



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Red Deer

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6:02 p.m.

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Electoral Boundaries Commission

Judge Ernest J.M. Walter, Chairman

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Peter Dobbie, QC
Brian Evans, QC
Allyson Jeffs

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[Judge Walter in the chair]

The Chair: Good evening. My name is Ernie Walter, and I am the chair of the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission. I would like to introduce you to the other members of the commission: 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 is Brian Evans of Calgary.

As you are aware, the five of us have spent the last months reviewing the electoral boundaries of our province. We've examined every square inch, and we've come out with an interim report, the result of which is that we have now for the second round of hearings received somewhere close to 500 written submissions. We're going to be examining those and doing more hearings.

Our goal is to ensure effective representation across the province. We are looking at population, scarcity of population, community interests, community boundaries, municipal boundaries, geographical features, understandable and clear boundaries, distance and area, inner-city urban issues, and that Calgary and Edmonton have certain issues that are unique to them.

We're anxious to hear and we certainly have been hearing from the Albertans that want to tell us what their views are on the proposed electoral boundaries. I can assure you we have certainly heard in this area of people who have, by and large, similar views of how they would all like to see these boundaries revamped. It seems to be quite consistent, and I'm sure anxious to hear what you people have to say.

We give each speaker 10 minutes to present, and then we have 10 minutes for questioning.

We want to thank you for moving your schedule up to be here at 6 o'clock rather than 6:40. It helps us quite a bit.

Since we're being recorded by *Alberta Hansard* and the audio recording, we would ask that for the record you give your name and the area that you're speaking with respect to.

Mr. Kemmere: Okay. I'll start. I'm Al Kemmere. I'm reeve of Mountain View county. For those who are not quite sure where Mountain View county is, it is the county between Red Deer and Calgary segregated by highway 2.

Mr. Plamping: Doug Plamping, chief administrative officer for Mountain View county.

Al Kemmere, Reeve

**Doug Plamping, Chief Administrative Officer
Mountain View County**

Mr. Kemmere: If I do get a little long winded, I beg you to cut me off because I have had a tendency of doing that, so I'll let you know that right up front.

Thank you for letting us do our presentation today. I need to start by acknowledging that this is no small task that you people are dealing with; it is significant. You have many different factors that you have to address in this, and ultimately you've got to come up with a program that is going to best serve the taxpayers of Alberta, so no small task at all.

You do have a copy of what I am going to be reading, so you do have that to refer to. I may end up paraphrasing at some point, but the information is intended to come across as printed.

Good evening and thank you for this opportunity to speak to

you about our concerns regarding the Division boundaries proposed for our region and to share our suggestions for alternatives for those boundaries.

I am not going to present the March 30th submission [that we sent to you] from Mountain View County word for word, but rather summarize some of our process in arriving at that proposal.

The proposal we have submitted is not a Mountain View County only proposal but one that has involved significant discussions with MLAs in Central Alberta and a large number of municipalities throughout the affected area. As you can see the proposal shows no change to the divisional boundaries in the west part of our county as this was separated years ago with the understanding that the communities [of] Rocky Mountain House riding have very similar culture, are represented similarly by industry (oil, gas, agriculture, forestry and tourism) [and many others] and have a common terrain or landscape. The information we have received from the people in this riding and the others in the Central Alberta area is that they can manage the population numbers necessary without changing the present boundary between the Olds, Didsbury, Three Hills riding and the Rocky Mountain House riding.

The other adjustment we are recommending follows a collaboration between Mountain View County and the MLA in the current Division including Olds, Didsbury, Carstairs and Three Hills, and the MLAs from the areas around the City of Calgary along with municipalities in the affected area. A meeting was organized which included representatives from Olds, Didsbury, Carstairs, Crossfield, Beiseker, Irricana, Rocky View County and Mountain View County where we shared our thoughts on the proposal made. Most of the representatives in attendance felt that they could support the proposal you have seen and were taking it back to their councils. The proposal shows a southern boundary adjustment to take in the towns of Crossfield, Irricana and Beiseker along with the rural farm lands that link and surround those communities.

This proposal addresses many of the primary factors that the commission used in creating the recommendation including;

A) Population – the estimated population.

6:10

And it's not precise, but it's plus or minus 39,500, so that's within your expected range.

- (a) Community Interests – Crossfield has partnerships with the communities to the north and has a culture that parallels that of the other towns along the QE II highway. Beiseker and Irricana also have partnerships with the communities [to the] north of them along the east edge of the division and similar agriculture interests and community culture.
- (d) Community Boundaries – this proposal does not split the town population to different divisions and attempts to include as much of the rural community population surrounding them as possible.
- (e) Municipal Boundaries – in this proposal we have drawn lines in the Rocky View County area but have attempted to use distinct features and not sever the small towns.
- (d) Geographical Features – rivers and water bodies are still used as was before.
- (g) Understandable and Clear Boundaries – in this we have used road allowances that in most cases are clearly marked out in the community.
- (h) Distance and Area – This leaves the proposed new division rather large but very manageable due to a good road network within it.

Our proposal is one that shows fair representation of the people who live in the counties affected and in the towns and villages within the Division with no potential dominance of rural voters by a large City of Red Deer population.

On the Electoral Boundaries Commission proposal on Divisions 55 [being] (Carstairs-Rocky View), 65 (Innisfail-Red Deer), and 77 (Rocky Mountain House-Olds);

We have significant concerns with many aspects of splitting our community into 3 Divisions, each with a different community interest. When it comes to the Commission's primary factors used in establishing the boundaries we view it as only meeting three of the factors clearly, those being

(a) Population . . .

As I believe all three recommendations are close to your quotient.

(f) Geographical features – Rivers were used when possible.

(g) Understandable and Clear Boundaries – The use of highways in some cases and local roads in others does show clarity, but the highways and the roads used have cut communities and municipalities.

We do not believe that the proposed Divisions in the area between Red Deer and Calgary provide the best results for the following primary factors:

(c) Community Interests

(d) Community Boundaries

(e) Municipal Boundaries

(h) Distance and Area

We would [like to] highlight each of these as follows:

(c) Community Interests – Over the last 5 years, Mountain View County and the 5 urban communities it contains have made significant strides in creating partnerships amongst each other resulting in mutual operating agreements and Inter-municipal Development Plans. The County, Olds, Didsbury, Carstairs, Cremona and Sundre jointly received the 2009 Outstanding Achievement Award from the Minister of Municipal Affairs as we had, and we quote, “fully embraced the ideas of collaboration and regional land use planning”. To have those agreements and plans span 3 different electoral Divisions increases the obstacles we have to face in continuing this cooperation.

(d) Community Boundaries and E) Municipal Boundaries – The proposed boundaries on Highways 2A and 580 place part of Olds (especially Olds College [and the town of Olds office]), Didsbury, and Carstairs in different divisions. The use of these highways also divides current and future rural growth [areas] adjacent to the towns in different divisions. The north-south boundary needs to move at least 2 miles east of the QE II Highway to include the future growth areas around Olds, Didsbury and Carstairs.

And we do have a map including those growth areas, that we can highlight in a minute.

We have included copies of our growth areas in our package. The inclusion of Didsbury, Carstairs and the County around them with lands and communities on the western fringe of Calgary places them in an area with little in common with the majority population.

To clarify that, the fringe around the city of Calgary is very much a strong urban influence rather than the traditional county farmland type of lands that we do have in the Mountain View county region.

(h) Distance and Area – By having Olds included with Rocky Mountain House you are placing it in an area with different culture and economy, and are placing it in an almost unmanageable division due to its size and distance from corner to corner.

If you look at that map, you will see how far it is, actually, from the Olds area or the Dogpound area west of Carstairs all the way up to Saskatchewan River Crossing, which is in the north end, and that's about a four-hour drive from one end to the other.

In summary we believe the proposal as submitted by Mountain View County is one that meets most of your “Primary Factors”; that will show little negative impact, and will require very little transition for the people affected.

Thank you for your time. If you have any questions, by all means, that's one of the reasons we're here.

If you want me to go over our maps that we have submitted, I

believe you have a copy of our submission, and you can see our map as far as our proposal to bring in Crossfield, Irricana, and Beiseker. I don't believe that's in this package here, is it? It's in the one that would have been circulated to you in advance, I'm hoping. The three maps that you have in the back show the growth areas around Olds and Didsbury and Carstairs. If you look at the dotted line – you take the size of Olds, for example. You go one mile north, and you see a dotted line that spans right across highway 2 and then comes back into the town of Olds and then goes around the west side.

Under the commission's proposed boundary you're actually following highway 2A, which splits the town of Olds into two pieces. Our suggestion, if you definitely have to run a north-south boundary like that, is that you actually go east of the fifth meridian or east of highway 2 by at least two miles because we have growth happening already in what we call the Olds growth centre. So if you have to follow what your recommendation is, we're asking that the boundary be moved that way. If you look at that map, the hard, dark line is the fifth meridian as shown on the east edge of our boundary there.

In summary, that's primarily what we're hoping for. We see that expanding or moving the south boundary down to include Crossfield, Beiseker, and Irricana has been done in consultation with Minister Morton, who has the area to the west side of Calgary, and our MLA, Richard Marz, has worked with us on that. Then we worked with all the municipalities affected by this. I won't quote everyone because it wouldn't be fair to do that, but primarily when they left the Mountain View county office after we submitted this, all of them felt that they could go back to their councils and seek approval for what we have sourced. Now, I'm not sure if they've submitted their reports. I left that in their hands.

The Chair: Thank you.

Brian.

Mr. Evans: Thanks, Chairman. Thanks, gentlemen, for your presentation. We have seen a map that both MLA Richard Marz presented to us today and that Reeve Habberfield from Rocky View presented to us as well. I'd like to give you a copy of that and just ask you for clarification to confirm that you are also, as Mountain View county, in agreement with that. We have had a number of presentations that really do show that we can create much more of an east-west, which is more traditional, boundary in this area that seems to meet the criteria that we have been focusing on as a commission. If you'll just bear with me for a second, I'll put that in front of you, Reeve, and if you could just take a look at that.

Mr. Kemmere: Yeah, we do have – is it the same map? Well, we'll see what you have. Yeah, that's the identical map. It's the identical map. MLA Marz and Reeve Habberfield were involved in our discussions on this, and Lois and I have had numerous phone calls trying to come up with what we saw was a win-win-win situation.

Mr. Evans: Some of the alternatives that you've presented in diagrams relative to Carstairs and Olds and Didsbury: those would be a second choice for Mountain View county and only in the event that we were to continue to promote a north-south alignment of the constituencies as opposed to an east-west?

Mr. Plamping: That's our second choice. Our concerns are that you're actually dividing the towns. I believe the maps that you had before did include the annexations that just occurred. Part of the mutual co-operation with the towns and the county is that they have taken in 20 years of growth within their boundaries to allow them to

grow progressively and in an organized way. The county is of course growing outside of those boundaries. So their boundaries did increase significantly, which is why the big changes. Yet highway 2A splits all of those communities now. In Didsbury highway 582, which you had also used as the east-boundary – there was a significant annexation north of that highway, so again you would be splitting Didsbury there.

So that was our second choice. If you did stay with the lines that you are proposing, we would ask for some changes to reflect what's happening around those towns.

6:20

Mr. Evans: So just for clarification, then. In terms of your preferred alignment would I be putting words in your mouth to say that you would much prefer the alignment that's on that map that I provided to you?

Mr. Kemmere: Oh, I don't know how we can emphasize how important that is to our community to do that.

Mr. Evans: Okay.

Mr. Kemmere: Just so I'm clear, are you referring to these ones that we put in the package today? Because these are actually your maps.

Mr. Evans: No. I'm just looking at the three maps of the three towns.

Mr. Kemmere: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Those are all my questions. Thanks for the clarification.

The Chair: Allyson.

Ms Jeffs: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, gentlemen, for coming this evening. I'm going to ask a little bit about this. So these maps – and I'm holding up the last three maps in your package, that look at the areas around Olds, Didsbury, and Carstairs – represent what exactly?

Mr. Plamping: These are from our municipal development plan. These represent growth areas where we are placing rural developments that are serviced by water and sewer. So they are much higher density developments than you would normally see out in rural areas.

Ms Jeffs: If I look at the Olds map – we have Olds in pink – the dotted line around that, is that the growth development zone?

Mr. Plamping: That is. We have written agreements with the towns on providing water and sewer services, and we also have agreements providing tax sharing back to the towns for those services.

Ms Jeffs: So at the very least you would want those areas, obviously, included with the town in the same riding. I think we've had a lot of discussion about this particular proposal today, and certainly it seems to have a lot of support. In any case, it's very helpful. Thank you for providing the growth areas around the town. That's going to be important because there will be a population there, and obviously we don't want to cut the town off from those areas. Are these areas in development right now?

Mr. Plamping: Yes. In fact, if you look at the Olds map, you'll see by the corner of highways 2 and 27 there is a full quarter of commercial and industrial development that is being completed right now. We have an additional four quarters proposed north of highway 27 in the same area at the present time, which will include a thousand population in rural.

Mr. Kemmere: Then on the Carstairs map the creation of that area's structure plan is under way right now to identify the broad growth area.

Ms Jeffs: Okay. But these are not lands annexed by the town.

Mr. Kemmere: No.

Ms Jeffs: So they're outside the town, but you're working co-operatively with the various communities to concentrate and plan some development there?

Mr. Kemmere: Yes.

Ms Jeffs: Thank you. I think that's the only question I have. Thank you very much. As I said, we've had quite a bit of discussion about the rationale behind this proposal today, and it's nice to have you again confirm your support. Thank you.

The Chair: Peter.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Reeve Kemmere and CAO Plamping. I have a question for you about a submission we received from Clearwater county. They provided us with a sketch that doesn't appear to incorporate the very eastern portion of the proposed Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills that covers Water Valley. From Westward Ho there's a little jog out in the southwest. Did you have discussions with the reeve or the council of Clearwater county?

Mr. Kemmere: We've worked with all the Reeves in central Alberta. We had our conference up in Edmonton in February, and we actually had a little powwow sort of meeting, and then they worked with Ty Lund and the other MLAs in the area. Now, I haven't seen their submission, but as I understand, they were submitting that the west boundary of Mountain View county remain as it is presently, but again I would have to have a view.

Mr. Dobbie: It's more their eastern boundary and your western boundary that I'm concerned about. I think it's just the scale that may be off in terms of where the green paint went.

Mr. Kemmere: No. The green paint is actually where the boundary is presently. I understand that that's what they are submitting, is it not?

Mr. Dobbie: Well, there's a slight difference in the southwest corner of your proposed Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills as presented to us by your MLA and others that I just would ask you to clarify with us. The southwest boundary proceeds to cover Water Valley.

Mr. Kemmere: No, it doesn't go that far. The green is what I understand Clearwater is submitting. The red line is what your present map shows, what you're suggesting.

Mr. Dobbie: This may be the information we received from Mr. Marz in an earlier submission.

Mr. Kemmere: Richard did submit an earlier submission, I believe he said, or option 1 and option 2.

If I may approach the table, would that help? Okay. What we see here is their green boundary. That is the present boundary of the Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills riding as it is. That is presently there right now, and that's what they're looking at maintaining.

Mr. Dobbie: Correct. And it is inconsistent slightly with the maps that I am seeing. If I look over to where the red marks are on the multicoloured map, I see numbers 9 and 10 around Water Valley included, and here you can see that they aren't. I guess, it's just to make sure that we are getting the best information possible.

Mr. Kemmere: Okay. The information I had from them is that they were not going to modify this boundary at all. Richard had not spent much time working about the west side because they'd come to their resolution already that they were not going to modify this. So their intent is still to leave that boundary as it is presently.

Mr. Dobbie: All right. That would take it straight south from Westward Ho, then?

Mr. Kemmere: Yeah.

Mr. Dobbie: The red marks in what are 7, 9, and 10 on the map that Mr. Evans presented to you would not be included in your request for the new Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills riding.

Mr. Kemmere: Oh, now we're struggling with lack of clarity here. There's Westward Ho right here. There's the dot of Westward Ho.

Mr. Dobbie: Correct.

Mr. Kemmere: They have the dot of Westward Ho right on the line there. As I understood, there was no need to change those boundaries. The population density in these areas is insignificant as far as major numbers.

Mr. Dobbie: So if the existing electoral division boundary follows one map or the other, that's your preference.

Mr. Kemmere: Yeah. Our understanding coming in here today is that this boundary as it is presently is what it was intended it be left at.

Mr. Dobbie: You can see my concern. There is a slight difference.

Mr. Kemmere: I understand that.

Mr. Dobbie: Again, your suggestion: live with the existing boundary.

Mr. Kemmere: On the west end. Correct.

Mr. Dobbie: I don't think I need you back up here, but I'd just invite you to also give us any comments you could. We've heard from MLA Marz and also from an earlier presenter who is a former deputy returning officer, Jim Allison. Both talked a bit about the far southeast boundary of the existing or the proposed Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills riding. We have invited Mr. Allison to give us some

suggestions as to whether that southeastern corner is better served by forming part of the Drumheller constituency. We would ask you to either provide your comments tonight or in writing or at least contact Mr. Allison to see whether you agree with his proposals because the more information we have, of course, the less likely we are to make a bad decision and get yelled at.

Mr. Kemmere: Just for clarity, then, you said: the southeast corner, down by Drumheller, where there's that little jaunt sticking down to the river?

Mr. Dobbie: Correct.

Mr. Kemmere: I don't think we would take issue with a proposal of that magnitude. Again, very sparsely populated, so it would still, I believe, keep our target numbers in place. I know it's always nice to be able to use a river as a distinct boundary, but I don't think we would dispute that little corner one way or the other. We intend to be very accommodating in that angle.

6:30

Mr. Dobbie: Finally, I'm not certain if you're aware that we did hear from two individuals who are members of city council for the city of Red Deer who have strongly argued that the city of Red Deer should be two constituencies and that there should not be people from Red Deer included in an adjacent constituency. They're certainly on the same page as you are. I wasn't sure if you were aware. I don't think there's a council resolution yet, but it may be coming.

Mr. Kemmere: I had discussions along those lines with Mayor Flewelling when we talked about this at a central Alberta mayors and reeves meeting here about a month ago. He was stating similar statements.

Mr. Dobbie: Again, I'd echo my other colleagues' comments that it is very helpful for us to have actual representations from entities directly affected as opposed to only political parties and organizations. It's very helpful to have you. Thank you for the time and the work you've done.

Mr. Kemmere: You bet. Thank you.

The Chair: Keith.

Dr. Archer: Yeah. Thanks, gentlemen. As others have said, the recommendations you're bringing are pretty consistent with some of the other recommendations we've heard over the last day and a half or so. They highlight a lot of the consistency of perspective that we've been hearing.

This is our last session in Red Deer. Before we go, I would like to get your comment on what I would take to be one of the implications of adopting the suite of recommendations we've heard from, oh, probably five or six constituencies in sort of south-central Alberta. The finding is that people have found ways of altering the status quo maps relatively marginally compared to our proposal, which I think was a more substantial change in some of the constituencies, to ensure that the proposals that are coming forward fit pretty close to the average constituency size. I think the data that you brought forward, again, is consistent with that. I think you had said that the riding would be about 39,500, and, you know, that's pretty close to the kind of target that we're looking at. That was true in the Innisfail-Sylvan Lake riding. It's true in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

It's true in Foothills-Rocky View. It's true in Rocky Mountain House, for example.

Then once we get to Red Deer, the recommendation is to take two ridings that we had created as about 40,000 people and make them probably 45,000 or 46,000 people, just because the population of the city is closer to 90,000 rather than 80,000. The overall implication of all of this is that as we leave this part of the province and start looking at other parts, one conclusion is that, you know, there are recommendations for a pretty good configuration of constituencies here but, in a sense, we've sort of lost 10,000 people from a couple of constituencies that are going to show up somewhere. I suspect what we're going to find is that we're going to be pushing outwards and perhaps north into northern constituencies, which inevitably will have to be smaller populationwise because of the larger populations that are existing in Red Deer and the fact that we're right around the average in the ridings south and west of Red Deer.

Would you come to a similar conclusion as that? What would be your reaction to that general observation?

Mr. Kemmere: First, if I may, one of the challenges, I know, that we saw in discussing this as groups is that ripple effect that goes along with that. While we've managed to get as close to your targets as possible with the rural ridings – and you've pointed out that that does take the city ridings a little higher. I believe that's one of the reasons why you have that range that you're allowed to work in, with a maximum of 25 per cent, you know, a target closer to 15 per cent at this stage of the process. I believe that's a flexibility that needs to be in there.

Now, the loss of 10,000 voters that have to show up somewhere: I don't have a full answer for that other than the fact that at some point – and it will all depend on how fast the city of Red Deer grows – we will see a modification. I don't know how significant a modification that will be, but it is the big challenge. I'm not sure how we answer that, and I'll defer to Doug. Doug has a lot more experience in this world than I do. But I don't want to discount those votes because those are important people, the same as every person, and they need to be heard.

I guess the only thing I could put on top of it is the rural disparity, the rural distances that voters find sometimes to get in touch with their MLA. The riding that we are proposing is still an hour-and-a-half to a two-hour drive from one end to the other. If your MLA ends up in one of those corners, you've got a significant task to get in touch with them whereas in a city riding they do have closer contact, I guess, easier availability, from my perspective. I see that that may be something that softens that. I am sure that people who live in that environment see it the other way around or could see it the other way around.

Doug, did you have anything you wanted to add?

Mr. Plamping: I don't think so. I think we do understand the challenge that's in front of you. In fact, I've been the CAO of

communities in the southeast and the northwest of Alberta, where the distances are just huge, and we finish up with very, very large divisions, so I definitely understand those challenges. But we also support the position of the city of Red Deer in that they don't see the mix of rural and city voters either, and they don't think, you know, that it works for either of us. So their position has been for the two divisions.

Dr. Archer: Well, those will certainly be the challenges that we're working with over the next weeks and months.

Since we're probably closing soon, let me close by saying that I sure appreciate seeing the effort that people in this part of the province have put in to look pretty closely at our recommendations and provide really thoughtful feedback that reflects a lot of discussions that obviously have taken place amongst your associates. Thanks very much for that.

Mr. Kemmere: Could I make a closing comment? I guess my comment would be that if I have one regret, it's that I didn't get more involved in the beginning of the process, in the first round of hearings. I think that often it is one of these situations where you don't know what to say until you have something put in front of you. We had something put in front of us that really shook us up; I'll be honest about that. It really shook us up, and it got our attention. We're presently working on a land-use bylaw in our county. We had nobody showing up at meetings until all of a sudden somebody grabbed onto it and said: whoa, what's going on here? Then all of a sudden we had 200 people showing up at meetings, but that's because they had a document to look at.

It does slow your process down, and we fully appreciate that, but I appreciate the fact that you give the public, that we are partly representing here, that opportunity to give our perspective on it because this is as a result of talking with a lot of constituents at the same time.

The Chair: Well, thank you very, very much. It's much appreciated, and I can assure you that we have had a lot of input. We'll be looking at it very carefully because it's pretty consistent. Again, thank you, and we thank you especially for coming at 6.

Mr. Kemmere: Well, I'm hoping the council meeting is over by now.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Kemmere: Best of luck in your pursuit.

The Chair: Thank you. We're adjourned.

[The hearing adjourned at 6:38 p.m.]

