



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Medicine Hat

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6:58 p.m.

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Electoral Boundaries Commission

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[Judge Walter in the chair]

The Chair: Good evening. Thank you for taking the time to come out and share your views with us today. I know that I speak for all of us on the commission when I say that we look forward to hearing from you.

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

We have been directed by legislation to make recommendations to the Legislative Assembly on the areas, boundaries, and names for 87 electoral divisions based on the latest census and population information. In other words, our job is to determine where to divide Alberta into 87 areas so that each Albertan receives effective representation by a Member of the Legislative Assembly. Over the next few months we will seek community input through a province-wide consultation before developing our recommendations. Through public hearings such as the one here today we want to hear what you have to say about the representation you are receiving in your community.

In carrying out this work, we have to follow the provisions of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. It says that we are to make proposals to the Legislative Assembly regarding the areas, boundaries, and names of 87 electoral divisions. You will recognize that this means we are mandated to propose four additional electoral divisions in Alberta, which will come into effect at the next general election. We are also reviewing the law, what the courts have said about electoral boundaries in the province of Alberta and in Canada, the work of previous commissions and committees which have studied the boundaries in Alberta, and the population information which is available to us.

A brief summary of the electoral boundaries law. As I've mentioned, our function is to make proposals to the Legislative Assembly for 87 electoral divisions. We have a limited time to accomplish this task. We are required, after consideration of representations made at these public hearings, to submit an interim report to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly in February of 2010 that sets out the areas, boundaries, and names of 87 proposed electoral divisions and reasons for the proposed boundaries. Following publication of the interim report a second round of public hearings will be held to receive input on the proposed 87 boundaries. After consideration of the input the commission must submit a final report to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly by July of 2010. Then it is up to the Legislative Assembly by resolution to approve or to approve with alterations the proposals of the commission and to introduce a bill to establish new electoral divisions for Alberta in accordance with the resolution. This law would then come into force when proclaimed, before the holding of the next general election.

One way to ensure effective representation is by developing electoral divisions with similar populations, especially where population density is similar. The law directs us to use the populations set out in the most recent census of Alberta as provided by Statistics Canada, the 2006 census, but if the commission believes there is population information that is more recent than the federal census compiled by Statistics Canada, then the commission may use this data in conjunction with the census information. Elections Alberta is currently reviewing the 2009 census data, and those

numbers will be considered by the commission once they are officially released. I note that we are also required to add the population of First Nation reserves that were not included in the census, as provided by the federal department of Indian and northern affairs.

The commission is required, as I've said, to divide Alberta into 87 proposed electoral divisions by taking into consideration any factors it considers appropriate, but it must and shall take into consideration the following:

- (a) the requirement for effective representation as guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms,
- (b) sparsity and density of population,
- (c) common community interests and community organizations, including those of Indian reserves and Metis settlements,
- (d) wherever possible, the existing community boundaries within the cities of Edmonton and Calgary,
- (e) . . . the existing municipal boundaries,
- (f) the number of municipalities and other local authorities,
- (g) geographical features, including existing road systems, and
- (h) the desirability of understandable and clear boundaries.

The population rule in the act states that a proposed electoral division must not be more than 25 per cent above or below the average population of all 87 electoral divisions, with one exception. Up to four proposed electoral divisions may have a population that is as much as 50 per cent below the average population of the electoral divisions of Alberta if three of the following five criteria are met:

- (a) the area . . . exceeds 20 000 square kilometres or the total surveyed area of the proposed electoral division exceeds 15 000 square kilometres;
- (b) the distance from the Legislature Building in Edmonton to the nearest boundary of the proposed electoral division by the most direct highway route is more than 150 kilometres;
- (c) there is no town in the proposed electoral division that has a population exceeding 8000 people;
- (d) the area of the proposed electoral division contains an Indian reserve or a Metis settlement;
- (e) the proposed electoral division has a portion of its boundary coterminous with a boundary of the Province of Alberta.

7:05

That's a very general overview of the legislation, but the Alberta Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada have also provided guidance. In rulings they have agreed that under the Charter the rights of Albertans include the right to vote, the right to have the political strength or value or force of the vote an elector casts not unduly diluted, the right to effective representation, and the right to have the parity of the votes of others diluted, but not unduly, in order to gain effective representation or as a matter of practical necessity. These rulings as well as the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act must guide our decisions and, ultimately, the proposals that we make to the Legislative Assembly.

Now that I've explained the law that we are guided by, we want to receive your input. We believe that what we hear from you, who will be affected by these boundary changes, is critical to recommending a new electoral map that will ensure fair and effective representation for all Albertans.

We welcome all of you here tonight. For those of you who will not be speaking, you can still make your views known in writing by mail, by fax, or by e-mail.

With that background information I'll call on our staff to call the first speaker. Each speaker will have 10 minutes to present and then five minutes for questions and answers with the commission. The commission's public meetings are being recorded by *Alberta Hansard*, and the audio recordings will be posted on the commission website. Transcripts of these proceedings will also be available. If

you have registered as a presenter or choose to participate in this evening's meeting, we ask that you identify yourself for the record prior to starting your presentation.

Ms Friesacher: The first presenter is Mr. Terrance Riley with the Medicine Hat PC association.

The Chair: Mr. Riley.

**Terrance Riley, Medicine Hat
Progressive Conservative Constituency Association**

Mr. Riley: Thank you, sir. Let me express my appreciation for being allowed to make a presentation tonight. I would point out that in previous years Mr. Lawrence Gordon, a lawyer in town, had been the primary presenter and the intellectual light of the presentation although he was small in stature. I simply came along to add weight to the arguments but not the presentation. This one was done entirely by myself, so I apologize for the amateurish nature of it, but there is information in there that I think you might find useful.

I would like to spend a minute just going down the list of the enclosures so that you know where it came from and what it's about and how it pertains to the presentation. The first enclosure is a table that is included in a much bigger document which was compiled in 2003. I got it from the city clerk, and I tried to dig out information that was pertinent to your work. This has a lot of other things attached to it. My only purpose in acquiring it was for this presentation. I can leave that document with your people if you care to have that. It simply shows the fact that Medicine Hat has grown and continues to grow roughly in proportion to the province of Alberta, and that becomes relevant in my presentation.

The second enclosure, enclosure B, comes from a document also from the city of Medicine Hat – again, I can leave this with your staff or with you – which was completed in August 2009, and it demonstrates not only that the city has grown but what parts of the city have been growing. It breaks the city down into zones. Enclosure C is also a part of that. Now, enclosure C happens to be appendix A of that report. So I hope I'm not confusing you by using my term, "enclosure C," rather than using the term "appendix A." It is appendix A to this particular document, but I'm referring to it as enclosure C. Okay?

Those two documents together show the population as it was broken down in that study as of August 2009 and the number of people in each of those breakdown areas. It's a whole-city map, but to give you some idea, anything that would be kind of north and east of the highway is part of Medicine Hat. Anything that is south and west would be part of Cypress-Medicine Hat. I gave you a map later on, a bigger map, which might help you to be able to see that and where that location is, and I'll get to that map in a minute.

I'm looking at enclosure C. Specifically, number 16 is hard to read because it's covered by a lake. The numbers up to and including number 20 would be in the Medicine Hat constituency, and the rest of the numbers, 21 through to whatever the highest number is, 34, would be in the Cypress-Medicine Hat constituency. If you take a look at enclosure B and enclosure C together, it might help you determine where the population is and is not. I'll be making reference to those two enclosures when I get to my actual oral presentation.

Enclosure D comes from a report which has just been issued through the Department of Education. I got it by e-mail, so I can't leave you the whole report. It's a 34-page report, and I ran off the one page that I thought might be relevant to your presentation; it talks about the population and its growth in Medicine Hat. I think

the key element here is in the first paragraph, that the population will grow between 2003 and 2024 in the order of 17,000 people, or a 1.9 per cent per annum population increase rate. I think that's the relevant information there. I also wanted to include the numbers at the bottom because it kind of corroborates, although not entirely, the numbers presented in the other two reports.

Enclosures E and F, of course, are maps that you are familiar with, that I got off your website, and I notice they're up on the board. I wasn't sure what would or would not be here.

The final enclosure is just this city real estate map. It's a much bigger map and might help you in your work that you have to do. I note particularly that the growth areas are outlined in kind of a beige, I guess you would call that. You will notice I guess it would be in quadrant A9 that this is development that has not yet occurred but will be occurring in the northeast quadrant, and at the bottom, which would be, basically, I9, J9, and a bit of 10, is development that has been planned but not yet started with regard to the area in South Ridge, which is in the Cypress-Medicine Hat constituency. I just thought that you might find the maps useful.

If I may now, Chair, make a few points with regard to where we would like to see things go, some points that our organization believes should be made. We note that there is an increase of four seats, so that should help you alleviate some of the pressure inside the urban areas, and we're going to assume that that's the fundamental purpose of those four seats, to help alleviate some of the pressure in some of the urban or some of the 'rurban' constituencies. I notice that Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo is one of the things that needs some offsetting.

7:15

I notice, however, that there are 10 urban constituencies that are below the provincial average – I'm talking about Edmonton and Calgary constituencies now, and this information comes from your own document – and five of those constituencies have a lower population than does the constituency of Cypress-Medicine Hat. I just observe that fact. That's according to your 2006 census, and it does not account for growth in that constituency since 2006. The information I give you will document some of the growth that has occurred in those two areas or in the area of South Ridge particularly in that constituency.

The recent population growth in the city of Medicine Hat has been focused in East Crescent Heights and in the South Ridge, South Vista Heights, and Saamis Heights areas. These you can refer to if you like, enclosures B, C, and G; that is to say, the city real estate map and those two other documents, B and C. That shows where the growth has occurred inside Medicine Hat in the last while and is likely to continue to grow. It is interesting that the East Crescent Heights growth will be occurring in the Medicine Hat constituency, and the other area – the South Ridge, South Vista, and Saamis Heights, which are kind of one beside the other, contiguous-type areas – is occurring in the Cypress-Medicine Hat constituency.

Now, I guess there are some questions about what the possible directions are that you may go with your decision, and I would like to talk about three possible scenarios and what we perceive to be the problems with those decisions. One is to create two urban constituencies inside the city of Medicine Hat, but it would likely have to include the town of Redcliff as part of the Medicine Hat-North constituency – I'm just going to use that term for lack of a better term – in order to get to the numbers. Now, the problem with this approach is twofold. Number one, if we would just get rid of the Medicine Hat part of it, the rural constituency of Cypress would be so huge that the effective representation of that constituency would become very difficult and well-nigh impossible.

As a former district representative of the ATA I used to represent all the schools in that area, and it was a real task to try to get around and just visit schools and teachers, never mind everybody else. After having gotten five speeding tickets in one month, I decided I had to find an alternative way to make representation to that group. It is a task, and some of you may or may not be familiar with the antics of Lorne Taylor in trying to make representation in those areas. He was not immune to the problem of coming up against the RCMP occasionally for the same kind of reason, trying to get around to represent that group. So that's problem number one.

The second problem involves specifically Redcliff. Redcliff, strangely enough, has been bounced from pillar to post over previous boundary changes. When I first came to Medicine Hat in 1974, the constituency was Medicine Hat-Redcliff, and Redcliff involved the whole city of Medicine Hat and the town of Redcliff. That lasted for when Jim Horsman was elected – I think that was '74 – but by '79 the commission came along, and they took Redcliff out of Medicine Hat-Redcliff and put it into, I think, the Cypress constituency. Unfortunately for Mr. Hyland at the time, when he put out his next brochure, he forgot that that city had been put into his constituency, and when he put out a map of the constituency, of course, Redcliff didn't show up on it. I was chairing candidate forums at the time, and I happened to do one in Redcliff and heard very vocally from the people of Redcliff how alienated they were to that process.

Then that system was corrected, and I think they were just getting to get along with Alan Hyland. Then in 1994, by God, there was another commission that removed Redcliff from there and put it into Strathmore-Brooks. It was the very tail end of Strathmore-Brooks for one election, and that made them feel very alienated. It has now been moved back to Cypress-Medicine Hat in subsequent revisions.

They've been represented by three kind of really diverse, different groups, and now to move them back out of Cypress-Medicine Hat into another group I think would alienate the citizens of Redcliff and make them wonder about the effectiveness of representation when they're constantly being moved from one constituency to another to another to another. That would've been the fourth move in 20 years, and I think it's unwise. The practicality of the solution of creating two urban constituencies in Medicine Hat and including Redcliff in the one of the north has some real problems with it: the geographic size of the remaining rural area and the specific problems of moving Redcliff yet again, for the fourth time in 20 years.

The second idea that comes up occasionally is to create two 'rurban' constituencies. I have tell you that after having spoken as a district representative and heard comments in rural schools about how alienated they were to that process – you know, when you go to these kinds of events, teacher inductions and so on, you hear other parents around in their casual conversations. Really, when they first started, there was not very much enthusiasm in the rural area about being joined up with Medicine Hat because two-thirds of the voters in the constituency come from the city, and "we'll never get our issues heard."

Now, Dr. Taylor, who was from the city, you know, initially came up against that. I think he very effectively represented the rural people, and some of the urban people thought maybe he was being neglectful of them if you spoke to Medicine Hatters at that time, but it worked. Now the new representative from there is one who comes from the rural area but is well accepted by the city in that regard.

But in general the interests of the urban areas and the interests of the rural areas are often quite different, and trying to have one person represent both interests presents a challenge to their effective representation and to the acceptance on the part of constituents that this man is representing me. It weakens democracy when you have a constituency that is perceived to be neither fish nor fowl. There-

fore, making two 'rurban' districts here is not one that would be well adjusted.

That leaves us with the third option, and that is to basically leave the Medicine Hat constituency alone. I cannot speak for and I have not been authorized to speak on behalf of the Cypress-Medicine Hat group. I would believe that those numbers work only if Medicine Hat is left alone. I don't know how you can change Cypress-Medicine Hat, but I can't pretend to represent their feelings. I know that for our constituency, when we met about it, we realized that the most realistic, practical, and eminently acceptable solution for us is to leave the constituency of Medicine Hat alone. You'll notice that it is currently about 4 per cent above the provincial average. The constituency of Cypress-Medicine Hat is only marginally lower. The information I have provided you should convince you that the population growth in the area will not leave either an overrepresentation in Medicine Hat and Cypress-Medicine Hat or an underrepresentation of those two areas. To create huge rural constituencies is not an answer.

Chair, that's my oral presentation. I guess I'm a couple of minutes over my allotted 10 minutes; I apologize.

7:25

The Chair: Keith.

Dr. Archer: Well, Mr. Riley, thanks so much for that presentation. It's really helpful, informative, and obviously you've given a lot of thought to this. That's much appreciated.

One of the challenges that we're faced with at the moment is that the legislation enables us to use not only the 2006 federal census data but also more recent census data as they are available, so we have some preliminary output from more recent data. But, certainly, what I'm looking at does not allocate the growth within Medicine Hat to the two different constituencies. Just to give you a sense as to what I'm looking at, our report says that there has been a population increase of about 4,100 in Medicine Hat between the 2006 census and the 2009 census, but we don't know – or, certainly, I don't have it in front of me – how much of that increase is in the Medicine Hat riding and how much is in Cypress-Medicine Hat.

The data that you're bringing seems to suggest that much of that growth is in the south, so it's in the Cypress-Medicine Hat riding. That would seem to a certain extent to be a corrective on what seemed to be the problem based upon the 2006 data, which was that although both of the ridings are somewhat under the electoral quotient that we're likely going to be using, the Cypress-Medicine Hat riding was under a bit more than the Medicine Hat riding was. I think what you're suggesting and your data are showing is that, in fact, almost all the growth in recent years seems to be south of the highway.

Mr. Riley: No, I don't think it quite shows that, sir. I would ask you to look at enclosure B. Now, it doesn't have 2006 data; it has 2005 data. You will notice that East Crescent Heights in 2005 had 8,540; in 2009 it has 10,772. That is the Medicine Hat constituency growth, and the real estate map shows that there is another section to be opened up in the future. It was expected to be opened previous to this time, but they found some prairie flowers in the area that was going to be developed, and they've put an environmental hold on that until they get that sorted out. Then that area will go forward. That is on the real estate map in the northeast corner of that map.

Now, in the southwest corner – and I refer to the bottom section there on enclosure B. It says, "South Ridge, South Vista Heights, Saamis Heights, & Rural Area including Tower Estates." The growth from 2005 was 11,060, and in 2009 it's 14,141, and there is

still some growth to go on there. As indicated in the real estate map, there is an area projected for development that has not yet been developed.

I would also point out, sir, if I might – your question pertains to Cypress-Medicine Hat rather than to Medicine Hat, but I can anecdotally add the following. If you drive between here and Bow Island, for example, on highway 3, you will notice a fair amount of development in terms of small acreages and so on and particularly development along the new golf club there. I'm not good enough to play it, so I can't remember its name. It's the one on highway 3 just on the left side as you leave the city of Medicine Hat. They're building a number of housing developments along that golf course. Also, if you drive out along the Holsom Road, which is outside the city limits but towards the river park, there are a number of acreages. What I call the Black & White trail I think is an extension of highway 4. It comes into Medicine Hat from just a little bit east of here; it's a back road to Foremost. Now, along that road, too, there are substantive acreage developments. I have no clue as to the number of people those would add, but there is development there.

In Bow Island I would point out that they have opened a McCain plant for potato chips and so on or whatever. I don't know what they process there, but they've opened a plant there. There's been some growth there. I believe there's been some growth in Redcliff and a little bit in Dunmore. So there is growth in the Cypress-Medicine Hat constituency outside the city of Medicine Hat, but I don't have the specific data, just anecdotal information, for you on that.

It is true that some of the outlying rural areas of Cypress-Medicine Hat are experiencing difficulty. I mean, they've had to close the school at Foremost, and they've had trouble keeping the school open in Hilda and so on. But in the areas of what I would call the greater Medicine Hat metropolitan area – it's almost a silly thing to make that reference, but I don't know how else to refer to it – there is a fair amount of growth in the Cypress-Medicine Hat constituency.

I do not think that if you were to leave it – now, it's not for me to say I want this to happen because it's up to them to make a presentation if they wish, but if you were to make that decision, I don't think that you will find that its level of differentiation from the average will increase in any meaningful way. In fact, I believe it will probably decrease somewhat.

Dr. Archer: Right. Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Brian.

Mr. Evans: Thanks, Chairman, and thanks very much, Mr. Riley. That's great information for you to pass on to us. I do have one question about the population. Please correct me if I'm wrong. I believe that Medicine Hat has developed quite a reputation as a retirement centre, so there are a number of people from other places in Alberta who are retiring to Medicine Hat. Do you have any idea what the percentage would be of younger newcomers with school-age children or of the age where population increase by children would be a relevant consideration compared to seniors moving into the area?

Mr. Riley: I have the information, but I don't have it in my head. The information is in this document, and I'll be more than happy to leave it with you. Now, these are projections as of July 2003, but the projections from 2003 to 2009 have been bang on. I apologize; I could shuffle through the papers here and find your answers, but I'll just leave you the documents if I could. I don't know who to leave them with.

The Chair: Just leave them at the back with the ladies there.

Mr. Riley: I think it'll have the answers.

On the specific point to which you make reference, though, I would make the general observation that our school district is growing in population. I am a school board member for the public school district here. Now, the district includes schools in both constituencies, right? It includes schools that are in the South Ridge area as well as Crescent Heights. In both areas, in fact, our two highest priorities as a school district are to get a new elementary school in that growth area in South Ridge and a second one in the growth area of North East Crescent Heights, or East Crescent Heights, as they call it, which is the northeast part of the city. We have population growth in there that warrants that, we believe.

Now, some of our schools in the centre are not fully occupied. But some of those schools are over a hundred years old, too, so we're struggling with that problem. I think our biggest mistake as a school board is that we've actually actively maintained those schools. If we'd let them fall apart, we might get the new ones we want. But we haven't done that.

So, sir, the actual specific economic data that you're looking for is in here and will answer your questions. I'll leave it with your officials.

7:35

Mr. Evans: Okay. Great. The only other question I have – you know, that's really quite extraordinary growth in South Ridge, South Vista Heights compared to the other growth between '99 and 2005. Is that more to do with availability of subdivided lands, serviced lands, or is it a continuing demographic that people who are coming into new housing would prefer the southeast to the northeast? I ask that question because it's relevant to the size that Cypress-Medicine Hat might become over time if we leave the boundary the same as it is now.

Mr. Riley: Anecdotally, again, I would point out that most of the commercial development in Medicine Hat from 1990 to the year 2005 took place along the highway on the southeast side. You know, you look at Wal-Mart and you look at three or four hotels that have opened up there and so on. That was true.

Since 2005 there has been substantial development starting in the northeast part. There has been the development of a Costco opening up on the north side of town, which would be in the Medicine Hat constituency. There is the huge development of a recreational and leisure centre in the northeast area. I couldn't believe it. You know, I lived in Crescent Heights most of my life, but I never got north of 20th Street for a long time. By God, when I went driving there the other day, I couldn't believe the housing developments up there. There is beginning to be a lot of commercial development on the north side of the city, which will enhance the growth that we've already seen. We've already seen it go from about 8,500 in 2007 to close to 11,000, and I believe the projection is another 3,000 in growth in that area over the next 15 years.

You know, it's fortuitous, I guess, for the two constituencies that the development and the growth, at least from the city of Medicine Hat's perspective, is kind of evenly divided between the two constituencies. To say that one is likely to grow more in the next year than the other, you know, you can't really tell these things until they actually happen. I mean, if they make a permanent reserve out of the Ranchlands area, that's the area that's projected to grow, in North East Crescent Heights, or what they call East Crescent Heights in your document here and what I call the northeast corner of the city. The only reason that hasn't been developed in the last two

years is because it has been held off for environmental reasons. They've put in new sidewalks and servicing right up to the point where they've been allowed to, and they're anxious to move into the next area for further development. There is some increase inside the traditional areas of North East Crescent Heights. There is becoming more intense population. There have been some townhouses and a couple of apartments built, which will intensify the population growth in the area, but we really don't know how.

Now, getting back to your original question about it being a retirement centre, yes, Medicine Hat always has been and continues to be a centre where people want to come to retire. It has more days of sunshine than any other major city in Canada, you know, and it's a lovely, lovely place to live. But it is true also that people who are over the age of 55 tend to vote more than people under the age of 55. I know that if we're looking at voters rather than overall population, that might be a factor to consider, too. I don't know. Perhaps an irrelevant point. I apologize.

The Chair: Peter.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you, Mr. Riley. A couple of questions. If you would flip to enclosure B for me, I count eight areas that you listed. Could you just take me through them, and I'll just mark which ones, according to your list, are in Medicine Hat and which ones are in the Cypress-Medicine Hat riding so we can test our math later on. Number 1, West Crescent Heights: is that in Medicine Hat?

Mr. Riley: All except the bottom two would be in the Medicine Hat constituency.

Mr. Dobbie: Okay. Great. That's exactly what I needed to know.

Mr. Riley: The bottom two would be in the Cypress-Medicine Hat constituency.

Now, I might just refer to my real estate map to make sure I'm accurate in that presentation.

Mr. Dobbie: Can we have that marked as an exhibit?

Mr. Riley: I'm sorry?

Mr. Dobbie: Just a lawyer's joke.

Mr. Riley: I had actually planned to outline the constituencies, with blue outlining the Medicine Hat constituency and the parts of the city in Cypress-Medicine Hat outlined in orange. Being that I'm presenting on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party of Medicine Hat, I thought that would be appropriate. But I retired some years ago, and my blue highlighter dried up, and I didn't think pink and orange would be appropriate, so I didn't outline your map with a highlighter.

As you open up that map, if you follow along the Trans-Canada highway from Calgary and heading east-southeast along the Trans-Canada highway from the northwest corner down to the southeast corner, everything, I'm going to say, on the eastern side of the highway is Medicine Hat until you get down to Carry Drive, which is just beside the Medicine Hat Mall. Medicine Hall Mall is in 9H on that map. Okay? Anything that is south and east of that is referred to basically as Ross Glen and Rossmere. It was owned by a family called Ross, and they sold it to the developer on condition that he name everything Ross, so every street in that area is Ross. It's Rossmere, Rossland, Ross something or other. All of that Ross farm development is in the Cypress-Medicine Hat constituency.

Then when you come to the south side of the highway, you will

see that South Ridge Community Park is the biggest thing there. Everything that is on that side of the highway is also in Cypress-Medicine Hat. That's called South Ridge. You see the heights all along there: South Vista Heights, Saamis Heights. Now, there's still a lot of development to be done in that area. The streets that are there aren't filled up yet; there's still development to take place. Even though the streets are there, there's housing yet to be developed in those areas.

The area that is in beige – I don't know if I'm using the right term; it's kind of a funny yellow.

Mr. Dobbie: Pumpkin.

Mr. Riley: Pumpkin? Thank you.

In that area they haven't even put the streets in yet, but it's slated to get streets later on. The fact that there are streets in that South Ridge area doesn't indicate that all the houses have yet been built that are anticipated to be built there. Does that help?

Mr. Dobbie: Yeah. That's exactly what I needed. Thank you very much.

Second quick question. In the top left corner, Box Springs Business Park: is the whole area a business park in the top left corner of the map?

Mr. Riley: It is so far. That's not to say that they won't develop residential property around it later on. Originally the only thing that was there was the Costco plant, but now I've noticed that there's a mini-mall that's kind of in the same general area but not part of the Costco plant. It has a mattress shop, and I don't know what else is there. I don't shop there, but I drove by it and saw that there are five or six other businesses opening up. In North East Crescent Heights, I might point out, where it says the Ranchlands area, there is development along 20th Street and Parkview Drive. That's where they've just opened the Co-op shopping centre, and that has a number of businesses in it. They've built a bunch of . . .

Mr. Dobbie: Again, sir, I . . .

Mr. Riley: I'm sorry. I'm just going on.

Mr. Dobbie: I was just trying to get a sense of whether that was going to be residential or not.

One final question if I could. You have been very cautious in not speaking for other areas, but we're trying to develop some principles around the issue of determining boundaries, and I'm wondering if you've given any thought to the special constituencies that we're allowed to create, up to four, by legislation. Currently there is one special constituency within the province. Do you have any recommendations for us as to any number of those special constituencies?

7:45

Mr. Riley: Well, I presume the one you're making reference to currently would be the Northland area, I'm sure. I know it as the Northland school division, and it takes in roughly a quarter of the province, the northeast corner, basically. That one school district covers everything in the northeast quadrant of the province with the exception of the Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo constituency. That is an area that clearly would have to continue to be represented there.

Now, if you were to go the direction, and I want to be very clear that we do not advocate that, of having two 'rurban' constituencies in Medicine Hat, the remaining Cypress – the population, once you get outside of what I would call the Medicine Hat metropolitan area, is declining. The Cypress population would I think warrant special

status if you were to go that way because there has been a declining population in Foremost, in Schuler, in Oyen, and in Empress. Empress is part of – I don't think Oyen is – the Cypress-Medicine Hat constituency. I think Oyen and New Brigden are part of the Drumheller-Stettler constituency. You know, I've represented those areas, and I've seen the closure of schools in those areas, specifically Hilda, Schuler, Foremost, and Bassano. Those areas are in the Cypress-Medicine Hat constituency, and they are experiencing population decline, but I believe the population growth in the metropolitan area outside of the city of Medicine Hat more than makes up for that great declining population.

If you were to create two 'rurbans' and then leave the remainder of rural Alberta, the Cypress-Medicine Hat constituency would have to grow substantively geographically and still wouldn't have trouble. Even if you went all the way up to the Oyen and New Brigden areas, include that, you know, and take that away from Drumheller, for example, you still wouldn't have a population big enough. Now, I'm speaking from my own mental knowledge of the geography of the area because I've driven those highways to represent those schools, and I've seen half a dozen schools in that area close, sir. So that would be a problem that you would face.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you.

Mr. Riley: I hope that's sufficient to your answer. The northern areas and then southeast Alberta would be three of the four areas you would have to give consideration to.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you.

The Chair: Allyson.

Ms Jeffs: Thank you very much, sir. Just briefly. Actually, you've made a couple of comments about 'rurban' ridings, and I'm interested in that. I wanted to sort of follow that up. You mentioned some logistical issues and also some issues that we could broadly look at, a community of interests that might be problematic if we went that route. Do you know if that's sort of a general feeling, or is that your view based on how you've seen that work in other constituencies where there's a divide like that?

Mr. Riley: In part, yes. As I say, my work within the ATA has exposed me to views of other areas that have gone this 'rurban' route. There have been general expressions of dissatisfaction. Now that I'm part of the School Boards Association, I've seen it both from the teachers and from the school board members, who have expressed doubt that they have been effectively represented in those situations.

It depends on the individual. I have to say that our current MLA from Cypress-Medicine Hat appears to have been able to successfully handle the transition. But I would point out that when it was first created, rural Medicine Hat was very unhappy with the prospect of having "someone from inside the city of Medicine Hat represent our interests." They were making reference to Dr. Taylor, who worked so hard to get his rural representation credentials in order that many people inside the city of Medicine Hat felt that he was ignoring them: "We're two-thirds of the population. What's the matter with him?" Of course, this is anecdotal information.

So it is a problem. We really, really find that would be the worst solution.

Ms Jeffs: So that's a worst-case scenario, in your view.

Mr. Riley: The people who have asked me to come here tonight would consider that the worst-case scenario, and the only way you could accomplish that is to include Redcliff in what I call the Medicine Hat-North constituency. They've been bounced around so much that you're really alienating a good number of people. I mean, they've been part of four or five different constituencies in the last 20 years. They were tied up with Brooks, and then they were tied up with Medicine Hat, and then they were tied up with Cypress, Bow Island. You know, they really have been bounced around.

It's hard enough in this day and age to have people have enough concern about who is their elected MLA and what constituency they're in without bouncing them from pillar to post and further alienating them. I think alienation is a major problem you want to try to avoid. I think people in our area have learned to live with the two constituencies that exist. I'm just speaking anecdotally now. I can't speak on behalf of the people in Cypress-Medicine Hat, but it is my observation that they have an MLA who comes from the rural area and they feel comfortable with him in the rural area and people in Medicine Hat have accepted that he has been an effective representation for them. I can only make that observation about him. He's not my MLA but, you know, general comments would suggest that's the case.

Ms Jeffs: All right. Thank you for that.

You've sort of suggested that you would like to see us leave the Medicine Hat boundaries pretty much where they are. I'm sorry; were you also looking at that in terms of Cypress-Medicine Hat, or were you going to look at us tweaking that a little bit? Did you have any thoughts on that?

Mr. Riley: My thoughts would be that if you left Medicine Hat alone, there would be no need to tweak because the population growth inside the city parts that belong to Cypress-Medicine Hat and in the metropolitan area around the city are sufficient to make their numbers work. I hope that's a clear enough and direct enough answer.

Ms Jeffs: All right. That's fine. Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you, Mr. Riley. That was very informative. We thank you for your time in preparing your submission and for all the questions you've responded to. So, again, thank you.

Mr. Riley: Thank you very much for having me. I will leave these two documents with your people at the back.

Today is World Teachers' Day, and I was a teacher. I have two sets of glasses because when I was standing at the front of the room, I couldn't get bifocals because when you're standing up and looking at the students who are sitting down, of course, you're reading through the short reading distance part, and I would get dizzy and faint. So I said: I'm going to stand up and read with these glasses. That's the way it is, and I apologize for it.

The Chair: Thank you.

Have we any further presenters?

Mrs. Sawchuk: We do not, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: All right. We will adjourn, then, and be off to Lethbridge.

[The hearing adjourned at 7:53 p.m.]

