



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Public Hearings

Westlock

Thursday, October 8, 2009  
5:04 p.m.

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## **Legislative Assembly of Alberta**

### **Electoral Boundaries Commission**

Judge Ernest J.M. Walter, Chairman

Dr. Keith Archer  
Peter Dobbie, QC  
Brian Evans, QC  
Allyson Jeffs

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### **Participants**

Charlie Ashbey, Councillor, County of Athabasca  
Corey Hogan, Executive Director, Alberta Liberal Party  
Lawrence Miller, Reeve, County of Barrhead  
Neil Pierce, Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert Progressive  
Conservative Constituency Association

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5:04 p.m.

Thursday, October 8, 2009

[Judge Walter in the chair]

**The Chair:** Good afternoon, and thank you for taking the time to come out and share your views with us today. We're looking forward to hearing what your views are.

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

Our task is as follows. We've been directed by legislation to make recommendations to the Legislative Assembly on the areas, boundaries, and names for 87 electoral divisions based on the latest census and population information. In other words, our job is to determine where to divide Alberta into 87 areas so each Albertan receives effective representation by a Member of the Legislative Assembly. Over the past few months we have sought community input through a province-wide consultation before developing our recommendations. Through 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 regarding the areas, boundaries, and names of 87 electoral divisions. You will recognize that we are mandated to propose four additional electoral divisions in Alberta, which will come into effect at the next provincial general election. This is the first time since 1983 that new seats have been added in the Legislature. We have to review the law, what the courts have said about electoral boundaries in the province of Alberta and in Canada, the work of previous committees and commissions who have studied the boundaries in Alberta, and the population information available to us.

A brief summary of the electoral boundaries law. As I've stated, we are to make proposals for 87 electoral divisions. We have a limited time to accomplish this task. 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 87 proposed electoral divisions and the reasons for those 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 that 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, which will be proclaimed before the holding of the next general election.

One way of ensuring 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 in 2006, but if the commission believes that there is population information that is more recent than the federal census compiled by Statistics Canada, then we may have reference to that data, and we have done so because we now have a considerable amount of population data that relates to 2009. For your information, based on the updated numbers from various sources, the

population of Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock is 35,852. This puts the region 11.7 per cent below the provincial average population of 40,583.

The commission, as I've said, is required to divide Alberta into 87 proposed electoral divisions by taking into account factors it considers appropriate, but it shall and will take into account 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.

5:10

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 of all 87 electoral divisions. Now, there's one exception to this in that we can have up to four proposed electoral divisions that may have a population that is as much as 50 per cent below the average population of the electoral divisions in Alberta if three of the following five criteria are met:

- (a) the area . . . exceeds 20 000 square kilometres or the total 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 an Indian 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.

As I've said, these are the exceptions, and if an electoral division is to qualify under this, it must meet at least three of the five.

Now, 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 rulings they have agreed that under the Charter the rights of Albertans include the right to vote; the right to have the political strength or value or force of the vote an elector casts not unduly diluted; the right to effective representation; 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 a general overview of the law that we are guided by, we want to receive the most important input, and that is your views. We believe that what we hear from you 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.

We welcome you here today. Those of you who will not be speaking can still make your views known in writing my mail, fax, or e-mail.

With that background information I'll now call on our 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've registered as a presenter or choose to participate in this evening's meeting, we ask you to identify yourself for the record prior to starting your presentation.

Our first presenter.

**Ms Friesacher:** The first presenter is Mr. Neil Pierce, president of the Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert PC association.

**Neil Pierce, Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert  
Progressive Conservative Constituency Association**

**Mr. Pierce:** Thank you very much for this opportunity.

**The Chair:** Mr. Pierce, could we for the record get you to give your full name just so it can be recorded?

Mr. Pierce: Sure. My name is Neil Pierce. I serve as the president of the Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert PC association, and I live in St. Albert.

Thank you for this opportunity. The constituency of Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert is a rural-urban constituency consisting of the city of Spruce Grove; the northwest portion of the city of St. Albert, using McKenney Avenue as the dividing line; and portions of Sturgeon and Parkland counties. Based on a number of factors that I will speak to, our constituency advocates for a status quo position by preserving existing boundaries. The rural-urban population blend of our constituency is not uncommon in our province, including areas like Stony Plain, Wetaskiwin-Camrose, Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, Banff-Cochrane, and others. Members of the Legislative Assembly representing rural-urban constituencies are able to appreciate and understand urban and rural issues alike, allowing them to bring balanced, pragmatic, and effective representation of their constituency to the Legislative Assembly.

Furthermore, there are common community interests among regions within our riding. St. Albert and Spruce Grove are both bedroom communities of Edmonton where a majority of the residents of each city work in Edmonton. This fact gives these two cities common community interests such as arterial roadways for commuting, new business development, new schools and recreational facilities, to name a few. Parkland county and Sturgeon county share common community interests as well, including survival of the family farm, commercial development, enhancement of primary and secondary roads for safety, and transporting agricultural products to market.

The status quo will also avoid voter confusion because constituents are now familiar with the boundary lines within our riding. This is especially important in St. Albert where the boundary lines can be more confusing to neighbouring voters.

In conclusion, our recommendation is based on our belief that residents within the Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert constituency will be better served by maintaining existing boundaries because of common community interests, avoidance of voter confusion, and the balanced, pragmatic, and effective representation our MLA can bring to our rural-urban riding.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Pierce. I am sure we will have some questions here.

Peter.

**Mr. Dobbie:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Pierce. It's very helpful to get your presentation. One of the challenges that

we are looking at is attempting to develop some principles that we will follow in recommending new electoral boundaries. It has been suggested to us by people in Edmonton and in Calgary that we may want to look at the province by taking the city of Edmonton population and not going outside of its boundaries. That's something we've heard strongly from the mayor of Edmonton and others, that they would not want to see any Edmonton and hybrid boundaries with St. Albert. So we've certainly heard that. I take it you would support that proposition.

**Mr. Pierce:** Yes, very much so.

**Mr. Dobbie:** We've also been asked to consider taking a look at the province this way: taking the population of Edmonton, allocating seats based on its population – the same with Calgary – and then looking at the rest of the province, which would be about 1.6 million people, or 48 per cent, and dividing the population into seats on that basis. Would you be in favour of that type of approach?

**Mr. Pierce:** Yeah, we'd be in favour of that approach.

**Mr. Dobbie:** With respect to your particular constituency it's almost 19 per cent above the average.

**Mr. Pierce:** Yes.

**Mr. Dobbie:** If one of our goals is to have as many non Edmonton and Calgary ridings as close to the average of 40,583 as possible, it would seem that one way to do that is to look at ridings like yours, where there is a higher percentage of voters, and making that boundary smaller. So if we were to do that – and I know your preference is to leave it alone – do you have a recommendation as to the logical place to make a division so that your constituency would be closer to 40,583? If we were to lose 5,000, 8,000 constituents, where could we make a change if we were forced to?

**Mr. Pierce:** I don't know. I haven't actually considered that, if we were to drop the population by 5,000, so I'm not sure that I would have a recommendation on that right now.

**Mr. Dobbie:** If you have a chance to think about it and could e-mail it in by the 13th of October, that would be helpful.

**Mr. Pierce:** Okay.

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

5:20

**Ms Jeffs:** Well, I'm really just picking up on what Mr. Dobbie has said. I would be interested to hear as well your recommendation in that regard because, as has been pointed out, currently the constituency is almost 19 per cent above, and there are some neighbouring constituencies that are rather below our provincial average. Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock is about 11 per cent below, and I think Whitecourt-St. Anne is also below the average. I don't know if that may help in your deliberations, but we would be interested in hearing about that. I'm assuming that for the population in your constituency, the projection would be that it's going to continue to grow, so that may be something we need to address.

**Mr. Pierce:** Okay. We'll definitely address that as a follow-up item. The big item for us is voter confusion. I think the residents of St. Albert on that bordering line now are just, you know, finally

comfortable and knowledgeable of who their MLA is and which constituency they belong in, so we'd very much like to preserve that wherever possible.

**Ms Jeffs:** I'm sorry. If I understand correctly, because of the voter confusion issue we should leave the line as it runs through St. Albert would be a particularly important part.

**Mr. Pierce:** Yes. McKenney, St. Albert Trail.

**Ms Jeffs:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Brian.

**Mr. Evans:** Thanks, Mr. Chairman, and thanks, Mr. Pierce. You know, we've heard from a number of people and people representing organizations who have indicated to us that unless there's a commonality of interest, it's very difficult to represent more than the quotient, the quotient being around 40,000. Certainly, Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert is in a high-growth area. There's no question that you're going to grow considerably both in Spruce Grove and in St. Albert and in the region itself. Other than a very effective MLA, which you've already referred to – and we take note of that – in terms of principle are there any particular reasons why, notwithstanding the fact that you're considerably over the provincial average and you will grow beyond that undoubtedly in the years to come, you still feel comfortable and the people that you represent still feel comfortable and those communities still feel comfortable with one MLA looking after that number of folks?

**Mr. Pierce:** No, I think we are still comfortable. We think our MLA, you know, has a good feel of the pulse of our constituents in both rural and urban areas.

**Mr. Evans:** Is it more so, then, the MLA, or does it have something to do with just the demographics of the people who live in your constituency?

**Mr. Pierce:** No. I would probably say just our understanding of people's issues within our sort of three major areas. I think that's just that knowledge of the issues, the representation that can be provided.

**Mr. Evans:** Looking at the map myself, the area your MLA represents is certainly smaller and more manageable from that point of view than Whitecourt-Ste. Anne or Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock or, for that matter, Athabasca-Redwater. I suspect that that has something to do with it as well. As my colleagues have indicated, because you are over, if you could spend some time just thinking about whether there's any way that you might be able to shrink the borders a little bit and provide closer to the quotient for those adjoining constituencies, that would be very helpful to us.

**Mr. Pierce:** Yeah. Now, what was the deadline again?

**Mr. Evans:** The 13th for this first run of information in front of us in terms of preparation of our interim report.

**Mr. Pierce:** Okay. We'll definitely be able to provide further input, then.

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

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Dr. Archer:** Thanks very much, Mr. Pierce. You can see that the commission has a consistent line of questions for you.

**Mr. Pierce:** Yes.

**Dr. Archer:** I think that's partly due to the fact that if we didn't change any of the boundaries for this riding, it would end up being one of the largest, if not the largest, populations of any riding in Alberta. You're getting close to 20 per cent over. The maximum we can go over is 25 per cent. At 20 per cent that's getting pretty close to the limit, and if it's an area in which there is considerable growth, then if we don't address it now, it will be a looming issue for the next Electoral Boundaries Commission. So that's the context in which these questions are arising.

**Mr. Pierce:** Sure. Okay.

**Dr. Archer:** I'd like to ask you a different question or maybe a set of questions about a representational principle. As Peter Dobbie was saying, we're still in the process of understanding what principles should guide our deliberations. St. Albert is an interesting situation in which the population, at 58,000, doesn't provide us with the ability to fit all of the constituency completely within one electoral district, keeping it as a urban district, as it were, and then treating the surrounding area differently. The 58,000 figure means that part of St. Albert has to reside in two constituencies, different parts of the community. The solution that has been used in St. Albert is to take one part of the community and have that electoral district a total urban riding and then take the residual amount – in this case it seems to be about 16,000 people or so – and put that into a mixed urban-rural community or, in this case, maybe a mixed multi urban-rural community with the other urban areas.

We've heard different views across the province as to whether that's the best solution or whether the best solution in general is to divide a community such that in most cases part of the urban area is in two constituencies. I wonder if you can just comment a bit on how the present solution works within St. Albert, where you have one totally urban constituency and one that's split between the city and its surrounding communities.

**Mr. Pierce:** Actually, over the past number of years that I've been involved, it's worked very well. We have excellent relations with our neighbours in St. Albert, and we work very, very co-operatively between constituencies. I think the key is: how can we best serve our residents? You know, I'm not sure that I can provide any more input to that other than what we've presented to this point. I think I'll need to go away and speak to the troops and provide further input.

**Dr. Archer:** Okay. Sure. Thanks.

The other question I was going to ask – and this may be something you would want to talk to your colleagues about as well – is that if we're looking at reducing the population of your constituency, I would take it implicitly from your presentation today that you see it as very important to maintain a connection between the communities of Spruce Grove and the portion of St. Albert that's currently in the constituency, perhaps the area in between those two parts of the community, to remain within a single constituency as opposed to separating that part of St. Albert that's currently in the constituency and Spruce Grove into another constituency and then linking St. Albert largely with the surrounding rural area. Would that be a

correct assumption, or should we just wait for further input from you on that?

**Mr. Pierce:** Yeah, I think that would be the correct assumption. I think that's consistent with our status quo proposition.

**Dr. Archer:** Yeah, that was my reading. Thanks very much.  
That's all I have, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you, Mr. Pierce. That was very enlightening, and we look forward to any further remarks or thoughts you have. We'd appreciate it.

**Mr. Pierce:** Great. Thanks so much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

5:30

**Ms Friesacher:** Our next presenter is Mr. Charlie Ashbey with the county of Athabasca.

**Charlie Ashbey, Councillor  
County of Athabasca**

**Mr. Ashbey:** Good afternoon.

**The Chair:** Mr. Ashbey, would you for the record just give them your full name?

**Mr. Ashbey:** Charles or Charlie Ashbey, county of Athabasca councillor. I'm fighting a bit of a harvest throat, so hopefully my voice doesn't crack under cross-examination.

I guess I'm singing the same tune as the previous presenter in that Athabasca county is currently in the Athabasca-Redwater riding. Given that, well, the initial figures that I saw were roughly 3 per cent below the average number, we're certainly well within the bounds there.

I guess going back in the history, the county of Athabasca has traditionally seemed to have been at a crossroads in terms of the Electoral Boundaries Commission, in terms of finding appropriate parity. Prior to being in Athabasca-Redwater, we were in Wood Buffalo, where Mike Cardinal, our MLA at the time, actually had the unwieldy riding which included Athabasca and everything north to the Territories border except the city of Fort McMurray. I have to credit your predecessors under Mr. Bob Clark, under the previous electoral boundaries, with the solution they came up with in forming Athabasca-Redwater. I think they did their job rather well. We feel rather well served by the riding.

There's kind of an agricultural core that runs through the riding. There's also the pipeline corridor from McMurray to the heartland area as well as a lot of oil and gas. In the Athabasca riding we have a lot of forestry activity. Even to the point of the riding becoming inclusive with the Namao base, our community had a troop recognition weekend a year ago. We invited all enlisted people to have a free-of-charge weekend. We put on a meal, provided golf. The riding regiment of Lord Strathcona put on a show.

Actually in a short time there's kind of a lot of cohesiveness in this new riding. Given that we previously had been bounced around – we at one time were with Lac La Biche, at one time with Westlock – I think there's a need, you know, if you're going to not only avoid voter confusion but develop kind of a political culture, that some form of continuity is at some point desirable. Looking at McMurray right now, depending on which population numbers you use, I guess our only trepidation is that if you use the lower numbers and you create two ridings, you don't see the need to draw population from

the south to bump it up. I think that in McMurray, if the two ridings do end up a little bit below initially, given the growth expectations there, within the mandate of your report I'm sure they'll come within the bounds of what would be parity.

Then regarding parity, I know, quoting from the report of Mr. Clark's commission, they quote the Alberta Court of Appeal where "effective representation and good government in this country compel those charged with setting electoral boundaries sometimes to take into account factors other than voting parity, such as geography and community interests." They even go further, you know, to say that rural ridings are harder to serve. Not to say that urban MLAs work less, but I think the fact is that in an urban area you have one municipal government that you have to answer to as an MLA. In the Athabasca-Redwater case I think Jeff Johnson has upwards of 12, by my count, that he has to liaise with.

I know that Bauni Mackay in the minority ruling in the last commission made the comment that technology has made it almost seamless to deal with great distances, that, you know, through the Internet and video conferencing you can overcome geography. But I can tell you as a municipal politician that the candour and frankness you get from a face-to-face meeting with your MLA or cabinet member cannot be replaced by any technology. It just doesn't cut it. I mean, certainly municipal politicians really, really rely on that face-to-face contact, and we wouldn't want to lose that.

So I guess, in a nutshell, the status quo certainly works for us, but I realize that with your job every time you pull in one direction, it creates a vacuum in another one. Certainly, we would prefer not to see a major disruption. You know, we think that the current riding is workable. If you look at it in terms of a hub and the spokes, basically, in residing in Athabasca, our MLA on his route from the Legislature to home travels almost the entire length of his riding. So I think it makes logic in that sense, too.

Yeah. I don't believe I have a lot more to offer right now. If the interim report comes out with anything that arouses our interest, I guess we'll be back with a more formal presentation, but for now I'll leave it at that, and I'll invite your questions.

**The Chair:** I'm sure you will be back.

I have a question. One of our functions is to look at names. What would you think of a name such as the Athabasca-Sturgeon riding?

**Mr. Ashbey:** I guess we still get top billing. Yeah. I don't know. In terms of my dealings with the MLA the name doesn't mean as much to me, I guess. Sometimes in terms of voter confusion perhaps the name means more. Athabasca-Redwater or Athabasca-Sturgeon: I wouldn't have a problem with either one.

**The Chair:** Okay.  
Brian.

**Mr. Evans:** Thanks, Mr. Chairman, and thanks very much Mr. Ashbey. There don't appear to me to be many alternatives to expanding Athabasca-Redwater at this point in time. As you say, there's not really any great burning need to do so. You do butt right up to the city of Edmonton, and I expect that there may be some acreage expansion in that area. Are there some subdivisions going in there? Have there been some approvals for rural subdivisions in that area?

**Mr. Ashbey:** I'm not really aware of any right in that area, but yeah, there are growth pressures all around Edmonton, no doubt.

**Mr. Evans:** In terms of some of the presentations we've received, we've certainly heard from the city of Edmonton, that said, you

know: cut things off at the municipal boundaries; do not create what had been referred to in previous commissions as a ‘rurban’ type of riding. Would you agree that that is a goal that we should be trying to achieve as well?

**Mr. Ashbey:** Well, you know, I don’t really buy into that dichotomy of rural, urban. I don’t think that because you live in rural Alberta, you don’t have appreciation for an urban service sector. I mean, a lot of us in rural Alberta rely on a lot of our services from our major Edmonton or Calgary area, depending on what part of the province you live in.

From a land-use planning perspective when I see a lot of foot and a half thick topsoil going under asphalt, I’m thinking to myself: gee, too bad there were not more rural people on their planning commission; maybe they would make better use of the land. So, you know, I don’t see that one precludes the other, that you can’t have someone with a rural background having sincere interest in urban issues.

If I could make a comment on Mr. Dobbie’s suggestion, you know, about the scenario where you take the Calgary and Edmonton population and divide up, find the average, and give them X amount of seats. I mean, I’m sure that that’s endorsed by Edmonton and Calgary because that just ensures the further dilution of rural ridings because you’re going to make sure that there isn’t any variation in the urban area. You’re basically going to do away with the principle of variance. Variance is part of your mandate, that it’s recognized that complete parity is unworkable in some situations. I think that in the previous commission they only used the special consideration once, in Dunvegan, but you could use it up to four times. I don’t think it’s a principle you have to run from. I think that that scenario of, you know, taking the two urban areas and giving them exactly the average I certainly don’t agree with because that just says that you’re going to have continually bigger rural ridings, and they become increasingly unworkable.

5:40

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thank you very much for those comments.

**The Chair:** Peter.

**Mr. Dobbie:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Ashbey. I raise these issues because it’s important that we get some discussion going on the general principles, so it is very helpful that you commented on that. One of my questions to you was going to be about the use of special ridings. I appreciate your saying that we have the ability to use up to four because that does allow us then, if we have some clearly large geographic areas and they meet the test, to have three or four outliers that are significantly below the average, but it does allow the balance of the province to be much closer to the average.

A final question I had relates to the municipal governance in your constituency. Your particular county is completely within the constituency. I imagine, however, that you have meetings with your adjacent counties and also the municipal councillors within. I don’t think we have anybody from the county of Thorhild here or from the other counties. Have you heard from them as to their opinion on the existing Athabasca-Redwater boundaries? How is it working for them?

**Mr. Ashbey:** Not specifically to this commission but, for instance, in the last year Athabasca county met at least once with all of our adjoining rural municipalities. We’re part of several commissions that extend beyond our boundaries. On a waste commission we include Lesser Slave. In ambulance we included Lac La Biche and

Thorhild, although now that the province has taken it over, that kind of precludes that. Yeah, we work very closely with our neighbours. I think we all feel well served by the current constituency. Our education region includes Thorhild and Smoky Lake, so there are a lot of ties. Quite frankly, like I said, I will comment again that the previous commission I think did a good job.

**Mr. Dobbie:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Keith.

**Dr. Archer:** Yeah. Thanks, Mr. Ashbey. A couple of questions. One arises from a submission we had this morning when we were in Slave Lake. One of the presenters was a reeve of the MD of Lesser Slave River. This question came up, as well, the one that Peter Dobbie just raised about the instances in which municipal district boundaries don’t overlap with provincial constituency electoral districts. That’s certainly the case with his district, Lesser Slave River. His recommendation to us was to respect the boundary of the municipal district. Consequently, the effect would be to move the western boundary of your district in the northwest part, the northwest corner of the constituency, east so that it corresponds with the boundary of the municipal district and then just follow that line south and include the entire package. First, I’d like you to comment on that.

Then I have a follow-up question which relates to a second issue that arose at the meeting this morning in Slave Lake, and that has to do with the potential designation of that constituency as a special constituency. The chairman at the start of our meeting read through that set of criteria that a constituency needs to meet in order to be a special constituency. One of them is that the constituency at its closest point has to be no closer than 150 kilometres from the Legislature. The southeast corner of the Lesser Slave Lake district looks to us – and we’ve actually not done the formal measurements yet – to be within the 150 kilometres.

The implication of all of that is that there are two potential changes that could have a bearing on your constituency, and that’s what I’d like to get your response to. The first is: how would you react if we shifted the northwest corner of your constituency slightly to the east, and I think Peter Dobbie has provided you a map that demonstrates that, and at the same time if we took the southeast corner of the Lesser Slave Lake district – and we’re not sure what the boundary would be there; maybe it’s the river – and attached that to your constituency? It seems to us that the net population change would not be very significant. We are told that there’s only a handful of people in the MD affected by the first change and possibly only a couple of hundred by the second change. If you could comment on those two changes, I’d appreciate it.

**Mr. Ashbey:** I’m assuming that he’s referring only to the part that is Lesser Slave River and not the part that’s Opportunity.

**The Chair:** That’s right.

**Mr. Ashbey:** Yeah. Actually, part of that Lesser Slave district is inaccessible other than through the Athabasca county, and we even maintain some of the road there for them because it’s kind of isolated. But, yeah, you’re right that the amount of population there – I don’t know the number – is minimal. Like I said, there is a natural connection there with the county in that it is accessible only through the county. It is kind of a remote area.

**Dr. Archer:** Right.

**Mr. Ashbey:** I'm not sure why the line last time was drawn that way. Like I said, it doesn't capture a lot of population.

**Dr. Archer:** It does seem to conform to the shape of the MD line, the MD boundary. Okay. I take it, then, that you wouldn't have a strong objection if we made the first change.

What's your view on the proposed second change, moving the southeastern corner of the riding over to your constituency?

**Mr. Ashbey:** Well, I mean, if it's for the sake of a couple of kilometres, I don't know if it's worth the exercise. I think they meet a lot of other criteria. They don't have to meet every criteria – isn't that my understanding? – to be considered. I think they meet enough other criteria that the 150 kilometres isn't a deal breaker, is it?

**The Chair:** It's getting close because of the population of Slave Lake, and it wouldn't be there, likely, in a year or two.

**Mr. Ashbey:** Well, yeah. Like I said, there again that portion is not really heavily populated, depending if you're going to include, I guess, the Flatbush area in there. That is somewhat of an agricultural area there. Yeah, I'd have to think on it, but I guess in terms of adding it to ours, we wouldn't have a big problem.

**The Chair:** Sorry, Keith.

**Dr. Archer:** That's okay. I was just going to ask the obvious follow-up: are there stronger connections between the people in that community and the Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock communities as opposed to your constituency? If we were to move that, should we move it south or east? I guess that's the question.

**Mr. Ashbey:** In terms of the highway 44 connection there probably are, and in the agricultural area along there. Because Westlock has more ag services, it does gravitate more towards Westlock.

**Dr. Archer:** Right. Okay. Thanks very much.

**The Chair:** Allyson.

**Ms Jeffs:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Ashbey, for coming and answering all our questions today. Just one point. It's more of a comment, really. I think that early on you mentioned that with the numbers that you had, the constituency currently is about 3 per cent below the average. We have the option of using and have chosen to use updated census numbers, municipal census numbers, so we can go a little bit beyond the last census. Our current numbers for the constituency I think are 37,066, and our current average is 40,583, so that puts you at 8.7 per cent below, so between 8 and 9 per cent below, which is certainly within that 25 per cent variance that we've talked about.

**Mr. Ashbey:** I was basing it on the numbers in this.

**Ms Jeffs:** I appreciate that. We've certainly had people expressing some confusion since we began the hearing process because those numbers are based on the 2006 census, and this is the first time that the statute has permitted the commission to consider more up-to-date census numbers and given us the discretion to do that. I thought it would be important for you to know that those are the numbers that we have for your constituency.

5:50

As I say, you are a little further below the average than you had perhaps thought. In light of that, I wanted to ask you: if we were to tweak the boundaries, bearing in mind it would be a bit difficult because you're surrounded by other constituencies that are a little bit below, is there any particular area you would suggest where it would make sense that we look to capture a little more population, given the way that the constituency and the municipal governments within this constituency are relating to each other right now?

**Mr. Ashbey:** Well, it's probably difficult because most of our adjoining ridings have a higher variance than we do. I would suggest, you know, that's just part of the variance that is inherent with large rural ridings. I look at the results of the last provincial election where we had a 41 per cent voter turnout. You know, if we were running around 90 to 100 per cent voter turnout for elections, then voter parity to me would be a bigger issue. Quite frankly, when only 41 per cent of the people can bother to vote in an election, then I don't know that worrying about every per cent on voter parity is an exercise that is – I mean, I've voted in every election I've ever been eligible to vote in, so I find that kind of appalling. The people that say that we have to have exact parity, why don't those people turn out to vote?

**Ms Jeffs:** I understand what you're saying. We're permitted some variance under the statute, and we certainly understand that, but I just wanted to give you the opportunity to make suggestions. I would assume it would have to come in the area that's already very close to the Edmonton boundary because that's probably the area where the population is growing.

**Mr. Ashbey:** Yeah. I guess you've already expressed that there's some hesitancy to take part of what is properly Edmonton and incorporate it. I don't argue with that. I don't think it's necessary. Like you said, the variance is in the act. When it comes down to whether it's 3 per cent or 8 per cent, I think that's tolerable.

**Ms Jeffs:** All right. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Peter had one more question.

**Mr. Dobbie:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One issue you had raised was your concern about pressure from the north if a new constituency is created in the Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo area. I just wanted to let you know, following up on Allyson Jeffs' indication, that the more recent census data does certainly indicate that the city of Fort McMurray and that area is significantly larger. The number that we are looking at is so high that it is very unlikely that there would be pressure to reach down and to include your constituency. If you're giving follow-up comments to us, it would unlikely be necessary to worry too much about that issue.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much, Charlie. I should say, "Mr. Ashbey." I had the privilege of swearing in Mr. Ashbey as a councillor. Thank you very much. If you have any further comments, we'd love to hear from you.

**Mr. Ashbey:** Okay. Thank you.

**Ms Friesacher:** The next presenter is Mr. Lawrence Miller with the county of Barrhead.

**The Chair:** Good afternoon.

**Lawrence Miller, Reeve  
County of Barrhead**

**Mr. Miller:** Good afternoon. I'm Lawrence Miller, reeve for the county of Barrhead. I am kind of feeling a little bit – how should I say? – inadequately prepared here because we were not given very much of a notice of what's happening. I phoned the county manager this morning and said, "Should somebody come?" "Well, yeah, somebody should come." But I don't see anybody else from Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock here. So it's just a verbal presentation. I'm sorry I don't have anything . . .

**The Chair:** Mr. Miller, we'd be delighted to hear whatever you have to say, and I'm sure it will be much appreciated. So just tell us whatever you'd like to tell us.

**Mr. Miller:** Well, I'm a rural resident, I guess, first of all. I really hope that we are not losing our influence within our province. You mentioned putting in four new seats, two in Edmonton and two in Calgary.

**The Chair:** No, we didn't mention that.

**Mr. Miller:** Okay. That's been tossed about, I guess.

The other mention that was made today, though, that the constituency boundaries should be within the cities and not be hybrid like rural and part of the city . . .

**The Chair:** That was with respect to Edmonton and Calgary only.

**Mr. Miller:** Okay. I think it's good for some of the MLAs to have a little bit of an idea what's happening out beyond the city. That's my point of view, probably nobody else's, but that's the way I think.

I think all of you know that the rural part of Alberta is sort of being left behind, and that bothers me quite a bit. You know, you look at Edmonton, especially now with the infrastructure that's being built, the money that goes into one place. There are other areas of Alberta that are not getting that much. But that's just my opinion, just the way I see it. You may disagree.

**The Chair:** Well, with respect to the Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock area have you any comments with respect to the boundaries?

**Mr. Miller:** I think the boundaries have served us quite well. Now, I know we're 11 per cent below the average. I don't know where you would give us area from. It looks like on the map there are possibilities. I don't know if Morinville feels at home with the way it's set up now. That was put in at the last electoral boundary change, I believe, that little bit of – I don't know what you'd call it – a dip to take in Morinville.

As far as our MLA is concerned, he is very effective, as you know. We have really no problems in that respect. I don't think you would take any away from us, but you'd probably want to give us some more area. Where you would do that, I'm not sure. Right now it's working quite well.

**The Chair:** All right.

Peter, do you have any questions?

**Mr. Dobbie:** I do. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Reeve Miller, for coming. We do appreciate the input. Just a reminder that if there are written submissions, even a letter that your county wanted to send in, saying that you're happy with the way things are

right now, we would be most happy to receive it from you. Again, it would be helpful if we got it by e-mail before the 13th of October, which means next Tuesday.

My question is in relation to the issue you've raised about how we consider generally dividing the province into constituencies. I had raised earlier on with another speaker that we have heard from the city of Edmonton and the city of Calgary and, certainly, many of the MLAs within those cities that they're not in favour of the 'rurban', rural-urban, approach for Edmonton and Calgary. Certainly, it does seem to have worked in many other cities: Red Deer, St. Albert, Lethbridge. There are a number of cities throughout the province that are well in excess of the provincial average of 40,000 where part of the population is urban and rural.

The counterargument against that or the concern that has been raised is what I'd like you to address. We've also heard from people who are worried that if you have a city of Edmonton and a rural riding, a combination like that, it won't be long before the city voice dominates the rural voice within that constituency much like you're worried about it within the province. So have you thought about that risk, that if you have a rural and urban constituency, the urban tail will wag the dog, you know, that the rural voice will be overwhelmed? Do you have any comments on that concern that's been raised?

**Mr. Miller:** I wouldn't, personally, because I think that rural people will speak up pretty much for what we think is right and what's wrong. An MLA, of course, has to be able to talk to all of us, right? He's not just going to listen to the city people; he's got to listen to the country people as well. I don't know. Maybe it doesn't work, but I see some merit in having to touch base a little bit with the outside of the big cities.

6:00

**Mr. Dobbie:** From a personal perspective I would be a good example of how it can work. I live in the county of Minburn. I live on a farm, but my business is in the town of Vegreville. I suspect that's the case for many people that are around Edmonton as well. They may also have some business or other connections with Edmonton even if they live in the county. I do appreciate you raising your perspective that you would be open to that if we were to look at it, notwithstanding that the mayor of Edmonton might be less open to it.

Thank you.

**Dr. Archer:** Hi, Mr. Miller. Thanks for coming. One of the possible changes that we've been looking at and talking to people about in a variety of constituencies – I was just asking Mr. Ashbey about it in our last discussion as well – has to do with the southeast corner of Lesser Slave Lake and the possibility of moving that part of that constituency into another constituency. There would be two obvious places in which that would move. One would be south into your constituency, and the other would be east into the Athabasca constituency.

Do you have any comment on that potential move? Bearing in mind that the purpose of that move relates to the requirements that a constituency needs to fulfill in order to be designated as a special constituency and given the small population of Lesser Slave Lake, unless it's designated as a special constituency, there's going to be a need to do some very substantial boundary changes to accommodate its present populations. Again, do you have any comment on moving that area? It would include the Flatbush area and just north of that into Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. Miller:** I think that would be a natural, really. It doesn't expand our boundaries by that much more of an area. You're talking about cutting across from between 67 and 68 with that line there?

**Dr. Archer:** Either of the lines or using the river, going northeast on the river.

**Mr. Miller:** Or the river. That would go up a little higher, then.

**Dr. Archer:** Yeah. Those would be the two options, I think.

**Mr. Miller:** Well, we have a lot of river boundary right now within our counties, but the constituency, of course, overlaps both sides. I don't think there would be anything wrong with that, really.

**Dr. Archer:** Okay. Thank you.

A second question I'd like to ask you about – this came up in our first presentation today as well – is the size of the constituency of Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert. It's 19 per cent above the provincial average, and that would almost certainly, if we don't change it, result in that constituency being amongst the largest population-based constituencies in the province. Your constituency is about 12 per cent under. You know, logically it seems that there may be a possibility of moving some of Sturgeon county that's currently in that constituency into yours. Again, geographically it's not a very large area.

If we were to respect the initial suggestions of our first presenter, Mr. Pierce, we would probably keep Spruce Grove and that part of St. Albert that's currently in that riding together and look at the more rural areas of that constituency in allotting those either wholly or in part to Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock and/or to Whitecourt-St. Anne. Again, do you have any comment on that possible change?

**Mr. Miller:** Well, are you talking about that piece that goes a little above Morinville-Westlock?

**Dr. Archer:** It would go west, west of Morinville.

**Mr. Miller:** West. Yeah. Okay. My concern as a councillor would be that the area itself is not getting much bigger. Our MLA has to cover all that area. If you give us a whole big, large area to cover, to increase it that way, it wouldn't be good, but this falls pretty much in the area that he covers.

**Dr. Archer:** Right. That was my sense, too.

**Mr. Miller:** So I don't think there's anything wrong with that.

**Dr. Archer:** Okay. Yeah. Thanks so much.

**The Chair:** Allyson.

**Ms Jeffs:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't have any questions, but I wanted to thank you, Reeve Miller, for coming and speaking to us today. Thank you very much. You've been very clear.

**The Chair:** Brian.

**Mr. Evans:** Thanks, Mr. Chairman, and thanks, Reeve Miller, as well. Just one question. We had a comment last night in Peace River recommending that constituencies south of the most northern constituencies might make more sense to be greater in size east and west as opposed to north and south. Certainly, it looks like

Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock is as much an east and west constituency as north and south. In terms of your road alignments and ease or difficulty of your MLA reaching all corners of the constituency, would you make any suggestions about how best to align constituencies, say, north of Edmonton but, well, let's say, south of the south boundary of Lesser Slave Lake, for example?

**Mr. Miller:** I don't know. Right now Swan Hills is the furthest north, and I know it's a long ways from Barrhead even. It's a good 65 miles, or 100 kilometres, away from our constituency office. Of course, with media nowadays you don't need to get there personally, but it was mentioned that face-to-face talk with an MLA is quite helpful. So we wouldn't want to be any further away than that. I think that should be the limit there. Going north, of course, we talked about adding a little bit from Lesser Slave River, which is within the area. Those kinds of boundary changes would work, I think, better than going way out north or further to the west. That's my idea, anyway.

**Mr. Evans:** So from your constituency's point of view the roadways don't create a problem either north-south or east-west, and there's no real merit to focusing on changing or even anticipating a change.

**Mr. Miller:** I would say not.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. All right. Thanks very much. Appreciate your presentation.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Miller. We really appreciate it. If you have anything further you'd like to add, we'd love to have it.

**Mr. Miller:** It's plain talk from a farmer. Sorry.

**The Chair:** Well, I understand that.

**Ms Friesacher:** The next presenter is Mr. Corey Hogan, executive director of the Alberta Liberal Party.

**Corey Hogan, Executive Director  
Alberta Liberal Party**

**The Chair:** Mr. Hogan, would you for the record for *Hansard* give your full name, please?

**Mr. Hogan:** My name is Corey Hogan.

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you.

**Mr. Hogan:** Today I have the verbal report from the Alberta Liberal Party. The written one will be following shortly. The thrust of this report is actually on the matrices through which the different variations are determined by the commission. I won't dwell on the individual boundaries. I think that many of my counterparts in the party have done a pretty good job, you know, in the city of Edmonton in particular, bringing up issues that they feel are important.

On the matter of the matrices, though, the previous matrix, I believe, had six criteria: geographic area; population; population density; number of households; elected or appointed bodies, Indian reserves, and Métis settlements; and distance from the Legislature. I'm here today to ask that the commission look at both expanding those matrices in order to increase the effective representation province-wide and as well looking at some of the redundancies that exist within the matrices in the opinion of the Alberta Liberal Party.

6:10

These matrices are largely a result of the Saskatchewan reference and rewriting of laws after that, which happened in the early '90s. In a nutshell, there was the decision that there could be variation from a population model, but it must be justified. From that point on it became more of a quantifiable thing. There were explanations given as to why there was any variation from the population model to ensure that MLAs are able to fulfill their role not just as representatives but as ombudsmen.

There's been a world of change since that initial reference and since most of that legislation has been created. Since then, services that were once received through a visit to an MLA's office now are available online and by phone. Reeve Miller said it well: with media nowadays you don't have to get there personally. That has somewhat diminished the requirement that constituencies have a lower population base as they get larger. Certainly, even things as simple as deregulation of the airline industry and telephone industry: travel has become much cheaper, reduced airfares, since that deregulation began in the late '80s, early '90s. Long-distance telephone service is free for many of us now on our home plans. Beyond that, even mobile phones being available means that the MLAs have the ability to be in contact whether or not they're in that office. It increases the communications and, thus, the effectiveness of the MLAs, regardless of the size.

Now, none of this is to say that these matrices are unnecessary. Certainly, it's very true that a rural area is more difficult to represent as it gets larger. Nobody disputes that. But we have area, population density, population, and number of households as separate entries which make up two-thirds of the matrices right now. It's the opinion of the Alberta Liberal Party that this could be reduced. Additionally, other matrices which reflect some of the more modern difficulties we have in reaching that bar of effective representation could be brought in. Criteria we'd request that the commission consider are all from sources that we found were measurable, most from census, but those not are from province-wide data sources.

Languages spoken. Minority language use both as a percentage and the quantity of languages certainly makes it more difficult to communicate with your MLA. Regardless of whether you can get there in person or have to go by phone, if you don't speak the same language, efforts have to be made to ensure that that representation can be made.

The number of groups. Right now it's number of elected bodies. We believe that it could be increased to not just elected bodies but number of nongovernmental organizations, number of corporations. There's certainly no shortage of societies and corporations out there, and those should all be available from corporate registries. They should be able to give a pretty good sense of where everything lies.

Per cent of population below the poverty line. Social programs are an enormous part of the government expenditure, and it's an enormous part of the MLA's day-to-day activities. Certainly, many urban ridings fill their time almost exclusively with AISH and WCB and helping their constituents move through those systems. There are a number of metrics available in census data that would help us determine where that need most lies.

Finally, new residents. New residents require additional services as they set themselves up. Now, I'm not just talking about new Canadians but people who have moved into the community and did not previously live there, whether they be from outside in the rest of Canada or elsewhere in Alberta. A new residents matrix category would help with the fact as well that when people move into a new area, that new area is likely to expand in population even further in the years to come. By creating this as a matrix entry, you've essentially created a metric through which you can have areas on the

periphery that are most likely to expand and therefore be outside of the ranges that you're hoping to create. There's math behind allowing them to be a bit lower, and there's a justification beyond future projections. We all know that future projections are a bit dicey; developments can be cancelled and whatnot. This gives us something concrete in the here and now that we can latch onto as well.

Finally, just a word on funding of constituencies. I'm certainly aware that that's outside of the scope of this commission, that the commission doesn't have the ability to increase the funding of constituencies. It's the opinion of the Alberta Liberal Party that these constituencies should have an increase in funds. While we understand the desire to remedy the reality that they do not have the funds to open multiple offices – and there's often a good push for creating, you know, smaller rural ridings in particular because those funds don't exist for multiple offices – it's the feeling of the Alberta Liberal Party that this would be papering over a bad situation with a worse one. Fundamentally you would be creating a remedy that could have long-term ramifications. Should the government ever actually fix any funding irregularities, it would create a situation where the lack of effectiveness that was addressed by a smaller constituency creates instead a lack of equality and falls short, in our opinion, of those court guidelines that there must be a justification for any variance.

In any case, that's it in a nutshell. I'd be very happy to hear any questions.

**The Chair:** Allyson.

**Ms Jeffs:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much for your presentation. Just initially a comment on the matrix as we are aware that there have been some concerns raised since the matrix was included in the last boundary commission report. How we might use it and if we might use it is still something that is under consideration. But leaving that as it may for a moment, I want to follow up on the issue you raised about a number of items in the matrix that seem to count the same thing, I think, if I understand you correctly, that we're looking at geographic area, population density, population, number of households, that those are essentially a measure of the same thing.

**Mr. Hogan:** Yeah, that's right.

**Ms Jeffs:** So is your recommendation that there would simply be one of those included or a single different measure?

**Mr. Hogan:** I think I can appreciate why they would all be there: to increase the ability of the commission to deal with those problems. But I think that as we moved forward, yes, I would see it pared down, perhaps, from the four it's currently at. In particular, I think population density makes a great deal of sense. I think households makes a great deal of sense. Area. You know, population density is just population over area. Those other two are in that sense redundant.

**Ms Jeffs:** Okay. Thank you for that. Sorry. I'm just having a quick look at my notes here. Also, you mentioned some other factors that should be used if the matrix is going to be there. You mentioned, I think, languages and minorities, bodies other than elected or municipal councils and so on. We've heard from some of the urban MLAs that, you know, community leagues could be included in that as well. I think you mentioned nongovernmental organizations and corporations, but was there anything else you would add to that list?

**Mr. Hogan:** Well, community associations, I think, is an excellent addition, one I missed. Yeah.

**Ms Jeffs:** Okay. Just on the issue of the funding, I think you made the point – and I would just reinforce it – that funding of the constituencies is certainly outside the mandate of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. Am I correct that the concern is that the matrix created by the commission was used for that process?

**Mr. Hogan:** Not entirely for that process, but I think it was a consideration last time, perhaps, when it shouldn't have been. I think it almost lets the government off the hook, if you will, by creating these smaller constituencies to cover a funding shortfall. I think that it would behoove Alberta as a whole if the commission essentially ignored the funding question or at least put it aside or tossed it back to the Legislature, that has the authority to deal with it.

**Ms Jeffs:** Okay. I believe that's the Members' Services Committee of the Legislature.

**Mr. Hogan:** Yes.

**Ms Jeffs:** Okay. Those are my questions, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.  
Brian.

**Mr. Evans:** Well, thanks Mr. Chairman, and thanks very much for your presentation, Mr. Hogan. Do I take it that you'd like us to restrict our questions to the presentation you made today rather than anything else, given who you are representing? I know it's a difficult situation for you to go a little bit further.

**Mr. Hogan:** You're certainly welcome, although I think I'll reserve the right to say: I have no idea.

6:20

**Mr. Evans:** Sure. Well, let's start with the presentation, then. Just so I'm clear, on the concept of differential funding of constituencies you'd rather see that eliminated completely and all constituencies be in receipt of the same amounts of money regardless?

**Mr. Hogan:** No, absolutely not. Certainly, the constituencies have different troubles. For example, rent in downtown Calgary costs more than rent in downtown Canmore. It's more a question of raising the funding level in general to meet those needs and to allow those MLAs to do their jobs effectively regardless of where they are. I think that's going to have to be a decision of Members' Services, but it's certainly not a one-size-fits-all solution, no.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. We've had a lot of discussion about these special constituencies in the north and, you know, the reality that we have one now and we have, legislatively, the ability to expand that up to four. Can you make any comments on behalf of the Liberal Party of Alberta as to the position of the Liberal Party of Alberta on the special constituencies?

**Mr. Hogan:** The position of the party is that special circumstances should be avoided. They're there for those very extreme cases, and if they can be avoided, they should be. Beyond that, I don't have any direction on that that I could give any further.

**Mr. Evans:** Again, the commentary that we've received and certainly what we've seen ourselves in travelling in the north is just the distances and the number of people and number of communities that MLAs have to try to cover and the difficulties with communication, notwithstanding the SuperNet and cellphones and all those other things. Certainly, my own position is that there's great justification for the special areas. It would be helpful if we could get a clear position from the Liberal Party on that given those variables, which certainly don't exist in all parts of the province.

**Mr. Hogan:** Well, it's a tool in the commission's chest, I suppose, the same way my health card is there in case I need it. I don't want to have to use it. Our hope is that the commission will avoid using those special circumstances if possible. Pushing those variances past 25 per cent certainly strains the argument that effective representation is more important than equal representation.

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

**The Chair:** Peter.

**Mr. Dobbie:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Hogan. Some of the issues you've raised with respect to the matrix are ones that we have been grappling with, and you'll be happy to hear that we are learning that the intensity of MLA demands seems to be different in different areas of the province and of the cities. We've certainly heard consistently that the intensity of the demands on an inner-city neighbourhood, for example, that has a large number of new residents, people who require assistance with access to services because of whatever their background might be, creates an intensity of workload for an inner-city MLA that is different than a suburban urban MLA. There seems to be some acceptance of that from MLAs from different areas.

The challenge with putting numbers on some of these factors is that the data is not always all that useful if you simply start to pick numbers. For example – and you're probably aware of this – if we looked at registered offices for societies, we would find that the vast majority are going to be within about 10 blocks of downtown because the registered office is a law firm. On the face of it, that would be a tool, but it's inelegant to a certain extent.

One of the suggestions that you had made was measuring new residents. I'm not sure I understand, apart from population change, how you capture a new resident. Can you explain to me in a little more detail what you meant by that?

**Mr. Hogan:** If I'm not mistaken, the most recent federal census includes data as to people who are new to the area as well, and that data would be used for those purposes.

**Mr. Dobbie:** So do you know what they define new as? Within a year, within six months? Did you happen to notice what that category meant, what the definition was?

**Mr. Hogan:** I believe it was within six months or a year. They might even have both categories. As well, they have moved into the census – I'm not sure what you call it – the larger metropolitan census area, those who have moved into the province and those who have moved into the country. They chart all of those separately.

**Mr. Dobbie:** Okay. Thank you. The other question I had relates to the contradictory information we're getting from people within constituencies. We have heard that in central Edmonton and central Calgary there is a very intense demand upon the MLA and the

MLA's office support staff to help constituents. At the same time, we've also heard that it is very important, for those constituents in particular, that we do not split their neighbourhoods. The result is that in some of those inner-city ridings, which arguably, on the one hand, should be lower than the average to allow the MLAs to catch up with the work, we're also being told: while I have this problem, I don't want you to make the constituency smaller because the only way to do that is divide a neighbourhood. So we are getting some competing factors, and often we're having to pick and choose one over the other.

If there are any thoughts you can provide in your written report that address that challenge because certainly community and neighbourhood is a very important factor for most people. They identify themselves not with a constituency; they identify themselves with a neighbourhood. At some point something has to give. It's either above-average numbers in a constituency or splitting a neighbourhood. We're really challenged with making good decisions on those trade-offs. If you could address your mind to the trade-offs and where you see one issue trumping another, I think that would be helpful for us as well.

**Mr. Hogan:** That's certainly addressed in the written report already. I'll make sure that's it's expanded upon.

Without knowing the exact situation – there are certainly as many different situations across Edmonton and Calgary as there are constituencies. There's a question of: what is community beyond the community? For example, Edmonton-Riverview. Both sides of the river are very much in line demographically. They're very much in sync in their aims and their lifestyles. They're both river valley based constituencies. You could make the case that that's a very strong community if for no other reason than the voter turnout in Edmonton-Riverview is, I believe, amongst the highest in the province, which shows there's not any difficulty understanding those boundaries, which I think you were alluding to, where we split off and people think of themselves as communities. That's one situation. Certainly Riverview has been around for a very long time.

Now, you start to get into the other side of the city where Edmonton-Gold Bar is, and I think you can make the case that that constituency stays on both sides as well, but it hasn't been there as long. Do those demographics fit? Certainly, some of those individual cases are addressed in our written report, but I wouldn't hazard to create a blanket statement for the party at this point.

**Mr. Dobbie:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Keith.

**Dr. Archer:** Well, thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thanks, Mr. Hogan, for those comments. Just to comment on the last part of the discussion that took place, one of the things that we're trying to do as a commission is to establish some principles of electoral boundary distribution, but we recognize that establishing principles doesn't mean that we're using a cookie cutter that is going to be used absolutely consistently in all constituencies. In some instances we will hear – and we have heard – from people within the local communities that have argued against the application of a particular principle.

You mentioned the constituencies that are divided across the river in Edmonton. One of the principles that we may use is to follow natural geographical boundaries, yet we heard when we conducted our hearings in Edmonton people in Edmonton-Riverview saying: "You know, even though the river runs through our constituency, it still works. We want to have a constituency that spans the river."

A number of people in Edmonton-Gold Bar are just the opposite: the river actually is an important community demarcation in this area; therefore, we should respect it. So one of the ongoing issues for us is not only identifying principles but recognizing when common sense prevails over the consistent application of a particular principle.

6:30

Now, much of your presentation talked about the so-called matrix that was used by the last Electoral Boundaries Commission. I don't want to spend much of our time talking about that in my questioning, but I did want to talk about the broader issue of representation in electoral district map-making because, you know, I think one of the fundamental principles of representation in our system is representation by population. I think parts of your comments are encouraging us to be mindful of that.

I understand that another part of your comments is to suggest that there are a number of criteria that can be used effectively in making decisions about where there should be some inequalities in constituencies and that the factors that may have been used in the past don't reflect the full range of factors that one could take into account. Things like social diversity, economic marginalization, and residential mobility I think are three of the factors that you've suggested.

Given that, however, I wonder if you could comment on what you see as the relative trade-off between representational equality within constituencies and the representation of difference, as it were. To take a concrete example, when you say to us that we should be mindful of things like residential mobility, are you suggesting that constituencies that have a larger proportion of their population that has moved in the last year or two years or five years should be smaller on average populationwise than those that don't have that same level of mobility? Or are you saying that, you know, these are factors to think about, but really the issue of population equality is the trump that should be used in virtually all cases and that we should be looking towards creating constituencies of relatively equal size?

**Mr. Hogan:** There's no question that the position of the Alberta Liberal Party is that population is the trump card. As Justice McLachlin said in the Saskatchewan reference which I alluded to earlier,

it emerges therefore that deviations from absolute voter parity may be justified on the grounds of practical impossibility or the provision of more effective representation. Beyond this, dilution of one citizen's vote as compared with another's should not be countenanced.

That is certainly our position. There's no reason that this is a straitjacket and that we must all be within a 1 per cent variance of each other. However, the Alberta Liberal Party firmly believes that it should be as close to equal representation as possible, and any variation from that – well, the last commission, I believe, broke things into four regions to begin with: rural, urbanized, Calgary, and Edmonton. Where we see this variation come into effect is more along the lines of within those internal boundaries once they've been determined and where one constituency has to give because of a community boundary or a geographical feature. That's when we would be applying these matrices to see where it makes the most sense to keep things the most effective.

So equal at all times; where not possible, then effective. That's the position in a nutshell of the Alberta Liberal Party.

**Dr. Archer:** Right. Thinking in a practical sense what that would likely mean for the ridings within Calgary and Edmonton, for example, the kinds of factors that you were mentioning seem to be factors that would predominate closer to the city centres: greater

social diversity, economic marginalization, greater residential mobility. I'm sure we can confirm that with the data, but I would suggest that those would probably predominate in the city centres. So would your position be, then, that it would be the preference that if there is some inequality in constituency sizes within Edmonton or within Calgary, the so-called suburban constituencies would be relatively large, and the city centre constituencies in general would be relatively small?

**Mr. Hogan:** Not necessarily. In fact, the new resident one, in particular, was brought more to mind with those suburban areas that are rapidly growing, the Edmonton-Whitemuds of the world. When it was created, I think Edmonton-Whitemud was in line with the rest of the populations of the constituencies; it's now well above the provincial average. We probably could have seen that coming with all of the new residents. Perhaps new households would be an

interesting measure as well, although it's not one that I've considered until this very minute.

**Dr. Archer:** Okay. Thanks very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Hogan. We look forward to receiving your written submission.

**Mr. Hogan:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Do we have further presenters?

Since we don't have further presenters, is there anybody else that would like to come forward and give us their views?

If not, thank you all for coming. We will now adjourn.

[The hearing adjourned at 6:36 p.m.]



