



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 28th Legislature
First Session

Standing Committee
on
Alberta's Economic Future

High-speed Rail
Public Input Meeting in Red Deer

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The 28th Legislature
First Session**

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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6:31 p.m.

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

[Mr. Amery in the chair]

Location: Red Deer

The Chair: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Moe Amery, and I'm the MLA for Calgary-East and chair of this committee. I would like to welcome all members and attendees to this public input meeting.

Before we begin, I would like to ask that members introduce themselves for the record and for the benefit of those attending. Also, members, please indicate if you are attending as a substitute for a committee member. We will start from my far right here.

Mr. Stier: Good evening, everyone. My name is Pat Stier. I'm the MLA for Livingstone-Macleod. If you don't know where that is, it's the constituency down in the southwest end of the province, from approximately Priddis all the way down to Waterton Lakes and over to Fort Macleod and up to High River. I'm here, and I am sitting in for Rick Strankman, MLA for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Rowe: My name is Bruce Rowe. I'm the MLA for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, and everyone knows where that is. Thanks for coming out tonight, folks.

Mr. Quadri: Good evening. My name is Sohail Quadri. I'm the MLA for Edmonton-Mill Woods. Thanks for coming.

Mr. Fox: Good evening. I'm Rod Fox. I'm the MLA for Lacombe-Ponoka and vice-chair of this committee.

Mr. Rogers: Good evening. George Rogers, MLA for Leduc-Beaumont, which is immediately south of Edmonton.

Mrs. Sarich: Good evening and welcome. I'm Janice Sarich, MLA for Edmonton-Decore.

Mrs. Jablonski: Good evening, everyone. It's so good to see so many of you out here because – committee, plug your ears – I'm hoping that we're going to convince everyone that we need a stop in Red Deer, between Edmonton and Calgary. Mary Anne Jablonski, MLA for Red Deer-North. Good to see you here tonight.

Mr. Luan: Good evening, everybody. Jason Luan, MLA, Calgary-Hawkwood. I look forward to hearing the lively discussion tonight. Welcome.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, by way of background, in November of last year the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future commenced a study on the feasibility of establishing a high-speed rail system within Alberta and must report its findings to the Legislative Assembly in May 2014. The committee has heard from 23 stakeholders with expertise or an interest in high-speed rail and has received nine written submissions from stakeholders as well. The committee is now conducting public input meetings in Calgary, Red Deer, and Edmonton and has also invited written submissions from interested Albertans. To date the committee has received in excess of 40 written submissions from Albertans.

The committee understands the importance of providing Albertans with an opportunity to participate in this study, and we look forward to hearing from those who present this evening. The meeting will conclude at 9 p.m. or earlier, depending on the number of presenters we hear from this evening.

Before we begin, just a few housekeeping items. Each presenter will have a maximum of 10 minutes to make their presentation, followed by five minutes for questions from committee members. If they present their wishes to follow up with additional information or to provide a more detailed explanation of his or her presentation, they may follow up in writing through the committee offices. Audio of committee proceedings is streamed live on the Internet and recorded by *Alberta Hansard*. The *Hansard* transcript for this evening's meeting can be accessed via the Legislative Assembly of Alberta website later this week.

With these very few brief remarks, we will begin with our first presenter. Our first presenter is Morris Flewwelling. Please come to the microphone and introduce yourself for the record, sir.

Morris Flewwelling

Mr. Flewwelling: Good evening, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Morris Flewwelling. I'm speaking as a private individual in this case, and I have lodged a copy of my single-page presentation with the clerk.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspectives on high-speed rail. My comments tonight reflect my experience and information with high-speed rail in Japan and France and my nine years serving as mayor of the city of Red Deer, on the Calgary-Edmonton corridor.

High-speed rail indeed may be a few years away. However, I believe that there are three fundamental issues that should be addressed now and in the interim. First, the government of Alberta and the municipalities of Calgary, Red Deer, and Edmonton must invest in and develop robust and multimodal transit systems within their boundaries. Passengers wishing to use high-speed rail must be able to access the station easily from their residences. Similarly, passengers arriving by high-speed rail must be able to travel from the station to anywhere in the three municipalities rapidly and comfortably. The fares for high-speed rail must be integrated with the local point-of-origin transit and point-of-destination transit so that the high-speed rail passenger has full access to both the intercity and intracity transportation.

Two, only the fastest, safest, and latest technology for the high-speed rail operation should be considered. If the high-speed rail experience is not fully superior, its use will not be maximized. France is a world leader currently and even now is developing yet faster trains.

Thirdly, the right-of-way must be determined based on this very rapid service starting now, or the price of the land for that right-of-way will become a major stumbling block to the capital cost. I suggest that the route as nearly as possible parallel the Queen Elizabeth II highway so as to develop a single transportation corridor linking the three cities. This will avoid unnecessarily sterilizing land along a completely greenfield route.

While there are many more detailed issues to be considered, I believe that the above three, dealing with robust terminal transit, fastest and latest technology, and identification of the right-of-way, are issues that should be considered now for benefit in future planning and development.

Thank you again for this opportunity to raise these issues with you.

If there are any questions, I would be pleased to respond, and I must excuse myself immediately after I'm finished here. I have another commitment.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Flewwelling.

Any questions? Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Flewwelling. Mr. Former Mayor, good to see you. Just a quick question. Your first point, about the cities developing robust transportation systems: we've heard from the mayors of Edmonton and Calgary that before the province would look at a project like this, they would want us to support LRT within both of those major cities, so I would imagine your statements would follow somewhere along that route, that we would support development of better . . .

Mr. Flewwelling: Absolutely. I use the term "multimodal," which would include LRT, buses, fast buses, whatever will work so that you don't find yourself on the platform in Edmonton or Red Deer and having to rustle up a taxi or get on your bicycle. It doesn't make any sense if you can go 40 minutes to Edmonton and then waste an hour trying to get to the university.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rogers.
Mr. Rowe.

Mr. Rowe: Thank you. Ex-Mayor Flewwelling, an excellent presentation. You've touched on, I think, some of the very key issues. When we started this whole process, we went through numerous presentations where three options for the rail line were given to us. One was the CP Rail right-of-way; the other was the CN right-of-way as well as the greenfield option. I take it from your comments that those first two are off the table.

6:40

Mr. Flewwelling: Well, I understand that the technology would be compromised, the speed would be compromised in using either the CP or the CN rail. The greenfield, I think, is a dream. I really would refer to the difficulties this province has experienced in trying to locate two very high powered electrical lines, and that became a major issue. So we already know that much of the land along highway 2, especially north of Red Deer, from Red Deer to Edmonton, is not as densely populated. It's already disturbed, and it's already compromised by the highway.

Now, high-speed rail: you will not be able to take some of the corners on high-speed rail that there are on the highway but roughly following that route, paralleling it so that you're not further disturbing the people who live along that line and farm along that line and carving up the land any worse than it already is.

Mr. Rowe: Thank you. I would agree with you very strongly as I live in a small village on one of those rail lines, and there's just no place for a high-speed rail line in those rights-of-way. They go through too many smaller villages and towns to make that feasible, so it's encouraging to hear that.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rowe.
Mrs. Sarich.

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I also would like to thank you, Mr. Flewwelling, for your perspectives. In having served in the capacity that you had in the past, obviously people that you had represented at the time have perspectives about land use and even your proposal on the right-of-way very close to the QE highway. What's really interesting is that we have received presentations from CN and CP – and their current track is not suitable for a high-speed rail – and even had serious questions proposed to the steering committee about safety and then if something were to come through the communities. You sort of

touched on that, that safety and noise, and I'm not too sure if a lot of people that are here this evening understand that even a high-speed rail comes with big concrete walls to protect it from people, animals, and then there are the crossings as well.

The question that I have for you this evening is that I was wondering if you could just explore a little bit about the integrated costs, and is there anything further that you would like to say about the land issue? I'm from the metro centre of Edmonton although my family historically, when they came to Canada in 1898 and 1901, was on the land. I was wondering if there's any other feedback that should be put forward to this committee about some of the concerns that you may have heard while you were surveying about land.

Mr. Flewwelling: Thank you. First of all, the idea that I propose of the integrated fares is that you simply buy a ticket and it automatically gives you the privilege of riding on the approaching and departing transit vehicles so that you're not chasing around looking for change, looking for tickets, and that sort of thing, so that when you buy a high-speed rail ticket, you just show the ticket to the bus driver or the LRT people and on you go and, similarly, when you're boarding the thing. You know, the intricacies of how that's going to be accomplished I would leave to science and technology, and so on, in the future, but I think it's really critical that it's seamless. You just keep moving. If you're worried about 10 minutes of travel time, well, you're going to be worried about 10 minutes standing in line waiting for a ticket.

With respect to land I think that we all recognize that this line will go through some of the best agricultural land in the world. That's happened in France as well, so we need to take a leaf from their book because they managed to push through, and it will create disturbance for agricultural operations. I dare say, to buttress the comment that our MLA for Red Deer-North, Mary Anne Jablonski, suggested, that there may be some question about whether there would be a stop in Red Deer, that I don't consider that a question at all. There has to be a stop in the middle of the line. So we'll deal with that.

The Chair: And she's pushing for it.

Mr. Flewwelling: What I was pushing for was that for the terminal in Red Deer the unit would arrive underground and that the terminal would be in the downtown, as it is in Edmonton, as it is in Calgary, because you are not going to be able to have people go halfway to Sylvan Lake to board a train. They could be halfway there in their own vehicle by the time they get to Sylvan Lake and then have to buy a ticket.

As I say, unless it is very convenient and very fast, it's not going to be used. We have a huge drawing area in central Alberta, particularly in inclement weather. People are going to use this service, not just the Red Deer people but the people in the immediate area.

When we were doing research on the airport feasibility study, we discovered five years ago that 650,000 flights leave Calgary and Edmonton with people with central Alberta postal codes. That tells you how much people move. So if you captured only a portion of that, to have people join the high-speed rail at Red Deer, you can see that the volume would be considerable. But it can't be in a remote location. It has to be where the people are.

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir, and thank you for your participation.

Our next presenter, Mr. Loren Wiberg. Again, sir, please identify yourself. Introduce yourself for the record.

Loren Wiberg

Mr. Wiberg: Good evening and hello. I'm Loren Wiberg. I'm presenting tonight as a citizen of Alberta who was actually born right here in Red Deer. I'd like to begin by thanking everyone in attendance tonight for taking the time to be here and, especially, to thank the members of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future for providing the people of Alberta with this opportunity to have our voices heard regarding this important development on the future of our province.

Since I've only got 10 minutes to speak, I'm going to jump right into the meat of my conversation. Please bear in mind that I put this proposal together by myself, and I'm not speaking on behalf of a multinational corporation. My one and only purpose for being here is to speak my mind in a way that I hope will benefit all of Alberta and Albertans and to share what I think is a good solution to the question of high-speed rail in Alberta.

What I'm proposing is that the high-speed rail in Alberta follow a multitrack, networked approach rather than simply deciding for or against high-speed rail within Alberta. What I mean by a multitracked rail network is as follows. The government would develop three distinct high-speed rail streams in a sequential fashion. The initial one would be a medium-speed train travelling at 100 kilometres to 160 kilometres per hour. That would be followed up a few years later by a high-speed rail travelling between 150 and 320 kilometres per hour and concluding with a third one, which would be a very high-speed rail travelling between 300 and 500 kilometres an hour.

Construction could begin on the medium-speed rail reasonably quickly and at a relatively low cost, and as it comes online, then work could begin on the next one and, finally, on the high-speed one. At the end of the construction of the first two, the medium-speed and the high-speed, there would be a review conducted on whether or not a second high-speed should be made or if we should make the jump to extreme high-speed, the 300- to 500-kilometre-per-hour trains, which tend to have price tags in the billions of dollars.

One of the advantages of this approach is that it offers a scalable solution with the varying speeds, starting with the low-cost medium-speed at 160 kilometres an hour. It's actually 100 miles an hour; it's very quick. A profound advantage to this approach is the major cost savings versus going with an exclusive high-speed-only rail system.

By building the medium-speed train first, we get the integrated network started, with a lower initial cost in land acquisition. The initial clientele for this would be people travelling between Calgary, Red Deer, and Edmonton, and without a doubt Red Deer has to be part of it. We have a draw of over a million consumers that focus around Red Deer, but they love to go shopping in Edmonton and Calgary, so making this convenient for them is a critical thing.

Now, the most unique element, I'm suggesting, with this rail system would be the ability for people to travel along with their automobile on the train, with custom-designed cars where you pull up and for a reasonable fare drive your vehicle onto the train and then go sit in a passenger car. This would give you the advantage of arriving at your destination and not worrying about local transit, waiting in lines for tickets. You'd simply drive on, go to your destination, drive off once you get there.

This would offer the tens of thousands of people a day that travel on the QE II the opportunity to travel the corridor of Alberta

in a much more enjoyable way. The price structure would be set to be marginally higher than the cost of gas.

6:50

A big advantage of this would be being able to relax while you're travelling by rail. Another factor to encourage ridership would be not adding the hundreds of kilometres of wear and tear onto your vehicle each trip. The additional safety of being in a secure train environment instead of dealing with the incredible traffic and large trucks on the QE II would also assist in gaining users for this system. The most significant benefit for the riders would be arriving with your own vehicle at the destination rested and ready to drive and sharing a nice social experience with fellow Albertans and other travellers as you go there.

It would serve to make the highway safer for everyone. Environmentally this would prove to be hugely beneficial by reducing emissions from automobiles along the highway. Finally, it would serve to benefit all of Alberta society by allowing for increased mobility and increased safety.

This high-speed rail project is a phenomenal opportunity for us to develop a made-in-Alberta approach. Virtually every aspect of this upgrade to our transportation infrastructure could be developed right here in Alberta by Alberta workers and Alberta companies. This would include the engineering design work, coming up with the route to lay the tracks, creating the technical designs for the medium-speed, high-speed, and very high-speed trains. All Alberta would benefit from the research and design, the fabrication of the rail cars.

We could also develop state-of-the-art power technologies like magnetic propulsion. This is the thing they use at some of the big amusement parks to fire up their roller coasters, where they can go from zero to 60 in a few seconds. One of the massive advantages with this is that it's using electricity, which can be generated cleanly. It's also currently being used in some newer generation U.S. military guns. It can take a projectile and accelerate it in a matter of seconds to tens of thousands of miles an hour. I'm not suggesting those kinds of speeds, but one of the huge advantages of using a magnetic drive is that accelerating from a standstill to a very high speed can happen within minutes, within the limits of what a human can take in G-forces. It can happen incredibly quickly.

Then you travel from Calgary to Red Deer, from Red Deer to Edmonton, or on an express from Calgary to Edmonton. I'm not suggesting in any way to skip Red Deer, but part of the very high-speed rail would be an express that would bypass Red Deer, the one going at 500 kilometres an hour. Every second train would go directly from Calgary to Edmonton, then one Calgary-Red Deer-Edmonton.

As the train arrives at its destination, these magnetic generators actually can operate in reverse to brake the train. So it's going from 400 or 500 kilometres an hour down to a slower speed and then to a stop. It's generating the electricity, so you're getting back 70 to 80 per cent of the power you put into it. So it's an incredibly green technology, which is a massive incentive considering the way the world likes to characterize Albertans as a bunch of rednecks that don't care about the environment and tend to be polluters.

The hundreds of kilometres of track that would be acquired would also be the perfect location to set up a series of solar cells, which could then power the train. So now you're running these trains, after the initial cost, for free. Your day-to-day operating costs are zero.

One of the most compelling things is that with the jumps in robotics and machine technology right now, you could actually

create rail cars that are semiautonomous. You drive your car into the station in Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer, and as soon as there are four or five cars with a common destination, that rail car senses it, uses a computer to communicate that to the operator, and he says go. The rail car is able to leave without an operator onboard. There's a human in the loop controlling it, but in a day where you've got cars that can drive around like the Google cars, without a driver, to have a train without a driver is easy to do and very cost-effective. This would allow for nearly instantaneous departures and the human operator and the network to oversee it.

Ideally, we'll also come up with a – this is an add-on, but I can't resist adding it in there. Sorry. I apologize. I meant to say that on the very final page it's got a graphic showing how the rails would be set up in a way where they're, to begin with, two rails, one north, one south, one way only, so there's no risk of collisions. Whatever trains are bound to Edmonton would be going on the northbound, trains bound for Calgary on the southbound. That would then encourage the robotic rail cars to be able to go one after the other after the other. They'd be able to track the rail car in front of them, the rail car behind them, with virtually zero chance of collision.

What I propose is that this multitrack network would exist along a single strip of land about 150 metres across going between Edmonton and Calgary and very close to Red Deer. You'd have to have a consultation process and get the right-of-way. Following highway 2 to a point would be a viable option, but the reality is that to get the kind of speeds you need, you've got to be going in as close to a straight line and as close to level as you can, so you would be wanting to worry more about the straight line and level than following existing infrastructure.

Just as a final note, the proposed rollout I've got is indicated. Phase 1 would be the public consultation process, an extension of what's going on now going for this year and next year. Phase 2, route planning and selection, would go 2015-2016, getting the right-of-way to the lands. Phase 3 would be actually purchasing the strips of land required. Phase 4, which would be 2017-2018, would involve a detailed structural plan for the first rail, which would be the medium-speed rail, going from 100 to 160 kilometres per hour. Construction would begin 2018-2019 for the Edmonton-Red Deer-Calgary route – I can't emphasize that Red Deer portion enough – and the construction would also begin for medium-speed rail stations as well as the rail cars. Ideally, the vast majority of this, whatever we can get away with within the limits of free trade, would be here in Alberta.

The Chair: One minute, Mr. Wiberg.

Mr. Wiberg: One minute? Okay. I will wrap it up.

Phase 6, 2019-2020, is completion of the medium-speed rail network, and it goes online. Then immediately the construction begins on the high-speed network, which would be the trains running between 160 and 320 kilometres an hour. Get those up and running by 2022. At that time there'd be a whole series of public consultations on how well these have been received, how well they're performing, whether the need exists to now go with the extreme high-speed trains at 300 to 500 kilometres an hour or if we take one of those track allowances and put in another 160- to 300-kilometre-an-hour one.

The final point, as my seconds run out, would be that once this gets going, we extend a phase that would go from Edmonton to Fort McMurray, allowing the massive transit problems that occur there to be resolved.

Finally, if I have a few seconds left, eventually there's an allowance on the track for a heavy-train network, where we develop the

biggest, heaviest trains on the planet, essentially twice the width of existing trains, going Edmonton-Red Deer-Calgary-Fort McMurray, and all these massive pieces of oil equipment that are cluttering our highways could now be shipped far more safely and economically by rail.

In conclusion, I think this is an excellent solution and certainly deserves some consideration. The dedicated one-way tracks would be safe. With the University of Alberta, between our professors and our students, there are none of these things that we couldn't achieve. The NINT, with their nanotechnology, could easily step onboard with the power sourcing.

Thank you very much for your time.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir. A very interesting presentation. We have a couple of questioners for you here.

Mr. Wiberg: Certainly. I was hoping you might.

The Chair: We'll start with Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Wiberg, thank you for your presentation. I just want to ask you a couple of questions, and I don't mean to be argumentative. Your proposal sounds to me like it would be intended that it would be built strictly by the government, which would concern me in terms of the type of financial burden we would take on to build this.

One thing we heard from some of the proponents earlier, particularly the people that build trains, is that unless you're providing a service that's much faster, significantly faster than what people are used to today, it's unlikely that the usage would be very high. When I hear you talk about staging, my immediate concern is: "Okay. Would we get the ridership to subsidize some portion of the cost of this?" It sounds to me like this would be completely a government enterprise, which, I would hope, if we went down this road, we could avoid.

Mr. Wiberg: Was that a question or a comment? If it's a question, I would love to respond to it.

Mr. Rogers: It's a question, sir.

I'll just leave you with one more. This is not just to you but to others. The whole idea of doing this is great, and I like the potential, but I still wonder about producing the electricity and whether or not we would be just swapping one form of greenhouse gas generation for another in terms of how we would produce the electricity to run this train.

Thank you.

Mr. Wiberg: I'll answer the electricity one first if I may. Solar cells, once they're produced, produce electricity for 10 to 20 years with no greenhouse emissions. If you're running 300 kilometres of track between Calgary and Edmonton, that would generate more than enough green electricity to power the trains and have a surplus to then roll over and sell.

7:00

With regard to your first comment, the rail producers saying that the only option in town is them, well, if I was a rail producer selling you a train for \$5 billion, I would say: "The only game in town is me. Come to me. Buy my train. Spend the \$5 billion. That's the only thing people want." The reality is that those trains are ideally suited for massive population centres and a lot of people that don't have their own automobiles, places like Japan, China, Europe, where people are used to being in large metro centres, there's an established network of local transit and buses, and they don't mind not having their cars. In Alberta I've yet to

come across anyone who goes from Calgary or Red Deer or Edmonton to any of the other cities to go to a single point. They want to be in their vehicle and be able to go to here, to there, to there, maybe get a few friends and go somewhere for dinner, and make a day of it.

If I was implying in some way – I said government of Alberta because this committee is government of Alberta. I have nothing against public-private partnerships. This thing has the potential to be a massive cash cow, and I would much prefer to see that in the hands of the government solely as it generates cash than private enterprise, but I have nothing against a public-private partnership.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you.

The Chair: One more question. Mrs. Sarich.

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. How long have you lived in the area?

Mr. Wiberg: Almost all my life with the exception of four years in Winnipeg, while my wife was going to university, and a couple of years in L.A., when I was working down there.

Mrs. Sarich: Thanks for sharing that. I was just wondering – I've asked the previous presenter about the acquisition of land and that's part of your proposal – do you have any idea from the community here what the expectation about fair compensation will be for the acquisition of their land so that there could be a right-of-way, if this would have an impact on people who are farming in the area? That would be the first question.

When you were putting together your proposal, did you have any thoughts about what the price of a ticket would be? Some of the proponents that have presented to the steering committee thus far – and we're an all-party committee – have suggested that this would not be a cheap ticket for anybody.

Mr. Wiberg: Well, no. In the documents that you have provided on your website, it says that the range of tickets is somewhere between \$60 to \$130 or \$150 one way, and I would suggest that that's probably not a bad price. I would think that one way from Red Deer to Edmonton or Calgary would be around the \$50 to \$60 mark and from Edmonton to Calgary or vice versa would be around the \$100 to \$120 mark. It would be more than the price of a tank of gas for someone taking their car along, but when you consider the depreciation and wear and tear of adding those 300 kilometres and the stress of being on that highway with all that traffic, it's a small price to pay.

Now, as far as the landowners go, I would suggest that it would probably be the same lease arrangement that they get with oil companies that go and cut a swath from their land, and then there's a royalty done up. I mean, it would be far more beneficial if we were able to buy the land. A strip of land 150 metres wide by 300 kilometres long isn't going to be cheap, but it's never going to go down in value.

Mrs. Sarich: Yeah. My third question would be in the area of exploring taking your vehicle. That was a very interesting concept, that you could just sort of drive in, and then when you arrived at your destination point, you could use your own vehicle. It just seems that you would be expecting that the government would be using your tax money to go ahead with some project like this and that it would be okay. You feel that lots of people would – the take-up for that, bring your vehicle and all that . . .

Mr. Wiberg: I think it would be massive. I mean, I believe the number of vehicles going between Edmonton and Calgary on a daily basis is something in the 40,000 to 50,000 range.

Mr. Rogers: Maybe eighty.

Mr. Wiberg: Eighty thousand. So you only have to get 10 per cent of that market, and you've got 8,000 people a day spending \$100 a day. That's almost a million dollars a day. If you've now got a system where the electricity is being generated by solar cells – you pay for those, a one-time thing, and they're good for 30 years. I apologize. I thought I had printed a few basic numbers there, and I didn't. It could easily be generating half a million to a million in profit a day within a couple of years of being running, and that's with a ridership of under 25 per cent.

I travel to Edmonton and Calgary fairly regularly, and in a heartbeat I would do this so that I could sit back and do something more interesting with my time than trying not to get squished by a big truck.

Mrs. Sarich: One last question if I may, Mr. Chair, really quickly.

The Chair: Please, briefly, Mrs. Sarich.

Mrs. Sarich: Have you put any thought to the expansion of the QE II, any expansion portion of the highway system, before consideration of the high-speed rail?

Mr. Wiberg: Well, it's funny you ask that. In the drawing that I have on page 8, you'll notice that it has the four rails on the one side and the four other rails on the other side. Because I only found out about this meeting about three or four days ago, it was kind of a hurried effort here, and I apologize if it shows. It's an autobahn-style roadway to accompany it. Once you've got these high-speed trains moving at 300 or 400 kilometres an hour, I think it would be a phenomenal idea to then add a toll-usage autobahn road. If you're saying, "You know what; I don't want to put my car on the train today; I'd rather do 140 miles an hour down this road," you pay your \$25 or \$50 or \$100, whatever it is, and away you go. That would strictly be for personal vehicles – no trucks, no trailers, no campers – people that could do some speed and pay for that service.

That's the reason I thought that instead of – I could have gotten away with an allowance of about 75 metres. I figured: go large or go home. So I thought that 150 metres is going to last us easily for the next 80 to 100 years.

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you very much.

Mr. Wiberg: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir. Thank you very much, members.

Just one correction, sir. You mentioned that this is a government committee. This is not a government committee. This is an all-party committee of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Wiberg: Oh, I apologize. When I say government, I don't think of the ruling party; I think of all of you. I like to think that you somehow work in concert, and I didn't mean that it was one party versus the other.

The Chair: I'd just like to make that correction. This is a committee of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Wiberg: Yeah. Okay.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Have a great day.

Mr. Wiberg: Thank you. I did notice that you represent all the parties, so it is definitely a team approach, and I do admire that.

The Chair: Absolutely. Great. Thank you.

Our next presenter is Mr. Wesley Oulton. Again, sir, please introduce yourself for the record.

Wesley Oulton

Mr. Oulton: Certainly. Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee on Alberta's Economic Future, and fellow Albertans, my name is Wesley Oulton, and I'm a lifetime Albertan currently residing near Olds. I'm a professional engineer, educated in Alberta, and lifetime member of APEGA. Before I discuss high-speed rail in Alberta, I'd like to provide you with a portion of my background relevant to my comments. I've spent 20 years working in the oil and gas industry, providing services including engineering, conceptual and operational economics for multimillion-dollar development projects in this industry, specifically in situ combustion, steam-assisted oil recovery, sour gas production and treatment.

In the early 1980s I assisted rural residents around the 1978 and '81 sour gas blowouts near Drayton Valley deal with the effects of these disasters. More recently I've provided technical expertise and contacts for OARC, the Olds Area Residents Coalition, to successfully appear in not one but two hearings in front of the ERCB, the Alberta Energy Resources Conservation Board, that ruled two times in favour of the area residents, requiring Canadian 88 Energy to significantly upgrade its plant prior to expansion. In the early part of this century I again supported rural Albertans by being an officer of the company that successfully negotiated with CPR for the purchase of the right-of-way between Rimbey and Breton, some 55 kilometres of rail line, with 85 per cent of this right-of-way being purchased and returned to the local landowners, including the government of Alberta.

This is not the first presentation or discussion on high-speed rail in Alberta that I have participated in. This project was initially brought to my attention by the late George Ford, of the University of Alberta, in the early 1980s. Most recently, on May 18, 2010, I attended a presentation here in Red Deer given by Mr. Ralph Garrett, P. Eng., who at that time was the VP of infrastructure for Alberta High-Speed Rail Inc. It was this presentation in 2010 that prompted me to write the following:

I came away from this presentation concerned about two aspects for this project as it was presented. The first is that the route being proposed (at that time) for this high speed train was first proposed and selected in the early 1980's.

7:10

By government records Alberta's population at that time was 2 million. Currently we're being reported at over 4 million.

The route as proposed at this presentation is/(was) approximately 2 miles west of highway #2 or the present QE II highway. For those of us living in or near small urban centers south of Red Deer and north of Airdrie this suggests that this high speed train would run near each of our communities with no benefit to each community (i.e.: no stops are planned). Mr. Garrett was kind enough to admit, when questioned, that living near these high speed trains would likely not be pleasant as they do make quite a bit of noise when they pass by. Might one suggest that moving this high speed rail to two miles east of highway 2 would affect a significantly less number of rural and small urban center residents? The second concern I have is with the proposed use of bill C-68 to gain the right of way required

for this project. Mr. Garrett indicated (in 2010) that this bill would be used to expropriate the land necessary for this urban transportation project. The audience at this presentation was led to believe that the land cost for this project would be approximately \$7 million of the (then) \$2.5 billion necessary to [build this train service].

It appeared to me at that time that the government of Alberta and big business were and are willing to circumvent the rights of rural Albertans and private individuals to proceed in whatever direction it is so desired. Very little of what I've read in the recent past has changed this view. Early intervention by many that could be affected by this project may mitigate the damage that will be inflicted on rural Albertans.

Now, high-speed rail. Do I oppose high-speed rail? In short, at this time, yes. I think high-speed rail between Calgary and Edmonton is a social service that will in the future do our province well and be justifiable. I just believe that with the proposals currently before you, the present Alberta government is again putting the cart before the horse. The people to be most affected by this project are the people of rural Alberta, and the people with the least to gain from this project are the people of rural Alberta.

Before Alberta proceeds with high-speed rail, I believe Alberta needs a transportation corridor from the 49th parallel to somewhere north of Fort McMurray or at the very least between Calgary and Edmonton. Options for this corridor could include a six-lane highway similar to the QE II; an autobahn-style toll highway with limited ingress or egress; a service highway used exclusively for movement of larger loads, emergency or maintenance vehicles; pipelines; power lines; communication lines; and whatever else the future may bring.

Before we proceed too far down the high-speed rail venture, we need to have a better handle on the number and location of individuals this project will affect negatively. This cannot be accomplished without knowledge of the route. Mr. Brawn of the Van Horne Institute has stated: "transportation shape[s] patterns of commerce and the future communities." Imagine small existing communities and the impact this significant disturbance generator, high-speed rail, will have on Penhold, Innisfail, Olds, Didsbury, Carstairs, Crossfield, and even Airdrie. Might some of these communities be forced to move?

On the reviewing of information for this project, it was with great relief when I found the presentation by the people . . .

The Chair: Sorry to interrupt you. Two minutes.

Mr. Oulton: Yes, sir. I believe I'm close.

It was with great relief that I found the presentation by the people from the Van Horne Institute. Some planning and forethought. Mr. Brawn of the Van Horne Institute has stated:

It is important that land-use planning look far into the future, anticipating population increases and shifting economic activities. The corridors through which more pipelines, rail lines, roads, and communication lines will need to be built to connect businesses and markets must be reserved for future growth rather than broken up and committed to nonstrategic uses. Wherever possible the rights-of-way that are currently protected for one purpose should be opened to [multi-users].

He goes on to state, "I would point out that the uses of a broader corridor could be several . . . waterlines for fresh and salt water, sewage lines," central collection, electrical grids, removal of old transportation lines from urban districts, et cetera, et cetera.

I believe that developing this broader corridor, which I take to mean wide – say, a quarter section wide or maybe even a half section wide, as proposed by the Van Horne Institute and Mr. Brawn – some eight to 10 miles east of the QE II may be the best

possible solution to transportation in Alberta as we move forward. We do need to develop corridors reserved for future growth throughout our province, and the sooner this is accomplished, the better for all Albertans, and the cheaper it will be for all Albertans if we choose to compensate the affected individuals appropriately.

I would like to address some of the concerns I see with respect to the presentations before this committee because many of them I feel are preposterous. I believe the information shows that the cost will exceed \$10 billion, not \$3.5 billion. But my time tonight is limited.

I'd like to bring one point forward, one that I believe is not preposterous. Mr. Roy of CPCS – and we all know that that's an old CPR company, people that understand railways, right? – states: "The fact is that all international high-speed rail projects" – and I emphasize "all" – "need some form of public support or guarantees to be viable." He goes on to state: "In all my research I've not found a high-speed rail project globally that is entirely financially self-sufficient, including . . . operations and the capital." These are important statements we need to take seriously as we move forward.

In closing, I object to the high-speed rail development in Alberta at this time because we do not have definitive knowledge of the route to be used and, therefore, we cannot logically determine the effects of this project: the effects this project will have on our population, the effects on our resources, or the full economic impact of this development. First, we need a route, a greenfield route, and then we need to determine if we can afford it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Oulton.

Any questions? Mrs. Jablonski.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much for your presentation, your very passionate presentation. The only question I have is that you mentioned that some of the rural areas between Calgary and Red Deer might be forced to move. Can you explain that a little bit more to me, why they might be forced to move?

Mr. Oulton: Well, according to the Van Horne presentation it's transportation that dictates where communities are built. That's not always positive. Would you like to live by this train?

Mrs. Jablonski: Probably not.

Mr. Oulton: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Jablonski.

Mr. Stier.

Mr. Stier: Yes. Thank you for your presentation, and good evening. I really appreciated hearing from you specifically because you had said that you've been to many of these meetings in the past and brought to us information that I wasn't privy to. So I do appreciate that.

I'd just like to get into the multi-use corridor. We have at this committee heard that comment before from several people, including those from the Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, and I wondered if you could enlighten us. When you talk about this corridor and you mention about the towns, I'm assuming that you would therefore offer an alternative location, perhaps, to the east of the current highway 2. Would that be where there are lesser towns? What would you have thought of that? Or is there a map around or a proposal for such?

Mr. Oulton: Well, there must be because the Van Horne Institute said six to eight miles. My initial reaction was less than that. I don't believe that's necessary. It's somewhere to the east of highway 2.

Everybody keeps talking about the major cost of this. You know, that's stupid. The major cost of the land acquisition is irrelevant in this project. It will not be 10 per cent of the \$10 billion you're going to spend on the train. You figure it out. It's 500 miles to Fort McMurray, which means that there are a thousand quarter sections you need to buy. At \$400,000 a quarter section that's \$400 million, and there are many miles of quarter sections north of Edmonton you get for nothing because you already own them.

Mr. Stier: Well, sir, if I might, through the chair, just go back to you on that estimate that you've just given. Perhaps you're considering the assessed value of open farmland, I suspect, versus compensation to those landowners who would be affected in that regard totally for the interruption in their operations and for future investment purposes, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Isn't that a little bit of a quick underestimate of what possibly could be encountered there?

Mr. Oulton: I don't see it as an underestimate at all. Land east of highway 2 is selling markedly cheaper than west of highway 2. Many quarter sections in the central area are selling between \$400,000 and \$500,000.

Now, you are going to meet some farmers that have, you know, a township of land, but they will be few and far between that close to highway 2. It's already broken up by acreages.

7:20

Mr. Stier: I see. Okay. Well, I won't debate that one with you. I just wanted to understand how you were putting that one together.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stier.

We have one more question. Mr. Luan.

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks, Mr. Oulton, for your passionate argument here. I think one of the duties of this all-party committee is having no preconditioned solution. Opening it up to hear from the public about this is right, hearing the diverse views and so on and so forth. Even for myself hearing from Calgary and back to Red Deer, you have this different slate of perspectives. Here's my question. I hear you very loudly that you're against highway construction at this point. Can you help me with your expertise to talk about at what point you start seeing the optimal point for all Albertans? What I'm hearing you say right now is that rural Albertans will be sacrificed for urbans, a short sort of sentence I'm hearing. If that's correct, at what point do you see the overall benefits to all, looking for a win-win solution? I'm interested in that.

Mr. Oulton: Well, it'll come after the establishment of a corridor, and I don't believe it's that difficult. I just believe it's something we'll have to start. If you're looking for straight economics to make this project work, you know, your guess is as good as mine. There isn't one in the world. Why would we think we'd have one?

On top that, you have seen a lot of presentations. Look at the presentations and see if anything is for our environment. There's one train. It runs at 155 kilometres an hour. That won't cut the mustard. The bodies are aircraft bodies, but they're only working in minus 38 Celsius. You're probably going to see that tomorrow

night. We have to have better design, which means that the financial forward of this is going a long ways out.

Mr. Luan: Yeah. Sorry to interrupt you. Through the chair, I do believe there is a possible optimal point. Look at the highway; look at the way we've developed. There are always times when you do those kinds of massive construction, when there is some temporary inconvenience and some sacrifices by certain Albertans, but overall there must be a case that together we are going to be in a better place. That's what I'm thinking. I hear you loud from what you're saying. Today, comparing your knowledge to – what? – two, four years ago, 2 million to 4 million is still not optimal, but I'm certainly thirsty for that. Whether that indicator or some kind of measurement is at 6 million, at 8 million, when should we start looking at it? Somewhere along the line we've heard different opinions across the presentations. I'm curious about yours. If you're going to say that nothing is going to work, that drastically discredits what you said to me, so I'm looking for an optimal figure there.

Mr. Oulton: Well, I don't know what the optimum is because California has just thrown it out, just yesterday – right? – or last week. We have to understand how our people want to be transported. To transport to Calgary via this system I think is extremely beneficial because the makeup of the city is very concentrated. So Edmonton going to Calgary: I would suspect you would get a lot more ridership than the other direction because in Edmonton the business community is very expanded. It basically entails the whole city. If you want to go look at, you know, a vessel being built, there are a hundred places to look at, not one. So I don't think we understand our transportation needs in Alberta enough to make that call yet. I've looked at the research that's written up. It's a little shaky.

Mr. Luan: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you very much. I think we're running out of time.

Mrs. Jablonski: Quick question?

The Chair: You have a quick question? Okay. I'll allow that.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. You mentioned Bill C-68, that was passed in 2010 by the federal government, and it was to expropriate land. I wonder if you could explain a little more about Bill C-68 and how . . .

Mr. Oulton: It's an Alberta government bill.

Mrs. Jablonski: C-68 is not an Alberta government bill.

Mr. Oulton: Well, when it was in the early stages, that's how it was reported by the press, C-68. It's a bill for the government's ability to take land, and the ability was significantly increased in Alberta, allowing for no compensation and no fight. You've appointed a land advocate who now has the responsibility of telling farmers they can't have compensation.

The Chair: Sir, Mr. Oulton, I don't think that's a provincial government bill if it's C-68.

Mr. Oulton: Yes, it is. It's a provincial government bill.

The Chair: We don't have any bills that start with C.

Mr. Oulton: It's a provincial government bill that made land expropriation the way it is.

The Chair: However, the time allotted for this presentation is over. Thank you very much for your views and your opinions. We appreciate it very much.

Mr. Oulton: Thank you.

The Chair: We will move to the next presenter, Mr. Jim Saltvold.

Again, please, sir, introduce yourself for the record. You have 10 minutes for your presentation and five minutes for questions.

Jim Saltvold

Mr. Saltvold: I'm Jim Saltvold, and I'm presenting on behalf of myself. I lived in Alberta from birth till 1965. Then I was away for 40 years, working in the nuclear industry in Manitoba and Ontario.

I wish to thank you very much for the opportunity to present on this topic. I think we should have some guiding principles on the high-speed rail. The first is, I think, that now is the time to establish a route and acquire land and get caveats so we can get the land very quickly and we're ready to go when the time is right.

Secondly, I don't think we're ready at this time. I think we should get our bus service working well so that we get a good utilization of bus services, as good a bus service as we can have in place. With a customer base it will be a more logical transition from the bus to the train, so we can see that it lowers the risk of the train.

I think the train should be built to meet present and predicted future needs and not to promote growth. I believe that bringing in people to extract our nonrenewable resources at the pace we've done during the recent past is reckless. According to a recent ATB Financial report in the Owl newsletter there are 689,000 more people in Alberta today than there were at the beginning of 2006. We need to learn how to manage our economy so people can obtain jobs and purchasing power without overdependence on growth and excessive consumption. Would-be economic migrants to Alberta need to learn how to prosper in their home areas and to help others prosper there, too. Changing our economic philosophy to be less dependent on growth and the accompanying short-term construction jobs will not be easy. However, some studies of past booms have shown that middle-income Albertans were no better off due to the boom and low-income Albertans were worse off. These studies should provide some motivation for changing our attitudes.

The high-speed rail company should be a Crown corporation rather than a for-profit corporation. Presently Edmonton and Calgary operate well-managed transit systems that include light rail trains. We should make use of their expertise. If a good assessment is done of the high-speed rail before it's built, investing tax money in it is sound fiscal management even if there is a certain amount of risk.

Insofar as is practical the high-speed rail should be built during an economic downturn, when labour is available, rather than during boom times, when there is a labour shortage.

Travel on high-speed rail should be affordable for all Albertans. Persons and businesses adversely affected by the high-speed rail should be fairly compensated.

I'm assuming that the Alberta High-Speed Rail (2005) Inc. is one of the main proponents of the railroad, and they are the ones who would like to build it. So I'll comment on things that I have seen from their website. The big statement on there is that it "will be funded, without taxpayers dollars, by private investors." There

is definitely no room for a Crown corporation here and probably no opportunity for average Albertans to invest small amounts in the range of \$1,000 to \$10,000 in shares. The implication of "without taxpayers dollars" is that investors are not asking anything from Albertans. In fact, they are asking for a great deal. They are asking for a monopoly.

The railroad would cause considerable inconvenience to some rural residents. Farmers would be compensated for land that they sell, but they may not receive adequate compensation for land that becomes inconvenient to farm because of the tracks cutting across it. Economic growth would shift from other areas of Alberta to Edmonton, Red Deer, and Calgary. This may or may not be a good thing.

7:30

Investors may not ask for tax breaks for high-speed rail, but Alberta investors would almost certainly agitate for the continuation of Alberta tax structures, which unfairly favour persons who are wealthy. They could effectively be investing money that should have been collected as taxes.

I assume that as much as 90 per cent of the project will be financed by bonds. The bonds would be held in pension funds and mutual funds, which have the savings of ordinary Albertans. If the project does not turn out as well as expected, risk would be shifted to various funds. If the project fails so badly that there's a loss even after bondholders forgo their interest, the government would have to take over or subsidize it.

A statement was made in the report on the web.

Alberta was built on visions which made us what we are today.

- Ranching and Farming
- Oil and Gas
- Universities
- Light Rail Transit

High-Speed Rail can move Alberta forward once again.

This statement reflects the philosophy and values of the promoters. Albertans have to decide if they share the same values.

An important implication in this statement is that the developments in the above areas have for the most part been very good, and certainly there's been a lot of good. However, there are some dark sides, one example being the senseless urgency in recent years to rapidly exploit the oil sands and conventional oil. The damage done to the environment is high, and there will be no easily available oil left for future generations. I do not want the high-speed rail if it's going to promote these values. On the website they predict the one-way fare to be \$100, saying that it's economical transportation. Compared to airfare, \$135 to \$240, this is economical. Compared to company travel allowances for the use of a personal car at 50 cents per kilometre for 300 kilometres, this is also economical.

However, bus fare is in the range of \$25 to \$70, depending on whether purchased in advance and the bus company. The suggested fare is not economical compared to the highest bus fare and is very expensive compared to the lowest bus fare. I would consider high-speed rail a failure if it is not immediately affordable for those who presently travel by bus.

Some formula may have to be worked out so that people travelling on business pay full fare and those travelling for personal reasons receive a subsidy. Since business travel can be charged as an expense on tax returns to reduce taxes, a government subsidy for personal travel would not be unreasonable. There are a lot of considerations, and I certainly do not pretend to have a good formula. However, here's where guiding principles are important. If affordability for all Albertans is important, a way will be found.

I'd like to discuss making the bus the best it can be. From 2002 to 2005 I commuted from Red Deer to Toronto. I took about a dozen bus trips to the Calgary airport. Most of them were in the middle of the night on Greyhound bus runs, not very convenient. I think we can serve the airports better by improving: having more nonstop runs from the airport and having them more often and at more convenient times. I forgot to mention that on the bus runs I took, you'd get on at Red Deer, stop at Gasoline Alley for the driver's break, at Innisfail, Olds, and Crossfield. It was a long route.

There must be enough traffic to and from the Calgary airport so the company operating as a regulated monopoly could operate a better service at a profit. An unregulated market, intended to promote competition to make prices lower, often does not produce good service, and the prices may not be lower. We need sensible regulation.

Last March I went from Red Deer to Edmonton for a seminar from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. To get there, I left at 3 o'clock in the morning, spending a total of 18 hours for the trip. With better bus service we could have reduced it down to about 12 hours. With high-speed rail we could shave another hour and a half off it maybe, so it would be down to 10 and a half hours. Well, this would be wiped out if we had to go out of town to catch the train.

In reality, high-speed rail will not do a great deal to reduce travel time from Red Deer to Edmonton or Calgary. High-speed rail between Edmonton and Calgary city centres would offer more significant time savings. An express bus takes three and a half hours compared to just under one and a half hours for high-speed rail.

Air travel. I think people like it, but I'm not sure it saves a lot of time over taking a bus, considering the time to travel to the airport, check-in time, and those things. We need to change attitudes so that people enjoy taking the bus a bit more.

I will conclude by adding a comment about adding extra lanes to the QE II. I do not consider this a good idea. We need to make travel by car less attractive and also safer. I'd throw out an idea which is controversial and maybe needs a lot more thought, but one way of making highway travel less attractive and also safer is to make the QE II an electronic toll road with elapsed time measurement to control speeding. This could be done at reasonably low cost by putting in checkpoints just north of Airdrie and just south of Innisfail on the south portion and just north of Lacombe and just south of Leduc on the north portion. These points would catch most of the through traffic. With elapsed time measurements, speeders would get both a toll bill and a speeding ticket. If this sounds radical, consider the alternative of the expense of adding lanes and still having a road where speeders make it unsafe.

Thank you very much. I'd be happy to answer some questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Saltvold.

Any questions from committee members? Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Rogers: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Saltvold, thank you for your thoughtful presentation. Just one note that I made. You said that it should be built to service current and future need, not to promote growth. I'm wondering if you might expand on that. It sounds a bit contradictory to me.

Mr. Saltvold: I think we're trying to grow at too fast a rate. We can't really oppose development of the oil sands, but I think that opposing the rate of development is quite a valid concern. We're working on an economy based on bringing in a hundred thousand people per year, and that creates short-term construction jobs. It's

going to be tough world-wide to move from this idea of growth to sort of a more steady economy, where people get the purchasing power they need, but I think Alberta would be great if it sort of topped off the population at maybe 4 million or whatever it is right now. Red Deer is at about a hundred thousand. To me, I'd just as soon see it at about that size.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you.

The Chair: Any other questions?

Thank you very much, sir. Thank you for your presentation.

I'd like to call on Mr. Gavin Bates. Again, please introduce yourself for the record. You have 10 minutes to make your presentation and five minutes for questions.

Gavin Bates

Mr. Bates: Hello, and thank you for the opportunity to make this presentation. For me, it was a last-minute thing. I registered, deregistered, and then reregistered when I found out that I could make it here, and I kind of put this together this afternoon.

My name is Gavin Bates. I live in Innisfail. I'm a retired mechanical engineer. I've never worked in transportation but consider myself to be analytical and rational. I've never dreamed about the technology that I heard about in the second presentation. I think BC Ferries is still having trouble figuring out how to tie a car down for 20 miles an hour.

I believe that the high-speed rail between Calgary and Edmonton is not practical at this time given the relatively small size and close proximity of the cities. I think we shouldn't overlook that those two cities are relatively close. The size will ultimately change, but the distance between the cities will only become smaller. There will not be a supportive passenger base until the cities' populations reach multimillions and cultural changes eliminate geographic sprawl and the dependence on personal transportation. Most Asian and European cities that have high-speed rail are growing vertically, with denser populations. They have extremely efficient local transit and curbed urban sprawl.

The logistics at departure and arrival, including parking, security, local transportation, and schedules, will make overall travel time savings much less than most people, I think, are hoping for. The limited, realistic passenger base will challenge viability even at the lowest project cost estimates. The vast majority of commuters between Calgary and Edmonton require an automobile at their destination to complete their travel arrangements if they were fortunate enough not to also require one at their city of origin. Many are travelling to destinations outside the actual cities, either stopping prior to or going through.

7:40

I put this one forward for consideration. There are 25 MLAs in Calgary, one or two here tonight, including the Premier, all of whom enjoy government-paid, flexible local transportation and all of whom should be travelling to a base destination in the middle of Edmonton. Given a realistic picture of logistics, schedules, security, et cetera, I'd like to rhetorically ask: how many of the 25 MLAs would commit to using high-speed rail to make most of their trips to attend the Legislature?

There are many significant potential problems with a proposed high-speed rail line in Alberta. When you look at the current power lines, as an example, it will be almost impossible to establish a corridor for what is acceptable to rural residents. Making jogs to avoid an obstacle is not an option with high-speed rail because you've got to keep it pretty straight. No one can go underneath the corridor of a high-speed rail, which you can do at

will with power lines. There have been a lot of arguments with the power lines, east, west. I don't even know all of the intricacies of that, but I think we're all aware that there's been a ton of conflict.

Such a rail line will put a barrier between Calgary and Edmonton, prohibiting the movement of residents, oil field equipment, farm machinery, tourists, and wildlife, impacting agriculture, rural communities, and commerce in general, any ground movement east to west. No amount of expensive overpasses will be enough to eliminate permanent, costly detours.

The severe Alberta climate will present operational challenges yet to be determined. There will be environmental impacts: noise, watersheds, wildlife. Alberta is facing huge deficits with the existing shortfalls in health care, education, and other infrastructure. In my opinion, public funding in any way for a venture with a high risk of failure is unacceptable. If there is any public funding to transportation available between Calgary and Edmonton, I would like to see it be for upgrading the QE II, which is practical and would be a benefit to all who travel it.

I will be the first one to admit that this presentation is structured around the next view of 10 to 20 years. Maybe some of the things that were proposed earlier could be a reality in 50-plus years.

That's how I feel. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Any questions? Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Bates. Just a thought. Your points are well taken, but you mentioned the future, that this may very well be a better discussion for sometime 20, 30 years hence. Might it be prudent to look at securing some kind of a corridor today before we build it all in? I'm just wondering if you might have some thoughts on this.

Mr. Bates: It very well may be prudent to look at that and see what is realistically possible. You will, I think, encounter a lot of these problems as you do that. I haven't personally studied options east, west. It'll be a big corridor, and I still am concerned that if and when you build it, basically it's like building a concrete dam between Calgary and Edmonton. I don't know how many overpasses you put in.

The current QE II is becoming a dam. Farmers have learned to live with it because they have quit renting on the other side. Now if they want to cross it, they have to find an overpass and go over it at 2 a.m. Alberta is not Europe. Not yet.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you.

The Chair: Mrs. Sarich.

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I couldn't help, Mr. Bates, answering your rhetorical question even though I'm not from Calgary. Some of the presentations, even this evening, addressed the multimodal transportation system, so LRT, highway, and all of that. Even in the big city of Edmonton, in getting from where I live to where we convene meetings at the Legislature, yes, you can get there, and you can take LRT. You can take bus options as well. But to go to other places within that city, it becomes complicated or even to travel from Edmonton.

How many of us real people here as politicians would take up the transportation system even as it exists today? It's complicated to take a commercial flight, which comes in at about \$224 – I know that because I had to buy a ticket to go to Calgary, and that was one way – or to take other means: Red Arrow or even driving. So it isn't as easy as it appears to be.

I did have a question. You kind of touched on it. As we think to the future, what would be the modes of transportation in 10 to 20 years? Some of the presentation was: how do we know that high-speed rail would be the transportation of choice for Albertans in 10 to 20 years?

But had you thought about – and I'm interested in the land question. I was wondering if you had any more insight or personal advice for us on the land. As somebody who has lived, you know, in your area, what would that actually mean?

Mr. Bates: Well, it's a tough one because you would impact an awful lot of agricultural users, some of which are probably century farms. I just haven't, I guess, wrapped my own mind around the absolute need for a high-speed rail and the need for a rail line between Calgary and Edmonton to be the leader in North America. I just haven't wrapped my mind around that. I think that if you get multimillions of people in Calgary and Edmonton and do have the feeder systems that get you to and from, that will ultimately push thought into procuring those corridors. I don't know if an early study with suggested corridors that could then be available to the public would help them form their future plans in such a way that the corridors could become a reality without bringing undue hardship on the value of their land, if something like that could be accomplished. I don't know. Like I said, I haven't wrapped my mind around the fact that the high-speed rail is even a realistic thing to do. I do not believe it will be viable and actually make money.

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you.

The Chair: Any other questions?

Mr. Bates, thank you very much for your presentation.

Mr. Bates: Thank you.

The Chair: We will move to the last registered presenter, Tony Jeglum. Again, Mr. Jeglum, please introduce yourself. You have 10 minutes to make your presentation and five minutes for questions.

Tony Jeglum

Mr. Jeglum: Thank you. Thank you all very much for coming and doing this very important work. My presentation was drawn up very much last minute, just as the previous speaker's was.

I wanted to come to especially push one particular point; however, a few notes were drawn up as I listened to the other presentations. We've been talking about high-speed rail, especially between Edmonton and Calgary, for the last 30, 35 years, but up to this point it has been just a conversation. There have been people the entire time saying: "We don't have the population yet. It's something that potentially we could do in the future." However, especially between Edmonton and Calgary, the price of land has done nothing but skyrocket, especially in the last decade. The population has done nothing but skyrocket.

The one point that I really want to push is that if there was ever a time to, you know, secure the right-of-way, it would have been 1905, but that was a long time ago. Not having a time machine, the time for it is right now. So even if every one of you is totally opposed to high-speed rail, the very least I would wish you to do is to secure the right-of-way. Whether that is following one of the rail lines coming into Edmonton or Calgary or an entirely different right-of-way that will allow for 500 kilometres an hour, whether it is on the ground or if it is an elevated platform, that is entirely up to you, but it's time to make that first step forward.

7:50

Of 20- to 24-year-olds in this day and age, the vast majority are not getting their drivers' licences at the same rates as they were 20 and even 10 years ago because driving is not seen as a major requirement in life anymore. There are more teenagers and twentysomethings that are texting instead of driving cars. If you can move yourself from point A to point B and continue to text, then having your hands on a wheel is not seen as something that is nearly as important as texting. Of course, there is nobody in this province that does them at the same time anymore.

We have amazing infrastructure in terms of roads in this province. There are umpteen dozen jokes about as soon as you hit the border to the east and what changes immediately thereafter. It is time to put some money into railroads. It is time to put some money back into passenger railroads in this province.

I'm obviously too young to remember, but I've certainly heard a lot of stories about the Dayliner that used to run between Edmonton and Calgary and how it was, you know, a wonderful thing that only killed a few people. I think that the safety surrounding the railroad is going to be something that is very important, and I think that in that regard the elevated platform likely has some virtue.

Nonetheless, it is time to diversify. We have moved ourselves primarily with personal vehicles for the last 100 or so years, and it's time to move on, to start talking about things further afield than what it is right now. It is not time to talk about Alberta in 2014; it is time to talk about Alberta in 2020 or even 2050, what we will be driving. An earlier presenter spoke about the Google car, that drives itself. I'll be the first person in the province to buy a Google car so that I can text while the car moves me from point A to point B. However, considering that that is at this point in time not available in Alberta and it may not be available in Alberta any time in the near future, I think it is time that we push forward with expanding the trains.

The argument has been made that in Edmonton, Red Deer, and Calgary there is not the public transit infrastructure in order to deliver people from either downtown Edmonton or Calgary or in Red Deer out to wherever they may need to be. I believe it's going to take a decadeish to build the train. On both ends and in the middle the public transportation system will respond accordingly. Even if there isn't an incredible amount of LRT development or even more buses that are put into service, Calgary has the Car2go system, which is incredibly efficient, incredibly easy, incredibly inexpensive, and can be set up over a weekend, let alone over the span of a decade. There are other options that can be afforded to a train service that delivers somebody to downtown Edmonton but then needs to get out to Mill Woods. There are things that can be done in order to facilitate that.

As it was mentioned – thank you very much, Mr. Rogers – if nothing else, it is time to acquire the land. It is time to say that this is the line between Edmonton and Calgary that we are going to use for high-speed rail at some point in time, in perhaps the near, perhaps the distant future.

I have exhausted my notes. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Luan.

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I must say that I was ignited by your comments and your energy and your vision. When you talk about thinking forward, thinking ahead versus looking backward, I find it very invigorating. I know that often we talk about how we want diverse views, that we want youth and the young generation to be part of decision-making, but I find that in reality very few

times do our youth take the time to join the discussion. So, on that note, I do want to congratulate you and thank you for bringing forward those thoughts.

On the note of land, right-of-way acquisition: do you have some thoughts to share in terms of what is the best way to be fair so that our landowners can be also supporters of this movement versus becoming barriers?

Mr. Jeglum: Absolutely. Actually, I grew up on a farm. I'm a farmer, so I'm quite intimately familiar with negotiating with pipeline companies, but this, of course, is a fairly different animal, when you're talking about a high-speed train coming over your land. I think that the Dutch actually have done an excellent example in this in that if the government decides that there's going to be a development on your land and you are going to be inconvenienced to the point where your land will not be the land that you want to enjoy for the next hundred years even though your family has been there for the previous, really, we're going to have to bite the bullet and pay them twice what it's worth and say: "Thank you very much. We're sorry that you have been expropriated from your land. If you want to stay, that's fine."

Now, it will probably be up to you people to decide how far away from the train somebody, you know, qualifies for that kind of a payment. I mean, if their land is going to be driven over by the train but they live half a mile away, does that mean that they should be compensated to that level or not? Obviously, if the train is going to be going 20 feet from their house, it's going to be something that they're going to have to be paid for.

Mr. Luan: Thank you.
Thanks, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Luan.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you very much for your very interesting presentation. You forgot to introduce yourself in the beginning, so I don't even know what your first name is.

Mr. Jeglum: My name is Tony Jeglum.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you very much for that.

Tony, you said that you wanted to push one fact to the committee, and that was to secure the land now. My question to you is: do you believe that high-speed rail in Alberta is inevitable and that Alberta will be a better place for it?

Mr. Jeglum: Yes.

Mrs. Jablonski: And can you tell me why you believe that?

Mr. Jeglum: The world in general is moving away from a carbon-based economy. There are people that believe that electronic modes of transportation – the Tesla is a beautiful and very wonderful car; however, batteries do not operate well necessarily in minus 40. I do believe, especially in moving from Edmonton to Calgary and Red Deer, of course, in between – I emphasize that, really, there should be a stop in Red Deer as well – that we are moving away from the private ownership of vehicles in terms of moving from just Edmonton to Calgary.

Mrs. Jablonski: So your basic premise for saying that high-speed rail in Alberta is inevitable and that we would be better off for it are environmental reasons. Would that be correct?

Mr. Jeglum: That would be absolutely one of the reasons as well, yes.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Jablonski.
Mrs. Sarich.

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and I would like to thank you, Tony, for your energetic presentation. We did have one proponent. Siemens actually suggested that there is technology to deal with the minus 40 – you had raised that in your presentation this evening – and they do have a living example located in Russia. That would be something that would be suitable for our climate. When you get into rural Alberta, it's not the same temperature as in a big metro centre like Calgary or Edmonton.

The question I had for you. Some people this evening had suggested the right-of-way east of highway 2. Some of the proposals are on the west side. Because you are from the farm, you know, and you're a landowner as well or your family was for whatever period of time, I'm just wondering if you had any perspectives or thoughts about: should it be east? You raised the question about establishing the right-of-way, and I appreciate that because if people know what the route is, then they can respond. Do you like it? What don't you like about it? Above ground, underground, whatever the technology can be? As somebody from the land did you have an opportunity to think about: should it be east or west? What could the benefits or complications be?

Mr. Jeglum: Certainly. Mr. Chair, if you'll allow me, if I could ask for a point of clarification. Earlier I was mentioning minus 40 degree weather but in terms of electronic cars and the batteries that are therein. Were you talking about extremely cold temperatures in terms of high-speed rail?

Mrs. Sarich: Yes.

Mr. Jeglum: Okay. I absolutely agree with Siemens that high-speed rail can be used in extremely low temperatures safely and efficiently. I'm sure that the technology does exist.

8:00

In terms of the routing specifically, because of the nature of high-speed rail and that a very level and very straight line is preferred, I think that geography would dictate more where the line should be, more than, you know, one side or the other of highway 2, or at least I would hope. But I personally have no immediate preference for one side or the other.

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Sarich.
Tony, you're in great demand.
Mr. Quadri.

Mr. Quadri: Yeah. Thank you, Tony. You know what? I love your presentation, enthusiasm, and most importantly your forward thinking. I think this is the future of Alberta, that we have to think outside the box, and that's what your presentation does represent. You know, I love the presentation, I love the enthusiasm, and the most important part I like about your presentation is that you mentioned Mill Woods because I represent Edmonton-Mill Woods. As soon as you get a hold of the – if the Google cars start selling in Alberta, put me on the list.

Mr. Jeglum: Absolutely.

Mr. Quadri: Thank you for your presentation.

The Chair: Thank you.
Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to be brief. Mr. Jeglum, thank you. Your passion, really, just oozed out of your presentation. This is the committee looking at Alberta's economic future, and I think that was your strong point, looking towards the future. This is not talking about building something tomorrow or next year.

I do want to agree with you. You talked about that if we're acquiring right-of-way, that we make provisions to compensate people properly. I believe there is a piece of legislation that exists right now, whether that would be adequate or may be beefed up. But, certainly, I think another presenter earlier made the comment as well that if we're going to do this, it has to be good for everyone in some fashion. Yes, you impact people for the greater good, but there has to be reasonable compensation. And I would agree with you there that if the legislation that we currently have isn't good enough, then we would beef it up to make sure that people that are impacted are, to the best of our ability, compensated.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rogers.
Mr. Rowe.

Mr. Rowe: Thank you. Thank you, Tony, for a great presentation. You mentioned that you farm. Can I ask where?

Mr. Jeglum: East of Lacombe.

Mr. Rowe: East of Lacombe. Okay.

I share some previously mentioned concerns regarding the route. I mentioned that we can't do it on the existing rail corridors. They just are not built for that type of thing. My concern is that this is going to run through the middle of my constituency, and as one presenter mentioned, it creates a dam in the middle of the province. Would you agree that moving it to – I'm going to say the east side of the highway because when I'm just sitting here thinking of the impact it would have on the communities, I think the east side would be by far the least intrusive. But no matter where you put it, I feel that it should be as close as possible to the existing QE II to lessen the impact on the farming community. And it's not just the farming community that I'm thinking of here because wherever they put it, as I said, it's going to be a dam and it's going to heavily impact emergency services, ambulance and fire, in crossing this facility. So would you agree that the closest we can get it to the QE II would be the least intrusive?

Mr. Jeglum: Not only would it be the least intrusive, but it also would be the fastest way to facilitate a transition from Edmonton through Red Deer and down to Calgary. Unfortunately, the closer you get to highway 2, the higher the population, and therefore there's going to be more people, not necessarily farmers, but there are a lot of acreage owners, a lot of people that live within that immediate vicinity. With great fortune I am not one of the people charged with deciding that. I will leave that to your judgment. But, yes, I would say that having it close to highway 2 – I mean, highway 2 was built where it is, obviously, for a reason. It is a very quick link between Edmonton and Calgary. So I would agree with you, yes.

Mr. Rowe: Okay. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Tony, for your presentation.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have no more preregistered presenters; however, we have this room till 9 o'clock. If any member of the audience wishes to present but did not register in advance, there is time available, and the committee would be pleased to hear from you. If you're interested, please move to the presenters' table and identify yourself for the record. Again, the same rules apply. You have 10 minutes to present and five minutes for questioning.

Evan Bedford

Mr. Bedford: My name is Evan Bedford. I just want to remind the committee that the price of oil has gone up far, far faster than inflation over the last 10 years, so I think the future is sort of written in stone, the direction things are going. This is even with oil and gas companies spending prodigious amounts trying to find stuff, and now they're forced, you know, to go deep under the ocean or into the Arctic or digging up tar sands. I think the writing is on the wall, as they say. That's all I have to say.

Mr. Rogers: Clarification, if I may, Mr. Chairman. Are you suggesting, are you on the same track that if we're going to do something like a right-of-way, some way to enable this in the future, we need to get after it now? Not necessarily building or – I don't know. I don't want to put words in your mouth.

Mr. Bedford: Yeah. Tony put it much better than I could ever have.

Mr. Rogers: Okay. Same idea.

Mr. Bedford: Yeah.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Any questions?

Thank you, sir.

Anybody else who would like to make a presentation?

Doug Wagstaff

Mr. Wagstaff: Forgive me for looking at my iPhone. I did take a few notes throughout the meeting.

The Chair: That's okay.

Mr. Wagstaff: My name is Doug Wagstaff of Olds, Alberta. One of the things that struck me this evening was the presentation earlier that indicated that consideration should be made for multiple tracks that do a straight through as well as collector points. One of the things within the corridor and just shortly off the corridor is that there is a lot of movement of Albertans that are collecting together in buses and vans and commuting into each of the two cities. They're doing that because they're choosing to live in rural Alberta and needing to work in locations and in jobs that are not necessarily located in those rural areas. The ability to quickly and safely transport those individuals into the city is another consideration I think the government should look at in the long term.

As the province grows and the corridor will continue to expand and populate itself, that will only increase. Consider that hubs along the way, if there's an alternative track that's quick and not directly high speed, would be like the LRT is to Edmonton and Calgary, for rural Albertans to be able to collect at points and quickly come into the metro centres of both, in this case along the

corridor of Edmonton and Calgary, but maybe consideration can also be made to connect our other large cities.

As far as the land acquisition and location: as close to the Queen Elizabeth highway as possible would consider that they would complement one another as far as collector points. Those rural communities that will rely on economic development can continue to grow by having this type of commuting system in the future. Again to emphasize, this isn't about tomorrow, five or 10 years. This is about the Alberta in 25 to 50 years out. The point should be well taken – and I believe it was Mr. Jeglum who commented about the ideal time to secure that land would have been in 1905 – that the longer we wait, the more complicated that will be. It's forward thinking. The challenge of the government with its local governments is to find a corridor that would work and then work together with the landowners to find a way to develop Alberta that way. Again, along the QE II. And I think by avoiding those areas that are populated, we're just limiting their ability to have economic development in the future around transportation of people.

Thank you.

8:10

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Any questions? You have one question, Mr. Stier?

Mr. Stier: Yes. Thank you. Good evening and thank you for your presentation. As a rural guy I can assure you that I understand what you're referring to with regional transportation from bedroom communities, if you want to call them that. What happens with those, just for your information and perhaps to ask a question after that information, is that local municipalities who lose those workers, lose that workforce which is going to the city. So they don't necessarily have a lot of economic growth as a result of that to pay for these transportation systems that you're referring to. On the backside of rural regional transportation we have another problem where the cities likewise don't necessarily want to be funding for rural transportation either, in a way of speaking.

Do you have anything in your cellphone that indicates how that might be accomplished?

Mr. Wagstaff: I think one of the realities is that we do currently share it together. It's just a different mode of transportation.

Mr. Stier: Sorry. Share what?

Mr. Wagstaff: We build the highways together with our tax dollars. So whatever the mode of transportation is that we choose to build in the future, we do need to share that. I believe it was Mr. Luan who commented about the fact that we do need to make sacrifices that in the long run will generate together a stronger province and a more vibrant province.

To your comment about the loss of rural areas, rural communities, and those jobs: it's not a loss if they're choosing to live in rural Alberta and commute to where they're working. I think right now we are finding within the corridor that the more traffic there is on the QE II, the more dangerous it's becoming just on a daily basis. In one way or the other we need to address that. Certainly, rail is the safest, most efficient way to transport people.

Mr. Stier: As a follow-up, if I may, just on that last point could I ask, then, just your opinion? I value your opinion. I was just in Olds this afternoon actually. When we look at the QE II and transportation in Alberta, because of all of the things that are hauled up and down the QE II in the back of pickups and onto one-tonnes and three-tonnes and semis, would you consider high-

speed rail having a higher priority instead of perhaps putting two more lanes each way on the highway, looking after everybody's needs therefore, widening the overpasses and so on to accommodate that?

Mr. Wagstaff: I wouldn't sacrifice the widening of the overpasses. However, I do believe that the way we transport – I think Tony as a young Albertan nailed it. We are looking at different ways that our younger Albertans are going to be both communicating as well as moving throughout the province. That's looking forward to ways that we're going to be able to move those people more efficiently.

I think what I heard tonight that I hadn't thought of before was a corridor concept that would combine – I didn't like the idea of an autobahn – our transportation systems to be more effective. The less traffic that we can do or the way that we can separate that traffic from the heavy industrial traffic of big trucks and the smaller vehicles or leisure transportation, the better off we'll be.

Mr. Stier: Okay. Thank you for that. I appreciate your time tonight.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stier.

Mrs. Sarich, briefly, please.

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just was curious. When you made the comment about everyone sharing, I guess, in the vision as well as perhaps the cost, any thoughts about tolls on roads?

Mr. Wagstaff: You're asking me personally, I assume.

Mrs. Sarich: Yes, I am. It's come up a few times as an idea.

Mr. Wagstaff: The Coquihalla worked. It's now paid for. I think that kind of idea, especially if you're talking about something that's – I think it's the role of government to provide services for Albertans, and I work for a municipal government. If we're going to do something that's above that, the way to pay for it, to offset – and the gentleman that spoke about those that are of lower income, he's correct. We need to keep that balance in there.

Certainly, there are aspects to transportation of commerce that do increase the use and danger of the highway. We may want to consider that with Albertans, yes.

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you very much for your presentation.

Mr. Wagstaff: Further to that, Mrs. Sarich. It's like the ring road around Calgary. I transport my children quite frequently from Olds to west of Calgary. If that had been a toll road, it would have been well worth it.

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, sir. Thank you very much.

Would anybody else like to make a brief presentation? Please introduce yourself for the record. You have 10 minutes and five for questions.

Norman Wiebe

Mr. Wiebe: My name is Norman Wiebe. I'm from Red Deer. I won't need the 10 minutes. I just have a few comments. I think it's premature to think that we should be building this right away. I think what you guys are doing is great, exploring the idea. I've always liked the idea of high-speed rail. I've done a little bit of

reading. Some of the reports that have come through or I've read through were pretty negative. It seems that all high-speed rail is pretty much heavily subsidized by the government. So in my mind I keep thinking: well, that's my money.

If it's something that I'm going to find vastly useful, perhaps it can be justified, but – I don't know – my feeling is that the time savings would be negligible. You'd have time lost. I'm assuming that with a piece of technology this expensive we'd probably have to have fairly significant security just like at airports. So, you know, if now I have to go through screenings and check-ins and things like that – you know what? – I'm going to avoid it. I'm just going to drive. The culture in this province is built around independence and vehicles. If I'm going to Calgary or Edmonton for business, it might be fine, but if I'm taking my family shopping, then it might be a lot simpler just to use my own vehicle so I can bring back all the goodies we pick up.

The need for government subsidy is probably the strongest deterrent in my mind. Vehicle technology is continually improving, so as we go along, the costs of driving to Calgary, you know, are not necessarily going to be increasing whereas I know that the cost of maintaining something like this will probably be vastly greater than everyone expects.

Highway expansion, in my mind, would be preferable than setting up high-speed rail, and it's because it's something that, I mean, is proven. We can do it. We have the space. The costs are not going to be, you know, even a fraction of high-speed rail, and the results are going to be immediate.

One last thing. I know that we now have air service in Red Deer, and I'm not sure what the usage on that is, but I think that it's a beneficial thing. But we have to keep in mind that not everybody will use that. It is a little exclusive. If we put high-speed rail in, for instance, I would probably use it once or twice a week, but I think that the ticket price would probably, just like for air, exclude most residents. As soon as you have to compare, "Well, I have the independence of having my vehicle, or I can spend twice as much and go through the security checks, the other hassles" – you know what? – I think most people are still going to choose to drive.

Those are all the comments that I had.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I think we have one question for you.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Wiebe. I'm just throwing this out. We've heard from some proponents, and one in particular says, "Look, we can do this. We have the technology. We can finance it. The private sector can build this without any government money. Just give us the wherewithal." Namely, they're looking for the legal ability to expropriate land and so on. What are your thoughts about going down that road, or are you skeptical that this could be done?

Mr. Wiebe: Oh, no, not at all. I'm a bit skeptical that it could be done profitably, but if they're willing to shoulder all the risk – I mean, I'm a free-market guy. I'm a libertarian. Free market. I'd say: go for it. I understand that they would need, you know, the government to put in legislation so that they could secure that quarter. There would have to be some co-operation, but as long as the funds, the funding for the entire project, were one hundred per cent private, I would have no issues with it.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

8:20

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you very much for your presentation. I just want to build on that because that private-sector proponent already speculated on a route, which was on the west side of the QE II, not on the east, that some of the people here this evening have mentioned. Any thoughts about which side of the highway? Some people had suggested as close to the highway as possible. That runs into an implication by some of the presentations that we had. For high speeds it's not a straight line; it's actually a curve to get to those speeds that are necessary. Are there any thoughts about what side of the highway and what some of the implications may be for landowners?

Mr. Wiebe: I never gave that any consideration, one side or the other. Like I said, the reports that I've been reading pretty much just emphasize the cost impact to the taxpayer, and that was my kind of overriding concern.

Mrs. Sarich: Really quickly here, you mentioned that you would have more immediate results if the current highway systems were expanded.

Mr. Wiebe: I believe so.

Mrs. Sarich: Any thoughts on road tolls?

Mr. Wiebe: I have nothing against that.

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, sir.
Please introduce yourself.

Mitch Thomson

Mr. Thomson: I'm Mitch Thomson, and I'm from Olds, Alberta.

I also had the opportunity to review some of the previous studies in years back. I think the biggest comment or thought that I would leave with the group is that a clearly communicated plan, that it is the intent of the province of Alberta to move forward with high-speed rail as it is clearly a method of transportation of both knowledge and the labour force and will benefit the province in the long-term future, is critical. I think it's critical to good planning for the landowner, it's good planning for the municipality, and it's good planning for the province.

The risk is, of course, that if you say that you're going to do it, people may speculate and start buying up land, and costs could go up. The true statement is that with proper planning the performance of the program will be much stronger and much greater, and I think it's just a matter of time before we get to that place. Anything you can do now to start buying land, start communicating your intent, and start working with landowners, municipalities, and business will spread the economic impact in a positive way over a longer period of time, and there will be far less risk associated with it.

Mr. Rogers: One quick question to Mr. Thomson: do I take from your comments, sir, then, that you would be in favour of some positive movement forward with this?

Mr. Thomson: Forgive me. I would absolutely support the notion that the province of Alberta start to look at that land corridor, that they truly identify the land where they'd like to locate the rail and start moving towards that in the immediate future.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rogers. Thank you, sir.
One more? Okay.

Marty Schmidt

Mr. Schmidt: My name is Marty Schmidt. I appreciate the opportunity to make some comments. My background is in the area of consulting relative to community project developments. I've been engaged in that kind of work throughout the province for the last 15 years.

A couple of things that come to my mind from all these fine presentations that have been made. Thinking 50 years out is a horrendous task. The projects that I've worked on try to get out 25 years, and that's a crystal ball exercise in itself. If we look back 50 years, who could imagine that Red Deer 50 years ago would be what it is today? That's just a small example. So when we have a population in Alberta that isn't terribly much greater than greater Toronto, we have to consider things about density. I think that from the experience that I've had and the studies that I've done on different transportation systems of high-speed anything, especially when you talk about, you know, straight lines, terribly high speeds, getting from A to B in no time flat, they happen to be in places where the population is very, very much greater than Alberta's is at this time and maybe even for the next 30, 40 years.

It's hard to say, because we also have to recognize that Alberta is now becoming increasingly recognized world-wide as an energy leader, not just in hydrocarbons, which will never go away – we'll always have that; we'll always have a need for the systems required to serve vehicles of all kinds on the road – but also, you know, inasmuch as we have an outstanding amount of sunshine for solar energy available in the southern part of the province. So energy becomes a byword for Alberta, and we know that by talking to people, our friends and relatives in other parts of the world. So we put all these kinds of things together, and we say: okay; how do we get people from Edmonton to Calgary and points beyond, perhaps to Fort McMurray? That place is going to grow immensely as time goes by in spite of all the rhetoric and negative things that are being thrown at it today. We have to think in terms of: how do we get there in the interim?

To reinforce some of the other comments that have been made, I would suggest that the government has to first of all have a solid philosophy about where this province might be 50 years down the road. That's a visionary thing. It outlasts most parties in government. So we have to think: in 50 years where do we see these nodes growing? How big is Red Deer, all of these places, Edmonton, Calgary? That will determine whether you're on the west side or the east side. There may be no magic to taking the view that you have to cluster everything about the existing QE corridor because geometrically it looks kind of convenient – you know, put it all down one pipeline – but that may not be terribly rational.

We also know from the Calgary experience that the Deerfoot at one time was an outstanding fast track way off at the edge of the city. Now it's one of the most dangerous routes you can travel on in southern Alberta. That's from all the traffic accident data. The ring road goes further out. Now we have to think in terms of: if you go down the road 50 years in this province, the QE might be already at its maximum for what you want to stuff on it. I would suggest that as an interim thing the QE has to be expanded, and there has to be some planning, I'm sure, for a lateral separation of vehicular types. I think somebody, maybe MLA Stier, had mentioned that. We need to continue to serve vehicles on the road. Right now we are probably approaching a serious limit of safety and all the other factors that go with it.

At the same time, as a parallel thrust, it's important to deal with the whole business of: how are we going to link north and south in the future and therefore focus on what kind of routes would be appropriate? Somewhere along the way it's going to have to be presented as: here's where we plan to put it. That will engage, as you all know, years of debate and scrapping as to how you're going to get across this land, that land, this land, that land. To me, there is no real urgency here to talk about high-speed rail as though it's got to happen within the next 10 or even 15 or 20 years. It needs to serve the demands that will grow, but we have to be there with the land available to put that route in place.

One last thing. It sounds to me like most of the conversation has been with respect to rapid transit that's ground-based. Years ago in Vancouver we had great debates about monorails that loop right over the tops of all sorts of buildings and farmland and industrial sites. That needs to be taken into account as well because lots of sites, lots of agricultural land can be crossed over without being passed through, and that has a whole different bearing on what kind of value you'd have to pay for those air rights to pass over land and over rivers and whatever else.

Those are just some comments to maybe help reinforce some of the notes you've been taking as well. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

Questions? No?

Good. Thank you. We appreciate that.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you.

The Chair: Next, please.

Tom Skoreyko

Mr. Skoreyko: Thank you for the opportunity. I didn't expect it, and I wasn't prepared for it, but I did bring my old book of stuff on high-speed rail.

The Chair: You're always prepared.

Mr. Skoreyko: First of all – oh, I don't know if I mentioned my name.

8:30

The Chair: Can you introduce yourself, please, for the record?

Mr. Skoreyko: Yes. Tom Skoreyko.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Skoreyko: I was construction inspector from 1984 till 2008, when I retired.

I don't mind moving ahead, but I don't think that our province will have the population for a high-speed rail for another 20, 25 years. By then the equipment is all worn out and has to be replaced. I brought with me a map of the United States, and it shows what they call high-speed rail. The lowest one on the totem pole is 177 kilometres per hour. When you get up into the 300 and higher, there are only a few very short lines. California, with 35,000 people, is building their first one.

The Chair: Thirty-five million.

Mr. Skoreyko: Thirty-five million people in California. They're building their first high-speed rail line. Texas has 25 million people. They're designing their first one. Florida, with 19 million, had started the design, and they scrapped it. They said it was too

expensive. There are a few little, short intercuts here to tie into the low end of what they call high-speed rail.

I've got no problem building two extra lanes going north and south along the QE II. I think that is our best option, and I think that we could dedicate one of the lanes, possibly – just a suggestion – to the semis because I would say that just about a quarter if not more of that traffic on that highway is semi traffic. It is loaded with semis. You go and count them, and there are tons of them. That would get the heavy equipment out of the passenger lane and let them move a little more freely and a little more safely.

I feel the east side is a better side. You don't have near the towns along the east side as you do on the west side of the highway. There's Ponoka, of course, that you're going to have to worry about, and Lacombe, Red Deer. We want to stop at Red Deer.

Myself, being frugal, I would drive a car because I can get to Calgary or to Edmonton in a little over an hour, and I have wheels when I get to the other end. I don't have to leave it parked someplace and have it, shall we say, vandalized while I'm gone because I have it with me. I can take it to Edmonton and get it vandalized sitting there.

Basically, I don't think that at this time with this kind of population in Alberta we can afford this high-speed rail line, especially when they're talking about 300 kilometres an hour plus.

Thank you for your time, and pardon me for stuttering. I'm a little not used to this.

The Chair: You've done very well.

Any questions?

Thank you very much, sir.

Mr. Skoreyko: Okay. Thanks.

The Chair: We're going to have to make it very brief.

Richard Moje

Mr. Moje: My name is Richard Moje, and I'm just interested in high-speed rail. I think the underlying assumption here is that everybody drives. Nobody thinks about the old people or the younger people, the teenagers, that don't drive or want to text. If we're looking at the future, then we're looking at our demographics. I don't know how much consideration we've had regarding that.

The other thing that we have to look at it is your economic point of view. When somebody could have an accident on highway 2, how backed up is traffic, and how does that impact our economy? Albertans, right? Those are just two salient points, but the other thing was integrated transportation, one point to the other. Get everybody moving, everything together, but don't forget bicycles and also walking and also how you get from point A to point B and, once you get to point A or point B, how you're going to move around. That's been pointed out already.

As for the land values, compensate those who are affected most. I think that's pretty much all the points that I have there.

Moving forward, again, another point is climate change. I don't know if it's well accepted as a science or not, but I think there's something to be said about that. So if we're considering this in the future, then we might be looking at all the factors that are involved.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Questions?

Great. Thank you.

I saw somebody else. Please come forward, introduce yourself, and the floor is yours.

Ralph Cervi

Mr. Cervi: Thank you. I'm Ralph Cervi. I'm a person who came to Alberta when I was 20 years old. The Mounties decided to send me here. I'm a retired RCMP member. To be honest with you, I figure that by the time this comes to fruition, you'll be expropriating my gravesite, so I'm not that concerned about it – okay? – to be quite honest with you. But I am looking at this saying that the government had a perfect opportunity to look at a corridor with the power line issue, so why are we reacting to this once the horse is out of the barn? That's when the corridor issue should have been taken care of because then you could have put in your power lines.

You could have even viewed the QE II like we view 2A nowadays because we always think that the QE II has always been there, but it hasn't. There used to be another highway 2. It might mean moving it to the east 10 miles because – let's be realistic – 50 years from now Edmonton and Calgary are going to be taking over land that right now we view as suburbs like Chestermere and Strathmore.

So I really think that if we're going to look at a corridor, we need to be realistic and say: then let's make this a one-time, like the gentleman said, a quarter section or half section wide, and then we don't have to keep expropriating land from people, at least not for hundreds of years. But this really should have been discussed when the power line issue was going on because then you could have said: "Okay. Now we've expropriated this land, and on this land we can build the six- or eight-lane highway. We can build a high-speed train. We can run the pipelines down there." I guess I'm just kind of confused why we're talking about this now when the Legislature has had to go through numerous committees and hearings about the electrical.

On top of that, I think we really should be focusing on a trial basis on Edmonton to McMurray. With the amount of people that are back and forth on that highway – okay? – you start to think that, well, if we can make it a success there, as Syncrude and Suncor keep expanding and expanding, then you might be able to sell the rest of the province on it. But right now it's going to be tough. I agree with the comment about it creating a dam. Yeah. There really is a dam. The majority of population is highway 2 west, and as we go further east, now we're getting into farms that aren't just a quarter section, but they're a section of land, two sections of land, townships of land.

So I guess the concern I've got is that if we're going to talk about a corridor, we should be looking at it to encompass all of these issues, not just the high-speed train. If highway 2 as we know it today ends up being moved, then so be it. No one had a problem when highway 2 became 2, and then 2A took over to the small towns. But those are the types of things about the future planning that I think sometimes we're missing because, like the gentleman said, it's hard to picture 50 years from now. Like, I can't imagine what it would be like to be in an emergency personnel position and have to deal with a high-speed train that has now gone off the tracks. How are we going to get ambulance and fire and all those things there?

Those other communities that they talked about in Europe: some of those cities have more population than our country has, so they've got the infrastructure. It's something I'm just throwing out there, saying that it's not going to be an easy answer, but we may have to really look outside the box and say that maybe this corridor that we're stuck on, the QE II, might not be what we really need to be looking at long term.

Any questions?

The Chair: Questions?

Thank you.

Mr. Cervi: You're welcome.

8:40

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Anybody else? Okay. I'll take one more.

Larry Wright

Mr. Wright: Good evening. My name is Larry Wright. I live in the town of Olds now. In the past I lived in Fort McMurray for 33 years, worked on transportation network systems, transits, and the likes of that.

The proposed rail system is a portion of an integrated transportation system. You really need to think about it, consider it strongly for the future. We've heard several bits of vision tonight, that you need to move ahead with the land acquisition. Having been involved in some of the problems with highway 63 in the past, I'd have to say that that's an absolute necessity at this point in time.

For those people who are in attendance tonight, I would suggest that they look at the source documents from the past few years, the vision of high-speed rail through Alberta, and even your recent documents for Alberta rapid transit. Even in our little community of Olds and Mountain View county we looked at it in 2009 in our Bunt report for the high-speed rail. It's a positive thing for the future. You need to do it.

I was trained originally back in the days of Ontario highway 401, the 400. Rail still coexists with the transportation networks in that part of the world. You need to get on with it.

If you go back to the 1970s, I think there was a little bit of debate in the city of Edmonton about something called LRT. I think it works.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir.

Any questions?

Mr. Rowe: Mr. Chairman, can I ask one?

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Rowe.

Mr. Rowe: Hi, Mr. Wright. Do you have a route in mind that you would prefer?

Mr. Wright: All we've done is looked at the past and our technical work with what's been provided. You need to do a lot of refinement to the roads and that, but pretty well something that jumps right out at you is that you're probably going to need a power source to run a railway. So that kind of . . .

Mr. Rowe: Narrows it down?

Mr. Wright: It narrows it down just a tad.

Mr. Rowe: Yeah. Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: One more question. Mrs. Sarich.

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you very much. Thank you for your presentation. You made reference to some report from 2009. What was that?

Mr. Wright: In Mountain View county and the town of Olds we did a consolidated transportation overview, a utility master plan process and the likes of that, and part of that was our work with

Alberta Transportation and trying to understand what the highway 2 corridor is going to be like, and we included part of the rail transportation and the high-speed rail work from 2005. I was pretty familiar with that, having worked in Fort McMurray. We were impacted in that part of the world at the same time by the same discussions.

Mrs. Sarich: Just quickly in a follow-up, you made a comment about a power source, and I'm just wondering if you could just expand a little bit on that because maybe there would be some Albertans not understanding what you really mean.

Mr. Wright: Well, if you've travelled in France, Britain, and other parts of the world, you know that electricity and power is the way that you make high-speed trains work. We've got a power corridor. Let's put it to work. It makes sense.

Mrs. Sarich: Okay. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Well, thank you, all, very much. Thank you, Red Deer and the surrounding area and, of course, Mary Anne Jablonski for hosting us here tonight. It has been a very productive night. We have heard from 15 presenters.

I would like to thank each and every one of you for taking time out of your busy schedule to be with us here tonight and meet with our committee members. I want to assure you that we did not come here with any predetermined conclusions or predetermined outcome. We came here to listen to you because you are the most important stakeholders. You are the people who are going to take that train from either Red Deer to Edmonton or Red Deer to Calgary or Calgary to Edmonton. So you are the riders, and you are going to either make it or break it. Thank you very much for being here tonight. I will assure you again that our committee's report to the Legislative Assembly will reflect exactly what we've heard here tonight.

Again I would like to thank all the presenters. Thank you for your contributions to the committee study of the feasibility of establishing high-speed rail transit within Alberta.

There is still an opportunity to participate by sending the committee your comments in writing. The deadline for receipt of written submissions is March 31, 2014.

One correction I'd like to make. I wish Mr. Oulton was still here. He mentioned something about Bill C-60 that has to do with land acquisition or land confiscation. Thank God for technology. We have done some research. Bill 60 has absolutely nothing to do with land acquisition. Bill 60, Health Professions Amendment Act, was done in 2009. Bill C-68 was a federal bill that dealt with the Canadian firearms restriction act. I don't know where Bill C-60 came from.

However, as a reminder for the record, the committee will be hearing presentations from the public in committee room A on the fourth floor of the Legislature Annex building in Edmonton tomorrow evening, starting at 6:30 p.m.

I would be remiss if I didn't take just a few seconds to thank the members of the committee, the *Hansard* staff, the committee clerk sitting over there and keeping the time and keeping us right on schedule, my assistant, Zack, sitting right in the back, the security staff, Parliamentary Counsel, the media co-ordinator, and Duncan – I forgot his title – and audiovisual.

Thank you, all, very much. Thank you for being here. It's a pleasure being in Red Deer.

Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 8:47 p.m.]

