

PUBLIC HEARING HELD AT THE BEST WESTERN HIGH ROAD INN, EDSON
7 OCTOBER, 2000

INDEX OF PRESENTERS - EDSON

NO.	NAME OF PRESENTER	PAGE
1	JUDITH BUGG	6, 10 12-16 18
2	ED MOORE	6 9-13 15-19

1 Public Hearing held at The Best Western High Road Inn, Edson
2 7 October, 2002, commencing at 1:30 P.M.

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4 THE CHAIRMAN: I'd like to welcome you here this
5 afternoon. The meeting is for the purpose of
6 considering the proposals of the Federal Electoral
7 Boundaries Commission, proposals which we made, and we
8 of course, are the Federal Electoral Boundaries
9 Commission for Alberta.

10 So our proposal, I'm sure the paper's already
11 aware of this, but it is contained in summary form in
12 this handout which went out to all the papers and in
13 its formal form here, which is found on the website as
14 well as in hard copy. So I believe everybody has this,
15 or if not, it's easily available and you can get the
16 address from our Secretary.

17 Now I'll just introduce the members. Miranda
18 Petryshyn is the Commission Secretary, sitting over
19 there. Sonja Petryshyn is our Court Reporter, at
20 least our Reporter for today, I can't drop old habits,
21 Court Reporter. Don Barry is from Calgary, he's a
22 Political Scientist. He's one of Members of the
23 Commission appointed by the Speaker of the House of
24 Commons. Ritu Khullar is the other member of the
25 Commission, she's a Lawyer practicing in Edmonton.
26 She as well was appointed by the Speaker. And Dawn
27 Mathews is our Geography Specialist. My name is

1 MacCallum, I'm a Judge with the Court of Queen's Bench
2 of Alberta.

3 We are an independent Commission, I think it's
4 probably fair to emphasize that, which has been
5 established under the provisions of the Electoral
6 Boundaries Readjustment Act of 1985, the objective of
7 which is to appoint Commissions which are entirely
8 free of any political or administrative influence.

9 Our word is final, but the process is
10 consultative. We must first of all follow the
11 guidelines which are set out in Section 15 of the Act,
12 the Statute I just mentioned. We hold public hearings
13 which is one of them today, to review the proposal
14 which we made and which I pointed to you here. The
15 next thing we'll do after that is change our proposal
16 in light of the public input if we consider it to be
17 advisable. We then prepare our report which goes
18 through the Speaker of the House of Commons to a
19 Parliamentary Committee and that Committee reviews it.

20 Then we will receive and review any objections
21 from the Members of Parliament and if we deem it
22 advisable we will modify our report accordingly. We
23 make then our final report to the Chief Electoral
24 Officer and he drafts a Representation Order which is
25 then proclaimed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council
26 and comes into force.

27 All of this happens on or before July of 2003, or

1 next year. So the new boundaries which we establish
2 may not be used in any election which is called before
3 June of 2004. There must be a year elapsed between
4 the Proclamation and the next election. So if an
5 election is called earlier, it will proceed on the
6 basis of the present boundaries.

7 The object of the submissions which we will
8 receive in our public hearings, is readjustment of
9 electoral boundaries and it is not the redistribution
10 formula which allocates the number of seats which is
11 given to each Province.

12 There is widespread interest in the second
13 question, of course, so we propose at each public
14 hearing to briefly explain the redistribution formula,
15 even though there's nothing we can do about it.
16 Alberta has 28 seats and that's really all we need to
17 know, but people are understandably concerned about
18 the fairness of seat allocation as between the
19 different Provinces.

20 So, I don't know if it's necessary for the
21 present audience to go through it. I can if you like
22 briefly, it's not necessary for the Politicians, I'm
23 sure. Does the paper need an explanation? There is
24 one, by the way, on pages 8 and 9 of this booklet,
25 Representation in the House of Commons of Canada,
26 which sets it out very fully and if you don't have a
27 copy of this, you're certainly welcome to take one as

1 you go.

2 Briefly, you start out with 282 seats, subtract
3 three seats for the Northern Territories, which leaves
4 you with 279 seats. And this is based on the number
5 of seats in the House of Commons in 1985. Then you
6 take the population of the ten Provinces, excluding
7 the Territories, divide that by 279 and you reach what
8 is called a quotient, the national quotient. Then you
9 take the population of each Province, divide that by
10 the quotient and it yields the number of seats,
11 theoretically.

12 Alberta, it yields 28 seats. Some of the
13 Provinces, it doesn't. The ones who are dropping in
14 population would be entitled to fewer seats than they
15 now have and the reason -- their entitlement is
16 preserved by two exceptions.

17 Since 1915, each Province shall have no fewer
18 seats in the House of Commons than it has Senators;
19 and secondly, each Province is entitled to as many
20 seats in the House of Commons as it had during the
21 33rd Parliament in 1976. So seven out of the 10
22 Provinces, as a matter of fact, benefit from those two
23 exemptions. Were it not for them they would have
24 fewer seats than they would have allocated to them --
25 have been allocated to them.

26 British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario are
27 increasing their population, and therefore, they don't

1 require the benefit of these exemptions.

2 So Alberta has 26 seats right now, it's going to
3 have 28, spread amongst the population of 2.9 million.

4 I'll skip everything I would normally say about
5 the hearing procedure at our meetings where Presenters
6 will be making formal presentations, and I'll just ask
7 you then if there is anything you wish to discuss
8 about this?

9 The boundaries of the riding have not changed
10 very much, if you'd have a look at the lines on the
11 map on the wall, once she gets it up, you'll see
12 there's been some adjustment made on the eastern
13 boundary. An adjustment which is driven by numbers
14 basically. Because we want -- our objective under the
15 Act, of course, is to maintain numerical parity as
16 between ridings, insofar as is practical to do so.
17 When it is not practical to do so, then we have to
18 depart from that.

19 Yellowhead is big in geographic area, of course,
20 necessarily so, but it's nothing like the two northern
21 ridings of Grande Prairie - Peace River, as we propose
22 to call them and Athabasca - Fort McMurray. If you
23 pause to think that the geographical center of Alberta
24 is around Swan Hills, and north of that point there
25 are two ridings and south of it there are 26. So the
26 difficulty of representation in the north is a very
27 real one. Bad enough in Yellowhead, I'm sure the MP

1 would agree.

2 MS. JUDITH BUGG: I'm sure he would, it's quite a
3 challenge.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: I'll just ask the Commission
5 members if they have anything to add to this?

6 DR. BARRY: No, I think you've covered all the
7 bases.

8 MS. KHULLAR: I don't have anything.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: Do you have any questions you want
10 to put?

11 MR. ED MOORE: Yes. You had said earlier that
12 the Provinces which are gaining in population were
13 exempt under this --

14 THE CHAIRMAN: They don't require the benefit, if
15 I can put it that way, of those two exemptions, the
16 Grandfather Clause or the Senatorial Clause.

17 MR. ED MOORE: And those were what Provinces
18 again? Ontario --

19 THE CHAIRMAN: All seven except British Columbia,
20 Ontario and Alberta.

21 MR. ED MOORE: Okay. And with no Presenters here
22 today, at least so far, what does that tell you?

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Well it -- we read the papers, of
24 course, as part of our research and looking for
25 evidence and Mr. Merryweather was quoted in the paper
26 saying he had no objection to the proposal, and I
27 suppose that sentiment is echoed amongst the electors

1 as a whole, so that's what it tells me anyway.

2 MS. JUDITH BUGG: Just for the record, it's
3 Merrifield.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Merrifield? I'm sorry, what did I
5 say, Weather? I'll probably continue to say Weather
6 too. That shows you how non-political we are, you
7 see.

8 MS. JUDITH BUGG: Yes, exactly.

9 MS. KHULLAR: Just to follow-up on that comment,
10 in other scheduled hearings, we have varying degrees
11 of interest. People who are going to present are to
12 give us notice in advance, so some areas we have quite
13 a few so, you know, take that as a sign of interest or
14 controversy, disagreement or agreement, the fact that
15 Yellowhead hasn't changed that much has drawn the
16 opposite inference of not too many people at this
17 hearing.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, we expect some of the
19 meetings are going to be very lively, to say the
20 least. There's lots of interest because -- with the
21 addition of two seats, of course, we've had to make
22 considerable structural changes and southern Alberta
23 is not effected, the three constituencies down there
24 have changed very little, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat
25 and Fort MacLeod. But anything in between there and
26 here has certainly changed, in our proposal, but of
27 course, people have to understood and I think they do

1 that what we have proposed is not written in stone by
2 any means. This is a consultative process, as I said,
3 and we do not intend to take any advocative --
4 adversary position on our own behalf. What we want to
5 do is hear from people and then we'll make up our
6 minds whether any more changes -- whether further
7 changes are needed to our the proposals.

8 There's also a misapprehension in some people's
9 minds as to the effect of going above or below the
10 provincial quotient. And that, if you want to call it
11 an average population per riding, it would be 106,240.
12 So the primary objective under Act is to get as close
13 to that as possible and the reason is that if there
14 are too few people in a riding, they become empowered
15 vis-a-vis people in more populace ridings. If there
16 are a lot more people than that in a riding, their
17 vote becomes diluted, the vote of elector becomes
18 diluted, so it's not a thing that you tolerate very
19 easily, but it's completely necessary, for example, in
20 the north.

21 You just can't design two ridings, for example,
22 on the eastern side of the northern part of the
23 Province and on the western side of the northern part
24 of the Province which come very close to that, is our
25 objective. Because there is too much population in
26 the west and too little in the east.

27 The east doesn't worry us though because Fort

1 McMurray, although it is low at the moment, is an area
2 of very rapid growth which you know, so by the time
3 the next census rolls around in ten years, we fully
4 expect that their numbers will be close to, if not
5 right up to, the provincial average.

6 But Peace River - Grande Prairie is a problem. I
7 think there's about 121,000 people in the riding that
8 we have proposed and we would like that to be less,
9 although it's well within -- there's sort of a
10 statutory limit of 25 percent, plus or minus. And
11 we're certainly not at that level by any means, and as
12 a matter of fact, in exceptional circumstances, you
13 can even exceed the 25 percent in some ridings. And
14 you'll find that appearing in the smaller Provinces,
15 for example.

16 MR. ED MOORE: And where are the two changes
17 again? I know I haven't looked at the book yet. The
18 changes that are --

19 THE CHAIRMAN: Changes for what?

20 MR. ED MOORE: The extra seats from the --

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Alberta as a whole had 26, so it's
22 getting two more. So, Calgary gets one more and we
23 have proposed the addition of another seat in the
24 Edmonton area. One from the new allotment, if I could
25 put it that way and another one from the amalgamation
26 of some rural ridings in the area, in the general
27 area. So that in the result, there would be eight

1 seats in greater Edmonton and eight seats in Calgary
2 proper.

3 Once you make a change, of course, it creates a
4 concentric effect, like throwing a stone in a lake so
5 that there must necessarily be changes in the
6 adjoining ridings.

7 Maybe you can help us out, can you tell us
8 anything about the Edson area that we might not know?
9 The Town, the population of the Town, for example?

10 MR. ED MOORE: Well, we seem to be gaining more
11 people and unlike other areas we're not, say as
12 economically depressed as some, although you know,
13 although some people are effected, especially with the
14 drought and such that we've had this past year, I
15 imagine there's some spillover effects into many
16 areas.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: There would be 5,000 or better, I
18 suppose, in the town itself?

19 MR. ED MOORE: Yes, there is --

20 MS. JUDITH BUGG: 70 I think.

21 MS. DAWN MATHEWS: 75, I believe.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: 7500?

23 MR. ED MOORE: Yes.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: All right, shows you how much I
25 know, I thought it was 5000.

26 MR. ED MOORE: It's growing, it's, you know, they
27 took a census recently of the town as well. It's

1 almost eight. It's getting to eight. But it's still
2 a transient area in some ways, you know, a lot of
3 movement.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: I'm sure.

5 MR. ED MOORE: A lot of people moving out.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Due to the oilfield and the lumber
7 business, as well.

8 MR. ED MOORE: Yes. And others moving in, so
9 it's -- kind of keeps an even keel.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: How many schools would you have?
11 Just the one high school or more than one?

12 MR. ED MOORE: Well, we have a separate school in
13 town, which has a high school in it.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

15 MR. ED MOORE: And they're going to be building
16 another one soon, up -- just in east Edson here.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Another public?

18 MR. ED MOORE: Catholic, separate school for
19 junior/senior, right.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Oh I see.

21 MR. ED MOORE: A junior/senior high and then
22 there's the one up here which is now currently
23 elementary, K up to grade 12 and then there's a high
24 school, the public high school which --

25 THE CHAIRMAN: Now Hinton is bigger I guess, in
26 terms of population, is it?

27 MR. ED MOORE: Yes. They're around 10,000.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: But they really don't have any
2 hinterland population there at all, do they, to speak
3 of? Whereas Edson does have some.

4 MR. ED MOORE: Yes, less than here.

5 MS. JUDITH BUGG: Mostly, a lot of Crown land in and
6 around Hinton. More so than here.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

8 MS. JUDITH BUGG: Do you have any idea, I'm sorry,
9 do you have any idea what population this riding would
10 pick up in that St. Albert area? Spruce Grove, like
11 there's that finger that comes in?

12 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay, Dawn?

13 MS. MATHEWS: You mean to take this away? Or --

14 MS. JUDITH BUGG: The part -- the proposal of
15 addition that comes -- like it changes our east
16 boundary into kind of a finger that goes right into
17 Spruce Grove, was my understanding?

18 THE CHAIRMAN: Right there? Where her pointer
19 is?

20 MS. JUDITH BUGG: Could be.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Just along the northern boundary
22 of Spruce Grove.

23 MS. JUDITH BUGG: Yes.

24 MS. MATHEWS: You want to know the population of
25 this area?

26 MS. JUDITH BUGG: Just a rough guess?

27 THE CHAIRMAN: We have pretty strong

1 representations by the way, from some people to give
2 that back to Spruce Grove and Stony Plain because they
3 regard that as being an actual extension of their
4 communities.

5 MS. JUDITH BUGG: Yes, I recognize that and we had
6 calls as well.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Have you?

8 MS. KHULLAR: Sorry, you've had what?

9 MS. JUDITH BUGG: We've had calls in regards to that
10 as well. And also, with those, kind of a very
11 difficult border because we have go so far as to get
12 down to Range Roads --

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

14 MS. JUDITH BUGG: -- to try and figure out whether
15 they're in our riding or in Mr. Williams' riding. So
16 there's been -- that's why we've had a lot of concern.

17 MS. MATHEWS: We just got this figured out.

18 MS. JUDITH BUGG: So, I just wanted to know what
19 kind of population guess, are we talking?

20 MS. MATHEWS: That highlighted yellow is 6,000.

21 MS. JUDITH BUGG: Okay. So it is a lot of rural
22 residential probably? Acreages and stuff, more so.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Oh yes. Yes.

24 MR. ED MOORE: No major industries within that
25 sliver then?

26 THE CHAIRMAN: Not to my knowledge, no. I think
27 that big mobile home development is located at

1 Winterburn is in that area, isn't it?

2 MS. JUDITH BUGG: I'm not sure.

3 MS. KHULLAR: That's the one on Highway 16,
4 isn't it? North of Highway 16?

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, just north of Highway 16, and
6 it's all acreages basically, small holdings. Those
7 are points, of course, which we like to hear. Because
8 it's very difficult just by looking at a map unless
9 you have a very detailed knowledge of each area in
10 the Province, you don't know the local conditions. So
11 those -- what we've heard is valuable you know, and
12 where only 6,000 people are involved, it's possible to
13 make accommodations without throwing the primary
14 objective out of whack altogether.

15 MS. JUDITH BUGG: Well, people of course, have
16 made their call to us because you know, we're going to
17 get the largest representation from that area.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

19 MS. JUDITH BUGG: So they've been calling everybody
20 to see what their thoughts are, et cetera.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. It's always --
22 superficially, it looks nice to have a regular square
23 riding or something, you know, but it's just simply
24 not possible. And so you inevitably wind up with
25 something which is a little odd and which causes
26 confusion, I surmise, when they see their neighbor
27 belonging to one riding and themselves to another.

1 MS. JUDITH BUGG: Oh, sure. Definitely. But that's
2 never going to change, no matter where you go.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, I'm afraid not.

4 MR. ED MOORE: And this is the proposal then,
5 this little sliver, and it may or may not necessarily
6 occur, depending on the hearings?

7 THE CHAIRMAN: That's correct. That's the
8 proposal.

9 MR. ED MOORE: Yes. And do we have an idea of
10 how many hectares that would be?

11 THE CHAIRMAN: I don't.

12 MS. MATHEWS: We do. I don't know where it is
13 -- oh, here it is. Yellowhead is 89,806 kilometers
14 square.

15 MS. JUDITH BUGG: Could you repeat that please?

16 MS. MATHEWS: 89,806.

17 MS. JUDITH BUGG: Thank you.

18 MR. ED MOORE: And this extra sliver of land, if
19 it would come to pass, how many hectares would that
20 be?

21 THE CHAIRMAN: It roughly, it looks like about 10
22 kilometers by five kilometers to me. Because it
23 comprises the area directly north of Stony Plain and
24 Spruce Grove, so 50 square kilometers, something like
25 that.

26 Miranda, would you get this gentleman one of
27 these please? Would you like one for Mr. Merrifield's

1 office?

2 MS. JUDITH BUGG: Might as well. Then if somebody
3 feels left out --

4 THE CHAIRMAN: This actually, the representation
5 formula would be valuable for you because you're the
6 people that can do something about it. By changing
7 the law, if you're so minded.

8 MR. ED MOORE: Mr. MacCallum, where do you hail
9 from once again?

10 THE CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry?

11 MR. ED MOORE: Where do you hail from?

12 THE CHAIRMAN: I'm from Edmonton.

13 MR. ED MOORE: And Mr. Barry is from Calgary?

14 THE CHAIRMAN: He's from Calgary, yes.

15 DR. BARRY: That's right, yes.

16 MR. ED MOORE: And you're from Edmonton?

17 MS. KHULLAR: That's correct.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. I think, unless you have
19 anything further to --

20 MS. JUDITH BUGG: I don't, no. You folks have to
21 get to Grande Prairie?

22 THE CHAIRMAN: We're going to Grande Prairie for
23 a meeting at 7:30.

24 MR. ED MOORE: I'm just curious, how many
25 presentations booked -- presentations do you have for
26 Grande Prairie?

27 THE CHAIRMAN: Grande Prairie? One, I think.

1 MR. ED MOORE: Is that all?

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

3 MS. KHULLAR: Yes, one in Grande Prairie.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Couple in Peace River.

5 Well, it's a shame that this beautiful room

6 didn't get better patronized but anyway --

7 MR. ED MOORE: How much apathy do you think is
8 out there about the Federal political process or does
9 it really have a major factor in this kind of a
10 process or when people don't have presentations, does
11 that tell you that they're relatively pleased with the
12 way things are going?

13 THE CHAIRMAN: I think I'll defer to the
14 Political Scientist to answer that one.

15 DR. BARRY: I would assume that people are
16 generally satisfied when we don't hear from them. Some
17 of our sessions are very heavily booked, starting on
18 Thursday in Edmonton. We have a lot of people in Red
19 Deer coming forward, and a fair number in Calgary, as
20 well.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: The more the status quo is
22 effected, the more -- the busier it gets. So I
23 wouldn't -- I don't think it's probably true to say
24 there's apathy so much as there is indifference.
25 Well, maybe that means the same thing, but it means
26 that people simply are -- we're content with the
27 status quo and they can see it's not changing and they

1 see no reason to respond.

2 MS. BARRY: We've had the most response where
3 we've made the most changes.

4 MR. ED MOORE: Right.

5 MS. JUDITH BUGG: Thank you very much.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Thanks for coming.

7 MS. KHULLAR: Sometimes you can tell in terms of
8 the number of letters to the editor, like that, at the
9 local level, what people are thinking.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. Has there been much comment
11 in your paper, for example, from the readers?

12 MR. ED MOORE: Not -- actually we haven't had a
13 lot of letters about anything lately. It either tells
14 you that people are very busy or that they don't have
15 too many concerns about too many issues. But I
16 imagine that will all change, once people get back
17 from vacations and such.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: I suppose, yes. Well, inevitably
19 you'll find interest, which is too late. That was the
20 case in the last Commission I know, there was some
21 commentary and the papers have remarked upon it,
22 editorials have remarked upon that with respect to the
23 Provincial Boundaries Commission. That urging people
24 to get out and make their concerns heard with respect
25 to any --

26 MR. ED MOORE: Well, we always say -- especially
27 when it comes to bi-elections, we always say well, if

1 you don't turn out and vote, you have no right to
2 complain. I think that applies to a lot of things.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: That's right.

4 Yours is a weekly, is it?

5 MR. ED. MOORE: Yes.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: What's the name of the paper?

7 MR. ED MOORE: Edson Leader.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: Is it the only one in town?

9 MR. ED MOORE: No, we have -- there's an
10 advertiser paper here that comes out every Monday, as
11 well. But I can give you my card here?

12 THE CHAIRMAN: Sure. If you'd just give it to
13 Miranda, she'll put it on file.

14 MR. ED MOORE: Thank you.

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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.

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

