



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

Judge Ernest J.M. Walter, Chairman

Dr. Keith Archer
Peter Dobbie, QC
Brian Evans, QC
Allyson Jeffs

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Patt Churchill, Councillor, Town of Innisfail
Judy Dahl, Mayor, and Warren Smith and Mary Jane Harper, Councillors, Town of Olds
Joe Lehane and Linda Yargeau, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake Progressive Conservative Constituency Association
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[Judge Walter in the chair]

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

As you are aware, the five of us have spent the last seven months reviewing the electoral boundaries of our province, and I can tell you that we've examined every square inch of the map. I know I speak for all of us when I say that the commission has found it both very interesting and challenging to weigh the concerns and relevant factors put before it during the preparation of the interim report. I'd like to note that we are very pleased with the large amount of public feedback we have received. We have read well over 470 written submissions and are looking forward to additional feedback during this hearing. Once we have considered this feedback, the commission will issue its final report by July of this year.

With that, I'm pleased to touch on a few of our findings and recommendations setting out the areas, boundaries, and names of the 87 electoral divisions we propose for Alberta together with our reasons for those proposals as outlined in the interim report, which hopefully you've had a chance to read. I can tell you that the foundation for our decisions has been effective representation for all Albertans. In undertaking its work, the commission has been guided by the requirements of the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, relevant decisions of the courts, advice received at the first round of public hearings, and written submissions as well as the latest census information available to us.

When I speak of the census information, the 2009 municipal census data for Alberta's cities shows that there has been a consistent pattern of growth since the 2001 census. Fifty-two per cent of Albertans currently reside in Edmonton and Calgary. Using the 2009 official population list, the total population being considered by the commission is 3,556,583. Given this pattern of growth this means the quotient, or provincial average population, has grown by 10,100 since the 1995-1996 commission and is now at 40,880. Essentially, the act directs the commission to divide the province into 87 electoral divisions with a population within 25 per cent of the provincial average in a way that will ensure effective representation for all Albertans.

Taking into account available population information and factors affecting effective representation, the majority of the commission concluded that the redistribution of the 87 divisions should allow for the following increases: Calgary by two additional divisions, bringing it to 25; Edmonton by one, bringing it to 19; and the rest of Alberta by one, providing it with 43 divisions. This, we felt, would ensure effective representation across the province.

Now, the commission is required by law to divide the existing Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo division. Its population is more than 88 per cent higher than the quotient, and the law prohibits the commission from recommending a division which has a population more than 25 per cent above the quotient.

How did we come to make the recommendations outlined in the interim report? In our effort to respect the requirements for effective representation as guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the primary principles and factors which have guided the commission are:

Population. The commission has attempted to limit the variation in average population per division. The average population per

electoral division from the quotient is from 4.3 per cent above in Calgary, .7 per cent in Edmonton, and minus 2.8 in the rest of Alberta.

Scarcity of population. The commission recognizes scarcity of population in the two proposed special divisions of Dunvegan-Central Peace and Lesser Slave Lake. Dunvegan-Central Peace meets all five of the criteria for a special division, and Lesser Slave Lake meets four of the five criteria.

Community interests. The commission has taken into consideration community interests of which we are aware.

Community boundaries. The commission has attempted, as requested by the municipalities, to respect community boundaries in Calgary, Edmonton, and other areas.

Municipal boundaries. The commission has made every attempt to respect municipal boundaries. This has not been possible in all cases, but the commission has attempted to reduce the fragmentation of municipal boundaries resulting from the existing divisions.

Geographical features. The commission has considered geographical features, including roads, which provide natural barriers between communities of interest.

Understandable and clear boundaries. The commission has attempted to recommend boundaries which are clear and easy to understand for the residents of the areas. In addition, the commission is using digital mapping technology to describe the boundaries rather than the extensive written legal descriptions previously used.

Distance and area. This is primarily an issue in the rest of Alberta. In recommending those boundaries, the commission has considered the area of the proposed electoral divisions and the travel distances involved both within the division and between the division and the Legislature. In addition, MLAs have to maintain relations with more than one school board, more than one municipal council, and several community and business organizations.

We have also considered inner-city urban issues. The commission acknowledges the submissions that inner-city urban ridings generally have their own challenges such as a large number of linguistic and cultural communities, a disproportionate number of people dependent on social programs, increasing numbers of new immigrants and aboriginal people, and other urban issues.

The commission has also recognized that while MLAs in Calgary and Edmonton may only have one council to deal with and two school authorities, maintaining relations with a number of community leagues or associations, business revitalization zones, and other identifiable organizations places demands on the time of a city MLA.

7:10

Now that I have reviewed our recommendations, we want to hear your views. We believe that what we hear from you, the people 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. I will now call on our staff to call the first speaker. Each speaker will have 10 minutes to present and then 10 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 to the commission website; transcripts of these proceedings will also be available online.

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.

Melanie.

Ms Friesacher: Our first presenter is Mr. Marlin Styner with the Red Deer-South Progressive Conservative Constituency Association.

The Chair: Mr. Styner, welcome. For the record would you identify yourself for *Hansard*.

**Marlin Styner, Red Deer-South
Progressive Conservative Constituency Association**

Mr. Styner: My name is Marlin Styner. I am a director on the Red Deer-South provincial Progressive Conservative association board. My assistant here is my wife, Diane Gramlich. She is also a member of the board. We are accompanied by other members of the board that are here in the room as well.

Your Honour, panel members, thank you very much for the opportunity to present to you today. Our board received your report with great interest, and we do have some thoughts about the report. First of all, thank you for your time and energy in this task. I can imagine that it has been a daunting task and one that you will probably receive few thanks for, but I thank you for your efforts and your time.

The Chair: Let me just tell you this. We were certainly looking at the sky in Calgary a couple of hours ago to make sure we could get our plane here tonight.

Please proceed.

Mr. Styner: Thank you. On the Electoral Boundaries Commission website, as you have already stated, there are some considerations that you were following to make your recommendations, and I will address some of those with regard to some issues that the Red Deer-South position takes.

The consideration of common community interests and community organizations. The proposed hiving off of the south portion of the electoral boundary for Red Deer-South along 30th Avenue through Avery Street and Allan Street to 40th Avenue through Molly Bannister Drive to Gaetz Avenue will take a portion of the city away from the Red Deer-South constituency. That will park it with the Innisfail-Red Deer proposed constituency where the folks in that area will have little or nothing in common with the people in the rural segment of that Innisfail-Red Deer constituency. It's a constituency that would encompass a two-hour plus drive from one end to the other. I appreciate that Dunvegan-Central Peace and Lesser Slave Lake have those distances to deal with, but that's not something that rural folks from a community the size of Red Deer are familiar with, and it would be a daunting task, I believe, for them to deal with.

The differences between rural and urban issues are quite vast. This is a strictly urban issue with very little to do with rural, as some other smaller urban centres will have more in common with rural issues.

The line through Anders that cuts through Allan Street and Avery is also separating a number of key issues. The 32nd Street barrier or the Delburne Road barrier, which is highway 595, is the natural city boundary. By moving the boundary north to Allan Street and Avery, you would be separating the Anders Inglewood Community Association, which is a fledgling community association that is just getting up and running over the last year, and I think that this boundary may have a drastic effect on that association.

The other factor that I identified immediately when looking at this area is that there are three major seniors' complexes in that area. These are folks that would have a difficult time, I believe, understanding and processing the fact that they are no longer citizens of a constituency that is strictly Red Deer. I believe they would have much difficulty in this decision.

On the point of geographic features, including existing roadways and systems, a very good feature that I think somehow got missed in this – and I understand that you're taking all criteria into consideration. However, the highway 595 barrier is a much more natural barrier to the Red Deer-South south border. The Molly Bannister Drive boundary that is being proposed is a roadway that really does not exist. In fact, I've talked with a number of city council members, and they inform me that if the makeup of council doesn't change dramatically, it will not exist. That road you were using for a boundary does not exist now and may never exist.

Using the existing city boundaries as they are I believe makes much more sense in terms of an understandable and clear boundary for Red Deer-South constituency. If there are adjustments to be made to satisfy the population ranges that are required in the electoral boundaries changes, we would much rather see the divisions being adjusted on the border between Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South.

In fact, the proposal that was put forward by MLAs Mary Anne Jablonski and Cal Dallas offers an alternative proposal which does just that, which adjusts the border between Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South to include Eastview and Eastview Estates and moves them from Red Deer-South to Red Deer-North. This would satisfy the population requirements of the proposal. It would also satisfy the fact of keeping the existing city municipal boundaries intact.

This proposal also makes more sense for the future in that we foresee Red Deer growing substantially between now and the next electoral commission change, at which point three constituencies would be warranted for the city. If we change the boundaries of both constituencies now to eliminate the city natural boundaries as the natural border of the two constituencies, it would make much less sense to make three constituencies out of the city at that time.

Also, the other point that I believe may be missing here – and I'm not sure; I could be wrong. The city has recently annexed some land to the west of highway 2, and that is something that may not be considered in the proposal. I'm not certain, but it's something that should be looked at.

This concludes my remarks. I did not bring a copy of the alternate proposal by MLAs Mary Anne Jablonski and Cal Dallas. I believe you do have copies of that as it was submitted as a written proposal.

The Chair: All right. Thank you very much.

7:20

Dr. Archer: Well, thanks, Mr. Styner. I appreciate your presentation tonight. As you can appreciate, the commission wrestled with this issue quite a bit. The city of Red Deer didn't divide easily into the electoral quotient that we were using. Really, the issue came down to one of ensuring the ridings were not changed very much from the status quo and having average populations considerably higher than the average in the province or trying to bring them more in line with the provincial average. Given the fact that the population data that we were working with had Red Deer just over 90,000, there were about 10,000 people above the quotient for two constituencies. Then the question for us was: if we want to keep the constituencies close to quotient, we need to identify some part of the city that's going to be coupled with an outlying area. We opted for the south.

What I take your comment to be is to suggest that for the time being live with that level of inequality, have the two ridings somewhere around 10 to 15 per cent above the provincial average, and then see how things look in the next round of boundary commissions. If at that time the numbers stack up differently, if it looks as though you're able to create either three wholly urban ridings or the

other possibility is, you know, that seven or eight years from now we may have a situation that's halfway between where we are right now and where we probably want to be – that is to say, relatively equal constituency sizes and maybe the third one will be 20,000 people that need to be mixed with some rural area – that that would be the possible solution.

I take it that that's your recommendation, that we let things stand as they are at the moment, rather than the proposal from the interim report, and live with that higher degree of constituency inequality.

Mr. Styner: That would be our recommendation, with, as you have identified, things changing in the future. There are a number of proposals on the books that are being planned for Red Deer and the Red Deer county area. Chief among them would be an area in Gasoline Alley, just south of Red Deer, behind where the Costco sits and south of that area, between highways 2 and 2A, that would hold up to 8,000 residents. Once that comes on stream, along with the expansion to the west of highway 2 in the city of Red Deer, the new annexed area, plus areas being proposed for and on the books for south and east and north and east, we believe that in the time between now and the next commission review the city of Red Deer would warrant three constituencies within the boundaries.

Dr. Archer: Yeah. Thanks. I don't have any further questions.

Mr. Dobbie: Thanks again, Mr. Styner. A comment first and then I'd like some feedback, if you can, on adjacent ridings. Certainly, the submissions we've received so far with respect to Red Deer have been consistent after our interim report in that all of them recommend two wholly Red Deer ridings. It is very helpful for us to go through this two-step process.

To help you understand where we were coming from, it sort of depends where you start to try to build the ridings. It does strike me now that one of the results of the approach we took was that we underweighted the need for understandable and clear boundaries to the extent that continuation of existing boundaries is an important component there. So it's very helpful to us that we're getting a clear message from the third-largest city in the province that they essentially are adopting the same position that we heard directly from Edmonton and Calgary, which is: our issues in this municipality are large enough; we should stay wholly within our municipality and work around it. Just so you're clear, I think there's a lot of merit to all of the presentations that we've received from Red Deer. Thanks for your clarification on it tonight.

My question relates to discussions you may have had with people in the adjoining constituencies. If we make the change and we don't have the 10,000 people to move from Red Deer, have you got any suggestions for us in relation to the constituencies adjoining Red Deer? Have you had those discussions?

Mr. Styner: I haven't had the discussions with other members of constituency associations in the adjoining areas. However, I can tell you that the natural trading areas and the natural movement of goods and people from within Red Deer to the outlying areas does not go south to Drumheller. It more often goes west to the Sylvan-Rocky area and east to the Delburne area and north to Lacombe. That would be a more natural area, a much more immediate area, than so far south.

If I could, I'd also like to comment on your comment about Edmonton and Calgary providing similar feedback to what you're hearing in Red Deer. It's nice to hear that they're thinking along the lines that Red Deer is. Oftentimes the voice from Red Deer gets drowned out by the two vortexes from the other sides of the province.

The Chair: Well, we could suggest to them that they're copying Red Deer.

Mr. Styner: Yes. That would be our suggestion as well.

The Chair: Thank you.
Allyson.

Ms Jeffs: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much for coming tonight. I'm just going to follow up a little bit on the same theme as Keith and Peter. With respect to Red Deer remaining as two urban constituencies in this go-around, with the growth numbers that you're suggesting, there will be an inequality of representation. You will be getting very high to that 25 per cent. I don't know if the projections would take it over or not; I don't have the numbers in front of me. Is that preferable to losing some of the population and having a hybrid riding, even if those numbers get very, very – you know, commissions hear that, too. Either we or the next one will hear about the inequality of representation with respect to that urban riding. Are you fairly confident that's a widespread view, that it would be better to keep the city together as they do in Edmonton and Calgary?

Mr. Styner: I'm very confident that would be a widespread view within the city. Both Members of the Legislative Assembly from Red Deer, Cal Dallas and Mary Anne Jablonski, have already submitted their proposal in favour of keeping the boundary as it is and using that representation even though it is higher than the average. The prevailing thought of residents within the area that's proposed to be moved into the Innisfail-Red Deer constituency I would think would be very much in favour of leaving the city boundary intact.

One other thing that I would also add to the discussion, knowing and working with both Cal Dallas and Mary Anne Jablonski, is that the city of Red Deer is unique in that we have two very good MLAs and we have two MLAs that work very well together. They both view Red Deer as home, and if need be, the two will use the line bordering Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South as a fuzzy line. So we do have very strong representation in this city from both MLAs.

Ms Jeffs: Just one other question. You mentioned an annexation occurring west of highway 2. Has that been mapped out? Is that boundary clear? I'm wondering, maybe, if we are doing some readjustment in this area, whether we should have that information. Is that available from the city?

Mr. Styner: I believe it should be. My information is that that was done near the end of last year.

Ms Jeffs: Oh, okay. The land has already been annexed.

Mr. Styner: I guess it has.

Ms Jeffs: So it may already be reflected in what we have as a boundary for Red Deer, then. We'll look into that as well.

Mr. Dobbie: In Red Deer-North it crosses highway 2. At the very top end of Red Deer-North, it does. Just under 11A it does cross.

Mr. Styner: Oh, okay. From 11A to 67th Street. So it is reflected.

Ms Jeffs: It is reflected?

7:30

Mr. Styner: It appears to be on the map.

Ms Jeffs: All right. Thank you for that. So it is reflected.

Mr. Styner: Looking at the map that was provided, it appears to be although highway 2 isn't mapped out that far north.

Ms Jeffs: All right. Thank you very much again.
Those are my only questions, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Brian.

Mr. Evans: Thanks, Mr. Chairman, and thanks very much, Mr. Styner, for your presentation. If we do stay with the two strictly urban Red Deer ridings, would it be your suggestion that we leave the boundaries the same as they are now? Is there any other alignment that you and the associations have considered that you would like to put in front of us?

Mr. Styner: The proposal that was submitted in written form by Mary Anne Jablonski and Cal Dallas offers an alternate solution that moves Eastview and Eastview Estates, which are polling stations 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 53, 54, 55, and 56 from Red Deer-South to Red Deer-North, and that would bring more in line the population requirements of both constituencies.

Mr. Evans: Okay. That's great. I just have a summary of their presentation; I didn't have the whole thing in front of me. That's the only question I have. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. and Mrs. Styner. We'll certainly take a good look at what you're saying here.

Mr. Styner: Thank you, Your Honour, and just for the record it's Ms Gramlich; I kept my name when we got married.

Ms Friesacher: Our next presenters are Mayor Judy Dahl of the town of Olds; Warren Smith, councillor; and Mary Jane Harper, councillor.

The Chair: Could we make sure there are chairs there for everybody?

**Judy Dahl, Mayor,
Warren Smith and Mary Jane Harper, Councillors
Town of Olds**

Ms Dahl: Good evening and thank you for this opportunity. I'm Mayor Judy Dahl, town of Olds, and we have Councillor Warren Smith next to me here, and we have Councillor Mary Jane Harper this evening as well. We did a submission previously to you. Not a lot of huge concerns for our area. The major concern that I will speak on and then my colleagues will add to is basically the potential of highway 2A as a boundary, that divides the town of Olds into two ridings and places our major employer of our area, Olds College, into Red Deer-Innisfail, a different municipality from where most of the employees live; i.e., Rocky Mountain House-Olds.

Our municipality is the home of the Olds College, and the proposed changes go against the historical perspective of what has transpired collaboratively between Olds College and the town of Olds going way back in history to a point where the town of Olds has actually annexed land in from the Olds College. We've come a long way as partners with them. Of course, with the new community

learning campus now housing Chinook's Edge school division, the Olds high school, they would be affected too, so the institution and the schools would be affected. Again, my biggest concern is partnerships, and the Olds College is a great partnership with us.

Our regional partners, involving the Mountain View county and other municipalities, have proven us well, and with the MLAs that we have onboard today, it does seem to make it quite easy to work with in the area we're at today. I wanted to start with that. We recognize the magnitude of the task you have, and we certainly respect the guiding principles for your recommendations and what you have to work with.

I will go ahead and pass the microphone. We don't want to take up a lot of your time but just make some points here. I'll move on now to Councillor Mary Jane Harper.

Ms Harper: Good evening. I am going to be addressing our trading area, which your proposed electoral boundary, to create the Rocky Mountain House-Olds electoral division, ignores. Olds is a major trading area for our citizens and our rural citizens both east and west of the town of Olds. We are a major hub not only for shopping, but we are the hub for the recreational opportunities for our children as well as, once again, as Mayor Dahl talked about, our schools. We are part of the Chinook's Edge school division. Your boundaries seem to ignore those type of historical principles that our community is part of.

We also are looking at the fact that citizens are travelling great distances from east of the town of Olds to do their trading in Olds. Their children go to school in Olds, and of course Olds is the major centre for the recreational opportunities. We would be looking at the fact that those citizens would be having to go elsewhere to different MLAs when, in fact, they would be coming to Olds for all those other things.

Once again, highway 2A just does not make sense. We would look to having your committee look to the boundaries of Mountain View county as a suggestion.

I'll turn it over to Warren to talk about our regional partnerships that also may be affected as part of these proposed changes.

Mr. Smith: Thank you. Good evening all. I appreciate the opportunity to provide some input into this process. I understand this is, indeed, a process, that you're listening and taking notes, and that's a good thing because what you're doing is not easy.

When you look at the proposed Rocky Mountain House-Olds constituency, you see it go from Olds on the extreme one side all the way to Saskatchewan River Crossing on the other side. One of the greatest challenges we have with that is that as a community with a population of 8,000 and growing as a college town and as a service centre, we have developed municipal area partnerships around us within Mountain View county, including Didsbury and Carstairs and Cremona and Sundre. We worked hard on these partnerships.

What, effectively, we do as partners in municipalities is that we often confer with our MLAs, and it is problematic when, in the course of making our synergies and our efficiencies as communities and working collaboratively with the provincial government, we're dealing with a number of different MLAs. We have to go further afield, shall we say. Instead of having to meet with one or two, we have to meet with three and four according to the current electoral boundaries.

I guess our submission is that the proposal that we have seen does not serve us well. In fact, it complicates and entangles the lives of the citizens of Olds and district, and that is our objection. I would add a point later on that relates to perhaps another suggestion.

I guess, Mary Jane, you're going to work on point 5.

Ms Harper: Once again I'm talking about commonalities. The citizens of Rocky Mountain House, Caroline, Nordegg, and Saskatchewan River Crossing do not have the same interests as the citizens of Olds and district. Olds is an agricultural community with oil and gas activities, but we're also a college town. While we really like all those other communities to the north, we really don't have anything in common with them. If you established these proposed boundaries, you would be forcing an MLA to do a great deal of travelling, almost to the point where the communities would be competing against each other for different interests. So that's why we're urging that you take a serious look at that north boundary that you're proposing by adding Olds and Rocky Mountain House together.

7:40

Ms Dahl: I know our time is short here, but briefly I would like to note, though, that the Municipal Affairs minister's mandate to promote sustainability by strengthening regional co-operation, municipal viability, and community accountability is very strong right now in our region. We certainly want to keep that aligned with the Municipal Affairs minister's mandate, and we believe we are.

So for our final point Councillor Warren Smith will add just a brief talk about the possibility of additional MLAs.

Mr. Smith: Well, actually, I'm going to leave that point alone. I'm going to speak to this point. I'd like to suggest that greater weighting be given to distance over population. I submit to you that an MLA serving 40,000 persons in a city, where they can stand on a tall building and see them all, so to speak, has maybe fewer challenges than an MLA such as one of those sitting behind me who serves 40,000 people in a rural riding. They have to make all that travel and do all that business that goes with going to a number of municipalities with different characteristics in each one. So I guess when we look at the proposal, we very clearly see it as so much more problematic than the status quo.

The Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills riding generally serves us very well, and it meets the needs of the people that relate to Olds and district. I think that's an important part of what we must do in allowing people to have access to their MLA and allowing an MLA to have access to his people. So that's the final point that I would make today.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.
Brian.

Mr. Evans: Thanks, Chairman, and thank you all for your presentations. I think they're very clear and understandable. Can you give us an idea of how well the current Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills riding aligns with Mountain View county? Are they fairly similar in size?

Mr. Smith: Yes, although our riding excludes Sundre, which is part of Mountain View county. I believe that highway 22 was used as a boundary on the previous occasion. In a more perfect world I think you'd find that all of Mountain View county would be within our riding. Of course, our riding includes Trochu and Three Hills and that east country, who have a very natural connection to Olds on highway 27.

Mr. Evans: So if we were to agree to an alignment of Mountain View county, any idea what the population would be?

Ms Dahl: It would be between 40,000 and 60,000, my guess would be.

It's interesting because the town of Sundre is a regional partner with us, and we do work well with that partnership. However, they are not within our boundaries. They have been in the past, and it was a big issue when they were taken out. They're just getting used to it and are still working with us, though, as a partner. So I'm guessing, Councillor Smith, between about 40,000 and 60,000?

Mr. Smith: No. Mountain View county is around 12,000 to 13,000, I believe. We're looking at about probably 27,000 within the confines of Mountain View county. If you add, then, the east country, that is also a part of our riding, which is Trochu, Three Hills, and points in between, you would be, I would guess, in the range of 30,000.

Mr. Evans: Okay. So you appreciate that we're trying to get as close to the quotient as possible. We don't expect you to come up with a magic formula tonight, but if you could spend some more time thinking about what might be a natural addition to get closer to that quotient with your east country and with Mountain View county.

Just one other point. I believe that MLA Ty Lund was talking about an alignment that would see Sundre as part of Rocky Mountain House. Would that population, then, have to come out of the 30,000 that you've made your calculation on because it is part of Mountain View county?

Mr. Smith: Yes, it would.

Mr. Evans: And Sundre is about 4,000?

Mr. Smith: I would say right around 3,000.

Mr. Evans: Three thousand? Okay.

Mr. Smith: The rural has already been accounted for.

I mean, Sundre has a very natural connection to the Olds area, you know, highway 27 east-west. If I were looking at a more perfect world, I would say: go from the current boundaries of Mountain View county, and proceed west as far as you can. You would therefore have a very logical connection, and then that would give shorter shrift, fewer numbers to the north to what is currently Clearwater, which would be Rocky Mountain House. But that's another challenge. I think that if you're looking at natural trading areas and you're looking at natural alignments from the Red Deer River on the east all the way to the mountains on the west, it is very logical.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Well, thank you very much. Those are all of my questions. I appreciate your time.

The Chair: Allyson.

Ms Jeffs: Yes. Thank you. I'm going to continue a little bit with this theme. You were just suggesting Mountain View county and moving west as far as you can, and that would not include, I guess, Trochu and Three Hills in a riding of that configuration. Am I correct?

Mr. Smith: No. I was suggesting we leave that bit alone, which goes beyond the Mountain View county boundary, but also to go west in a natural flow, which is currently part of Clearwater, and then I think Bighorn is the other part, where kind of fingers of it come up and jut in on the west side.

Ms Jeffs: Okay. So the area of Trochu to Three Hills, which is now part of the current riding, would not be included in that. You'd be shifting it.

Mr. Smith: No. I would include them.

Ms Jeffs: Oh, you would still include them. Are they in Mountain View county?

Mr. Smith: No, they're not. I cannot speak for them and what their preferences would be, but that's the current riding that we have. It goes beyond the boundaries of Mountain View county, but it doesn't include all of Mountain View county.

Ms Jeffs: I actually lived in Olds when I first moved to Alberta, but it has been a while.

I guess one of the challenges we are having is trying to weigh the issue of distance, which you raised, and configure a riding, you know, in predominantly not an urban area, which still respects concerns that we've heard with respect to keeping ridings as close to the average, the quotient, in the province as we can. I think that was one of the considerations here. So if we can look at an alternative configuration that respects those kinds of community connections. My concern is that if we go too far west, we're going to have some problems on the western edge of the province, but that may be something for us to look at.

Mr. Smith: Yeah. Really, there are very few folks that live beyond Sundre.

Ms Jeffs: That's right.

Mr. Smith: Really, once you go into the hills beyond Sundre, there's just a scattering of population. I mean, it still has to be somebody's constituency.

Ms Jeffs: Yeah. It's a lot of territory out there.

Mr. Smith: I'm suggesting that we go from the Red Deer River on the east all the way west to the Rocky Mountains and have relatively, I guess, almost a squarish design, a rectangular design, to a riding. That would be fairly reasonable and logical.

Ms Jeffs: That would still be a fair distance, it seems to me, to travel.

Mr. Smith: Compared to what we're looking at on the screen, it would be quite simple.

Ms Jeffs: All right. Those are all the questions I have. Thank you, again, all of you for coming out this evening.

The Chair: Peter.

Mr. Dobbie: Thanks, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, mayor and councillors, for the input. I believe you were present when I responded to Mr. Styner's presentation. It's clear tonight so far that we're hearing a request for a significant change from Red Deer and some direction from you that there are significant changes that would work better for you in your constituency. You recognize that there's a cascading effect when we do that.

It appears from the submissions that we were being given an opportunity throughout central Alberta to do it over because, frankly,

almost every constituency has suggestions. The good news from tonight is that the changes that you are proposing may certainly dovetail with all of the changes that are being recommended in the adjacent constituencies.

7:50

In a perfect world this would be easy. It's not a perfect world. Just so I'm clear, in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills the north-south relationship or as much of the old riding is the priority. That's the natural, current working relationship. That's what you've invested time and energy and money in building.

Ms Dahl: And partnerships.

Mr. Dobbie: And partnerships. So that's something that is clear and understandable to members of the existing constituency. We take that very seriously.

Is there any part of the existing constituency that would naturally fit with either the constituency to the north or to the south if we were going to have to make changes? I don't need an answer on that tonight, but because you made a presentation, we are able to take additional feedback from you and consider it as part of your presentation if we get it within the next two weeks. We've seen some proposals for a drawing of the constituency. It's difficult for us to easily translate the words, so if you have a proposed electoral boundary that also contemplates changes to the adjacent ones, I would strongly encourage you to submit it. We have heard you, but in terms of the priorities it's the partnerships we've talked about, it's the trading patterns, and to get this thing with Olds College fixed no matter what.

Ms Dahl: Yes. Absolutely. It's historical. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Dobbie: Okay. Thank you.

Dr. Archer: Well, I don't think I have much new to add to the questions that have been posed. Here's how I understand your input. The first point, that the town of Olds was split in the interim report, is something that I don't think was intended on our part. You know, once you decide to go down a certain highway – we went down 2A, and that cut off part of Olds College. That's, I think, an easy fix. Thanks for raising that.

The other one is a bit more challenging. Quite frankly, the growth pattern that we all recognized as we sat down to draft the boundaries for the interim report was that the growth is much stronger along the highway 2 corridor than it is in the outlying areas. That confronts us with the challenge of either making the constituencies relatively small the farther you get from highway 2, small populationwise, very large geographically, or extending some of the constituencies farther east. That's what happened with Rocky Mountain House, which I think at present goes to Sundre, and it was pulled east to include Olds.

Again, I think the rationale is pretty clear, from our perspective, to try to address the population challenges. If you don't pull constituencies eastward into the more densely populated areas, it means that you're pushing the constituencies to such a large geographical size if you just push them northwards. West Yellowhead, of course, is the constituency that abuts Rocky Mountain House-Olds in our proposal, and you're just not going to make up much population there unless you draw the lines extending out a long way. So that was the challenge that we confronted.

I don't have the population figures for Olds in front of me. Do you have it?

Mr. Smith: Right around 8,000.

Dr. Archer: About 8,000.

Ms Dahl: Well, 8,000 without the college students.

Dr. Archer: Yeah. To find 8,000 people by going north into West Yellowhead is going to be a real challenge for us. I suspect this will be an issue that we're going to have to wrestle with a bit following the input that we've received. Again, the challenge that any Electoral Boundaries Commission is going to face is that our growth patterns tend to be concentrated along that corridor where you find yourselves. I fully appreciate your point, which is that that's where most of your relationships are, right along that corridor. Your interest, obviously, is to try to build upon those and reinforce those.

Mr. Smith: Mr. Chairman, may I respond to Dr. Archer?

The Chair: You sure can.

Mr. Smith: I think, Dr. Archer, you would find that most Albertans would be quite comfortable with the concept of accepting the fact that a more remote constituency will have much less population. I mean, that's a known factor because of the distance challenges. That has basically been our history in Alberta, you know, that the fringe areas have had lesser populations but greater distance, and I think that's a fair trade-off. I think you'll find that Albertans are comfortable with that. Locking into populations is not necessarily the way to go when you're looking beyond that Westlock to High River zone of growth. So just a point. I know you're aware of it, but I think we're comfortable with that.

Dr. Archer: If I could make a quick response to that. Not everyone has shared that view with us. As you can imagine, we've heard just the opposite from some Albertans. Again, part of our job is to listen to people's perspectives and try to weigh the various challenges and find a way as much as possible to accommodate the diverse interests that exist within the province.

To take 8,000 people out of the constituency of Rocky Mountain House, again, takes it so close to the maximum possible deviation – that would put it almost at 25 per cent below – that it's a real challenge. I just wanted to reiterate that we've heard both sides of the argument.

The Chair: Well, thank you all very much. It's been very helpful. If you would be so kind as to give us that further information within the next couple of weeks, we'd really appreciate that.

Thank you all.

Ms Friesacher: The next presenter is Mayor Cody Berggren of the town of Bowden.

Mr. Berggren: Good evening.

The Chair: Good evening, Mr. Mayor.

Mr. Berggren: First, I just want to thank the commission for hearing our submission from the town of Bowden on the proposed electoral boundaries.

The Chair: Could I just for the purpose of *Hansard* get you to identify yourself on the record?

Mr. Berggren: Sure. Mayor Cody Berggren from the town of Bowden.

The Chair: Thank you. Go ahead.

**Cody Berggren, Mayor
Town of Bowden**

Mr. Berggren: Okay. Being just north of the town of Olds, a lot of the things I'm going to express are very similar to what the town of Olds expressed in their municipality. We belong to one of the urban municipalities of Red Deer county, which basically mirrors the current Innisfail-Sylvan Lake constituency. We act on a lot of regional initiatives together; we act almost like a regional municipality in a lot of areas.

By having one MLA represent our area on things that we take to the provincial table, whether that be water, waste water, regional transmission lines, seniors' housing, or even medical facilities, the town of Olds will now be in the new Innisfail-Red Deer riding. Being the closest urban to us with health services, any changes in health services provincially the people from Bowden would not be able to voice to that MLA. Well, I suppose they could, but their representative is from the Innisfail-Sylvan Lake riding. By having that solid area – I'll call it an almost homogeneous-type area – relationships have been built, and they're very strong. With a shakeup of this magnitude in, really, how the ridings are designed, on a more north-south fashion rather than an east-west, it would take years probably to get back to the relationship levels that we have now.

When the municipalities, particularly the urbans along the highway 2 corridor, originated, it was with the railway, so you have a very close spacing of the corridor. I'll say that every 10 miles or so was a rail crossing, and those became the towns. That built stronger trading relationships into the urbans going more on an east-west pattern than on a north-south although, being from the town of Bowden, we're a very small community, basically a bedroom community, so we do commute a lot, and we do go to Olds as well.

8:00

It's our wish that the riding remain very similar to the way it is right now. I'm not sure what the population figures are for that and what the deviance is from that, but we'd certainly like to see it remain the same. However, we do appreciate the difficult task you have at hand.

I want to point out a couple of other things. With this initial boundary we have annexed lands to the east side of highway 2. This boundary goes up highway 2A, then up 2, then on to 2A by Bowden, so the east side of our town would be in the other riding. If that boundary was to remain fairly similar, we'd like to at least have our town all included in one riding if that's at all possible.

I guess the other thing is that when you look on the maps – I like to refer to Bowden as a border town because it always seems that whether it's federal ridings or provincial ridings, we're always right on the border somewhere. We always seem to get juggled around a little bit: you know, there's a thousand or so population; we'll just pick that off and throw it over here. We don't want to just be that extra thousand that gets thrown into that Rocky riding, if you get where I'm going with that. We do prefer to be in the existing riding or very similar to it if possible.

That's really all I have.

Dr. Archer: Well, we're getting a consistent theme, I think, in the presentations tonight. At the moment the constituency that you're

in has you aligned with Sylvan Lake. That's pretty close to the northern part of the constituency?

Mr. Berggren: That's correct.

Dr. Archer: Our proposal is going to expand that quite a bit farther north. I take it that your position is that Bowden doesn't have too much interaction with places like Rimbey or Bentley, for example, which would be in the constituency. I'm just looking at the constituency map I have. Those would be the two largest towns north of Sylvan Lake.

Mr. Berggren: We do have some interactions with those communities on some levels but more on regional initiatives and projects. They're really in a different area altogether as far as that goes.

Dr. Archer: Right. One of the things, the phrase that's been very important for us in our work, is to ensure that people have an opportunity for effective representation. How would you characterize the political interests of people in different parts of this proposed constituency? Again, let me take the example of Sylvan Lake and Rimbey and Bentley. Would you see those people as having substantially different interests that need to be reflected in their representation?

Mr. Berggren: I think we all have the same basic needs or wants out of a constituency, but when you're in the corridor, I guess it's a little different than being way out into the west country. As we all know, that's fairly sparsely populated, but it is a whole different area, I think, in a lot of different ways. You have more forestry and sustainable resources and those kinds of things in big-time effect out in that riding area as well.

I think the interests are different, for sure. In the corridor it's growing fast, and a lot of things that we have to do are regional initiatives, whether that's water or waste water. That's where everything is headed. That represents quite a bit different views, I think, or needs than somebody in the west country has. They're not worried about those types of things maybe. I mean, you still have your basic, I'll say, provincial needs that are the same, health services and education. I mean, those are all pretty similar. Those are provincial concerns, so they're all very similar, but I'd say that it's different, for sure.

Dr. Archer: Right. Okay. Thanks.

The Chair: Peter.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mayor. In summary, am I to understand that you're saying that the existing constituency works for your community?

Mr. Berggren: It works very well.

Mr. Dobbie: Again, certainly, we've seen in many of the submissions a theme of: if it's not broke, don't fix it. We're also hearing tonight some examples of the cost that your community might bear in making those changes. It's not simply an MLA travelling, but there are existing relationships among the municipalities that would be more difficult to manage.

Mr. Berggren: That's correct. I mean, you'd have to begin new relationships with maybe other municipalities within the constituency. That's not a bad thing necessarily, but these ones are built, and they're strong.

Mr. Dobbie: The challenge that a district like Innisfail-Sylvan Lake will face is for us to justify any material change from the provincial average. Certainly, we've heard that, you know, the remote ridings have to have consideration for the size of their constituency. You would be aware that we would need to make sure that the constituency remains as close to the provincial average as possible.

Mr. Berggren: I think that's the goal, right?

Mr. Dobbie: Again, in this constituency there's nothing that I'm aware of that would need to have us consider a material change from the provincial average. Is that a fair assessment as far as you're concerned?

Mr. Berggren: As they've proposed?

Mr. Dobbie: No. The existing riding.

Mr. Berggren: The existing? I think they're good, yeah.

Mr. Dobbie: All right. Again, if we're going to stick with the original or the existing riding, it's important that we have a principled basis for departing from the average. My view would be that this would be one where, if we can keep the existing constituency, we would want to make sure it stays as close to the average as possible.

Mr. Berggren: Sure.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you.

Mr. Berggren: Thanks.

The Chair: Allyson.

Ms Jeffs: Yes. Thank you. I don't think I have too many questions other than just to clarify. There is a portion of the town that is currently on the east side of highway 2 that has not been captured?

Mr. Berggren: That's correct, yeah.

Ms Jeffs: Okay. I think that's the easier request, to make sure that the town stays entirely in the same riding. Recognizing what you've said about the existing boundaries being your preference, just with the amount of change in this area that the riding is part of, that may prove difficult, but we'll take that under consideration. I don't have any other questions, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Brian.

Mr. Evans: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thanks, Mayor. Maybe just a question about how you would characterize the population in Bowden. Is it agricultural mostly with some oil and gas?

Mr. Berggren: It was primarily agriculture, but with, I guess, the taking down of the small-town grain elevators, we saw a real domino effect within the community. The two urbans closest to us are quite a bit larger than us and have more services, so we've turned into more of a bedroom community. People commute even to Calgary from Bowden but more so, I'll say, to Innisfail or Red Deer. They work at the Bowden Institution, places like that.

Mr. Evans: So much more of a small urban population base than a typically rural population.

Mr. Berggren: Right. Yes.

Mr. Evans: That may be helpful in just trying to align. We appreciate the various municipal partnerships that you have already, but having some idea about the demographics as well is helpful, so thank you for that. That's my only question.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. It's most helpful.

Mr. Berggren: Okay. Thank you very much.

Ms Friesacher: The next presenter is the Hon. Luke Ouellete, MLA for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. Ouellette: Joe and Linda may as well come up because they're from the constituency association.

8:10

The Chair: By all means.

Mr. Ouellette: They're right after I am, so we may as well just put the two together. How is that?

Are we waiting for Brian?

The Chair: I think we'd better for one second here. In the meantime, have a seat.

**Luke Ouellette, MLA
Innisfail-Sylvan Lake**

**Joe Lehane and Linda Yargeau, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake
Progressive Conservative Constituency Association**

Mr. Ouellette: Well, Your Honour Judge Walters and the rest of the commission, good evening. Thank you very much for allowing me to speak here tonight. I know that your task of drawing these boundary lines is incredibly important. In particular, I am concerned about how our current constituency of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake seems to have been completely demolished. I understand that those of you on the commission do not have a very easy task ahead of you. What is important is that the boundary lines contribute to proper representation of all constituents. I recently wrote a letter to His Honour Judge Ernest Walter expressing my concerns, and I will cover many of those points tonight as I go through my presentation.

As the MLA for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake since 2001 I must say that it has been my personal, first-hand experience that the current boundary lines make sense and are working not from just my perspective as MLA but for the communities that are in the riding. I strongly oppose the changes that have been proposed for the area in the interim report. I know that the commission is mandated to take a number of items into consideration when reviewing these boundaries. After reviewing the guidelines myself and taking a critical look at my constituency, I believe that the current boundaries of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake are already consistent with these guidelines.

Furthermore, I believe the boundary changes that have been proposed would go against the guidelines rather than strengthen them. One of the guidelines is sparsity and density of population. The provincial quotient is 40,880. The current division of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake is 40,015. The proposed divisions for the revised boundaries are 41,409 and 40,964. In all cases the population is within that provincial quotient, so the proposed changes don't really affect that sparsity or density.

The mandate also states that common community interest and community organizations should be considered. The current

boundary not only accurately and effectively takes these community organizations into account; it also reflects the trading patterns of our area. As it stands, there's only one county within this electoral division, and I'm sure that you all understand this is certainly a desirable quality. It allows an MLA to better represent their constituents. We seem to take that into consideration in the urban areas. Why wouldn't that also be taken into consideration in the rural areas?

Under the proposed boundary lines not only would there be more than one county to deal with in Innisfail-Red Deer, but it would also create a situation where the same division has both rural and urban areas. While it is possible to represent everyone in this situation, it's not ideal, so I would say: why would we want to create a less than ideal situation if we don't have to? This scenario may also require creating additional constituency offices.

Many of my points that I've mentioned were also described in the letter I submitted. Again, I appreciate that this is not an easy job you've been tasked with. However, I don't see any benefits to making these changes. In my opinion, the proposed changes only create more challenges, so I urge you to not make the changes described in the interim report as your final decisions.

I would recommend keeping the majority of the existing boundary of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake intact with some exemptions. We could transfer a western portion of the current Innisfail-Sylvan Lake boundary to the constituency of Rocky Mountain House, as MLA Ty Lund described in his written submission. We could also take back the portion of the county that is currently in Red Deer-North as it was in Innisfail-Sylvan Lake before the last boundary changes. I've encouraged my constituents, including business owners, elected municipal officials, and community members who have expressed concern to me, to also provide their comments to you directly. I do know that the town council of Sylvan Lake is in favour of your new boundaries, but I've not heard from anyone else in the area that has said it that way other than the town council themselves.

I also have one more option for you to consider. Someone who knows a bit about demographics played around with maps a bit on a computer. I think they've already sent them to you, but I delivered a bunch more to you tonight. When they redrafted the maps, they found that by adding two divisions in Calgary, which you're doing in the new part, one in Wood Buffalo, and one in Edmonton and leaving all of the rest of rural Alberta as is, there was very little difference in provincial quotients between your proposed changes and the current boundaries with the exception of Airdrie-Chestermere. To address that, you really could do that pretty simply by picking up the minus 11 that's in Foothills-Rocky View right now and the minus roughly the same that's in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, that both have boundaries against that riding. I really believe this is an option that you could consider and look at. I think it's a simple solution that would still address the issue at hand. Of course, that's up to you to decide, but I really urge you to take this into consideration when finalizing your report.

I want to thank you very much for hearing me out this evening and allowing me to be present. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'm just wondering. Since all three of you are up there, would you like to make your presentations? Then we could ask questions of all three of you.

Mr. Lehane: Yes, Your Honour.

The Chair: All right. Well, let's do that, then.

Mr. Lehane: Mr. Chairman, Your Honour Judge Walter, and members of the commission, my name is Joe Lehane. For the record I live in what is presently the Innisfail-Sylvan Lake constituency. I've resided in the Innisfail area for over 34 years now, and I have a law office in the town of Innisfail. For clarity, then, in reading your report, I'm from the rest of Alberta now. I have lived in Calgary, and I have lived in Edmonton, but for many years I have lived in the rest of the Alberta.

During that period of time I've been very involved in many community organizations – service clubs, boards, associations, et cetera – and I was a member of the 1995-1996 Electoral Boundaries Commission for the province of Alberta. That was a commission chaired by His Honour Judge Ed Wachowich. So I do have some background on the issues and challenges that are faced by this commission, and I thank you for the opportunity to be able to share those with you tonight.

8:20

I read the interim report that was filed by the commission, and when I read it, of course, I looked at the Innisfail-Sylvan Lake constituency, and I said: that won't work. I contacted our MLA and the PC Constituency Association and said: if you would like me to come out and share some of my thoughts and experience in these matters, I would be pleased to do so because we have a problem here.

First of all, I want to compliment and commend the commission on that interim report in terms of very clearly focusing on effective representation and setting out the factors that must be considered in drawing constituency boundaries that will ensure effective representation. Now, with tongue in cheek I have to tell you that your job is much, much easier than our job was back in 1995-96 because they gave you four extra constituencies to fill up. We didn't get any. We had to move almost every boundary imaginable to fit the increased population into 83 constituencies.

In any event, your report has set out the focus on effective representation, and that is the law. It was set out clearly in the Saskatchewan reference case in 1991 by Madam Justice McLachlin, and she set out as well the factors that she has charged you with considering in ensuring that our Legislative Assemblies are effectively represented, that we have effective representation in those Legislative Assemblies, that represent the diversity of our social mosaic.

Following on that law, the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act of Alberta has set out various factors that they are asking you to consider to ensure that boundaries are drawn in a manner to ensure effective representation. I think I need not repeat those for you. We have a very eminent commission here, who's studied them, looked at them, reflected them in their report.

It is my submission that the present boundaries of the Innisfail-Sylvan Lake constituency do reflect those factors and do meet those criteria. The present constituency boundaries address sparsity and density of population. They present constituency boundaries that put together a geographical area that has common community interests and an area that has common community organizations. The present boundaries reflect existing municipal boundaries, specifically including the county of Red Deer and excluding areas within the boundaries of the city of Red Deer. The present boundaries address the need of the MLA for this constituency to deal with municipalities and local authorities. The present boundaries are understandable and clear boundaries. The current boundaries recognize current trading patterns.

The current constituency population is 40,115. That is the information that I'm given to understand. This is very, very close to

the provincial quotient of 40,880. The current boundaries of the constituency, in my submission, are an excellent example of boundaries that meet and reflect the factors and the considerations that the commission is charged with recognizing when proposing boundaries that will result in effective representation.

Again, I heard a phrase earlier this evening from the commission that's often used out in the rest of Alberta. We use the expression: don't fix what's not broken. It's my submission that the new proposed boundaries for Innisfail-Red Deer do not properly take into account the factors and considerations necessary to meet the criteria that are set out in the act.

I want now to refer the commission to the October 1994 decision of the Alberta Court of Appeal. That was a reference case whereby the government of Alberta invited the Court of Appeal of Alberta to decide if the present electoral boundaries were constitutionally valid. At pages 24 and 25 of that decision the Alberta Court of Appeal stated:

As we have said, the origin of the problem before the Legislature is the historic imbalance in the level of representation between agrarian and non-agrarian populations in Alberta. Each year this problem worsens, because each year urban populations increase and non-urban populations decrease . . .

There are only three possible solutions to the historic disparity: first, a mixing of urban and non-urban populations in electoral divisions of equal size, second, more seats over-all . . .

That is the situation that has been given to you to look at with this commission.

. . . or third, fewer non-urban seats.

The immediate cause of the problem faced by the Legislature in 1993 was the conviction, by the Commission and by the Committee, and by most of the parties [that appeared] before us, that the people of Alberta simply would not accept the idea that agrarian and non-agrarian populations would both feel adequately represented in the same constituency.

The Court of Appeal went on to say:

We accept this sentiment as a dramatic example of the importance of the idea of effective community representation.

I repeat. The Court of Appeal stated, "We accept this sentiment," being people saying that they didn't want the mixture of the urban and rural populations in one constituency, "as a dramatic example of the importance of the idea of effective community representation." I think that what I've heard this evening has been the flavour of the representations and a constant theme, both with the city of Red Deer wanting to maintain their municipal boundaries for their constituencies and the rural areas wanting to have their constituencies.

The present boundaries of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake do not include the city of Red Deer. The present boundaries of the constituency do include communities that have common interests, common history, common geography, and common community interests, including associations, service clubs, et cetera. For example, the villages of Bowden and Spruce View are almost bedroom communities to the town of Innisfail in terms of trading patterns and mutual interests.

I've reviewed the written submissions that were forwarded to your commission by the Hon. Luke Ouellette, and I submit that his letter and his recommendations make sense, are based on experience and knowledge of being the MLA for this constituency, and I agree with his suggestions with respect to potential boundary changes.

The present proposal in the commission's interim report for the Innisfail-Red Deer constituency creates a hybrid constituency with an urban population and a nonurban population: the city of Red Deer and the rural areas south of the city of Red Deer. I submit that that flies in the face of the Court of Appeal's statement in the 1994 reference case, where they said, "We accept this sentiment as a dramatic example of the importance of the idea of effective commu-

nity representation.” They then went on to say that that eliminates that as a choice for possible solutions to rebalancing the constituency populations.

We note that the commission has striven to keep the constituencies of the city of Red Deer, the city of Edmonton, the city of Lethbridge, and so on within municipal boundaries. We believe that the same should occur for the city of Red Deer and that the rural areas to the south should be left as rural areas to the south.

The existing constituency, with some very minor changes, would honour and reflect the need for effective community representation. It would recognize the common interests, the common community organizations, existing municipal boundaries, municipal and local authorities, and the desirability of clear and understandable boundaries. It’s my submission that there is a very compelling case to maintain the Innisfail-Sylvan Lake constituency boundaries with minor adjustments that have been recommended.

Thank you.

8:30

The Chair: Thank you.

We have number 3 here, so we’d like to hear from you.

Ms Yargeau: Okay. I just need to check. We actually had arranged for our mayor, Julia King from the town of Penhold, to speak, and I don’t believe she’s here. I just want to check to make sure. No. So if it’s permissible, then, I’m Linda Yargeau, I’m a resident of the town of Penhold, and I’d like to speak from that perspective.

The Chair: Please do.

Ms Yargeau: Thank you. First of all, as I’ve pointed out, I do live in the town of Penhold. I’ve lived there for about 30 years. In the proposed changes the town of Penhold would actually be part of the Sylvan Lake constituency. My children went to school in Penhold. My kids played hockey there. I bought my groceries there. There’s a lot of alignment between the town of Penhold and the community of Innisfail, and the new boundary changes would cut us off from that current alignment. Of course, then, I would be speaking in opposition to the changes that you’re proposing.

There’s probably one thing that pretty much everybody in the room has in common this evening. I don’t think any of them want your job. I certainly respect the challenges that you have. I did hear as I entered the room tonight a comment about: if you start from one place, it’s like a ripple effect. I guess that at the end of this presentation or at the end of the evening I hope that you would consider perhaps starting from a different place and looking at: is there another way? I think we’ve presented a map to you that gives you an option there.

I did present a letter on behalf of the Innisfail-Sylvan Lake constituency. I just want to touch on some of the points in there. The trading patterns for the community that is Innisfail-Sylvan Lake currently go from east to west across highway 2, so we’re not split by highway 2. I’ve heard people reference that earlier this evening. Highway 2 is a travel pattern; it’s not a boundary.

When I read your interim report – and I think Joe has referred to this as well – you talk about respecting urban municipalities. I think a rural municipality, a county, is somewhat like an urban municipality, and I hope that you would respect that as well. In your changes you have virtually split them. I think Luke said “demolished,” but really you’ve split us in two. It is a community, and it would be splitting that community.

We’ve made a point of the fact that in the proposed changes the county would be represented by up to five MLAs. I know there are

some folks that think that would be advantageous. The flip side of that is that, in fact, you might have no or very little representation because you don’t have a sort of good rapport with any one of them in the end.

I think I spoke to the fact that the roads are transportation lines and not boundaries.

Just a couple of points I’d add from things I’ve heard here this evening. In the proposed changes the city of Red Deer, I think the south part, would be expanded into the county. When I talked to by no means any official representation from the city, it would seem more like if the city were to expand currently, rather than go south of Gasoline Alley, it’s more likely to go west. So if you were looking at adding to the city in any way, there’s probably more of an opportunity or an advantage there. There are a number of subdivisions out there, and I believe that a lot of those folks would travel into Red Deer to work.

Probably the only other thing I could add is that – and I heard someone mention this earlier this evening as well – I’ve lived and worked in this area for more than 30 years, and probably in most of the systems: education, health, justice, et cetera. What makes it unique and what makes it work well is relationships, and the relationships are built on the boundaries that are established by things like electoral boundaries. I hope that you will take that into consideration as you make your decisions about what these boundaries look like in the future.

I don’t think I can add any more than that. Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much. We’ll have a few questions.

Brian.

Mr. Evans: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you all very much for your impassioned presentations. Lots of experience at the table, and we appreciate that very much. I also personally appreciate this map that you’ve shown based on the former alignments of the boundaries. I assure you that we’re going to spend some time working on that to just confirm, based on the information that we have, that this works the same way because, I must say, it’s a bit of a surprise to me. So I appreciate that very much. I presume that this is the map that you would like to see us use?

Mr. Ouellette: Well, unless you decide to go by those two maps and say, “Hey, this works for all of rural Alberta,” but I’m saying that that will work. I feel like – I know there are areas you need some people. Innisfail-Sylvan Lake seems to be perfect right now. Everything’s perfect: we have the one county; we have the exact quotient of the province. But people around us have to be made whole or fixed or whatever, and if need be – and I sat with all the MLAs. Needless to say, all of the municipalities and everybody else gets their say at what they think should work out, but we tried to figure out what would be the least disruptive.

We kind of agreed amongst ourselves that, you know: Ty, if you need some people and you have to shave a piece of my riding, shave a piece of the riding but don’t take it to highway 2 kind of thing. In your new boundary change Ray Prins was given that piece of Red Deer county that used to be in Innisfail-Sylvan Lake just north of Red Deer. But it’s up against the river, and it’s really tough to get to, where I drive through it almost every time I’m going somewhere in my riding, so Ray says: I don’t mind if that doesn’t come. It would be easier to bring that back, and give Ty some off the other end. I would stay close to my 40, possibly, and Ty would get a little bit more to help him out. I’d like to keep it right the way it is, but I’m not sure that’s possible.

Mr. Evans: Sure. I appreciate that. So if we were to agree with the municipal boundaries of Red Deer being the boundaries for the two constituencies in Red Deer, that really helps you in Innisfail-Sylvan Lake to get this alignment and the population to work out? At least we've had identified to us an adjacent body that would really help with this alignment. Am I putting words in your mouth about that?

Mr. Ouellette: No, that's exactly what we're saying. But you'd probably have to leave Red Deer at about 11 per cent or 10 per cent, roughly, over the quotient number, which I don't think is too bad for city ridings. Like Marlin had said earlier, those two act as if it's an invisible line, and both represent all of Red Deer basically.

Mr. Evans: Right. We have heard that urban areas, other than inner-city urban areas, do have more in common, so you can have a greater number and not put additional stress on the MLA who is representing that area. You know, we have heard that loud and clear from our hearings in the fall and this spring as well. That's helpful to us.

Again, all of you appreciate that we've tried to shrink down the variance as much as possible without creating issues by doing that so that we are being consistent with the messages that the Supreme Court and other courts in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and elsewhere have indicated are appropriate considerations in determining what effective representation is.

Thank you again for the presentation. We'll move on to my other colleagues.

The Chair: Allyson.

Ms Jeffs: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Ouellette and company, for coming this evening. I'm just going to follow up a little bit with respect to this map and with the changes. Do you have a sense as to what the population change would be with these territories being moved as you've suggested?

Mr. Ouellette: On that particular one I don't. I should have looked that up, but I didn't.

8:40

Ms Jeffs: That's all right. We have the magic technology that will tell us.

I appreciate – and it's a point well taken – what you're saying about the current constituency meeting the criteria. The challenge we have is looking at the other constituencies where that's not the case. In particular, some of the less populous neighbouring constituencies are a concern because some of those areas are not likely to grow, and of course, as you're aware, some of them are significantly below the average as we speak. But it's helpful to know that this is a preferred configuration.

I just had a comment on the larger map on looking at the rural. One thing that struck me is that one of the things the proposed boundaries are trying to do is bring some of the, you know, non-urban ridings closer to the average. Even though a lot of the configuration in rural Alberta would be within the statute, I'm looking at this and seeing a lot of double digits below. That's something we'll need to look at as well as we go forward.

I think we've heard loud and clear, Mr. Lehane, the concerns about the Red Deer boundary and trying to keep Red Deer city as one unit or as a unit with two constituencies.

Other than that, I don't have any other questions, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you.

Peter.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Ouellette and Mr. Lehane and – is it Yargeau?

Ms Yargeau: Yargeau.

Mr. Dobbie: Yargeau. Sorry. I didn't have that spelled correctly.

Certainly, what we've seen since our interim report is a testing of the hypothesis that was in the Alberta Court of Appeal decision in 1993-94. It has been very healthy for us to receive the amount of feedback we have on the issue of: is it still a widely held view among Albertans that 'rurban' type ridings don't work well? In the central Alberta area we've certainly received copious amounts of feedback. It's helpful for us to get that because we can't simply accept that as received wisdom from the past. Things do change. It certainly appears that there is still very little appetite for these urban and rural constituencies although any community over about 5,000, in my view, is urban, and they're in a lot of large constituencies.

The take-away I have from this is that we may have tended to not consider the Hippocratic oath of do no harm as much as we might have. The direct feedback we've received is certainly helpful. We are going to be able to take a look at starting from somewhere else. The thought process that you've laid out tonight has been very helpful. Certainly, the feedback that we've received from throughout the hundred miles around Red Deer, and one particular rural constituency a little further south, has been very helpful.

Dr. Archer: Again, thanks for the presentations tonight. I guess I have a question or comment for each of you. First, Mr. Ouellette, on the maps that you've provided, I'm not sure that the numbers that are on this map – and the one that I'm looking at in particular is labelled Our Proposed EDs – correspond with the numbers that we have based upon the most recent census data from the various urban census that we have been provided from Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Ouellette: This is the existing riding map. Our Proposed is the existing riding map the way they are today.

Dr. Archer: The way they are today. The way I am interpreting this is that it's the existing numbers with current data superimposed on existing ridings.

Mr. Ouellette: Right.

Dr. Archer: Right. So what I'm saying is that I'm not sure that the numbers that are on this map are consistent with the numbers that were available to us from Municipal Affairs. We may want to just do some following up. You had mentioned that a young fellow had worked on this, and I suspect we can ensure that the numbers he's working with are the same numbers that we're working with just so that there's no misunderstanding based upon that.

Mr. Ouellette: Okay. I can check into that for you.

Dr. Archer: Even given these numbers, there's a pretty substantial difference between this set of maps and the maps that we've proposed. Again, just a very quick look at this map. I just saw it for the first time during our meeting here this evening. It has not only two special districts, but four additional districts are verging on special districts. There are four districts here in addition that are more than 20 per cent below the population averages.

We discussed this question early on in our deliberations as to whether we're going to have a firm number over which we're trying to resist having deviations greater than that, you know, whether it's

10 per cent or 15 per cent. The legislation allows us to go to 25 per cent, but the question we had is: should we effectively be looking at a smaller number? We didn't come up with any hard-and-fast rule, but we did suggest that we should tend towards smaller variations rather than larger variations. This map that we've been given tonight really pushes the boundary of large variations. That's my first reaction to it.

Mr. Ouellette: It wasn't really given to say: follow this. It was just a: "You know what? Without doing any harm at all, we can stay within the law here and not change rural Alberta at all, really." We don't have to go there – I agree – but I think, by looking at this, it does all of a sudden say: "Well, boy, we might be able to do a lot less harm and go to some of these ridings that have those real big numbers. If there are some little wee ones right around it, just change them instead of changing the whole map from one end of the province to the other to try to make that number work out."

Dr. Archer: I think what you'll find if you do that, because that's a bit of the place where we started our work, is that if you run just north and south along the eastern part of the province, that's where all of the really small ones are other than West Yellowhead. That presents a challenge for any boundaries commission. That was the challenge that we confronted at the start. Again, I appreciate it, but there is a large number of ridings with a lot of variation here.

The question I would have – is it Mr. Lehane?

Mr. Lehane: Yes.

Dr. Archer: It's more a comment, I guess, than a question. On the question of whether it's useful or defensible for a boundaries commission to consider constituencies that are part urban and part rural, again, we've heard totally different perspectives on that around the province and sometimes totally different perspectives from the same constituency.

For us, the most glaring one is Grande Prairie because at the moment Grande Prairie is kind of half urban and half rural for both of its ridings. The city council passed a motion recommending to us that we create an entirely urban riding and a partly urban, partly rural riding, which we did. Then they passed a resolution opposing that change. Sometimes there's opposition even in the same area. So what we've tried to do is to listen to the people in that area, rather than to take a hard-and-fast rule of saying that we're doing this and we're not doing that, and try to be responsive to their desires. We've heard pretty clearly, I think, in some of the feedback that we've received and some of the input tonight that the preference in this area seems to be to keep Red Deer as two urban ridings and not to give off the southern part for the time being.

Ms Yargeau, in just trying to understand what would be the most important message that we should draw from your presentation, I'm wondering if it's accurate to say that the most important conclusion is that it's important to ensure that Penhold and Innisfail are in the same riding. Or was there a broader conclusion that you were recommending?

Ms Yargeau: That's certainly part of it, but I think the broader conclusion is that the current riding is fairly consistent or coterminous with the county of Red Deer, which is the municipality that we're a part of. I guess my preference would be that you maintain that boundary rather than split it.

8:50

Dr. Archer: Right. Okay. If I could just pose one question to you, Mr. Ouellette, before we go?

Mr. Ouellette: Sure.

Dr. Archer: It was the same question I posed earlier tonight. When I look at Sylvan Lake, the proposed constituency, although it doesn't have the same configuration as the current constituency, I think of that part of the province as having a lot of similarities. Again, if you take the extreme towns within that – it would be, I guess, Rimbey and Penhold – do you see that there is a fundamental difference in interest between people in the proposed constituency which would really be a red flag to this commission or to another commission to say: you know, these people, their interests are just so profoundly different that you shouldn't put them together in a single riding?

Mr. Ouellette: Whatever I say to answer this question, I'm cutting my own throat because somewhere down the line I have to represent these people, and it's not like – whew.

Anyway, Sylvan Lake is a little bit different than all of the rest we're talking about here. Sylvan Lake probably has more to do with Red Deer than anything else. Sylvan Lake is a bedroom community of Red Deer although they'll argue that today they're starting to grow out of that bedroom community of Red Deer. Still, 50 per cent of the people there work in Red Deer, so Sylvan is different. With the new riding we would get the whole lake in one riding, but I don't know what that means, why they think that means any different other than development that happens there because all around the lake other than in town is summer villages.

The southern part of that riding that you're going to call Sylvan Lake is really, as someone said earlier, almost a bedroom community to Innisfail. I mean, the people in all of that west country, Spruce View area, all through there, their kids play hockey in Innisfail. They belong to the service clubs in Innisfail. All of that sort of stuff. In Bowden, also, which would be in Sylvan Lake, really they are kind of split between Olds and Innisfail on where they do most of their business and stuff, I believe. When you take what you've drawn as a riding for Innisfail-Red Deer, I think there are about 7,000 people of Red Deer cut into that riding, and then it goes all the way down to Drumheller. I mean, even Trochu, Three Hills, they don't come in to Innisfail. They go to probably Olds or Calgary or Red Deer. We're more of an east-west riding than we are a north-south riding, I guess I would say.

Sylvan is a bit of an anomaly, yet they belong to the same commissions. For their waste water and water they belong to the Anthony Henday commission or the Red Deer. I don't know what, but they're a phase 2 of what we're working on, put it that way.

The rest of it – in fact, before we finished, I had turned around and noticed that just about every municipality in my riding has elected folks in the audience here right now that are supporting to try to keep our riding together, I would say. That's the county of Red Deer, town of Innisfail. Of course, we had Bowden here already speaking. You know, we have Delburne over here. That's all part of this riding. I guess everybody is pretty passionate about trying to keep our riding together.

Mr. Lehane: And Red Deer doesn't want us.

Mr. Ouellette: Yeah. I did read in the newspaper that they interviewed a whole bunch of people cleaning their yards on the weekend, and they're all saying: we don't want to go to Innisfail.

Anyway, there are wonderful people throughout the riding, and yes, they will form new partnerships and make things work wherever we all end up. We're just saying that we believe we have a really good thing here now, and we're going to try to fight to keep that good thing going.

The Chair: Well, thank you all very much, Mr. Minister and your supporting group. I see you have many supporters in the audience. We'll certainly be taking this into account and looking at it in detail. We're getting a very clear message.

Mr. Ouellette: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you all.

Mr. Ouellette: Pine Lake I missed. We have Pine Lake here.

The Chair: I understand that that is our last group of presenters. We're now in the position that we're almost at 9 o'clock, and it would be our intent to adjourn unless there is somebody that feels very strongly. Yes, sir.

Mr. Wood: Do you want me to come up there?

The Chair: Yes. Would you?

Unidentified Speaker: Chair, there's another one out here, too.

Ms Churchill: I'll be very brief.

The Chair: All right. Well, we'll deal with this gentleman first. Your name for the record, sir.

Mr. Wood: Jim Wood.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Wood.

Jim Wood
Private Citizen

Mr. Wood: Good evening, Hon. Judge Walter and panel. I'm here as a private person, but I am a councillor for Red Deer county. I'm not in an official capacity here tonight, but I did just kind of want to speak to the idea of the percentage of variance that may happen between various ridings, trying to speak from a personal perspective of what, in fact, even happens within our own jurisdiction of Red Deer county. We have various population densities. My own area, division 1, is very large, and I compare it to some of the other divisions within our municipality that are very small.

Trying to look at effective representation from within our own municipality, I think of how much further I must travel in order to look at the various aspects of what happens within my own boundaries of my own area. In looking at that, sometimes it may appear

that to have the number be a very small variance may be better, but it truly might have better effective representation to in fact look at up to that 25 per cent variance just in order so that that particular riding does have a more effective representation.

I hope that I've been able to bring my point forward here tonight. I did not hear that in the other presentations. I had lots of similar things that I would have said, and there is no use repeating them, but I really urge you to take a look at allowing those variances in some of the sparser populated areas of our province because I believe that those MLAs will in fact better represent the population that they do represent.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much.

Does anyone have any questions on this?

Thank you very much. That was a very good point to make.

Patt Churchill, Councillor
Town of Innisfail

Ms Churchill: Thank you. I'm Patt Churchill. I'm a councillor for the town of Innisfail, and I am sitting in a councillor position tonight. I've been asked to speak, and I want to speak as a constituency member, too. Right now if our constituency is split through the proposed changes to Innisfail-Red Deer, I believe that one of our treasurers will now belong to Sylvan Lake. Our president will be in another riding. As a councillor I find that very upsetting. We work very closely with our constituency to get messages to the government of Alberta.

The town of Innisfail also recognizes that the trade routes are very important. I understand that Sylvan is happy that, you know, they may be the trade centre, and that's fine, but we do share so many common interests with Penhold, Innisfail, Bowden. We share regional partnerships. We are in regional commissions. So I want to reiterate that sometimes when drawing those boundary lines, they often cross economic routes that just don't make sense. I'd like to just reiterate that.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. I take it there are no questions. Thank you so much.

Now, we are at the point where we will adjourn. Hopefully any of you who are driving a long ways will make it before any storm hits. Thank you all for coming tonight. We really appreciate the public input. Thank you.

[The hearing adjourned at 9 p.m.]

