believe one of them is just coming now. We need a short adjournment, and I believe we will have one of those people because I did see them here earlier.

[The hearing adjourned from 2:09 p.m. to 2:11 p.m.]

The Chair: If you would be so kind for the *Hansard* just to give your name and the area that you're speaking for.

Lorne Olsvik, Councillor
Lac Ste. Anne County
Whitecourt-Ste. Anne
Progressive Conservative Constituency Association

Mr. Olsvik: Thank you. My name is Lorne Olsvik. I'm from Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

The Chair: All right, Lorne. Thank you for being here, and we'd like to hear from you.

Mr. Olsvik: Thank you, Your Honour, and good afternoon, lady and gentlemen. It's nice to see some familiar faces. It's a great day in Alberta when it's 31 degrees out there in the middle of September or late September. I'm a gardener, and I'll tell you that it's been a tough year gardening this year, with 35 days in between frosts, but, you know, we'll take the good fall.

This afternoon I'm here to present for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne. I've got two hats I wear. I'm a county councillor with Lac Ste. Anne county, and I'm on the executive of the Whitecourt-Ste. Anne PC association.

Just to update you, I know our numbers are down from the 40,000 average for constituencies. We're at about 35,000. We have a very long constituency, stretching from west of Whitecourt to the boundaries of the fifth meridian. We have three counties: Woodlands, Yellowhead, and Lac Ste. Anne. In the county we have three towns: Whitecourt, Mayerthorpe, and Onoway. We have 12 summer villages.

The constituency is quite a bit different. In the west end of our constituency is oil and gas. In the east end and the middle of it is agriculture, in the Mayerthorpe area. The east end of our constituency has a large gravel footprint. Although we don't have people chaining themselves to the gravel trucks yet, they're getting very close, but our MLA has done yeoman service in the environmental community. It also is our lakes community. On the east end of our county is a high subdivision area, much like Rocky View. We have a very high commuter population to Edmonton and also to the power plants in the Wabamun area. We have three major power plants, and a lot of the residents in those areas live in country residential subdivisions supplying labour and services to those plants either in construction or in the maintenance and operation.

The 12 summer villages are a huge shadow population for our area. We have seven major lakes in the area, and we have 12 summer villages. It does present five months of challenges, not only for the counties and the municipalities, to deliver those services. The MLA has had a lot of chores because of water conditions, lake conditions, boating conditions. We don't have a provincial park on any of them. We do have a lot of challenges, and there are a lot of questions always asked of our MLA from other MLAs in the city, so there are a lot of tasks that he has to perform.

We are working very well. I want to say that we do work with our neighbours quite well throughout the whole constituency, and George has done a great job of trying to harmonize and trying to, you know, deliver the goods back to the community. We build strong teams of seniors' foundations, our health care, our education systems. As well, we've got a good relationship with our First Nations. Our First Nations, being Alexis, have two footprints of land, one right on Lac Ste. Anne and one where they operate a money-making casino west of Whitecourt on a 5,000-acre parcel of land that was a land-claim settlement. The chief and band have worked very well and closely with our MLA, and even though there are federal-provincial issues, he always tries to mitigate in between and ensure that they're treated as all Albertans should be treated.

We also have an aboriginal/Métis community in Lac Ste. Anne Mission, which is one of the oldest in the province, and every year we have 50,000 First Nations from across North America. It is quite an event. It's a two-week event, but it lasts for a month.

I know that there are a number of challenges to provide services in all those areas. Transportation is a big issue, but our constituency is about water. We're on two major watersheds, the Athabasca and the Saskatchewan. The watershed and its footprint is about halfway in between. It is significant because with the land-use framework and the planning in our area, water is a tremendous issue, especially around the aggregate mining and the mining of that aggregate in the water. It's of concern. Again, our MLA has always been involved in this, and he's always had the provincial departments. So it's taken a lot of time.

With the size of the constituency, the varied population, and its groups it's a tough job. Going from legion to legion, to Boys and Girls clubs, parent groups, and Friends of the Earth and watershed groups that he has to participate in – and he's expected at all of them – I can tell you that George isn't getting too much weight put on. He's pretty lean and mean because he's always on the go.

You know, we do recognize that population is one thing, but expanding that population and where it goes to in the constituency – we are growing; there's no question. On the east end of the county of Lac Ste. Anne, which is the largest entity, we've seen a number of developments, and we've seen a number of lake developments on that water. When it comes to water, people are just attracted to water. We have a number of bare-land condominium projects that are going into those areas, and we have probably 1,200 new properties that are either finished, under construction, or up for sale. There is an economic downturn, but we've been progressing quite a long ways. We are bringing regional water into the area. We expect some significant development because water and the use of those lake communities will attract more people at a greater frequency. Again, a lot of it is a shadow population; these are not permanent residents. We're hoping to get more permanent residents in those areas. The properties are there, the houses are there, but under the provincial voting rights we can't count them although if you took a look at the voting roster at a summer village, where they're allowed to vote in two locales, at their Edmonton or Calgary properties or at their summer village, they're allowed to. If those numbers were taken into consideration, we would be far above the provincial average.

As well, we have numerous large campgrounds, and these campgrounds have turned. With the economic situation in Alberta they're moving in their fifth wheels, and they're parking them there as a 12-month stall. So here we now have another shadow population in trailers and modulars; I guess they call them park models. They're moving them into these trailer parks, and that is significant as well. I believe that at last count there were 1,500 campground stalls with permanent structures.

So, you know, I do see that our constituency has been growing. I mean, I don't know the provincial numbers because all of Alberta has been growing in the urban population. Have we kept up to those same balances? Probably not, but we do have a pretty good future in that growth rate. You know, we work well, we hope we remain whole, we've got a great MLA that is doing a great job for us, and we're quite satisfied.

That's my presentation today, Your Honour, and if there are any questions, I'd be happy to answer them.

2:20

The Chair: I'm sure there are, Lorne.
Brian.

Mr. Evans: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Good to see you, Ken. I still think of you as the mayor of Onoway.

Mr. Olsvik: Well, actually, Brian, excuse me. You always get me wrong. Ken is my brother. He's the golfer.

Mr. Evans: I know. It's Lorne. I know. You're both good-looking guys.

Taking a look at some of the additional population figures that we would like to use, we don't have any up-to-date information on the Mayerthorpe population increase or Onoway. I presume we're going to get that. Is it your view that we would be getting it?

Mr. Olsvik: We can certainly provide you – Mayerthorpe has a population of 1,600; Onoway is 1,000. Onoway has just moved from village to town status.

Mr. Evans: Would those populations be increasing now with the downturn or static, or are you losing some population in those places?

Mr. Olsvik: No. Actually, the property values in some of those areas are attracting people. They're not the half-million-dollar properties that you would have in the Parkland or the Stony Plain-Spruce Grove area. We're finding more middle-income and affordable housing, lower income families moving into those areas, and that's where the population is growing. We have a brand new elementary school and a renovation to a high school. Onoway has a population of 1,000, but I can tell you that every day 2,200 kids go to school there. We have a huge regional busing system, and it is growing. School enrolment this year in the Onoway area has gone up.

Mr. Evans: Just looking at the map, I wonder if you've identified any areas where you might pick up some population if we were to make some changes. I mean, is it realistic to make any change to the south of you at Stony Plain or east at Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert?

Mr. Olsvik: Well, personally, you know, we've got a lot aligned with us at Wabamun, the Wabamun area. We're involved in

regional water together and many of our fire agreements and emergency services. We work very closely with that area.

Mr. Evans: That, you know, is an issue for us, of course, trying to get closer to the provincial average. Again, just looking at the map and trying to remember the arterial roads leading into the city, are you seeing much yet about any commuters, or is it a little too far even to the eastern border for commuters to come into the city?

Mr. Olsvik: Oh, no. We're commuting. It's a tremendous commuting population. If you take a look, we have Evansburg in the constituency, and across the river two miles away we have Entwistle. I mean, those communities are fairly close, yet we're in different constituencies. Some of those lines could be straightened out. I mean, if you took a look at that far southwest corner of the constituency, if those lines were straightened out, we would certainly add a lot to the population. Going further west on highway 43, you know, as compelling as it may be, it still stretches out the constituency a lot further.

We have more in common when you start expanding on the east end because that's where the greater population is outside of those two major centres, Mayerthorpe and Whitecourt. They don't have much fringe population whereas when you get in the eastern area, where we have all the lakes and the summer villages, we have huge potential for recreational and country residential properties. Our subdivisions are swelling. As I said, we have 1,200 new subdivisions proposed in the east end of the county of Lac Ste. Anne. Now, these are new parcels that are either under construction, proposed, or completed, and they're out marketing those properties for building on. We have a huge one on Lac Ste. Anne where they've channelled into the lake and are providing 200 homes in a causeway off the lake, properties where you drive up with your boat.

Mr. Evans: So it's really quite realistic to assume that in the foreseeable future there will be a significant increase in population, relative to the population you have throughout the constituency, in that eastern part of the constituency.

Mr. Olsvik: We just finished an engineering study and a prediction for our regional water. We're bringing water in from the city because we have Wabamun, where we can't access the lake for water anymore. We tried to get groundwater and can't get a sufficient amount to supply their drinking water. So right now all the water is being trucked in from Stony Plain, from the end of the line of the capital region water. Onoway's water is over a thousand parts per million of dissolved solids. We're seeing, as those aquifers are getting challenged, the increase of TDS. The total dissolved solids are creeping up, which means that our aquifers are getting a little tighter. So surface water is a must. The Alexis band right now is taking its water from Lac Ste. Anne. We've had a green-blue algae bloom, and the mercury content has been a little high. They can't drink that water. Right now their water is only for domestic use. It's not potable water.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you, councillor. The base number that we're working from, based on the population data we have, is now 40,583. We've certainly heard from the city of Edmonton that they want to keep their boundaries as inviolable, so let's keep the constituencies in Edmonton within Edmonton and not reach out. Our quick math seems to indicate that approximately 50 per cent of the province lives in Calgary and Edmonton and 50 per cent of the population

lives outside. In your particular constituency it sounds like the three counties – and this isn't always the case – Woodlands, Yellowhead, and Lac Ste. Anne work well together. Is that a fair assessment?

Mr. Olsvik: I guess we socialize pretty good together, but when it comes down to money, you've got to remember that you've got Woodlands, and they don't pay municipal taxation other than education . . .

Mr. Dobbie: I'll interrupt you only because we have a couple more questions. My question is: if I'm thinking that we might need to add some population to this constituency now, which county is Fox Creek in?

Mr. Olsvik: Fox Creek is in Greenview. It's the municipal district of Greenview, I believe.

Mr. Dobbie: If I were to suggest that if we could stretch the county that way, are there some natural communities of interest in terms of the river or some of the other items that you've talked about?

Mr. Olsvik: Well, I guess there are some economic development links that they have with GAER, which is the Grande Alberta Economic Region. There are some links with the seniors foundation, although I believe they pay a requisition into the Lac Ste. Anne seniors foundation. They don't have a facility, but there are some links.

Mr. Dobbie: Again, I understand your preference would be to not stretch the boundaries, but we do want to try to create as many constituencies as close to the average as possible. I just wanted to get a sense of whether that's completely out of the realm of possibility from your view or not.

Mr. Olsvik: Well, the only problem is that we have one MLA, you know, and when there are lots of mouths to feed, the greater you get, the tougher it is to make things work. If we could swell those numbers into common service deliveries – the pie only gets cut up so many ways. So, you know, by adding more of the population, are we – sometimes it's difficult for that MLA.

2:30

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you.

The Chair: But could it work?

Mr. Olsvik: Well, I don't know if I'm at liberty to answer that. I don't know if that was in my scope. But, Your Honour, now that you've asked me, I'll tell you that we always make things work. Nothing is out of the question for making it work. I mean, that's what we do in rural Alberta; you just make it work. Sometimes it isn't pretty, but it's all ours.

The Chair: Allyson.

Ms Jeffs: Yes. Thank you very much for your presentation and for answering us so bluntly. I want to talk a little bit about the boundary with Stony Plain and that sort of jagged edge there if I can use that expression. We talked a little bit about growing the riding a little bit towards Spruce Grove, Sturgeon, St. Albert. Is there a particular area in terms of communities of interest and other boundaries that would make sense to enlarge the riding a little towards Stony Plain to capture some population, again without trying to add too, too much territory to your existing riding?

Mr. Olsvik: Well, I believe that history always takes precedence, and the history of the constituency is that that was once part of it. I mean, Bill Purdy was the representative, and he was our representative for a lot of years. So we do have some historical links through the constituency there.

Ms Jeffs: Any particular area where you would see us capturing that population, or as we drift it . . .

Mr. Olsvik: Well, Seba Beach, Wabamun make good sense. It's been there before.

Mr. Evans: It has a decent resident population, Seba Beach, or just, again, shadow?

Mr. Olsvik: Oh, no. The residency of Wabamun is a fairly good-sized population. There are Seba Beach, Wabamun, and again there's country residential. There are a number of summer communities as well, but those summer communities are not summer communities anymore. There are a number of them that are fully occupied and have a permanent population.

Ms Jeffs: Just one other question, if I may. When you talked about the shadow population and the summer village population and the rules which allow those individuals to vote either in this riding or in their Edmonton or Calgary riding, do you know if those folks typically vote in their main residential riding, whether that's Edmonton or Calgary? Do you have any sense as to what the typical pattern is?

Mr. Olsvik: Well, Allyson, actually it's not a provincial vote where they're allowed. Under the Municipal Government Act they're allowed to vote in two municipalities. They're allowed to vote in their city place, but they're also allowed to vote in their summer residences.

Ms Jeffs: Okay. They're not constituents, then. That's actually what I was asking. They're not constituents for the purpose of the provincial boundary, then.

Mr. Olsvik: But they have all the needs of a constituent.

Ms Jeffs: Yes. I appreciate that. We have a number of ridings in the province that have shadow populations, so I just wanted to be clear about that. I appreciate that.

Mr. Olsvik: Thanks, Allyson.

Dr. Archer: Thanks, Mr. Olsvik, for your presentation and subsequent comments. We're still compiling the data set that we'll be using ultimately for the boundaries. Brian Evans made reference to the fact that some of the communities haven't been updated; some of them have. But when I look at them today, I see that your constituency, using our expected electoral quotient, is about 16 to 17 per cent below the average and the constituency of Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert is about 18 per cent above. Then, the latter constituency is relatively small geographically, and it's right next to yours. I guess the logical implication is that if we're trying to equalize the constituency sizes as much as possible and to do that without increasing the geographical size of the constituency, that's where we should be looking. Is there any compelling reason that you would offer why we shouldn't be looking in that direction for any reconfiguration of this constituency?

Mr. Olsvik: Well, that's a good question. The answer I'd give you is that in the east side of the constituency is one of the higher populations, other than the two large centres, and it's very like minded. If you take the fifth meridian on the east side, those are all country residential right to the Villeneuve area, all the way back, the Calahoo area and Glory Hills. You cross the border, and it's all the same. It's all country residential. It's all the same types of uses. They're all commuting into the same place. They're very like minded.

The far reaches of Fox Vegas, or Fox Creek, they're a ways away. Like, that's a long ways out. I don't know if you've driven highway 43, but when you leave from the fifth meridian and you drive to Fox Creek, you know, that's a pretty long haul. I mean, I've worked up there many times. It's not the same population, the same needs base as what that east end is.

Dr. Archer: Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much. That was excellent. We really appreciate it. If you have anything more in a written fashion, we'd be pleased to hear.

Mr. Olsvik: Would you like it in a PDF file, digital format? We can have all the information presented. I did review it, but I'm not good at reading it out.

The Chair: I think that would be excellent. If you just check with the people at the back there, they can give you the addresses and everything for it.

Mr. Olsvik: Thank you very much, sir.

The Chair: I thank you. Have a good day.

Mr. Olsvik: Brian, nice to see you again.

Ms Friesacher: The next presenter is Mr. Hugh MacDonald.

The Chair: Mr. MacDonald, welcome.

**Hugh MacDonald, MLA
Edmonton-Gold Bar**

Mr. MacDonald: Good afternoon. Thank you for your time. For the record I wished to be here at 2:15, but this gentleman – obviously things are busy in Whitecourt – had to get back, so we allowed him to present. He was to present now or at 2:45, I believe.

I appreciate this opportunity to make some comments to your commission. I look forward to your first report, and I will follow that with considerable interest on behalf of our constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar. I would like to officially say on the record again that I don't think it is necessary at this time for us to be adding an additional four MLAs. We're asking nurses to work harder, doctors to work harder, who knows who else, and I think we could get by with only 83 MLAs. But that was a debate in the Legislative Assembly. The vote went forward, and the majority of members concluded that regardless of the economic conditions we can afford to have four additional MLAs.

That being said, of course, you're aware that in the last redistribution Edmonton lost a seat, Edmonton-Norwood. Not only should Edmontonians get that representation back in the Legislative Assembly now, we should get an additional seat as well. I'm looking at the information that was provided to our constituents in

Edmonton-Gold Bar through Canada Post, and the average electoral division population will be, you indicate, 37,820. If we look at this . . .

2:40

The Chair: Could I just help you there? That was before we had the municipal populations for 2008 and 2009 that were given to us. The quotient is now 40,583.

Mr. MacDonald: So the numbers have changed already?

The Chair: We've just received the 2009 numbers from the city of Edmonton and Calgary and some other places, which we are to look at and consider, and it brings the average to 40,583 for 87 seats across the province.

Mr. MacDonald: That's a significant change.

The Chair: It is. We do not yet have the actual increase in each constituency, but if you took the average population increase in Edmonton and applied it equally, I think you would find that Edmonton-Gold Bar would be . . .

Mr. MacDonald: I'm not talking about Edmonton-Gold Bar, sir. I'm talking about the entire city.

The Chair: Oh, the entire city. It's up significantly. But we have to average the figures across the province, and across the province your average is 40,583.

Mr. MacDonald: So the information that you have sent to the public is inaccurate?

The Chair: No, it is accurate. It is based on what we are bound to look at, the 2006 census. But in addition to that, under the act we are entitled to consider municipal populations as they become available. This has just become available within the last week.

Mr. MacDonald: Well, I have the census history from the city of Edmonton, which is available, indicating that the population of this city is in excess of 782,000 citizens. If we do the rough math on that, it is not unreasonable to ask that if we're going to have representation by population as a result of your commission, then the citizens of this city should have 20 different electoral divisions, not the 18 which we currently have. And that's what I'm requesting today.

The Chair: I see. All right. If you look at the average with the population updates that we've received and you just averaged it out, say, over 19 seats, it would put Edmonton's at 41,181 per division.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay.

The Chair: If you did the same for Calgary and you looked at Calgary as having two more seats, 42,606 would be the average in Calgary. If you looked at the rest of the province, it would put it just under 39,000 per constituency. I don't know if that's of assistance to you.

Mr. MacDonald: Well, I do know that according to this information that was put out in the public domain with population and variance, if I can rely on it, 12 of the 18 constituencies in the city currently are over, and for the ones that are under, it's a modest amount.

In the past, when boundaries have been redrawn, constituencies were elastic, and some of their boundaries moved, some more than others, interestingly enough. But, again, when you look at that and you look at the city map and you see the current electoral divisions, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that Edmonton-Norwood be restored and that a good home for a new constituency would be down probably west of the QE II because of the 49 per cent above the provincial average which is currently in existence in Edmonton-Whitemud. There has been a significant population growth in the south corner of the city and also in the southeast corner of the city. If you look to the north and you look at Edmonton-Castle Downs, for instance, Edmonton-Manning, Edmonton-Decore, there could be some elasticity to some of those current boundaries to reflect a new constituency which would be roughly within the number that you're talking about, 40,000 citizens per constituency.

The Chair: Mayor Mandel was here and appeared before the commission, and he was suggesting that Edmonton would expect significant growth in Edmonton-Whitemud, some in Edmonton-Ellerslie, and some in Edmonton-McClung. He expected that that would be the most significant growth. He also suggested that there would likely also be some further growth in Edmonton-Castle Downs, Edmonton-Decore, and possibly Edmonton-Manning but that the major growth would likely be in the south.

Mr. MacDonald: Well, no disrespect to His Worship, but there also is a significant development planned in the Quarters division east of Canada Place, what we know as Canada Place, where there could be up to 30,000 citizens living in that community, the downtown development east. There is significant interest – and hopefully we will see it – in LRT development. There is a proposal by the city of Edmonton, as I understand it, to increase the density of the population in the downtown areas, and that would include, of course, part of the new constituency of Edmonton-Norwood, which existed before, because that's where some of that development would occur. So not only are we going to see development increase on the edges of the city and particularly as we get the ring roads finished; the city of Edmonton has plans to encourage people to live in larger numbers in the centre of the city.

The Chair: Now, I probably interrupted your submission here, so go ahead with your submission, and then we'll ask some questions.

Mr. MacDonald: No. If you have questions now, that's fine with me, sir.

The Chair: Allyson.

Ms Jeffs: Sure. Thank you very much, Mr. MacDonald, and thank you for bringing a calculator so that you could do those quick calculations with the change of numbers. I thought that was very resourceful.

Just a quick comment. You talked about adding one MLA to Edmonton to restore the one lost and then a second seat. You've had a bit of exchange with regard to the new numbers. I would just remind you that if you have additional thoughts on that, we are taking submissions in writing up until October 13, so if you need a little more time to crunch those numbers and have some other thoughts on that, we would welcome those. That's just by way of a comment.

I wanted to ask a little bit about your constituency, if that's all right, at this point. I suspect your ears may have been burning a little bit because there has been some discussion about Edmonton-

Gold Bar and the configuration which currently splits part of the riding on the other side of the river. There's been some discussion as to whether that should be rectified, whether the riding should be bounded by the river, and I'd just be interested in your thoughts on that.

2:50

Mr. MacDonald: Well, I've gotten to know the fine people of Riverdale and the communities of Commonwealth and McCauley in the last five years, and it's a privilege to represent that neighbourhood. I would certainly continue to do so if there was an election and that was part of our constituency.

We in Edmonton-Gold Bar have always been one of the constituencies which has very elastic borders. In the previous redistribution, of course, we lost the community of Kenilworth to Edmonton-Mill Creek; we lost Idylwyld to Edmonton-Strathcona. In the boundary redistribution before that, we lost the fine community of Bonnie Doon. As a result of that, we seem to keep growing to the north. Now our constituency is from 90th Avenue in the south to well past Commonwealth Stadium in the north and from 97th Street over to the LRT tracks on the east. So it's a large constituency.

The population that you have here would be completely inaccurate. There would be at least 3,000 if not 5,000 additional voters in that community who for one reason or another do not want to have their names attached to a voters list. There is a large transient population, unfortunately, and many levels of government are working to improve it. There is a large number of homeless people who reside in our constituency, and they are not reflected in your numbers, so I would ask you graciously to consider that in your deliberations.

We have in the past seen our boundaries change significantly, and if they do not change this time, we would certainly be honoured to continue serving the community, if we're elected in the next election, that we currently serve.

Ms Jeffs: Mr. Chairman, just one more if I may. Appreciating what's been said already, that we're still getting updated data, particularly on a riding-by-riding basis, I'm showing, I think, that Edmonton-Gold Bar is just over the average, 102 per cent, but your sense is that it would be higher. Do you have sort of an off-the-cuff guesstimate? Do you think you're closer to 105 or 110 per cent?

Mr. MacDonald: The modest figure would be at least 3,000. I would say that it could be as high as 5,000. If you look at the number of people who enrolled or were added to the voters lists, there is quite a change there, and there is a lot of development occurring where the population density is increasing significantly.

That being said, before I came, I looked at some of the municipal data on a neighbourhood basis, and oddly enough I could not get that data as to who's who in which neighbourhood to balance with what was on your sheet, so there's more work to be done on that. I certainly couldn't get the numbers to balance with what the city had in their community profiles, and they had it broken down by gender and age.

If I could make one suggestion, please.

Ms Jeffs: Please.

Mr. MacDonald: The city has a population breakdown of young people between the ages of 15 and 19, and I think it would be more prudent if we broke that down from, say, 15 to 18 and that all people who were of voting age and older would be included in the same groups. In my calculation, of course, I can't calculate the young

people, and we know how young people don't bother going to the polls on election day. I think we should have a look at that and make that determination or that number standard across all the cities so that you or Elections Alberta can quickly add those numbers up because it's hard to determine who's of voting age if they're between that 15 and 19 age bracket.

The Chair: Recognizing that it may well be a good idea, we just don't have the authority to do that.

Mr. MacDonald: Well, I can understand that, and I can understand you've been reluctant to make recommendations because, certainly, the former Chief Electoral Officer made many recommendations to the Assembly in a report, and unfortunately we know what happened.

The Chair: If it was, as a number of people have asked who've appeared in front of us, that Edmonton should get, as most of the presentations I think have said, one new seat – and I think one said possibly two – where would we be looking if we were looking at putting in a new seat?

Mr. MacDonald: In Edmonton?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. MacDonald: Well, I'm still of the opinion that it is not unreasonable that we get two seats. Why should this city, who lost a seat in 2002-2003 during the redistribution, just get back what it lost then and forget about all the population growth that has occurred since? That doesn't seem fair to Edmontonians. I really think that we should have the seat that was lost in 2002-03 restored and an additional seat put down in the south-central area and adjust the boundaries around the edge of the city accordingly to reflect your plus or minus 40,000 constituents. I don't think we should get just one seat. I think it's unfair to the city to even contemplate that we just get back what was taken away from us in 2002-03.

The Chair: I appreciate what you're referring to and the difficulty that you're obviously looking at, Mr. MacDonald, but if you looked at the growth statistics from 1996 to 2001, Calgary was 110,784, Edmonton was 49,798, and the rest of the province was 58,971. The growth from 2001 to 2006: the rest of the province was 96,067, Calgary was 109,000, and Edmonton was 64,000. If we look at the population numbers which we have to date for 2009, we have Calgary at 77,262, the rest of the province at 67,687, and Edmonton at 52,067. I'll simply give you those numbers, and if you have other or better data, it would be very much appreciated. It would be very helpful.

Mr. MacDonald: Well, no one is saying that Calgary should get less. Perhaps you can refresh the committee and the audience: when Edmonton lost a seat in 2002-03 through redistribution, how many did Calgary gain?

The Chair: I believe they were given three seats.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes.

The Chair: But if you look at the average population in Calgary in the seats, it would be 42,000. If we're distributing it over 87 seats, it would be 42,606 in Calgary and 41,181. These are just numbers where, for the sake of mathematics, you look at Calgary with two

seats, Edmonton with another seat, and the rest of Alberta getting one more seat. We do have some issues in areas such as Wood Buffalo-Fort McMurray, where the population is just about double the average.

3:00

Mr. MacDonald: You have a very difficult job.

The Chair: Yes, we do, but what would be helpful is any information you have, any suggestions that you have that you could provide us with in writing. It would be very helpful. When I say that, we've had people presenting here. For instance, yesterday an individual presented a whole scheme of ridings for Edmonton – population breakdowns, boundaries, everything, including the 2009 numbers – and had them broken down with his proposed new boundaries. It certainly makes one think when one looks at it, and this is the kind of information that would be very helpful. This is my only copy, but I'm sure we can get others. I think it might be helpful if you were looking at this and then putting your ideas together also.

Mr. MacDonald: Sure.

Well, the only comment that I can make on this document, sir: it is researched and submitted by a constituent of Edmonton-Gold Bar.

The Chair: There you go. It just shows you we've got good things coming out of Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Well, I don't mean to be disrespectful to your group, but many of the people who made submissions the last time were disappointed how their research and their analysis had been dismissed, and that is for the public record. Hopefully, with your commission it will be totally different because many people worked long, prepared detailed research and analysis and presented it, and felt it was ignored. Hopefully, the presentation that you provided to me to have a look at from an interested citizen from Edmonton-Gold Bar will be considered by your group.

The Chair: I can assure you that all submissions will be considered, and we will look at everything very seriously.

Mr. MacDonald: There were many people who were disappointed in the outcome of the last.

For the record – I know I'm over my time probably – I had an interesting conversation with a group from Nova Scotia at a conference last week. They told me – and I had no idea of this – that there are four constituencies in the Nova Scotia Assembly who have special status: three that are left aside for the Acadian community and one for the community around I believe it's called North Preston in Dartmouth. They have special significance. They are guaranteed to have those communities, those four seats in the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly. I know we're debating this rural-urban dilemma and populations and how far people have to travel, but that is just an historical note.

The Chair: Yes.

Keith, do you have any questions?

Dr. Archer: Well, I guess I have maybe a couple of questions that reflect principles of electoral boundary distribution that I'd like to get your views on. One has to do with the relative amount of constituency population equality that you see as an important framework for an Electoral Boundaries Commission to work on. Now, we're working with legislation that provides us with the

opportunity to look at constituencies above or below 25 per cent of a provincial average. What would be your recommendation to us with respect to the constituencies either in the city of Edmonton or, more broadly, within the province? Would you suggest we use that full range of variation or that the variation generally be reduced to a smaller number and, if so, what that number would be?

Mr. MacDonald: I really don't think the 25 per cent variation is necessary. We spent millions and millions of tax dollars installing high-speed Internet throughout the province. I wish that in a day I could keep up to all my e-mail. I don't think a member, whether they're in High Level or down in the southwest corner of the province, where it is sparsely populated, is any different than me, and their constituents also have access to that high-speed Internet. Communication has gotten faster. There are resources for rural members, for instance the aircraft. They seem to use them at their leisure. They can get around a lot easier, probably, than I can.

To sum it up, I think that if you have one constituent, their vote should be on average equivalent to a vote somewhere else. For instance, whenever we look at Livingstone-Macleod or we look at Dunvegan-Central Peace, there shouldn't be any difference between the vote of a citizen living there in this province and a citizen living in Edmonton-Gold Bar if you have representation by population.

Dr. Archer: Thank you.

Mr. Dobbie: I'm not sure if we're behind schedule or not but just a quick question on another general principle. We're working on the assumption – and we've certainly heard from the mayor of Edmonton – that we should not be reaching outside of the boundaries of the city of Edmonton to have constituencies that include those in Edmonton and outside. Do you have an opinion on that?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Let Edmonton be Edmonton. We have some sort of urban areas like Medicine Hat – I believe Cypress-Medicine Hat, it's called – and you've got the two in Grande Prairie, that are stretched out in either direction, Grande Prairie-Wapiti and Grande Prairie-Smoky, that divide the city into rural areas. But let Edmonton be Edmonton, please.

Mr. Dobbie: Then in your calculation in your initial presentation, where you were suggesting 20 seats, you would use the most recent Edmonton population figures?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. I have a number from their census – that is, for 2009 – of 782,439.

Mr. Dobbie: That's our number. We do not yet have the numbers for the individual constituencies, but we are expecting that soon. Again, that's the number we're working from as well. The quotient is slightly higher than the one in the paper because, of course, that's the 2006 census, that we are required to look at, and we didn't have the updated numbers. So we are using the 782,000 figure for Edmonton.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, and I have the final Edmonton census 2008 results summary by neighbourhood.

Mr. Dobbie: We're waiting for it in technological form so that we can move the lines around and do the quick math.

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah. These are some of the numbers I couldn't get to balance.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.
Anything further?

3:10

Mr. Evans: Mr. Chair, just quickly. Thank you for your presentation, Mr. MacDonald. We have heard from some presenters that the difficulty of representing the transient population and the homeless population that you have identified as part of your constituency is disproportionate to the numbers and the percentage of those constituents relative to all of your constituents. Obviously, we want to make sure that all MLAs are effectively representing their constituents. I'd be curious, from your experience in the five years that you've been an MLA, if that part of your constituent population is taking a disproportionate amount of your time in your duties.

Mr. MacDonald: Well, in the five years that I've represented some of the downtown areas, it certainly has, certainly for access to social services and other government programs. There are a large number of agencies which do remarkable work to provide support for those individuals, and you try to work with those agencies. It is a lot of work.

I'll be quite candid with you: I'm resentful whenever I hear rural MLAs tell me about how many hospital boards and school boards and countless hours they have to spend getting around. That's true, but we in the city have unique circumstances as well. In fact, many of the people who would be living in our community or our constituency without a house, the ones that I talked to, were born and raised, in most cases, in sparsely populated neighbourhoods of Alberta. They have come to the city seeking help and work and opportunity just like everyone else. They all have come from somewhere, and we do have a significant workload trying, again, to help these people get access to available government programs and services and work with those agencies. I don't know where we would be without the agencies, that provide so much help that is needed for those individuals.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thanks very much for that.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. Good luck in your deliberations.

The Chair: Well, thank you so much, Mr. MacDonald. We look forward to receiving any further written submissions. It would be most helpful.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. Thank you.

Ms Friesacher: Our next presenter is Mr. Joe Yurkovich.

The Chair: Mr. Yurkovich, welcome.

Joe Yurkovich

Mr. Yurkovich: Thank you very much. Good afternoon, Judge Walter and members of the commission. Sitting there listening to you speak with Mr. MacDonald, you've cut my presentation in half because I had two submissions to make to you. The first was that I thought it was incumbent on you to use the most recent municipal census data, and it sounds as if that is something that you're very interested in doing. That was my first submission.

I'm not quite as diligent as the person from Edmonton-Gold Bar. I only did a partial analysis using the 2009 numbers. There was only so much of my partner's time that I was willing to devote to this, but

I have crunched the numbers a little bit myself. I note that when you mentioned the average size of the constituency, I also did the math. That would show Edmonton as having 19.28 seats. Certainly, 19 would not seem to me to be unfair to the city of Edmonton. This is not my submission, but just to comment on it, I also believe that you should respect the municipal boundary and keep those constituencies all in the city of Edmonton rather than going to Edmonton and some of the other constituencies.

That really is because of my second point, which is that I do believe that you should try to respect some of the boundaries, the natural boundaries. Certainly, the municipal boundary would be one, but the other significant boundary in the city of Edmonton is the North Saskatchewan River.

I do believe that those boundaries are things that should be paid attention to because they are the factors that lead to community leagues, to schools, to recreational opportunities for people. People organize themselves around those boundaries. So to have constituencies that would cross the river or that would go from Edmonton into an adjacent municipality, you're really combining people that do have fundamentally different interests. I don't believe that that leads to particularly effective representation, so I'd urge you to respect those natural boundaries.

One thing that I did in my submission, if you look at the appendix that I gave you, was take a look at my particular constituency, which is Edmonton-Whitemud. Edmonton-Whitemud for the 2009 municipal census has 71,091 people, so that constituency can almost in itself be divided into two constituencies with your average population. What I did with the map that I gave you was I added some of the constituencies that used to form part of Edmonton-Whitemud that were taken out at the last redistribution. If you combine those constituencies in with Edmonton-Whitemud, you can have two constituencies.

The southeast one would be under the average, but as I've noted – I've given you a copy from the area district plan for Windermere, and it sounds as if the mayor gave you the same information – there is significant growth planned for that area. The Windermere neighbourhood is projected to have a population in excess of 62,000 people, so you can expect that the significant and rapid growth in Edmonton-Whitemud that we've experienced is going to continue with Windermere on stream. Presently there are only 570 people that are shown in the 2009 census, but the projection is for 62,000.

I've also used, as I said, some of the 2009 numbers from the city – they are there on the city's website by neighbourhood; I understand you're going to try to access that when you get it in a form that you can manipulate – and I think that if you were to take that information and move Edmonton-Riverview to the north side of the river completely and move Edmonton-Gold Bar completely to the south side of the river, you would have constituencies that are within the average range that you've suggested. But, as I say, I wasn't able to give you all of the boundaries. I've only done my own constituency.

I think that that, in essence, is my submission, and I'd be happy to answer any questions.

The Chair: Certainly.

Ms Jeffs: Thank you very much for this submission. I'm still taking a look at your map here. This is very helpful because, obviously, Whitemud is an area we need to take a look at. I'm just wondering if you can clarify a little bit for me. I thought you said that your proposal adds in some of the communities that were taken out, and I'm wondering if you could identify some of those. It may be in your written submission, and I'm just not finding it.

Mr. Yurkovich: That's fine. If you take a look at the map, what you see running down the middle of the page are the Whitemud and Blackmud creeks, so to the left it's the Whitemud, and then on the right it turns into the Blackmud. Up at the top where it's one creek, you'll see 41, 40, 36, 35, 37. Forty-one and 40 are Grandview and Lansdowne. They were taken out of Edmonton-Whitemud in the last redistribution, so they aren't presently in. Thirty-six and 35 are presently part of Edmonton-Whitemud. Thirty-seven is Blue Quill Estates, which was taken out. Then as you continue down past 23rd Avenue, there's 38, which is Skyrattler, and 42 and 43 are Keheewin and Bears paw. Thirty-eight, 42, and 43 were also taken out of Edmonton-Whitemud in the 2003 boundary redistribution.

As I say, I looked at all of the ones that we used to have and what would happen if we added some of those back in. When I talk about natural boundaries, in 2002 I was the president of the Edmonton-Whitemud PC association, and our submission had indicated that if we were going to have our population reduced, we would want to take out some of those constituencies on the east side of the Whitemud Creek because they really have less in common with the people in Riverbend and Terwillegar on the west side, and that still is the case.

On this map I've given you how I would redraw the boundaries based on my scenario 2. I did not include Grandview and Lansdowne just because I don't think that they have as much in common as some of these other constituencies. I've left 35 and 36 in because they are still in, so that would not be a change for them to continue in one of these two constituencies.

3:20

Ms Jeffs: Okay. Your map as it exists, then, would redraw within Whitemud but would envision leaving substantially the same boundaries with the existing Whitemud and the other constituencies? I'm thinking of McClung and Rutherford and Riverview. Am I understanding that correctly?

Mr. Yurkovich: Well, definitely McClung. That's part of my submission. The best defence is a good offence, I guess. I'm telling you to at least eliminate those two cross-river constituencies. I definitely don't want to see my constituency go cross-river.

I mentioned in my submission – sorry; I didn't introduce myself. I am the Edmonton vice-president of PC Alberta, but I'm not here in that capacity. I didn't access any PC Alberta information in order to make these submissions, and I'm not doing it with authorization. I'm also on the executive of a community organization which is called TRAC, which is basically all of the communities on the west side of Whitemud Creek up to the Anthony Henday. All of those communities act together, and it wouldn't make sense to take the people on the west side – and I'm on the west side – and put us with the people in McClung because we really don't interact with them. We don't have the same interests as them. That's why both for our constituency and also for Riverview and Gold Bar I think you should leave them on one side of the river.

Ms Jeffs: Okay. All right. Thank you again for all of the detail and all of the work. We really appreciate that.

Dr. Archer: Thanks very much, Mr. Yurkovich, for the submission and the oral comments as well. Now, some of the data that you're providing in your report are being provided to us for the first time on a constituency-by-constituency basis. Are these data that have been published by the city of Edmonton that you have then subsequently identified with the various communities within the city?

Mr. Yurkovich: Absolutely. That's where I got it from, from the city census. As Mr. MacDonald mentioned, they do have a breakdown for 2009 by neighbourhood.

Dr. Archer: Right. I think those are the data that are currently being input into the software that we'll be using as well, so it's really helpful to get this early view of it. Using the census data from 2006, it was clear that Whitemud was well above the average, but when you include the growth that's taken place in Whitemud since then, it really puts an exclamation point next to the need for fundamental restructuring in that part of the city.

My only other comment, I guess, is an observation. You provided us with a proposed redistribution for south Edmonton constituencies which resulted in a set of constituencies. I'm looking on – it's a table; the page isn't numbered – I think it's page 4.

Mr. Yurkovich: Yeah. I'm looking at it.

Dr. Archer: The proposal has all of the constituencies remarkably close to our projected electoral quotient. I think the greatest variation is a couple of thousand people, but in most cases it's actually within a couple of hundred. That would lead me to infer that your recommendation to us is that certainly within the city of Edmonton and possibly beyond – and you may want to comment on that – we should really be focusing on trying to create constituencies with as close to equality in population as possible.

Mr. Yurkovich: Well, as you'll see from this page, what I did is that I really did estimate it for a number of these south Edmonton constituencies. For the ones where I had the actual numbers, that's where I've got the greatest variance. You know, I don't see a variance of a few thousand with this Edmonton Whitemud northwest as being significant because of the comment that I made about Windermere and the growth that will be experienced there.

You know, I would suggest that you try to go for the average but then leave some of these neighbourhoods together rather than maybe divide them in half. If there's a variation of a thousand or 500, that doesn't seem to me to be particularly consequential. My concern would be that you keep people together that have the same interests. I guess that's why from a personal perspective I'm not as troubled as some people are by rural constituencies having fewer people because the larger number of people that an MLA has to represent means that there is a greater variation in some of their interests. Now, I can see where you might have fewer people in some of those rural constituencies. That said, I think that it would be fair for Edmonton to have 19.

Dr. Archer: Thanks very much.

The Chair: Brian.

Mr. Evans: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thanks, Mr. Yurkovich. That commonality of interest was what I was going to ask you about. It seems to me that in Whitemud that commonality of interest lends itself to greater than the provincial average of the quotient, where your MLA is a hard-working individual but, you know, not at risk of having to access the medical system in Alberta to deal with the added burden of those individuals, whereas there are other areas in the city of Edmonton, certainly outside of the city, where that commonality of interest doesn't exist or is not nearly so obvious and getting those people in a situation where they feel that they're being fairly represented and effectively represented is much more of an issue. I take it that you would agree with that, and can I take it that your MLA would agree with that as well?

Mr. Yurkovich: I can't speak for my MLA.

Mr. Evans: That's the first time I've heard that from you, Joe, that you couldn't speak for Dave.

Mr. Yurkovich: Just like Mr. MacDonald, my MLA's position would be that he'd be honoured to represent all of these people and he doesn't want to lose any of them. I've heard him say that on numerous occasions, so I'm sure that would be his position.

If you take a look at the way that I gave you three different scenarios, the first scenario that I gave you showed all of the people in this area that I mentioned that my community organization, TRAC, represents, and that would be 45,000 people. I put that there simply because if you were to look at commonality of interest, I think the greatest commonality of interest would be between those people. But it's for you to decide, whether you want to look purely at numbers or whether you want to have a greater variation in the commonality of interest. From my personal perspective, it wouldn't trouble me if there were 45,000 people in my constituency because we all really do have, you know, a close commonality of interest.

Mr. Evans: Thanks very much.

Mr. Dobbie: Mr. Yurkovich, on the issue of the North Saskatchewan River you've strongly argued that Edmonton-Riverview should be divided along the river, and I'm sure you're aware that we have heard to the contrary from other presenters from that constituency. We did hear strong arguments as to why in their opinion both sides of the river have a commonality of interest in terms of age of development. So in making your recommendation, have you had a chance to talk to people within that constituency or representatives of community leagues? I'm just wondering: apart from your experience in your constituency have you checked out and validated that hypothesis within Riverview?

Mr. Yurkovich: Well, I can't say that this time around I have. I know that last time around, eight years ago, there were some very strong views from people in that constituency that they did not like being divided. I also know that last time around we were in danger of and did in fact lose one constituency in Edmonton, so I think that the arguments that you got that time were to a large degree in order to protect that constituency so it just didn't disappear. That's not my submission presently. My submission would be that it just resituate itself to the north side of the river. So that constituency would not disappear. It's just that the people on the south side would be absorbed into some of the south side constituencies.

I know that the only person I've had an opportunity to talk to from Riverview was the president of their PC association, and he indicated to me that this time around they weren't going to be making the submission that they needed to be on one side of the river or the other. I don't know whether they've done that yet or not. I know that there are differences of opinion on that. Last time around I did hear some very strong views that they wanted to be on one side of the river.

3:30

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Yurkovich. We appreciate your submissions, and we'll certainly be taking them into account. Again, thank you for coming here to give us your views.

Mr. Yurkovich: Thank you for your time.

Ms Friesacher: The next presenter is Mr. Brian Mason.

The Chair: Mr. Mason, welcome.

**Brian Mason, MLA
Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood**

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much. It's nice to be here.

Hon. Judge Walter and members of the commission, my submission today is going to be of a general nature. The president of my constituency association of Edmonton-Highlands will be submitting a written submission with respect to Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood specifically, but I wanted to talk a little bit about some of the broader principles today. We will provide the commission with a written submission in due course.

I think we've seen a period of very strong growth in population in our province, and that, I think, presents some challenges. The growth that we've seen has been concentrated in urban centres primarily. Calgary and Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, and Red Deer I think are the areas where most of that growth has taken place. We're of the view that at least one seat should be allocated to Edmonton. In the last commission our presentation identified the risk of loss of a seat in Edmonton, which did come to pass, and we think that this provides an opportunity to restore that seat. It looks like Calgary justifies two additional seats, and if Edmonton doesn't receive two seats, then we think that the Fort McMurray area is probably the best candidate for the fourth seat that has been mandated under the legislation.

I want to address a question that has been raised about the plus or minus 25 per cent guideline, which I believe was imposed by a court. In our view, that is generally in most cases far too wide, especially if it's applied so that there are consistently higher populations in cities and consistently lower populations in rural areas. I don't think that's the intention, but that seems to be the case fairly broadly. We would argue that plus or minus 10 per cent of the population, while it makes a commission's job more difficult, provides greater equity in the province, and we would urge the commission to try wherever possible to bring the differences in population of the different constituencies within that range.

I'll give you an example. A voter in Battle River-Wainwright, which is at about 75 per cent of the current population, has a vote that's worth twice as much as someone in Edmonton-Whitemud, which is now about 148 per cent of the average. We think that we should work harder to equalize populations. The fundamental principle of our democracy is representation by population.

Now, there are sometimes valid reasons why you want to vary from that in our system, but I think it should be minimized. We do recognize the need for exceptions for northern constituencies in particular. They're very large with relatively low population density. We were asked when we talked to the commission before whether or not we felt that the commission should establish four, which is the maximum allowed under the legislation, or perhaps fewer. In our view, even though this may contradict my first point, we believe that four such constituencies are, in fact, desirable.

My third point is that boundaries should be retained as much as possible unless there are changes that are necessary because of changes in population or obvious communities with common interests that should be grouped together, and wherever possible it's important to respect municipal boundaries when considering electoral boundaries, especially for the two largest cities. It may be difficult or impossible in some of the other smaller cities in the province, and we understand that.

A fourth point that I want to make is to draw to the commission's attention the tradition of naming electoral districts in this province

after illustrious party leaders of the various parties. For example, we have Calgary-Lougheed, we have Edmonton-Decore, and we have Edmonton-Manning, all named for leaders of different political parties. We would like to propose that the constituency of Dunvegan-Central Peace be renamed for Grant Notley. It could be, just a suggested name, Central Peace-Notley, in recognition of our leader who passed away in 1984. He was the leader of Alberta's NDP from 1968 to 1984, he was an MLA from 1971 to '84, and he was leader of the Official Opposition between 1982 and '84. So we suggest that for your consideration. Clearly, I think the commission may wish to ask the people who actually live there, but that's our suggestion.

Now, in terms of specifics in Edmonton, clearly the most obvious need for a boundary change is Edmonton-Whitemud because of its significant population growth. That could be accommodated by an additional seat and some redrawing of the boundaries of the adjacent constituencies.

In terms of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood I want to raise the question: if there is any change to the boundaries, I'd ask the commission to consider the commonality of interests that we have with some of the other constituencies on the north side of the river that went in the last redistribution to Edmonton-Gold Bar. Those communities are Boyle Street, McCauley, and Riverdale. We respectfully suggest that they have more in common, more of a community of interest with the communities in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood than they do with those in Edmonton-Gold Bar.

As a general rule we would prefer not to see boundaries cross major rivers like the North Saskatchewan River. However, we don't think that that's as important as respecting community of interest. With respect to some of the discussion with the previous presenter about Edmonton-Riverview, it's our view that there is some commonality of interest between the communities on either side of the river in that particular constituency, but that's not necessarily the case. So if possible, we think constituencies should not cross major rivers, but if there's commonality of interest, then I think exceptions can be accommodated.

Now, I want to address Calgary just very briefly. It's clear that there has been significant growth, particularly in some of the northwest parts of that city, which would in our view call for the addition of a couple of new constituencies. We also want to draw the commission's attention to some communities that seem to be included in different ridings in the city of Calgary for no discernible reason. Just a couple of examples: Calgary-Bow includes the neighbourhood of Westgate even though it's significantly removed geographically from the rest of the constituency, and Calgary-Elbow includes the neighbourhoods of Elbow Park and Glamorgan, which are significantly far apart and separated by the southern portion of Calgary-Currie. So our general principle is to avoid the redrawing of boundaries unless necessary, but obviously in Calgary the redrawing of boundaries is going to have to be more extensive than in other parts of the province.

3:40

With respect to constituencies outside of Edmonton and Calgary, we would submit that where there is a city that is too big for one constituency but obviously not big enough for two, instead of splitting it in half and adding rural areas to it, the commission endeavour as much as possible to create one full urban riding and the remaining urban fraction then could be put together. That's the model that's in place in Medicine Hat, and we would suggest that that be applied elsewhere as well, in Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie in particular. Red Deer-South is significantly over the provincial average, so that will need some attention. Airdrie-

Chestermere is also significantly over the average population, and we think that that can be accommodated by increasing the size of the Foothills-Rocky View constituency.

That's my submission to this point. I'm happy to take any questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much. It's been most helpful. Allyson.

Ms Jeffs: Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Mason. I'm just quickly looking at my notes here. You made a very helpful suggestion regarding the variance of the ridings. Although the statute permits us to go 25 per cent above or below, you've suggested 10 per cent. I just wanted to know if you would refine that to have any difference between an urban and a rural constituency, or do you think 10 per cent for either of those?

Mr. Mason: I think as much as possible plus or minus 10 per cent. I believe that we should strive for as much equity in terms of population as possible.

Ms Jeffs: Okay. Sort of related to that, I think I heard you talk about our capability to have four of these special ridings that would be anomalous in that sense in that we're allowed up to 50 per cent plus or minus.

The Chair: Minus.

Ms Jeffs: Oh, sorry. Minus, rather. Thank you. Up to 50 per cent below.

I think you said that you thought there was a need for four such constituencies, and I'm just wondering if you had identified those more specifically.

Mr. Mason: Not more specifically, but I can tell you, having travelled in that part of the province in the last several years, that there are very significant distances involved. Transportation is not always as convenient as it is in the southern part of the province. So I think that it would be useful. We're not completely wedded to four, but the commission had asked us to consider that. I guess that to state the position a little more accurately, we have no objection to four, but I think two would be – you know, it would not suit the interests of the people in that part of the province adequately.

Ms Jeffs: Okay. Then presumably, with the exception of the special areas, trying to keep things as close to the average or within that 10 per cent.

Mr. Mason: Yes.

Ms Jeffs: All right. Thank you.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you, Mr. Mason. I'm looking forward to receiving the written report as well. Our current intent is to use the most current numbers we have available, and the quick math is that just under 50 per cent of the population of the province is contained within the city of Edmonton and the city of Calgary. In terms of coming up with averages, I take it you would have no objections if we looked at the average constituency size within Edmonton and Calgary, within the special regions we create so that they're outliers, and then we'll look at an average for the rest of Alberta, excluding the zero to four special areas. It certainly makes it more possible for us to come close to that 10 per cent if we're not going to be tagged with the need to include the four special areas within the averages.

We're looking at four areas, what is the average population per constituency: Edmonton, Calgary, the special areas, and then the rest of the province excluding those. It becomes a fairer assessment when you use the example of the disparity of votes that we see right now. I think it will be helpful if we can hear from you as to where those special areas would be in your opinion. The more input we have, frankly, the better decision we can make, and it's better for us if we can get some suggestions, even if it's a hand-drawn sketch on the map with some highlighter on it. So I would encourage you to add that to your report.

Mr. Mason: Okay. I think that's probably a fair comment, that it would be much easier to arrive at the plus or minus 10 if you exclude the special areas. Of course, the growth in Fort McMurray may, you know, impact that because one of those very large constituencies now is Wood Buffalo, and if Fort McMurray would get its own constituency, that might change things.

Mr. Dobbie: That might be tough to do the doughnut and the hole on that one.

Mr. Mason: Okay.

Dr. Archer: Mr. Mason, your comments were so clear and comprehensive, I don't have too many questions to ask. But I guess I would just summarize. What I'm taking as one of the key messages is that there are several constituencies both in Edmonton and in Calgary that span across the rivers. So I'm leaving here with the conclusion that your recommendation would be that we should look pretty closely at those constituencies, whether it's Calgary-Bow in Calgary or Edmonton-Gold Bar, and unless there's a compelling reason to keep a community together, we should respect the importance of the river in drawing the boundaries.

Mr. Mason: I think it makes sense. Often the geographical boundary is what actually really creates the difference between communities because they're not connected; you have to go around to a bridge and cross. Now, there is in some cases, and if that's the case, then we have no objection to respecting that community of interest. We see that as a higher priority than geographical boundaries.

In the case, for example, of the last redistribution, when we lost Edmonton-Norwood, it required all of the constituencies to sort of move in to fill up the space. My constituency of Edmonton-Highlands included a big chunk of Norwood, but that created a vacuum that then drew Edmonton-Gold Bar across the river. I don't think the communities on the north side of the river do have very much in common with the constituencies of Hardisty and Gold Bar and some of those.

Dr. Archer: That's the message we've heard from some other presenters as well. The exception is the Riverview riding. One of the presentations actually encouraged us pretty strongly to ensure that the constituency becomes a river-focused constituency, if you know what I mean, that there are communities that are developed pretty closely around that river area, and that itself has developed the commonality. But the weight of opinion that we've heard is much more consistent with what you're saying.

Mr. Mason: I would agree with the comment with respect to Edmonton-Riverview. I think that it would be my experience with those communities that they're not much different on either side of the river.

Dr. Archer: Thank you.

The Chair: Brian.

3:50

Mr. Evans: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thanks very much, Mr. Mason. Very good input for us. Can you give me some comments about the variants in the urban areas between inner-city and suburban areas? Do you feel, as I'm beginning to feel from the presentations that I've been hearing, that the tolerance would be greater on the positive side – in other words, a greater number of constituents in a suburban urban area than in an inner-city urban area – just based on the fact of commonality of interest in the suburbs, much more so than in the inner city, and the kind of the demands on social services, et cetera, in the inner city?

Mr. Mason: I guess I would agree to an extent. If I can go back to the time when we were trying to draw up boundaries on Edmonton city council, we adopted the plus or minus at 10 per cent, and we went through that exercise a number of times because each council would vote on whether or not to go to one member per ward, and they've finally made that decision. So we went through the exercise a number of times, and it's very difficult. Obviously, the less of a discrepancy in population you have, the more difficult the job.

But it's my experience that people in professional communities, people where there's some wealth, have more capacity to express their interests clearly to their elected officials or to government, whether it be to the city or to the provincial government. People with very low incomes and low educational levels have a harder time doing that. I've represented those people for nearly 20 years, both at the municipal level and at the provincial level, and they have less of a capacity to speak up and challenge political authority if they feel their interests aren't being represented. So they need champions. They need someone to help them get organized and to speak for them in some instances as well.

On the political side, if those people are included in a constituency with larger groups of citizens that don't have the same issues, then their voices are often lost, and they don't get represented. It's certainly my concern that we do make sure that they do have a voice and that they're not divided and become fractional parts of other constituencies where the predominant population, you know, has more education, more money, and certainly more influence.

I don't know if that answers your question.

Mr. Evans: Yeah. That's a little different perspective on it, but thanks very much. That's great.

The Chair: Mr. Mason, yesterday we received a very detailed and very interesting presentation from Mr. John Kolkman that had significant detail and appears in many respects to include the principles that you've been discussing here today, and I wonder if you'd had the opportunity to see that presentation.

Mr. Mason: I haven't seen his written presentation. I have discussed this with him. He is our former director of research of our caucus, so he's intimately familiar with it, and in the last redistribution he prepared our presentation.

The Chair: He's done an excellent job, and you're welcome to have my copy; it's the only one I have.

Mr. Mason: Thank you. I'll get a copy from John. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Mason. Your input was very good, we really appreciate it, and we look forward to receiving your written submission.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much. I wish the commission all the best in their deliberations. It's a very challenging job, and I hope you're able to discharge it and everyone's satisfied. Thank you.

The Chair: So do we. Thank you, Mr. Mason.

Ms Friesacher: The final scheduled presenter is Mr. David Dorward.

David Dorward and Russ Morrow

Mr. Dorward: Hon. Mr. Walter, how are you today? Thank you for having me.

The Chair: Welcome. With you today?

Mr. Dorward: This is Russ Morrow. I'd like to introduce Russ Morrow, my good friend and neighbour. We have similar thoughts, and we've synthesized our thoughts. I'm going to make the presentation, but Russ is here in case there are any questions.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Dorward: Thank you. I was a candidate in the electoral division of Edmonton-Gold Bar in the 2008 general election. I've provided you with a map of Gold Bar. Of course, it is one of the areas that I've just heard spoken about relative to the river. I was raised in Avonmore; I've lived in Capilano for 27 years. There is no political motivation for our time today; in fact, quite the opposite. I actually received more votes in the downtown area than the other leading two candidates. The reason for that background is just by way of your understanding how I came about the thought process that I had in order to prepare these notes.

Edmonton-Gold Bar has 70 polls and approximately 14,000 registered voters. Twenty per cent of those voters are in the 16 downtown polls, 5 per cent are in the Riverdale area, meaning that 25 per cent of the area is north of the river. The balance of the polls are in the homogenous communities of Ottewell, Gold Bar, Forest Heights, et cetera. These communities represent the highest age demographic of any provincial electoral division according to the 2006 statistics, and we certainly could tell that as we went door to door.

I've provided you with an extract from the boundaries commission act only to point out the two areas that I thought best to use my time, which would be common community interest and community organizations as well as geographic features. Firstly, in the area of common interest and organizations, the communities to the south and southwest of 90th Avenue and Connors Road, the neighbourhoods immediately to the south on the map that I've provided you with – that being the Bonnie Doon area, south Strathearn, old Bonnie Doon, Kenilworth area, for example – align exactly with the areas immediately to the north, which are 75 per cent of the riding. The communities on the north side of the river do not align in common interest and organizations with the communities south of the river. For example, let me give you some of the directions that a person would need to consider if a person was representing the people on the north side of the river. Those would be homelessness, housing, crime prevention, violence, poverty. Whereas in the other communities, the 75 per cent, the issues that you run into there certainly are

assisted living, long-term care, health care, school closures. Those are the issues of the Kenilworth and Ottewell and Forest Heights areas.

The North Saskatchewan River presents significant issues for the constituency and constituents. There's no physical boundary more visible than the river, of course. The MLA's office typically and logically resides on the south side of the river, which makes transportation very difficult for people on the north. Walking to your MLA's office is impossible. Many individuals on the north side don't have cars. These people definitely deserve access to their MLA, and a north side constituency for the residents over there certainly makes more sense. In fact, these people tend to be more laterally moving, if I could say it that way, between Edmonton-Norwood and Edmonton-Centre. You know, they tend to move that way. There were times when I was on the west side of 97th Street, which is Edmonton-Centre, visiting inner-city support agencies, for example, and found that people almost migrate back and forth, and they're not even sure exactly which constituency they're in or, you know, where Capilano is, often.

Unfortunately, you know, it could be that an individual that's the MLA tends to focus on the 75 per cent and not the 25 per cent. An example of that is the city of Edmonton's great work with The Quarters area, for which I attended many, many meetings and didn't see any provincial representation there at all for those folks that were dealing with those issues. I felt for the city of Edmonton folks who were trying to get a synthesis of what to do in that area. Not only was there nobody there from the provincial government from the legislative perspective, but if there was, there would have been four of them there, which might have even been more challenging.

4:00

Another example is that the only advance poll in 2008 for the election was at Capilano Mall. When I spoke to downtown voters who told me that they couldn't vote on that day and I encouraged them to go, they had no idea how they would get there or exactly what the bus route was. It just seems like such an impossible task. When I encouraged an advance poll on the north side, of course, I was told, "Well, the area's too small," whereas if it was part of the advance poll of Edmonton-Norwood or Edmonton-Centre or Edmonton-Calder, well, then it would have been there naturally, and these folks could have just gone over.

The MLAs in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, Edmonton-Calder, and Edmonton-Centre already deal with the same kind of issues that exist in those 16 polls in the downtown area. As I've mentioned, this only frustrates attempts by the city to assist in the area. They have to liaise with so many people.

In conclusion, I would encourage and ask the commission to strongly consider removing from the Gold Bar electoral division the polls on that north side of the river, particularly those 16 in the downtown area, adding voters if necessary from areas that are more homogenous, as I've mentioned, south of the present electoral division.

That's my presentation. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dorward.
Allyson.

Ms Jeffs: Thank you very much. This has certainly come up a few times in the course of our two days here. We've heard a lot about river boundaries, and this is one that, as I say, has come up quite a bit, so I appreciate your submission and your very helpful map. We're currently updating our 2006 data with municipal data for the various constituencies. Gold Bar is a little above the provincial

average. It sounds like you wouldn't have a problem with adding to it in the areas that you've mentioned, but do you have a sense as to what the population of the constituency is right now with the updated Edmonton census data? Have you had a chance to look at or crunch those numbers?

Mr. Dorward: No, I haven't, but I would be very surprised if it's much different.

Ms Jeffs: Is that right?

Mr. Dorward: These are fairly stable areas. I don't know of any new apartment buildings that have gone into the area. There is no growth area to the east. [interjection] Oh, thank you very much. I appreciate that.

Mr. Yurkovich: It's in my documents.

Mr. Dorward: My capable assistant tells me it's 40,288, and in 2006 it was 38,700. So it has changed by 1,500 voters, in that range.

Ms Jeffs: All right. That doesn't sound like it would be too difficult to accommodate with the adjustments that you would suggest that we recommend. I think that's the only question I have, sir.

The Chair: Thank you.

Dr. Archer: Well, Mr. Chairman, I don't have any further questions. The presentation and recommendations are pretty consistent with what we've heard from a number of people. If there are strong proponents of keeping the part of the constituency on the north side of the river intact with the constituency, they've not made a strong presence at our public hearing. I take it from that that there seems to be within the community a lot of agreement that this is one of those ridings that probably should be following the river.

Mr. Dorward: I would concur.

Mr. Dobbie: I agree with Keith. We've received a proposed drawing from an interested member of Edmonton that takes the boundary down to Argyll Road as the southern boundary, along, I guess, the southeast component and then up. My question is: does that make sense to you, reaching that far south? My recollection is that it's housing all through there.

Mr. Dorward: Avonmore and Donnan are the communities immediately north of Argyll Road. Then you get up to Kenilworth and Bonnie Doon. My only concern would be that those numbers may not work because I believe that when I checked those numbers – and I apologize for not having them – I think that Kenilworth and Bonnie Doon roughly mirrored the 16 downtown polls in population. If you added, then, the Donnan and Avonmore, which is your suggestion of Argyll Road, that may go over your number, but that's just a numbers game, and it may be the way I think first sometimes. I would concur totally in the homogenous nature of that. Those communities of Donnan and Avonmore are just like Kenilworth and Ottewell in their nature, you know, in their look and their feel and their issues.

Mr. Dobbie: And it would be the same comment, that you wouldn't be expecting growth in there.

Mr. Dorward: No. Very stagnant areas. The only growth area, in fact, in the next five or six, seven years will be – Strathearn has a

housing development that has been approved that'll go forward, but it's not shockingly big.

The Chair: It would appear that if you did that, the constituency's population would be approximately 42,000, and that's removing that part north of the river and adding these two.

Mr. Dorward: North of Argyll Road?

The Chair: Yeah.
Brian.

Mr. Evans: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I think I'd just say thank you for the presentation. The map is terrific. As other commission members have said, we've heard about the problems of north of the river here, and it certainly makes sense to me to make that adjustment and, if anything, move south to keep the number close to that quotient. Thanks very much to both of you.

Mr. Dorward: You're welcome.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Dorward.

Mr. Dorward: A pleasure.

The Chair: I can assure you that we'll be looking at what you've said here.

Thank you, Mr. Morrow, for supplying the moral support.

Mr. Morrow: You're welcome.

Mr. Dorward: Thank you, commission. We really appreciate the work you're doing. Thanks a lot.

The Chair: Thank you.

There doesn't appear to be anyone else who is going to make a presentation here today. Thank you all for attending. We will adjourn, and we'll be in Calgary tomorrow. Thank you again.

[The hearing adjourned at 4:08 p.m.]

