

PUBLIC HEARING HELD AT THE GRANDE PRAIRIE INN, GRANDE PRAIRIE
7 OCTOBER 2002

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1 Public Hearing held at The Grande Prairie Inn, Grande Prairie
2 7 October, 2002, commencing at 7:30 P.M.

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4 THE CHAIRMAN: Is Mr. Bill Rogan here, County
5 Administrator of Grande Prairie? This gentleman was
6 our sole registered Presenter tonight, so I suppose he
7 probably has been unavoidably detained. Perhaps we
8 can just start with a few preliminary matters.

9 I'd like to welcome you here this evening. The
10 meeting is for the purpose of considering the
11 proposals of the Federal Electoral Boundaries
12 Commission. These proposals have been published on
13 the web and formally, in hard copy and there has been
14 a summary of them in the -- inserted in the major
15 newspapers in the Province. We don't have any more of
16 these on hand, but if anybody is interested in seeing
17 the formal proposal and doesn't have a copy of it,
18 they're welcome to inquire from the Commission
19 Secretary this evening.

20 I'd like to introduce the members of the
21 Commission and the staff who are here tonight. On my
22 right is Commissioner Ritu Khullar. She is a Lawyer
23 from Edmonton, she was appointed by the Speaker of
24 House of Commons. On my left is Mr. Don Barry, a
25 Political Scientist from the University of Calgary.
26 He too, was appointed by the Speaker of the House of
27 Commons. My name is MacCallum, I'm a Judge of the

1 Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta and I was appointed
2 by the Chief Justice of Alberta. To my left is Ms.
3 Sonja Petryshyn, our Reporter for today. Ms. Dawn
4 Mathews is our Geography Specialist from Ottawa and
5 Miranda Petryshyn is the Commission Secretary.

6 We are an independent Commission by design. We
7 take office under the auspices of the Federal
8 Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act of 1985. We are
9 intended to be and we are, entirely free from any
10 political or administrative influence.

11 Our word on the matter of Electoral Boundaries
12 Readjustment is final, but the process is
13 consultative. We are at the first stage of that or at
14 least the second stage of the process now, we've made
15 our proposal which has been published. We must follow
16 the guidelines and we have followed the guidelines
17 under Section 15 of The Act in formulating our
18 proposal. We're now in the second stage, that is the
19 holding of public hearings to hear reaction, after
20 which we might change our proposals, if we deem it
21 advisable, in light of the public input we receive.

22 We then prepare our Report which goes through the
23 Speaker of the House of Commons to a Committee of the
24 House of Commons where the Members of Parliament will
25 examine it and they may submit any objections that
26 they have, after which we can again modify our report,
27 if we deem it advisable.

1 We return the final report to the Chief Electoral
2 Officer who drafts a Representation Order and this is
3 proclaimed into the law by the Lieutenant Governor in
4 Council.

5 All of this will happen before July of next year,
6 2003. Now the boundaries that we set at that time may
7 not be used in an election called before June of 2004.
8 So if one is called before then, it will take place on
9 the basis of the boundaries as they now exist.

10 The object of our work and of the submissions
11 which are to be made to us is Electoral Boundary
12 Readjustment. It is not redistribution formula which
13 allocates the number of seats which go to each
14 Province. That is not our business. By operation of
15 law, Alberta is entitled to 28 seats in the next
16 redistribution, whereas it now holds 26.

17 Therefore, strictly speaking, there's no need to
18 say anything about that subject, however, we have
19 received wide interest in it from many quarters, who
20 want to know why one Province has more seats than the
21 next and things like that. So, although it is not
22 open for discussion at this meeting, I could briefly
23 explain it to you. If you have reference to that
24 handwritten placard on the wall there, that sets out
25 the formula, and also at pages 8 and 9 of this
26 booklet, which is called Representation in the House
27 of Commons, you will find it fully explained. If you

1 want a copy of this booklet, anybody is free to ask
2 the Commission Secretary afterwards.

3 What happens briefly, is that you start with the
4 282 seats which were in Parliament in 1985. From that
5 number you subtract one seat for each of the Northern
6 Territories, for Nunavut, the Yukon and the Northwest
7 Territories. That leaves you with 279.

8 Then you take the population of the ten
9 Provinces, divide it by 279 and you come to an
10 electoral quotient. The provincial population is then
11 divided by that electoral quotient and you come up
12 with a theoretical number of seats for each Province.

13 In the case of Alberta, British Columbia and
14 Ontario, that is in fact, the number of seats that
15 they will have.

16 For the other seven Provinces, one must apply the
17 exemptions, the so-called Grandfather Clause and the
18 Senatorial Clause, under the terms of which no
19 Province will have fewer seats in the House of Commons
20 than it had Senators in 1915 and no Province will have
21 fewer seats in the House of Commons than it had
22 Members in the House at the time of the 33rd
23 Parliament, which was in 1976. So seven out of the
24 ten Provinces profit, if I can use that word, from
25 those provisions. Alberta does not because it gained
26 in population and so on that basis alone, it is
27 entitled to two additional seats.

1 The population of the Province now is 2.9 million
2 and we have, as I said, 26 seats and we're entitled to
3 28. So that means that -- that means a major
4 readjustment in effect, because as soon as you disrupt
5 the status quo, you cause a kind of a domino effect
6 and most ridings change. There are a few that have
7 not changed very much and perhaps we could discuss
8 those and I'm not going to -- since our Presenter is
9 not here and I guess nobody else has notified us in
10 writing that they intend to make a presentation, I
11 thought perhaps you might like to ask us some
12 questions in sort of an informal way? Please identify
13 yourself if you do?

14 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: My name is Brenda Giesbrecht. I
15 already gave her my name. I am from Valleyview, which
16 is about an hour and 15 minutes east of here. I've
17 had a chance to get the hard copy of your Proposal and
18 if you look at it, it doesn't show on the maps on the
19 wall, but if you look at the provincial map on your
20 hard copy and I would like you to look on the boundary
21 between Grande Prairie - Peace River and Yellowhead.
22 So where you're going to look in the proposal, in the
23 book that --

24 THE CHAIRMAN: In here?

25 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: Yes, that book.

26 THE CHAIRMAN: You want me to look where?

27 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: On the provincial map, what page

1 is it? Right in the middle. I've got a copy at home,
2 I wasn't going to take another copy. Now if you look
3 on the map, you see the boundary between Yellowhead
4 and Grande Prairie - Peace River?

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

6 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: Dawn, do you want to move your
7 arrow, right there. Okay, those are highways, are
8 they?

9 MS. MATHEWS: Yes, the red is highways.

10 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: Right under Athabasca, do you see
11 that little -- there's a -- right there, that's
12 Valleyview. Now if you look on your map, you can't
13 see it on there because there's not township lines,
14 but if you follow the highway straight south, right
15 there, there is still, how many did I count? Nine
16 townships that follow that highway and they're patent
17 land, you understand the difference between Crown land
18 and patent land? Patent land is privately owned land.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: Right.

20 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: It includes the Hamlet of Little
21 Smoky and several farm residences. Now, I happen to
22 live in that area and why it's of interest to me is,
23 we are -- really don't feel that we're represented by
24 default. Culturally, economically and socially, we
25 belong to the community of Valleyview which is that
26 red, right there, the conjunction of the highways.

27 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

1 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: That's the community that we
2 belong to and it is within Grande Prairie - Peace
3 River, so we're not represented by that MP.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Excuse me, are you north of Fox
5 Creek?

6 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: Yes. North of Fox Creek.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: You are. Okay.

8 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: Now the issue that I have here is
9 Rob Merrifield is the Member of Parliament for
10 Yellowhead, and to all intents and purposes, he
11 doesn't represent the people of Little Smoky because
12 it's such a small area, so far isolated from the other
13 areas, that it gets very little attention.

14 So even though it would be an ideal situation,
15 theoretically, that we have two Members of Parliament
16 representing that area, in effect, we have no
17 representation or we feel we have no active
18 representation.

19 Now, if you look at where that boundary is to the
20 east, that's down on Township 64. If that entire line
21 on 68 where the arrow is right now, if that was
22 dropped 24 miles so that that line, instead of jogging
23 up goes straight across to the B.C. border, it would
24 effect no population whatsoever except those nine
25 Townships.

26 MS. KHULLAR: Sorry, what's the change that
27 you're suggesting?

1 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: What I'm suggesting is where
2 Yellowhead has that -- you don't need all the rivers
3 and all that stuff, all you need is that one. Where
4 that arrow is right now, if that line was continued
5 directly west, the only population that would be
6 effected would be the people in those nine Townships.
7 There's no other residential, if you look on your map
8 you can see the Townships. And you'll see that
9 there's no other area whatsoever that is effected by
10 that. If you were to draw a line straight across.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: And what would be the southern
12 boundary then? Can you refer to a --

13 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: The southern boundary would then
14 be the north side of Township line 64, it now follows
15 68.

16 So what I'm suggesting, it's easier to show it on
17 here, if this line was continued right along here, it
18 would follow right there and these are the only people
19 that would be effected. The Town of Fox Creek is
20 farther down here and it has, yeah, right about there.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: And Valleyview is -- where is
22 Sturgeon Lake?

23 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: Valleyview is right about -- yes.
24 Sturgeon -- well, see this --

25 THE CHAIRMAN: Sturgeon Lake. I'm just trying to
26 find it here. Anyways, it's right about here.

27 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: Valleyview is right about here.

1 Pardon me, it's right about here.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Straight east.

3 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: So they feel very isolated right
4 now, is what it amounts to.

5 MS. KHULLAR: The Little Smoky is currently in
6 Yellowhead then.

7 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: Yes, it is. And anyone from about
8 12 miles south of Valleyview is in a different riding.
9 So several people in the area have discussed it at
10 length over the past couple of weeks, ever since that
11 newspaper flyer came out.

12 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

13 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: We were thinking that
14 theoretically it would be a good idea, we'd have two
15 Members of Parliament but it seems like no one takes
16 an interest in that area.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: It's right on the highway though,
18 is it Highway 43?

19 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: It follows the highway on that,
20 yes.

21 MS. KHULLAR: I just want to clarify, when you
22 said currently, I mean under the current boundaries,
23 your MP is now?

24 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: Rob Merrifield.

25 MS. KHULLAR: It is Merrifield, okay.

26 THE CHAIRMAN: And you'd rather be in Grande
27 Prairie - Peace River?

1 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: With Charlie Penson, yes. Well,
2 that's who is representing it now is Charlie Penson.

3 DR. BARRY: So you would find more effective
4 representation, is what you think?

5 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: Yes. What's interesting is a lot
6 of people didn't realize they were in a different
7 riding than the Town of Valleyview until they attended
8 a meeting or -- you know, they went to a Town Hall
9 Meeting with Charlie Penson, for instance, and found
10 out that he wouldn't be able to represent them so.
11 He, by default, represents them already because what
12 if a meeting is called and you know, if the Member of
13 Parliament comes and has a Town Hall Meeting or an
14 open public meeting, people go to talk to Mr. Penson
15 but Mr. Merrifield has never come up to Valleyview or
16 never come to that area, that I'm aware of. And
17 neither had the Member before him.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: Now, Ms. Giesbrecht, just let me
19 read this back to you and see if I've got it straight,
20 okay?

21 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: Sure.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: You live in the Little Smoky area,
23 which, according to our Proposal will be in
24 Yellowhead.

25 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: Currently is in Yellowhead.

26 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. You're suggesting that we
27 lower the boundary in our Proposal of the Grande

1 Prairie - Peace River riding to the Township line, the
2 north Township line of 64 instead of its present
3 location on Township 68?

4 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: That's correct.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: The effect of that would be that
6 the nine Townships along Highway 43, which surround
7 your place of residence, would be in Grande Prairie -
8 Peace River?

9 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: That's true.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: And there probably wouldn't be any
11 big effect in terms of the population?

12 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: No. I did the various
13 calculations and it's like, marginal.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Well, that would be good because
15 everybody realizes the problem we have in Grande
16 Prairie - Peace River, it's too populace.

17 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: Yes.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: And we just can't find a solution
19 for that because of the nature of northern Alberta.
20 There's two ridings in northern Alberta, that is north
21 of the geographic center of the Province and 26 south
22 of that point. And there's an imbalance favouring the
23 west now, in terms of population, which means that the
24 vote is diluted in the west.

25 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: The only way that it could be
26 changed perhaps is if Yellowhead was altered somehow,
27 so that there is some reason for the Member of

1 Parliament to pay attention to that area.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Well, the difficulty, as you know,
3 is one of geography. There's nothing but bush between
4 the Wapiti River and the North Saskatchewan -- or at
5 least, the Athabasca basically.

6 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: Yes.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: So you can move the boundary all
8 you want, but you'd have to move it 200 miles south to
9 have any effect on population.

10 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: No. What I was saying is that if
11 Yellowhead was -- not the Grande Prairie one, but if
12 Yellowhead was --

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. At any rate, if you can
14 think of a solution, please write to us, we'd be glad
15 to consider it.

16 Do you have any comments that you'd like to make?

17 DR. BARRY: No.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: Ritu?

19 MS. KHULLAR: No.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Well, thank you, Ms. Giesbrecht.
21 We'll certainly take that into account and see what
22 might be done.

23 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: Well that was just -- I'm just
24 looking at these, these are the municipal lines here,
25 right now --

26 THE CHAIRMAN: Anybody else have a contribution
27 they wish to make?

1 MS. CAROL WILSON: Well, I didn't quite plan on it,
2 but --

3 THE CHAIRMAN: That's fine, ma'am. What is your
4 name please?

5 MS. CAROL WILSON: Carol Wilson.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Carol Wilson? Carol with an E?
7 No.

8 MS. CAROL WILSON: I was looking at the map and right
9 up in the north where the line goes straight out past
10 I think it's Jean d'Or Prairie.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes?

12 MS. CAROL WILSON: Well, Jean d'Or Prairie and Fox
13 Lake are two Indian Bands and they're both the same
14 Bands. I was wondering why it's split? And you can't
15 get into Fox Lake any other way except by Jean d'Or
16 Prairie.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Where is the Fox Lake Reserve in
18 relation to Fort Vermillion?

19 MS. CAROL WILSON: It's just down the river -- 60
20 miles.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: It's downstream from -- how far?

22 MS. CAROL WILSON: 60 miles.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: 60 miles. So that in terms of
24 representation, you're saying that the situation could
25 be improved by moving --

26 MS. CAROL WILSON: Well, I'm just wondering why --
27 like it's one Indian Band, it's the Little Red River

1 Band.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. That's a good point. No, I
3 think we preserved the old boundary there.

4 MS. MATHEWS: Yes, we just followed the old
5 boundary.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: We just followed the old boundary
7 so far, but it is a good point.

8 MS. CAROL WILSON: I just wondered why it was split
9 because there's no access from anywhere else.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: Certainly not from Fort McMurray.
11 And is that area, the Fox Lake area served by road
12 from Fort Vermillion?

13 MS. CAROL WILSON: Yes, but there's no -- it's only a
14 winter road. Going in the winter.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. But that's the only kind of
16 surface transportation there is, apart from river, is
17 that it?

18 MS. CAROL WILSON: Yes, the river. Somebody has a
19 little ferry there now, so they can go back and forth
20 in the summer time.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: But at any rate, the access, such
22 as it is, is all from the west.

23 MS. CAROL WILSON: Yes.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay, we've made a note of that.
25 What I have written down is that we should consider
26 moving the easterly boundary of the Grande Prairie -
27 Peace River riding to include the Fox Lake Indian Band

1 which has no access to Fort McMurray as it now sits in
2 that riding in our Proposal. So again, that would
3 involve a minimal shift in population, wouldn't it?

4 MS. CAROL WILSON: Well, there's nobody else it would
5 effect.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: No.

7 Any other questions? Anything you want to ask us
8 or discuss? You're from the paper, are you?

9 MR. DALE TIEDEMANN: No, from the radio station.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, the radio station. Do you
11 have anything you want to ask us?

12 MR. DALE TIEDEMANN: No, not right now.

13 MS. MATHEWS: Am I allowed to ask a question?
14 In your suggestion, if we go across here, what do we
15 do with Swan Hills?

16 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: No, that's not the line I said to
17 move. Go up, you see -- no, that short little line
18 right down, right there.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: Project that westerly. Swan Hills
20 is over here.

21 MS. MATHEWS: So you want Yellowhead to go
22 approximately down here and across here?

23 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: Just straight across there.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: I think you have your pointer on
25 it.

26 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: And I was looking here and right
27 now, if this handout is correct, Grande Prairie -

1 Peace River is just under 15 percent above its
2 variance now. And Yellowhead is about three percent
3 above its variance. So it won't have much of an
4 impact.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: No, it won't have, such a move
6 wouldn't have very much impact at all. Except that it
7 might matter to the -- quite a lot to the people who
8 live in that effected area.

9 MS. BRENDA GIESBRECHT: When they want to speak to a
10 representative they know who -- it's somebody who
11 understands their area, is familiar with it.

12 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. We are certainly open for
13 further discussion if you have anything further to
14 submit. I don't know whether we should wait for this
15 gentleman any further from the County?

16 MS. CAROL WILSON: So Edmonton and Calgary are the
17 only two Cities that got eight seats, or what's that?

18 THE CHAIRMAN: Calgary got, Calgary proper got
19 one new seat, it had seven. Edmonton has six. Under
20 our Proposal, Calgary proper will have eight and
21 greater Edmonton will have eight. So it's not true to
22 say that we added two seats to Edmonton, but we
23 reconfigured the boundaries to include satellite
24 cities and towns, such that the Edmonton area is now
25 equal to Calgary proper.

26 There has been a great big population explosion
27 in Calgary, but there has as well, been one in greater

1 Edmonton except that it's not confined to the City
2 boundaries, so that's what we have proposed there.

3 MS. CAROL WILSON: And does that get rid of Elk
4 Island, did somebody say that?

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. Not everybody is thrilled
6 with that as can you imagine, but the reality of
7 demographics nowadays is one of urbanization. You
8 know, that's where the population increases are
9 happening and if the status quo is maintained, it will
10 only mean more and more dilution of the urban vote,
11 which is not fair and as a matter of fact, it's
12 contrary to the spirit of the law under Section 15,
13 your first consideration should be parity of voting.

14 Wait for ten minutes for him to show up and we'll
15 just adjourn the meeting.

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19 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

