

PUBLIC HEARING HELD AT THE TRAVELLER'S MOTOR HOTEL, PEACE RIVER  
8 OCTOBER, 2002

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1 Public Hearing held at The Traveller's Motor Hotel, Peace River  
2 8 October, 2002, commencing at 1:30 P.M.

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4 THE CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.  
5 Thanks for coming.

6 This is the Public Hearing into the Proposals  
7 prepared by the Federal Electoral Boundaries  
8 Commission, not to be confused with our Provincial  
9 counterparts who are carrying on their process at the  
10 same time.

11 The purpose, of course, of this meeting and  
12 hearings like it, is to consider the Proposals which  
13 we made and which have been published in this form, in  
14 hard copy. If anybody wants a copy of this, they're  
15 welcome to get one from our Secretary later on in the  
16 meeting. They have also -- in summary form, it's been  
17 published in this handout which appeared in the major  
18 newspapers and as I said, it's on the web.

19 We also have, for your information, a booklet  
20 called Representation in the House of Commons, which  
21 is very informative and you can have a copy of that if  
22 you wish as well.

23 I'd like to introduce the members of the  
24 Commission. My name is MacCallum, I'm a Judge of the  
25 Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta in Edmonton. To my  
26 right is Ms. Ritu Khullar, who has been appointed by  
27 the Speaker of the House of Commons. She is a Lawyer

1 practicing in Edmonton. To my left, Mr. Donald J.  
2 Barry, a Political Scientist from the University of  
3 Calgary. He, as well, has been appointed by the  
4 Speaker.

5 The staff of the Commission consists of Miranda  
6 Petryshyn, seated to the right of this table here and  
7 she's the Commission Secretary. We have Dawn Mathews,  
8 the Geography Specialist who visits us from Ottawa at  
9 the moment. And then our Reporter is Sonja Petryshyn  
10 for today's proceedings.

11 The process of the redistribution of electoral  
12 boundaries can be described briefly as follows. We  
13 are an independent Commission. We take our  
14 appointment through the Federal Electoral Boundaries  
15 Act of 1985. We are intended to be and are as a  
16 matter of fact, completely free from any political  
17 influence or political -- dictates of any kind.  
18 Administrative influence as well, is not brought to  
19 bear on our process, we are, in a word, independent.

20 We are expected to interpret and serve the  
21 public interest in a wide sense, in doing our work.  
22 Of course, we have to decide and balance competing  
23 interests as well.

24 We welcome constructive suggestions which is the  
25 purpose of the meeting like this. But everyone must  
26 understand that the submissions that are made to us  
27 will be evaluated in the larger context of the public

1 interest. In other words, we look at the big picture,  
2 and if your particular point of view which you advance  
3 to us is not adopted in the end, I hope you won't feel  
4 aggrieved or insulted in any way, be assured anything  
5 that we hear will be carefully evaluated.

6 The final word in the process is ours, but the  
7 whole business is consultative in nature. We must  
8 first of all follow the legal requirements set out in  
9 Section 15 of the Statute as well as Section 3 of the  
10 Constitution. We then hold public meetings, of which  
11 this is one and as a result of these meetings, we can  
12 certainly change and will change our Proposal, if we  
13 deem it advisable.

14 We then prepare a Report which goes to the  
15 Speaker of the House of Commons and from the Speaker  
16 to a Committee of the House of Commons, where it is  
17 considered by the Members of Parliament.

18 They have a right then to voice their objections  
19 and as a result of hearing them, we may again modify  
20 the Report.

21 We prepare our final Report and send that to the  
22 Chief Electoral Officer who draws up a Representation  
23 Order and then this Order goes to the Governor in  
24 Council for Proclamation.

25 All of this is to be done by July of 2003. The  
26 new boundaries thus established may not be used in any  
27 general election before July of 2004. So if an

1 election is called before then, it will be contested  
2 on the basis of the present boundaries.

3 The object of the exercise here is to receive  
4 submissions regarding electoral boundary readjustment  
5 and it is not to consider the redistribution formula  
6 which allocates the number of seats which is given to  
7 each Province. That matter is set by operation of  
8 law.

9 There has, I can tell you, been a lot of interest  
10 on that subject and we've received many inquiries and  
11 for what it's worth, I can offer a very brief  
12 explanation and at your leisure you can consult the  
13 diagram on the wall back there, which is done in hand  
14 and it explains in abbreviated form the formula which  
15 is applied.

16 What happens is that you start with the 282 seats  
17 which the House of Commons had in 1985. From that  
18 amount you subtract three seats, one for each of the  
19 Northern Territories, Nunavut, Northwest Territories  
20 and the Yukon. You're left then with 279 seats.

21 You divide the population of the ten Provinces,  
22 the latest figure from 1991, by 279 and that gives you  
23 a national quotient.

24 Then you divide the national quotient into the  
25 population of each Province and you come up with a  
26 theoretical number of seats for each Province.

27 In Alberta's case, that works out to 28 and

1 that's where it stands for Alberta. It doesn't stand  
2 that way for all Provinces because there are two  
3 exempting clauses which apply.

4 One is the Senatorial exemption, and by virtue of  
5 that, no Province can have fewer seats in the House of  
6 Commons than it had Senators in 1915. And then the  
7 second one is a so-called Grandfather Clause, which  
8 directs that no Province will have fewer seats than it  
9 had Members in the House of Commons during the 33rd  
10 Parliament, which was in 1976.

11 So seven of the ten Provinces get more seats than  
12 they would otherwise have by reason of the operation  
13 of these two exemption clauses.

14 That's what happens, so if you're interested  
15 further in the subject, you can read all about it in  
16 this booklet and in summary form, as I said, on that  
17 diagram on the wall. There is nothing we can do about  
18 it, so the subject is not open for discussion at this  
19 meeting.

20 Alberta has a population of 2.9 million and it  
21 has 26 seats at the moment. When our work is finished  
22 it will have 28.

23 The hearing procedure at this meeting, ladies and  
24 gentlemen, is as follows: There will be a 15 minute  
25 time limit for presentation. I will ask the Secretary  
26 to hold up a piece of paper showing you when you have  
27 three minutes left. The Commissioners may intervene

1 at any point during your submission, but I think  
2 they'll try and let you make your submission  
3 uninterrupted if possible.

4 I, as Chairman, will have to enforce relevancy.  
5 People are interested in putting forth all kinds of  
6 things which are not necessarily germane to the topic,  
7 and so I'm afraid we'll have to do that, so please  
8 excuse me if I find that necessary to do.

9 The Presenters may put questions to the  
10 Commissioners during the course of your presentations,  
11 and we will take those questions under advisement. If  
12 you leave us some time between the end of your  
13 presentation and the 15 minutes, we will either answer  
14 the questions then or leave it to further  
15 consideration.

16 We can't take any submissions from the floor or  
17 representations from the floor until the last  
18 Presenter has completed. That's only fair because  
19 these people took the trouble to advise us that they  
20 were going to be presenting.

21 But time permitting, and at the discretion of the  
22 Commission, we will hear from the floor.

23 The first person that we have on our schedule is  
24 Mr. Terry Vulcano and I'd ask you to come forward,  
25 sir, and make sure the microphone is on and make your  
26 presentation?

27 MR. TERRY VULCANO: Thank you.

1           These are my ten copies that we're supposed to  
2           bring along.

3   THE CHAIRMAN:           Thank you very much.

4   MR. TERRY VULCANO:       Dear Commission; thank you for the  
5           opportunity to comment on the proposed Federal  
6           Electoral Boundary changes. In a democratically  
7           elected representation system, it is important that  
8           representation be fair, equitable and manageable.

9           The large number of people that are being  
10          represented by a Member of Parliament makes providing  
11          services and ensuring representation difficult. My  
12          comments here are not meant as a reflection of the  
13          local Member of Parliament's handling of things.

14          My feedback is directed at the overall Electoral  
15          Boundary review, with particular reference to the  
16          situation in Alberta. Canada is characterized by  
17          concentrations of populations in cities and a rural  
18          population spread over a vast non-homogenous areas.  
19          It is difficult to provide equitable representation  
20          for such a divergent population base.

21          The boundary review does have some guidelines to  
22          follow in regards to representation with some  
23          exceptions. Thus ridings may vary in size from around  
24          30,000 in Nunavut, Yukon and Prince Edward Island, to  
25          an almost 110,000 average for Alberta, British  
26          Columbia and Ontario.

27          I'll just comment, I'm using the numbers that

1       came out in here which I note are different than the  
2       handout over there.

3               Many, perhaps most Canadians, appreciate the need  
4       for the large geographically spread out rural areas to  
5       have representation of a lower population base. Being  
6       able to reach, communicate and represent such a vast  
7       constituency demands it. It is also noted that such  
8       areas are divergent in their population's make-up,  
9       cultural background, interest and concerns, which  
10      makes appreciating these differences challenging.

11             Believing that to be true and hoping that the  
12      Boundary Commission review seeks equity and  
13      manageability in the new electoral boundaries, one  
14      must immediately ask why Grande Prairie - Peace River  
15      riding, one of the largest in geographic area, has the  
16      largest population base, at least in all of Alberta,  
17      at 122,000 persons, it has four, almost five times the  
18      populate base of smaller ridings noted above.

19             A further analysis of the representation base  
20      shows that many ridings are planned for Edmonton and  
21      Calgary. Eight each. And others are positioned  
22      around large centers, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Red  
23      Deer, Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray. Indeed the name,  
24      the riding name bears the name of a city, perhaps  
25      symbolic of who is being represented, and thus  
26      dominated by those communities, as if the rural area  
27      could easily be incorporated around a city.

1           For Alberta, there are two major models used for  
2 representation. One where large cities have a  
3 multitude of representatives and rural areas are  
4 dominated by a population center.

5           Neither seems to suit the rural electorate in  
6 ensuring their concerns, wishes, aspirations and  
7 priorities are heard.

8           Another model exists elsewhere in Canada. For  
9 example, Prince Edward Island has four seats. Without  
10 trying to speak for the citizens of the Island, it  
11 seems they have a reasonable representation system  
12 where a Member of Parliament represents not too many  
13 people and the distance from one constituent to the  
14 next is not too great.

15           Perhaps there is an advantage in using this  
16 approach elsewhere in rural Canada.

17           Instead of cities and rural areas having to share  
18 a representative, using a lower population guideline,  
19 Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Red Deer, Grande Prairie and  
20 Fort McMurray might have their own representatives, as  
21 could the surrounding rural areas. This would provide  
22 better representation for both urban and rural folk,  
23 and be consistent with the representation elsewhere.  
24 Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Saskatchewan,  
25 benefit somewhat from a more realistic population  
26 bases, on average around 75,000.

27           Do cities with concentrations of populations with

1 many of the same needs, interests and concerns, need  
2 so many Members of Parliament to represent those  
3 needs, interests and concerns? Particularly when  
4 their averages exceed some rural population bases.  
5 This is a question for all of Canada.

6 I've lived more than half my life in cities,  
7 Montreal, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Calgary. Generally,  
8 I would find that fellow residents would not know who  
9 their Member of Parliament was, but were comforted  
10 that there was a prominent MP in their city, if not a  
11 Cabinet Minister.

12 I've also lived in different places in rural  
13 B.C., the Arctic and northern Alberta. There,  
14 everyone seemed to know not only who their Member of  
15 Parliament was but where was their home community.  
16 I'm not claiming to be speaking for people living in  
17 the cities, hopefully you'll learn about their  
18 concerns when you hold meetings in other locations.  
19 It seems that the Federal representation and concerns  
20 are more important to rural Canadians.

21 Although I focus my comments in Alberta, there is  
22 also the question of whether each Province is  
23 represented fairly. Your comments acknowledged at the  
24 beginning of the session. One wonders what a  
25 significant disparity exists from Province to  
26 Province.

27 I'd like to think the Commission has heard some

1 of the different concerns throughout the country in  
2 regards to boundary review and is able to accommodate  
3 the diversion needs of Canadians throughout the  
4 nation.

5 The work of the Commission to establish just  
6 electoral bases is challenging. I trust you'll be  
7 able to take into consideration this perspective  
8 provided today, aid you in developing representation  
9 that is fair, equitable and manageable.

10 Thank you.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Vulcano. Do  
12 you have any comment? Mr. Vulcano, thank you very  
13 much for those remarks. You did make mention of the  
14 relatively high population in the Grande Prairie -  
15 Peace River proposed riding. Let me assure you that  
16 that has received our anxious consideration. It is  
17 too big for comfort, but it is by no means approaching  
18 the 25 percent limit set under Section 15 of the Act.  
19 In fact, that 25 percent limit, plus or minus, can be  
20 exceeded in exceptional circumstances. We haven't had  
21 to do that here, but still we would like it to be  
22 closer to the provincial quotient which is 106,240  
23 people.

24 The difficulty is that this area, northwestern  
25 Alberta, seems to be trapped by geography. If there  
26 were roads traversing the Province north of Lesser  
27 Slave Lake, you could easily construct a riding which

1 would then comprise the northern part of northern  
2 Alberta, include Fort McMurray and Peace River, in  
3 other words, the North Peace Region plus Fort McMurray  
4 and north.

5 That was the case at one time in this Country and  
6 it proved to be horrifically awkward in terms of  
7 effective representation. It's simply too far to  
8 travel and you have to go all the way down around by  
9 Athabasca.

10 So, the situation is as it is at the moment for  
11 that reason. We are not particularly comfortable with  
12 it.

13 Fort McMurray, as you may know from reading, has  
14 only 88,000 or something in it, its proposed riding.  
15 But Fort McMurray in our minds is not a problem  
16 because there's such explosive growth over there that  
17 it is -- if the projections are even halfway correct,  
18 within several years, it will come up to the  
19 provincial quotient, that area.

20 But Peace River - Grande Prairie, unfortunately,  
21 is too big now and it's only going to get bigger, so  
22 in short term, that will remain a problem unless  
23 somebody can suggest a solution to it. So give that  
24 some thought and be sure to write to us, there's  
25 still lots of time left in the process to do something  
26 about it if anybody has a better idea.

27 And our next Presenter then, I'm sorry, is

1 Ms. Joyce Dvornek, representing the M.D. of Big Lakes.

2 MS. JOYCE DVORNEK: Good afternoon. Mr. Chairman,  
3 Members of the Commission, thank you for allowing us  
4 to make this presentation to you. Mr. Chairman, my  
5 name is Joyce Dvornek, Councillor for the Municipal of  
6 Big Lakes. This presentation is on behalf of Council  
7 and we are located within two constituencies, namely  
8 Athabasca - Fort McMurray and Yellowhead.

9 We understand that you are trying to achieve a  
10 plus or minus 17 percent deviation in population  
11 average. We have that. In Fort McMurray, I mean  
12 Athabasca - Fort McMurray, minus 17 percent.

13 Alberta's north is sparsely populated, so we  
14 strongly discourage any proposal to increase their  
15 size. In fact, together Grande Prairie - Peace River,  
16 and Fort McMurray - Athabasca cover 333,234 square  
17 kilometers which represents 52.1 percent of the land  
18 mass of Alberta, with 210,501 people or 7.1 percent of  
19 the population of Alberta, which will only get two of  
20 the possessed 28 seats.

21 We do notice that you have adjusted the south  
22 boundary of Athabasca - Fort McMurray. Traditionally  
23 the Westlock area was included, but not in your  
24 Proposal. It would seem to us that greater  
25 coordination could be made to coordinate boundaries  
26 better with regard to Alberta's provincial electoral  
27 boundaries and municipal boundaries. For example, by

1 lowering the Athabasca - Fort McMurray south boundary  
2 within Big Lakes south Township, south one Township,  
3 would make it more coterminous with our provincial  
4 constituency boundary.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry, ma'am, just say that again  
6 please?

7 MS. JOYCE DVORNEK: For example, by lowering the Athabasca  
8 - Fort McMurray south boundary within Big Lakes, south  
9 one Township would make it coterminous with our  
10 provincial constituency boundary. Please note that no  
11 residents reside in this area.

12 By adjusting the southwest boundary in the County  
13 of Grande Prairie south from the 18th Baseline to the  
14 Wapiti River will place all of the County of Grande  
15 Prairie in the Grande Prairie - Peace River  
16 constituency.

17 We thank you for your time and in closing stress  
18 to you to consider the difficulties of any Member of  
19 Parliament to adequately serve their constituencies in  
20 Canada's sparsely populated northern area.

21 That is one of my major concerns, not that we  
22 feel that we're not represented, but it is an onerous  
23 task for anyone to be able to meet with their  
24 constituencies when they have this huge area to cover.

25 Thank you.

26 THE CHAIRMAN: You were going to give us a copy of  
27 your material, weren't you?

1           Thanks. So the Secretary will make copies of  
2           that for us, Ms. Dvornek, and we can consider it when  
3           we have more time, in detail, because it's rather  
4           technical and I must confess that its boundaries  
5           escaped me.

6   MS. JOYCE DVORNEK:           Okay. Thank you.

7   THE CHAIRMAN:                I get the spirit behind what  
8           you're saying but --

9   MS. JOYCE DVORNEK:           It really is quite an issue when  
10           we have Federal boundaries, we have Provincial  
11           boundary and then we have Municipal boundaries. And  
12           there really should be some effort to try and  
13           coordinate them, it would make it so much more  
14           efficient. Even when you're talking to politicians,  
15           you've got to talk to your MP and he's just outside  
16           that little area, so you've got to go talk to someone  
17           else and it's a huge area.

18   THE CHAIRMAN:                Well, it certainly is a huge area.  
19           I must say though, that there is no real equivalence  
20           existing between Federal, Provincial and Municipal  
21           boundaries. They're established for various reasons,  
22           of course, and they simply can't be coterminous,  
23           although it's a desirable thing, because it identifies  
24           a community of interest within the Federal Electoral  
25           District. So we try to do that, we certainly don't  
26           always succeed and we're happy to make changes to  
27           achieve that result when it doesn't involve a big

1 population shift. So we'll certainly look at it.

2 Do you have any comments?

3 DR. BARRY: No.

4 MS. KHULLAR: I'd like to just clarify a point,  
5 and I'm sure it's contained in your submission, but if  
6 I understand correctly, you have two separate  
7 suggestions. One is dealing with the south boundary  
8 of Athabasca - Fort McMurray? And then the second  
9 suggestion is dealing with the south boundary of  
10 Grande Prairie - Peace River?

11 MS. JOYCE DVORNEK: Right.

12 MS. KHULLAR: Okay. I got confused. I thought  
13 maybe they were just one suggestion at one point, but  
14 two. And they're outlined in your submission?

15 MS. JOYCE DVORNEK: Yes, they are.

16 MS. KHULLAR: Okay. Then we can get the details  
17 from them. And so the M.D. of Big Lakes is just at  
18 the boundary --

19 MS. JOYCE DVORNEK: It's that yellow --

20 MS. KHULLAR: Okay.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, I see. She's got it  
22 highlighted, yes.

23 MS. KHULLAR: Thank you very much. That's  
24 helpful.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, thank you, ma'am.

26 Mr. Tom Baldwin, Executive Director of Northern  
27 Alberta Development Council.

1 MR. TOM BALDWIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I  
2 understand that you would have copies of the Northern  
3 Alberta Development Council's submission in front of  
4 you?

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Yes.

6 MR. TOM BALDWIN: Mr. Chairman, just for some  
7 background for the Commission Members, the Northern  
8 Alberta Development Council has a mandate to advance  
9 northern development. It's a ten member council, the  
10 Chair is the Member of the Legislative Assembly of  
11 Alberta for Peace River, Gary Friedel, and there is  
12 nine members that are appointed through the Order in  
13 Council process established by the Provincial  
14 Government.

15 The area covered by the Council covers about 60  
16 percent of Alberta and the population is just probably  
17 around the ten percent mark, in fact, it's probably  
18 just under the ten percent mark. So, a vast area and  
19 as Deputy Reeve Dvornek mentioned, sparse population  
20 across the north.

21 Generally speaking, the south end of the Northern  
22 Alberta Development Council's boundary takes in Grand  
23 Cache, comes out to take in Whitecourt, across to take  
24 in Athabasca, and right across to take in Bonnyville,  
25 St. Paul, Cold Lake. So a fairly large area in the  
26 scheme of things.

27 Mr. Chairman, the current --

1 THE CHAIRMAN: Excuse me? Would it be fair to say  
2 that it's north of the Athabasca River and north of  
3 the North Saskatchewan River then, generally speaking?

4 MR. TOM BALDWIN: That's probably a little bit of a  
5 larger area, Mr. Chairman, but generally speaking you  
6 could use that as some geographical markers, yes.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: All right.

8 MR. TOM BALDWIN: Currently, there are four Federal  
9 Electoral Boundaries within the Northern Alberta  
10 Development Council area, Athabasca, Peace River,  
11 Vegreville and Yellowhead and under the Proposals  
12 being promoted by the Commission, Athabasca, Wabasca,  
13 Peace River, Westlock, St. Paul and Yellowhead.

14 Mr. Chairman, one of the great challenges in the  
15 north, as you've alluded to, is ensuring the effective  
16 representation and wanting to make sure that the voice  
17 of northern Alberta is heard in Ottawa through the  
18 House of Commons.

19 We realize that is a challenge in the north when  
20 you look at the population levels and the vast areas  
21 that are covered. When reviewing the proposals,  
22 Mr. Chairman, related to new boundaries the Northern  
23 Alberta Development Council would hope that the  
24 Commission would take in a few factors when looking at  
25 those boundaries.

26 The first one is balancing the rural and urban  
27 interests. Under the Provincial Electoral Boundaries

1 system the balancing of the rural and urban interests  
2 in Alberta has been fairly successful, and in fact,  
3 it's been fairly effective in terms of balancing rural  
4 and urban interests across Alberta. And hopefully,  
5 Mr. Chairman, that is a principle that this Commission  
6 would look at and I might add not only in terms of  
7 balancing the rural and urban interests across  
8 Alberta, but there is probably even a greater interest  
9 to make sure that the interests of all the regions of  
10 the Country are balanced when it gets to our Federal  
11 Government.

12 Secondly, and I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman,  
13 firstly to acknowledging the challenges of connecting  
14 east and west across northern Alberta, that's  
15 something that a few of my colleagues behind me here  
16 have been promoting and doing an excellent job of it.  
17 But that's one of the realities, and I think the  
18 socio-economic connections, whether they be related to  
19 transportation or traditional trading patterns, it may  
20 be the links between various communities, but also the  
21 historic and social -- the historic, social and human  
22 interaction over time has created, I think, boundaries  
23 of some sort in terms of establishing where the  
24 constituencies may be, Mr. Chairman.

25 Thirdly, the -- and a principle that is used in  
26 Alberta is the degree of difficulty to serve. When  
27 you look at some of the northern constituencies, I

1 think it is important to try to determine a factor of  
2 sorts in terms of that degree of difficulty to serve.  
3 Such things as physical accessibility to all parts of  
4 the constituency. We still have communities here in  
5 Alberta that do not have all-weather access and those  
6 types of considerations should be considered,  
7 Mr. Chairman.

8 The size of the constituency, as you have alluded  
9 to, the distance between communities within that  
10 constituency. Natural features that may impact on the  
11 level of physical accessibility and even,  
12 Mr. Chairman, the distance between the constituency  
13 and the House of Commons. The northern Alberta MLAs  
14 and a number of their northern colleagues have some  
15 fair distances to travel in terms of getting back and  
16 forth to Ottawa.

17 And lastly, Mr. Chairman, in terms of a series of  
18 factors to consider, is the number of communities  
19 within the constituency. I think it's a critical  
20 consideration. In the northern Alberta  
21 constituencies, there are a number of elected  
22 municipal councils, health authorities, school boards,  
23 that demand a certain level of contact with their  
24 Federal elected representative. I might say that also  
25 applies to a variety of appointed boards within those  
26 constituencies, Mr. Chairman.

27 It's easy sometimes to say that with our modern

1 technology, whether it be fax machines or e-mails or  
2 whatever it might be, that the size of the  
3 constituency perhaps is reduced in terms of a  
4 consideration or the face-to-face contact.

5 In the opinion of the Northern Alberta  
6 Development Council, Mr. Chairman, that's not the  
7 case. Constituents still want that access to their  
8 Member of Parliament or in the provincial context,  
9 their Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta,  
10 to have those face-to-face meetings.

11 In the case of the Grande Prairie - Peace River  
12 constituency, where the MLA right now -- or the MP, I  
13 should say, is situated in Grande Prairie, for some of  
14 his constituents to meet with him, it could be an  
15 upwards of an eight, nine-hour drive one way,  
16 Mr. Chairman.

17 So I think, notwithstanding our modern  
18 technology, the number of communities, the size of the  
19 constituency, should all be factored in.

20 With that, Mr. Chairman, the Northern Alberta  
21 Development Council members unanimously adopted two  
22 recommendations that they would like to convey to you.

23 Firstly, that the current number of Members of  
24 Parliament that represent northern Alberta not be  
25 reduced; and secondly, that any proposed changes to  
26 the current Federal Electoral Boundaries take into  
27 account the balancing of rural and urban interests,

1 socio-economic connections, the degree of difficulty  
2 to serve and lastly, the number of communities served  
3 by a Member of Parliament.

4 That would conclude the Northern Alberta  
5 Development Council's presentation, Mr. Chairman.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Do you have any  
7 comments on Mr. Baldwin's presentation?

8 MS. KHULLAR: Mr. Baldwin, does the Northern Alberta  
9 Development Council have any specific suggestions or  
10 comments on the Proposal?

11 MR. TOM BALDWIN: The only one, Ms. Khullar, would  
12 be the -- I think just taking a look at some of the  
13 boundaries, I think with the proposed Athabasca - Fort  
14 McMurray constituency, some of the connections -- the  
15 socio-economic connections might not connect as well  
16 on the map that's drawn.

17 I know you've looked at the Athabasca - Boyle  
18 area. Some would suggest that a greater connection to  
19 Fort McMurray is over in the Lac La Biche area. There  
20 might be some of those -- along those lines that you  
21 might want to take a look at in terms of some of the  
22 socio-economic connections.

23 I like the way the Chair put the being captured  
24 by geography and I think that Peace River - Grande  
25 Prairie while there's an obvious concern of serving  
26 that great of a population over that great of an area,  
27 perhaps at this go around that might be the best

1 solution. I think the Council members acknowledge  
2 that, but perhaps with an eye to the future as the  
3 growth of northern Alberta continues. Perhaps the  
4 next round of Electoral Boundary reviews here in  
5 Alberta might be able to make some adjustments and to  
6 be quite candid too, I would hope by the time that  
7 there's another look at the boundaries, perhaps our  
8 east/west connections across the north are a little  
9 bit better and that might provide some opportunities  
10 for yourselves or the next Commission that comes down  
11 the road, if you will.

12 MS. KHULLAR: Thank you.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, thank you very much, sir.

14 That's quite helpful.

15 MR. TOM BALDWIN: Thank you.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Ms. Carolyn Kolebaba, am I saying  
17 the name correctly?

18 MS. CAROLYN KOLEBABA: Yes.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: Is not on the agenda but she has  
20 asked to be heard. She comes from the Northern  
21 Sunrise County. We are pleased to have you, ma'am, go  
22 right ahead.

23 MS. CAROLYN KOLEBABA: Thank you. My name is Carolyn  
24 Kolebaba, I am the Reeve of Northern Sunrise County.  
25 Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and thank you  
26 for the opportunity to address the Federal Electoral  
27 Boundaries Commission for Alberta.

1           In creating the boundaries to achieve the goal of  
2 effective representation, Northern Sunrise County  
3 would ask you to consider the following non-population  
4 factors:

5           Geographic size. Due to the geographic size of  
6 the Peace River constituency, the ability of a Member  
7 of Parliament to maintain meaningful, face-to-face  
8 contact is severely hampered. The human factor must  
9 be taken into account. The north struggles with the  
10 ability to get from A to B through adverse weather  
11 conditions and lack of road access. Our Member of  
12 Parliament does his best to cover this constituency  
13 and to have the necessary personal contact with his  
14 electorate in the best manner possible.

15           I must ask this question, will our northern  
16 Alberta voice be lost in a Federal election? It is  
17 commonly known that the outcome of the Federal  
18 election has been determined even before we vote. How  
19 many Albertans are voting today in Federal elections?  
20 Are we already so far removed from the decision-makers  
21 that we have lost faith in the system? We believe  
22 that the erosion of rural representation is the major  
23 factor in the disillusionment of voters, as it relates  
24 to rural Canada. With so many ridings in the  
25 metro-urban centers, the urban population overpowers  
26 the rural already.

27           Population based formulas do not work in the

1 north. The metro-urban Member of Parliament may have  
2 six or seven papers and several radio and television  
3 stations with daily access. The rural Member of  
4 Parliament does not have this advantage.  
5 Communication systems are set up so that urban Members  
6 of Parliament can poll their constituents daily. Our  
7 Members of Parliament in the north are hampered by the  
8 lack of daily communication.

9 Regular contact with the Member of Parliament.  
10 The number of local governments and community  
11 organizations demanding the regular contact of these  
12 Members of Parliament is increasing as we, the people  
13 of the north, see our voice and vote being lost to the  
14 metro-urban centers.

15 The municipalities and industries are wanting  
16 more from our Members of Parliament. Not all problems  
17 or concerns can be dealt with on the phone or the  
18 computer.

19 You have to see to believe. More resources must  
20 be allocated as we continue to grow in the north for  
21 the Member of Parliament to understand the complexity  
22 of the issues we face on a daily basis. The rural  
23 Members of Parliament are struggling now to handle  
24 challenges within their constituencies. Overload is a  
25 factor.

26 It is incumbent upon this Committee to recognize  
27 that should you enlarge the boundaries and reduce the

1 number of rural constituencies, this overload factor  
2 will increase. The next question that must be asked,  
3 who will then be willing to run in a Federal election  
4 knowing full well that in a short time they will be  
5 taxed to their limits?

6 Distance. The distance between communities and  
7 their remote location presents a unique set of  
8 challenges. The Member of Parliament must set his  
9 priorities to provide individual contact with his  
10 constituents. I would strongly caution this Committee  
11 on the rationale behind any boundary changes that  
12 would reduce the number of rural ridings and increase  
13 metro-urban representation.

14 May I say again, population based formulas do not  
15 work in the north.

16 In closing, I make the following observation.  
17 Northern Alberta is beginning to wonder if we are part  
18 of the Canadian mosaic. Rural residents of Alberta  
19 need to at least maintain the number of existing  
20 Members of Parliament, so our voice may be heard in  
21 Ottawa. Our electoral system in general, should be  
22 re-examined. It does not effectively represent the  
23 sparsely populated areas of Canada. Our Senate is no  
24 longer effective or representative of the Country.

25 We support your recommendations on the Peace  
26 River constituency boundary. If the name of our  
27 constituency must change, it should be Peace River -

1 Grande Prairie, since Peace River represents the whole  
2 region.

3 Thank you for the opportunity to make this  
4 presentation.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, ma'am. Do  
6 you have any comments or questions?

7 MS. KHULLAR: Just one question. Where is the  
8 Northern Sunrise County? Can you flag it on the map?

9 MS. CAROLYN KOLEBABA: You know the M.D. of East Peace?  
10 Do you have the M.D. of East Peace in your geographic  
11 there?

12 MS. MATHEWS: M.D.?

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Municipal District.

14 MS. CAROLYN KOLEBABA: Municipal District of East Peace.

15 MS. MATHEWS: East Peace. Oh yes.

16 MS. CAROLYN KOLEBABA: Okay, that's Northern Sunrise  
17 County. We had our name changed in July.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: Oh.

19 MS. KHULLAR: Okay. So you're entirely within  
20 the Grande Prairie - Peace River proposed riding?

21 MS. CAROLYN KOLEBABA: Yes, that's right.

22 MS. KHULLAR: Thank you. I don't know if there  
23 were any other? The Commission may have other  
24 questions, I'm not sure. I'm done.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: I have nothing further for you.

26 MS. CAROLYN KOLEBABA: All right. Thank you.

27 THE CHAIRMAN: Well, the Chair recognizes the

1 Mayor who has been kind enough to pay us a visit,  
2 Lorne Mann. Mr. Mann, notwithstanding the fact that  
3 you're not on the line-up, would you like to say a few  
4 words to us?

5 MR. LORNE MANN: Just a few comments. I found the  
6 Speakers well informed and they hit home your opening  
7 comments, Sir, that we are too big and the area is, as  
8 well, too big. I liked that the notion that  
9 boundaries be as coterminous as they can be with  
10 provincial, arguing, you know, basically that as a  
11 factor. And it certainly makes it handy.

12 And the issue of the rural and the urban, is it  
13 really a question of corridor versus non-corridor, as  
14 that seems to be a big issue in the provincial but the  
15 point is well taken and our constituency illustrates  
16 the gap between the factor of land base, hence  
17 serviceability and population.

18 But is population more an issue of when they  
19 count it, because all the numbers are launched off the  
20 Census that's taken in June, yet over the winter our  
21 population -- what would you hazard? Sometimes  
22 triples. I mean, in the Manning area two winters ago,  
23 there was approximately 6500 people working seasonally  
24 in the Chinchaga area. That's just one little sliver  
25 in the north so, and while the head office is in and  
26 line up in Calgary's and Edmonton's, the 70 percent of  
27 the resources come from this area that power the

1 economy, so not only is the population understated by  
2 Census basis, then a lot of people often physically  
3 earn their income up here and indirectly earn their  
4 income. I believe one study showed that 265,000 jobs  
5 were created from agriculture in the city and then the  
6 city suddenly got more sensitive to agriculture.

7 But again, the biggest stress of course is to  
8 elect quality not necessarily quantity, so I was glad  
9 to see that it doesn't appear to be effecting the  
10 north, but one issue and one thing that I learned  
11 today is that the so-called Peace River-Fort Mac  
12 connector, the lack of that not only makes it  
13 difficult to service that area as a Member of  
14 Parliament, it makes it impossible and  
15 contraindicated.

16 So to the extent we would like to see an  
17 east/west northern Trans Canada highway, the fact that  
18 it makes it impossible to have a common representation  
19 along that access is a strong argument for moving that  
20 along, so that was a big learning factor there.  
21 Because it is difficult to service and we tend to  
22 almost treat the Feds as irrelevant out here from  
23 alienation, but also it's even within our riding, our  
24 MLA, our MP is two hours away by road when he's here  
25 and 50 miles away by road when he's at work, so it  
26 makes it difficult. And again, the stress is quality  
27 over quantity and I'm glad it didn't change.

1           I agree with Reeve Kolebaba that the change of  
2           the riding name to Grande Prairie - Peace River, the  
3           brand name of northwestern Alberta is basically Peace  
4           River and it's -- Grande Prairie is a vibrant city at  
5           that time and probably the only city within our riding  
6           at that time, but we hope that not to be the sole case  
7           in the future.

8           So brand name is important both internationally  
9           where Peace River agricultural products are important  
10          and known worldwide, but also as a Canadian identity  
11          but without -- if they have to be in there, let's put  
12          them at the end.

13          Other than that, thank you for your good work.

14 MS. CAROLYN KOLEBABA:    I agree.

15 THE CHAIRMAN:            That is the end of the Presenters  
16           who have told us that they wish to speak and I think  
17           we can hear from the floor if -- we do have time. So  
18           that if anyone has a question or suggestion to put  
19           from the floor, please come forward to the mike and  
20           identify yourself and we'll hear you.

21          Instead of that, somebody left. Well, I must say  
22          that we enjoyed our trip here, I'm glad that more  
23          people came than we expected. One never knows whether  
24          to interpret a few people as approval or simply lack  
25          of interest.

26 MS. CAROLYN KOLEBABA:    You were in Grande Prairie last  
27          night?

1 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, we were in Grande Prairie.

2 MS. CAROLYN KOLEBABA: Can you tell us how it went?

3 THE CHAIRMAN: There were fewer people there.

4 MS. CAROLYN KOLEBABA: Was there any objections like we  
5 have brought forth, similar to ours or not?

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Some minor objections to the  
7 electoral boundaries to the south to include, you  
8 know, particular areas that we really didn't even know  
9 about, so that illustrates the utility of meetings  
10 like this, because unless you have really detailed  
11 local knowledge, you can't always design a boundary  
12 without hiving off some pocket of population that you  
13 shouldn't have touched. So we learned something  
14 there.

15 We didn't get any solution to our problem with  
16 the riding being too populace, so for the short term,  
17 probably not much will change over the situation as it  
18 exists right now.

19 MS. CAROLYN KOLEBABA: Well, that's good because Northern  
20 Sunrise County does not want to be sliced off and put  
21 into Fort McMurray - Athabasca because we have no  
22 trading patterns whatsoever. We can't get through  
23 there. So if there is going to be changes, we don't  
24 want to be the axe. The provincial government is  
25 trying to do that to us now and we're not accepting  
26 it, so.

27 THE CHAIRMAN: We're going to have a close look at

1 that.

2 We did receive a request by the way, to adjust  
3 the boundary between Athabasca - Fort McMurray and  
4 Grande Prairie - Peace River in the area of Jean d'Or  
5 Prairie, it cuts off the Fox Lake Reserve now, which  
6 has no access from the east, from the Fort McMurray  
7 direction and is served entirely from the Fort  
8 Vermillion area and we weren't even aware that such a  
9 problem existed because we didn't alter the boundary  
10 up there, we just left it as it is. But somebody very  
11 usefully suggested that there's no point in having it  
12 where it is, it could easily jog around to include the  
13 area in its natural service area.

14 MS. CAROLYN KOLEBABA: Yes.

15 MR. LORNE MANN: Haven't they just signed an  
16 all-service, all-weather road?

17 MS. CAROLYN KOLEBABA: From this side.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: From Fort Vermillion, yes.

19 MS. CAROLYN KOLEBABA: But not from Fort McMurray because  
20 they should be on our side.

21 MS. KHULLAR: So that's a proposal that would be  
22 supported here as well?

23 MS. CAROLYN KOLEBABA: That's logical. You don't want to  
24 leave anybody alienated.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: No. That's the sort of thing we  
26 want to hear because we wouldn't know otherwise.

27 Yes, sir?

1 MR. TERRY VULCANO: You mentioned you're not getting  
2 any suggestions --

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Would you mind coming forward  
4 because we need your voice for posterity on the  
5 recording?

6 MR. TERRY VULCANO: You said you're not getting any  
7 suggestions on what to do about the size of the riding  
8 and perhaps my presentation wasn't clear enough then.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: I think I understood what you  
10 said, yes. But it was spoken generally, I think you  
11 would like to see the north regarded as a special area  
12 under the legislation, so that a much less populace  
13 riding could be justified.

14 MR. TERRY VULCANO: But my solution was that you take  
15 it from the cities.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Take it from the cities? Yes,  
17 well of course, sir, we must be guided primarily by  
18 population under Section 15 of the Act.

19 MR. TERRY VULCANO: I'm not suggesting you do anything  
20 outside what your guidelines are.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: No.

22 MR. TERRY VULCANO: I just wish to, you know, be sure  
23 that you're clear that that's what my suggestion is?

24 THE CHAIRMAN: Maybe I don't understand you then?  
25 How can we take it from the cities without leaving  
26 what's left in the cities with too many people in each  
27 riding?

1 MR. TERRY VULCANO: What is the most you can have in a  
2 riding? 140,000?

3 THE CHAIRMAN: The legislation says 25 percent over  
4 the provincial quotient.

5 MR. TERRY VULCANO: So what does that make it?

6 THE CHAIRMAN: 25 percent of 106,000 which is say  
7 26,000 on top of 106,000, so it would be 131,000 or  
8 something. And then it says you can exceed that  
9 amount in exceptional circumstances.

10 MR. TERRY VULCANO: So you get 106 plus the 26, you  
11 could go roughly 130?

12 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

13 MR. TERRY VULCANO: So if you use that 130,000 and  
14 divide it into the cities, then you can have one less  
15 riding in the cities.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: That's mathematically possible,  
17 but I doubt that it's legally acceptable.

18 MR. TERRY VULCANO: Legally acceptable?

19 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

20 MR. TERRY VULCANO: But weren't your parameters that  
21 it be -- as long as you follow those guidelines?

22 THE CHAIRMAN: It's an exception, sir. The fall back  
23 position is population, parity of vote, representation  
24 by population, however you wish to phrase that. So.

25 MR. TERRY VULCANO: I'm not following, if the  
26 guideline is you can go 25 percent over --

27 THE CHAIRMAN: Do you want to -- well, I'll read

1 Section 15, perhaps it's not fair to -- if you look at  
2 our Proposal, do you have a copy of this to take home?

3 MR. TERRY VULCANO: I'll grab it, yes.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Paragraph 15(a) of the Act  
5 requires the Commission to create electoral districts  
6 whose population shall correspond as closely as  
7 reasonably possible to the electoral quota. So that's  
8 the first guideline.

9 Or average electoral district size for the  
10 Province. According to the formula and then so on,  
11 the number of seats in the House of Commons has been  
12 increased from 301 to 308.

13 Because it goes on -- at least our material goes  
14 on to say that because Alberta's population has  
15 increased, we are now entitled to two extra seats, so  
16 that makes 28, on electoral quota of 106,243. We  
17 acknowledge that the Act is concerned with more than  
18 representation by population because Section 15(1)(b)  
19 continues as follows:

20 The Commission shall consider the following  
21 in determining reasonable electoral district  
22 boundaries; (1) The community of interest or  
23 community of identity in or the historical  
24 pattern of an electoral district in that  
25 Province and (2) A manageable geographic  
26 size for districts in sparsely populated  
27 rural or northern regions of the Province.

1 Of course that's a matter of the utmost concern for  
2 people living here in the northern half of the  
3 Province because the geographic center of the Province  
4 is close to Swan Hills, Alberta. North of that, we  
5 have two ridings, two Members of Parliament, south of  
6 it we're going to have 26. So it's a great problem  
7 for the people of the north to have effective  
8 representation.

9 And so we certainly are taking those things into  
10 account and we appreciate your comments. I may say  
11 that we get adamant letters from some quarters saying  
12 there is no possible justification for not equalizing  
13 all 28 constituencies in terms of population, none at  
14 all, they say.

15 So one man one vote, that's the polarity on the  
16 other end of the scale. It's clearly not correct and  
17 it's not the law. So it's a question of balancing the  
18 interests, but I understand your point, sir. Thank  
19 you very much.

20 MS. CAROLYN KOLEBABA: So do you get comments on the  
21 Senate? Have you had that in your little tour here?

22 THE CHAIRMAN: No, I don't think so. Oh, yes.

23 One person had something derogatory to say about --

24 MS. CAROLYN KOLEBABA: It wasn't as polite as mine?

25 THE CHAIRMAN: It's irrelevant so --

26 MR. LORNE MANN: The only thing worse is them not  
27 talking about it.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: It's something we have no business  
2 discussing.

3 MS. CAROLYN KOLEBABA: You can't talk about it?

4 THE CHAIRMAN: No.

5 MS. CAROLYN KOLEBABA: Okay.

6 MS. JOYCE DVORNEK: I just have one question and it is  
7 maybe more to familiarize yourselves with the area,  
8 the land mass that we're talking about. How are you  
9 commuting to your different venues?

10 THE CHAIRMAN: By air.

11 MS. JOYCE DVORNEK: By air?

12 THE CHAIRMAN: Except in central Alberta where  
13 we're going to drive. That's by choice, it's not by  
14 necessity. We could have driven, but it would have  
15 taken two months to do our hearings instead of one  
16 month.

17 MS. JOYCE DVORNEK: I guess that's the point that I  
18 want to drive home.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, well, the point is obvious,  
20 ma'am, everybody recognizes that. You only have to  
21 look at a map.

22 MS. JOYCE DVORNEK: But sometimes it's really easy to  
23 forget and we do feel like we're forgotten. That's  
24 why we're here.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. Thank you.

26 MR. GARY LINDSTROM: Our difficulty is, in the north  
27 here, there's a number of people that are living in a

1 location such as Edmonton that figure that the north  
2 is Edmonton and we take exception to that point.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: I know the feeling, sir. I  
4 practiced in rural Alberta for 18 years.

5 MS. CAROLYN KOLEBABA: Can I ask you if there was an  
6 east/west connector, like it's a hypothetical  
7 question, but if there was an east/west connector and  
8 it did go, we did have a major highway that went  
9 across the north, could we be allocated under those  
10 conditions as a special area and north of that  
11 highway?

12 THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, you'd be a lot closer to it  
13 than you are now.

14 MS. CAROLYN KOLEBABA: So have you heard of the east/west  
15 connector before?

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Mann mentioned it to me in  
17 passing at lunch, but I have no knowledge of whether  
18 it's imminent, it's certainly possible obviously, but  
19 I would hazard a guess that it's going to be resource  
20 driven. When there's enough market for the resources,  
21 all the way across the Province from Peace River to  
22 Fort McMurray, through that heavy oil belt, then it  
23 will be built.

24 MS. CAROLYN KOLEBABA: And I would suggest to you that  
25 the resources are there, but it's politically driven  
26 and the political analysis of that is if there is an  
27 east/west connector, the dollars will start seeping

1           towards different parts of the Province instead of  
2           Edmonton and Calgary. And so I would suggest to you  
3           that definitely that is a political thing and we have  
4           to push harder in the north, but we do not have the  
5           population that screams as loud as Edmonton and  
6           Calgary. So we are strangled by that, by people, like  
7           yourselves, we would like you to take note of what  
8           we're saying today.

9   THE CHAIRMAN:                I think that -- we gave some  
10           thought to you know a "North Peace riding", if I can  
11           put that in quotes, but it would be something like 50  
12           percent under the provincial quotient.

13   MS. CAROLYN KOLEBABA:       No, it won't work until that  
14           highway is there.

15   MR. LORNE MANN:               The NADC has gathered  
16           together the northern road strategy in which the --

17   THE CHAIRMAN:                Mr. Mann, would you take the mike,  
18           please, the Reporter, remember you're in court here?

19   MR. LORNE MANN:               The northwest, the east/west  
20           corridor of Peace River - Fort Mac corridor, as we  
21           like to call it, is part of the Northern Alberta  
22           Council's northern road strategy and along with other  
23           laterals and major road networks and that has  
24           agreeance across the north as far as I know, and all  
25           councils and rural municipalities have adopted it, so  
26           if you could bring that forward in the deliberations,  
27           it would certainly help to legitimize that. But it is

1 a priority of the north and it's gaining recognition  
2 when referred to by Minister of Transportation,  
3 Stelmach, as a positive in a recent meeting. Thank  
4 you.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for coming.  
6 Give our regards to all the Members of the Bar and I  
7 hope they're behaving themselves in their usual  
8 decorous fashion?

9 Well, ladies and gentlemen, if there's nothing  
10 further, we'll adjourn. Thank you again for coming,  
11 and we're off to Fort McMurray.

12 MS. KHULLAR: By plane.

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18 PUBLIC HEARING CONCLUDED

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CERTIFICATE OF TRANSCRIPT

I, the undersigned, hereby certify that the foregoing pages are a true and faithful transcript of the proceedings taken down by me in shorthand and transcribed from my shorthand notes to the best of my skill and ability.

Dated at the City of Edmonton, Province of Alberta, this 18th day of October, 2002.

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S. Petryshyn, CSR(A)  
Official Court Reporter/  
Examiner

FEDERAL ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION

OF ALBERTA, 2002-2003

UNDER THE FEDERAL ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES

READJUSTMENT ACT, R.S.C 1985, c. E-3

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P U B L I C   H E A R I N G

PEACE RIVER, ALBERTA

8 October, 2002

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C O M M I S S I O N

Justice E. P. MacCallum	Commission Chairman
Ms. Ritu Khullar	Commission Member
Dr. Donald J. Barry	Commission Member

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Ms. Miranda Petryshyn	Commission Secretary
Ms. Dawn Mathews	Geography Specialist
S. Petryshyn, C.S.R. (A)	Official Court Reporter/ Examiner