



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Olds

Wednesday, January 25, 2017
8:30 a.m.

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Electoral Boundaries Commission

Justice Myra Bielby, Chair

Gwen Day
Laurie Livingstone
W. Bruce McLeod
D. Jean Munn

Support Staff

Robert H. Reynolds, QC
Shannon Dean
Aaron Roth
Shannon Parke
Tracey Sales
Janet Schwegel

Clerk
Law Clerk and Director of House Services
Administrator
Communications Officer
Communications Consultant
Managing Editor of *Alberta Hansard*

Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Olds

Public Participants

Pat Alexander, Reeve, Clearwater County

Bruce Beattie, Reeve, Mountain View County

Bob Clark

Curt Maki, Deputy Reeve, Clearwater County

Fred Nash, Mayor, Town of Rocky Mountain House

Jason Nixon, MLA, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre

Leo Denis Puerzer

Michael Robertson, President, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills Wildrose Constituency Association

Rhonda Wise

8:30 a.m.**Wednesday, January 25, 2017**

[Justice Bielby in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Thanks very much for coming out to this meeting of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. I'm delighted to see such a good turnout. You get full marks for having the best subscription rate of anyone in the province. We had some downtime in Edmonton during our first day, and in comparison Olds has a terrific turnout. So thanks very much for being so interested in what we're doing.

My name is Justice Myra Bielby. I'm a judge of the Court of Appeal of Alberta normally, but at the moment I'm chairing the Electoral Boundaries Commission. Now, to my left is another commissioner, Jean Munn of Calgary, and then we have Laurie Livingstone of Calgary. To my far right is Gwen Day from Carstairs and then Bruce McLeod from Acme. Together we're the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

We've been asked by the Legislature of the province to do a job as required by something called the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, which is a piece of legislation that was passed by the government of Alberta, most recently in 2009, but variations on this have gone back for decades. The purpose or the point is that a democracy respects the right to vote. That means that every eligible person should be able to vote in an election and one person's vote should be relatively equal in effect to another person's vote.

As population changes and moves, that can be impacted if large numbers of people, for example, move into a constituency. That's the situation we're facing in Alberta. In the last eight years, since the last time an Electoral Boundaries Commission sat, Alberta has had a phenomenal 20-plus per cent increase in its population. More than 800,000 people have moved into the province net, even offset against some people who may have moved out. Notwithstanding the current economic downturn, perhaps, we've grown terrifically. The legislation requires a review every eight to 10 years, but the circumstances also at this moment are particularly interesting.

Our job, the boundaries commission's job, is to research these issues and make recommendations to the Legislature as to whether, where, and how our provincial constituency boundaries should be changed to ensure effective, proper representation by our MLAs in future provincial elections. As I say, representation based on population is a fundamental principle of democracy.

Now, Alberta has 87 provincial constituencies. We have not been given any additional constituencies this time to address this increase in population. Perhaps some of you were involved on the last occasion with the boundaries commission, and at that time the province created four new constituencies. That was available to the boundaries commission to use to address some of the increase in population, but that hasn't happened this time. We're still at 87. If you think of Alberta as a pie or a pizza, it's cut up into those 87 pieces that you see on the screen based on the recommendations of the 2010 provincial boundaries commission. Our job is to make a recommendation as to whether any of those boundaries should be moved or not because of changes in the population in that particular constituency.

Needless to say, each constituency returns one MLA to the Legislature at the conclusion of every provincial election. We have 87 MLAs for the 87 constituencies. Our population has increased by more than 20 per cent since the last time we've done this; however, the challenge is that the population hasn't moved equally into each of the 87 constituencies. They have favoured certain constituencies, and other constituencies have seen no real increase in population, even a slight decrease in certain circumstances.

But the average population for each constituency has changed. In 2010 if you took the province's population and divided it by 87, you got 40,800. The boundary commission then was able to make recommendations that saw 85 per cent of the provincial constituencies be within a 10 per cent swing of that 40,800 figure. Now our estimated population is 48,884. It's increased by 8,000 on average in every constituency. But because of the population moving into different areas in different proportions, we've got variations in our constituencies, shown on this map of the province here, that range from a low of 25,192 people up to 79,034 people. That's pretty much all occurred because of an influx of population in the last eight years.

Now, these figures are based on information we were given by the Alberta Treasury Board, and I understand they got it largely from municipal censuses. All of the cities and towns did a census last summer, and they relied on that. The actual Statistics Canada 2016 census population figures are coming out on February 8. Once we have that information, we will adjust these figures to reflect the actual, but I'm not expecting there'll be a huge change.

If you look at our maps, you'll see some colours. Just looking at Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills as an example, in blue at the bottom you'll see that we had 41,231 people here the last time and you were 1 per cent above the provincial average. Now you have 47,038 people, and you'll be 4 per cent below the provincial average. The red is current, and the blue is what happened last time. That's important because that's the basis on which your actual constituencies now exist, that last-time recommendation. This blue and red is true for all of our maps. We've got the maps of the surrounding constituencies here, too, and that's how you can interpret them.

Our job, because the growth hasn't been spread equally, is to make recommendations to ensure that each constituency has effective representation. That doesn't mean simply dividing the province into 87 squares, each of which has 48,800 people in it. If that was the job, there wouldn't need to be a boundaries commission. Somebody in Edmonton could have just taken a pencil and ruler and done that. There are other things that we have to consider in addition to relative population densities.

This legislation says that we're to take into account common community interests and organizations, including those of Indian reserves and Métis settlements, and that wherever possible we're to respect community and neighbourhood boundaries. In some of the larger cities that might have to be divided up into more than one constituency, we shouldn't go through a neighbourhood if we can avoid it. We should respect municipal boundaries, so we should avoid cutting up any town or village inadvertently or otherwise. We want to keep common communities together. We're to try to create boundaries for constituencies representing geographical features where they exist. Major highways, rivers, mountains sometimes, naturally the border of Alberta with British Columbia: those are boundaries that we try to respect in the creation of our constituencies.

But more important than my chatting about those factors is the fact that we're looking for your input today. That's not a closed list. Those are just things that we must consider, but we can consider anything else that's relevant. I think that's one of the reasons that the Legislature created this process of coming out and having public hearings and inviting written submissions, so that we're not left in a vacuum in deciding how to find those community interests in a particular area.

We started our work last week in Edmonton. Prior to that time, we hadn't looked at any of these maps or really discussed what we're going to do on any individual basis, but we will do that by May 31. On May 31 or before we have to have filed a set of interim recommendations, 87 interim recommendations, with the provincial

Legislature. Those recommendations will be posted on our website, www.abebc.ca, and I'm sure the Legislature will post them as well.

We'll then engage in a second round of consultation. I understand that often people can't think of what to say if they're just speaking about a general concept, but once a specific recommendation is made, they see how it's going to work and they might have some views or thoughts or suggestions. So we're going to go through a second round of written submissions then and a second set of public hearings. We'll file our final report with the Alberta Legislature no later than October 31, 2017.

8:40

In the normal course the Legislature will consider those recommendations and pass legislation adopting those recommendations prior to the next provincial election. That seems a long way off, and people have asked me: well, gee, why are you doing it now? Apparently, the returning officers like to have at least a year lead time in setting up an election, so they are very keen to know what the boundaries are. That's the reason for the timing. In fact, the timing is set out in these three steps in the legislation: formation of the commission, the first report, and the second report. We don't have any authority to vary that. Our authority is limited to the 87 constituencies, their boundaries, and we can also take suggestions in regard to naming constituencies.

Sometimes people want to change the name of their constituency. We had a very spirited mayor of Blackfalds the other day who won the room on wanting to add Blackfalds to Lacombe-Ponoka. That's also one of the things that we're able to make recommendations on.

Now, we are accepting written submissions, and I'm happy to say that we have as of today's date approximately 450 that have been submitted. The last time around in the whole year there were only 500 written submissions. In two weeks we've got 450, but I think that I have to admit that the reason for that is largely because we're not just accepting them by post. You can go onto our website and just make your submission right on the website and hit send, or you can e-mail us or use various types of social media or even still the post. There's been quite a good uptake on that, and we've received and continue to receive a very large number of written submissions.

At the end of today if you talk about this and somebody says, "Gee, if I'd known, I would've put in a submission," it's not too late. We're accepting written submissions until February 8 and updates to those until February 17 because some people are concerned that the new census data will affect their submission to a degree, so we're giving them some extra time to update their submission if they feel that that's happened once they have the actual numbers.

Written submissions will be considered just as thoroughly as verbal submissions, but we're really grateful that you've come today because we've found that the actual suggestions that people have made have been very helpful, and it's given us a chance to ask some questions ourselves about local things that, you know, you can't really do if you're just reading a written submission. So I'm delighted to see you.

Just to go over the rules that we have to follow in the law in setting our boundaries, parity of population isn't our only consideration. The Supreme Court of Canada has told us that each of us has the right not to have the political strength or value of our vote unduly diluted. That said, our legislation permits variances from the average of up to 25 per cent up or down from the provincial average, and there is also a potential of four special constituencies that can have a variance of up to 50 per cent below. Based on the last Electoral Boundaries Commission recommendation, we only have two of those, Peace River and Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley, which butt up against the north. Keeping that in mind, the

last commission was able to come in with under a 10 per cent variance in 85 per cent of the constituencies. We can't assume that we will necessarily go up to 25 per cent if there are other options available after we consider all of our factors.

In summary, our job will be this: when we meet after we've completed all of the hearings and after the deadline for the written submissions, we're going to look at the actual population in a constituency, compare it to the provincial average, which will be approximately 48,800, see if there's much of a difference, and if there is, consider whether any of the factors that I've gone through today or any factors raised in anybody's submission justify not moving a boundary to reach that provincial average. But just because we might feel the need to move a boundary based on that, that doesn't suggest how that boundary should be moved. That's where people have been especially helpful, and we've been really grateful for that.

This is just an example, but it's fresh on my mind because our last hearing was yesterday afternoon in Drumheller. Several people mentioned how they couldn't understand how such a tiny bit of Kneehill county had been left in their constituency of Drumheller-Stettler when the rest of the county was served by another MLA. That was very helpful because we can make note of that. We would never have known that otherwise, so when we come to our task of looking at Drumheller-Stettler, I'm sure we'll keep that in mind. If there is anything in your boundaries which is like that, if you think there's something in your constituency that doesn't really reflect the rest of the constituency perhaps or would be better in another constituency, we particularly welcome that type of input.

Now, we're fully subscribed today, which is terrific, so that means, for better or for worse, that we're going to have to keep all of our presenters to the 10-minute time limit plus five minutes for any questions from the panel because we have a public hearing later today in Lethbridge. So we're on the road to Lethbridge after we leave here.

With those remarks, I'll just conclude by saying that *Alberta Hansard* is with us. They're recording everything that you'll say here today and everything that I'm saying. That will be put online, on our website. You know, you can just listen to the tape kind of thing of all our hearings on the website. There's about a two-day lag to get them on the website. Also, there will be a written transcript of all of the hearings available on our website, so know that you're being recorded when you make your submissions.

We'll start with Fred Nash.

Mr. Nash: I have a written submission. I've made copies for you as well so that it's easier to see the notes and everything else.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Nash: There are also these economic feasibility studies. I'll just let you pass them out.

The Chair: Just if you wouldn't mind, Mr. Nash, could you tell us what constituency you reside in?

Mr. Nash: Of course. Distinguished panel, I'm the proud mayor of beautiful Rocky Mountain House, Mayor Fred Nash. I represent electoral district 77, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Currently Rocky Mountain House and area are feeling the negative effects of low oil prices, agricultural setbacks or harvest setbacks, the environmental movement towards green energy, and the slowdown of consumer confidence, although these concerns are not to be overshadowed by the largest concern, which is the lack of investor confidence in our commercial developers. Our town's 2016 year-end building permits graph shows – and I'll leave these

two little books; it's in this book as well – that we had a high of \$40.1 million in building permits in 2014 compared to a meagre \$9.2 million in building permits in 2016. In 2016 the Rocky Mountain House municipal census counted a decrease of 80 residents – we were at 7,300; we're now at 7,220 – which filters down to a revenue decrease for local businesses. One landlord reports up to a 38 per cent rental vacancy. You can see why we're nervously awaiting the results of the Canada census next month.

However, on a more positive note, you will see that Rocky Mountain House and Clearwater county and area have many significant attributes which provide opportunities and hope.

Rocky Mountain House is the largest town in electoral district 77 compared to Rimbey, Bentley, Eckville, Sundre, and the village of Caroline.

Our MLA has three offices: Rimbey, Rocky Mountain House, and Sundre.

The Cowboy Trail, highway 22, and David Thompson, highway 11, intersect our area into quarters. Our main business corridors are both highways 22 and 11.

With the land area approximately 24,000 square kilometres, our MLA spends many, many hours behind his windshield while he's serving his constituencies.

8:50

Rocky Mountain House and Clearwater have a very diverse economy. Number one is oil and gas; then forestry; agriculture; tourism; essential services like education, health, and government; and retail business.

Contributing to our economy and culture are three First Nations: the O'Chiese, Sunchild, and Big Horn reserves. The Big Horn First Nation is affiliated with the Morley reserve. We have an excellent working relationship with all three First Nations. I've been honoured and privileged to smoke the peace pipe with the chiefs and the elders, speak at many powwows, and receive an eagle feather for collaborating to remove barriers and encourage healing.

The Alberta government award of excellence was received collectively by Clearwater county, the town of Rocky Mountain House, and the village of Caroline for a Stronger Together agreement. We have a functioning and proven model, a modern framework for other communities to follow. Our collaborative network is evidenced by our regional airport, regional waste authority, regional fire service, regional FCSS as well as cost sharing for community buildings and festivities. Clearwater and Rocky Mountain House are currently negotiating some very long-term revenue-sharing agreements for lands around the town of Rocky Mountain House.

Our action plan for solutions to the electoral boundaries. The number one solution to increase the population in electoral district 77 is to build the Howse Pass highway through the Rocky Mountains, connecting B.C. and central Alberta. We completed a feasibility review on the Howse Pass in 2005. The copies are in here, and that's one of the copies you've got. We received a letter of support from the current Alberta highway minister, Mr. Brian Mason, and the B.C. government confirmed that this highway is in their long-term strategy. It is forecast that the Howse Pass will generate a \$2 billion per year boom in business for central Alberta. I have a video, but they wouldn't accept it, so I'll try to get it on through other means.

The second solution to increase our population is to develop at least one world-class anthracite carbon deposit within the 40-kilometre area of Rocky Mountain House. One mine would create 800 permanent positions. There are currently two in the process of development. There are two of these rich opportunities within the

area, an estimated 1,400 jobs, and if you multiply that by 2.3 people per family, it gets a little over 3,200 residents.

The third and easiest solution is to reassign citizens from Banff-Cochrane district 49, with the projected 31 per cent overrepresentation right now.

In my personal experience and observation, whenever I've come to a decision or a fork in the road of life, the more difficult choice is always more challenging; however, the learning and the rewards are always much greater.

Good luck in your challenging endeavour to rebalance the boundaries. I'll take any questions.

The Chair: Thanks very much, Mayor Nash.

I will start with my question of: do you know how many people are estimated to reside on the three reserves within your constituency?

Mr. Nash: It's about 2,100, I think. I'm going by memory. I do have a graph back in my office, but it's approximately that.

The Chair: Okay. None of those reserves butt up against the edge of your constituency?

Mr. Nash: Yes. The O'Chiese and the Sunchild are on the north end, and the Big Horn is out towards the mountains, within the mountain foothills.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Nash: We have an exceptionally good working relationship with them.

The Chair: Okay. Great. Questions?

Ms Livingstone: I'm just wondering. A suggestion was made when we were in Red Deer last week that Rimbey might naturally belong with the Innisfail-Sylvan Lake riding as opposed to the riding that it's currently in. What are your thoughts on that?

Mr. Nash: To meet the population, the representation, we wouldn't like to lose anything else. Rimbey has been represented very well by our MLA. Our former MLA came from there. The current MLA lives in the south end of the riding. But the biggest thing that we have that I see as an issue with our MLA is that he has to travel an awful lot to get to all the functions, whether it's a school graduation or whether it's – he has to have an awful lot of highway time. He's been doing an exceptionally good job, as the previous ones did, in getting to all these functions, but it takes away from his family life.

The short answer is that I would not like to see us lose it, but whatever you guys decide – I know it's a difficult job to balance it. Banff-Cochrane just south of us, right close to us: there are acreages, so it's not heavily, densely populated. If you were to go a little bit further south than that, then it gets even further travelling.

Did I answer your question?

Ms Livingstone: Yes. We're just trying to get a sense of who naturally fits together if we do have to start shifting all the lines around, to make the minimal mistakes possible if we have to start moving lines.

The Chair: Okay. Just to build on that a bit, you're thinking that your population could be brought up a bit if we moved your southern boundary down into the Banff-Cochrane constituency.

Mr. Nash: Correct.

The Chair: They, of course, are well over the provincial average, so that's a different kind of issue for us. Do you have any suggestion or idea of where naturally that line might fall if we moved it along a highway or a river or what have you?

Mr. Nash: Well, I've looked at that. We're over there in the far corner, and there's this kind of a straight line, but if you continued that straight line, there aren't high-density areas or population to draw from there. That's the acreages or farms.

The Chair: Right. So how far south would we have to go?

Mr. Nash: I'm guessing it would have to go another approximately 10 kilometres or so south, but I didn't have all the numbers with me to do that.

The Chair: Sure. I just wondered if you had a thought on that.
All right. Other questions?

Mrs. Day: Yeah. Sorry; I didn't look at it very carefully, but where does the boundary now exist to the south? Where is that cut-off happening? Just below Sundre?

Mr. Nash: Yeah. There's the Red Deer River, and it actually goes about two or three miles south of the Red Deer River, which is a natural boundary. But they would have to extend further south than that, then.

Mrs. Day: So it would go further south into, like, Bergen and the Water Valley area?

Mr. Nash: Yeah.

Mrs. Day: Okay. Fairly dense subdivisions in the Water Valley area.

Mr. Nash: The areas in Water Valley, yeah.

Mrs. Day: I mean, it's not like a town quite, but it's quite a lot in there.

Mr. Nash: If you look at our numbers for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, we estimate around 41,000, maybe 42,000, and we've got to get that 6,000 more. There isn't that there. But with the opportunities – and we have very positive opportunities with the Howse Pass or these big mines. Plus we've got to get – how do I say that – developers' confidence or consumers' confidence back. And that's the one thing I didn't mention. Because we've had so many changes in our provincial and federal governments, I think that is holding us back a little bit.

Mrs. Day: Okay. So your main direction would say looking to the south, not to the north or not to the east.

Mr. Nash: Not to the north because in Drayton Valley it's even less dense for a longer period.

Mrs. Day: Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. Nash: Any other questions?

The Chair: Yes. Sometimes the answer to one question leads to another question. You were commenting that the population in Drayton Valley to the north is under the provincial average as well. We don't, I see, have a map that clearly addresses that, but just looking at my big map – I can't see it either. If we had to drop the northern boundary of Drayton Valley – and we haven't made this decision. We're just having this conversation. If we had to move it

south to improve their numbers, any suggestion on where that should happen?

Mr. Nash: Like I said, you would have to go quite a ways south to pick up people because it's a very low-density area. It's high hills. Yeah. It gets difficult. It's nice to have everybody live together, but it gets difficult. I'm guessing it would be at least 20 kilometres or more south in my estimate.

The Chair: Thanks.

Mr. McLeod: Mayor Nash, you talked about Water Valley in extending south. We've also had a presentation from the AAMDC about not splitting up counties if we could in doing this. Are there two different counties involved here?

9:00

Mr. Nash: That would be Mountain View to the south and Clearwater county.

Mr. McLeod: Okay.

Mr. Nash: Clearwater county is well represented in our area. They're very, very aggressive and active with all the municipalities within their area. We do go outside their boundary a little bit already to the east.

Mr. McLeod: To the east. All right. Thank you.

Mr. Nash: I believe Reeve Alexander will be speaking later on today.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.
Any other questions?

Mr. Nash: I think Gwen has one.

Mrs. Day: Just one more question. Yes, it's a long way south if it works, but do you see that there's a cohesiveness to that in the type of lifestyle and the type of people that your MLA would have to represent? Do you think it's cohesive in that way? I don't know if there's a natural economic corridor, that they would go north as far as Rocky, but do you think it's a good mix?

Mr. Nash: That's affirmative. I believe so. It is ranching and acreages and rural lifestyle, and the Cowboy Trail, highway 22, goes right up the middle. It is one of our main business corridors.

Mrs. Day: So it's a link itself. Yeah. Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thanks so much.

Our next presenter is Michael Robertson. Good morning, Mr. Robertson. Could you tell us what constituency you reside in?

Mr. Robertson: Yes. I reside in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, and I'm representing the Wildrose constituency association here.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Robertson: Hon. commissioners, fellow presenters, and fellow citizens, I would like to thank each of you for allowing me the opportunity to submit testimony this morning regarding the creation of new electoral boundaries here in Alberta. I have lived and worked in this riding all my life, having been raised and currently residing on a seven-generation family farm. I currently teach, and I traverse the riding all the way over to Three Hills every day so that I can teach senior high humanities there. I very much wish it to remain so. However, this commission is not legislatively

tasked with assessing how I feel but more to create the ideal constituency boundaries according to principles that you have laid out, the population and representation thereof, the legislative obligations of sections 13, 14, and 15 of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. Therefore, I will attempt to condense and focus my remarks to reflect such obligations.

First, I would like to point out that I went to great lengths to consult the past legacies of the boundaries drawn regarding this riding and the effects thereof. It should be noted that aside from a few brief interludes the riding of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills has consistently and primarily been represented by no more than two MLAs through the entire history of Alberta. After the first distribution in 1905, where we were part of the Rosebud riding, the constituency was part of either the Olds or Didsbury riding from 1909 to 1961, thereafter being reunited in 1997. The eastern portion of the riding was portioned off and united with everything east of highway 2 outside of Calgary and down highway 1 and west of Drumheller. The western part of the riding became the riding of Olds-Didsbury and remained so except for a brief time between 1993 and 1996 when the boundaries were expanded south to include west Airdrie.

If anything is proof that these so-called rural ridings don't work, it's that period, between '93 and '96, when the ridings of Olds-Didsbury and Three Hills both contained parts of Airdrie. No one in either riding, urban or rural, was particularly happy with the representation they were getting, not because of the MLAs. Let me be clear on that. It was simply a case of different needs and interests, which were recognized at the time in time for the 1997 election. Aside from some expansions at the fringes, since 1997 the riding of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills has once again found itself in a state of equilibrium. It is clear that these borders are more than just arbitrary lines on a map to us. We actually understand and identify with them as part of our current and historical heritage.

Secondly, I would like to make clear that due to this relative consistency of shape due to geography and municipal borders, we have had a few side effects, intentional or otherwise. We have been blessed in this riding to grow at approximately the rate at which the rest of the province has seen fit to distribute and redistribute seats. In fact, I would like to note that we already have relatively close to the average population for the proposed redistributed ridings, with a variance of – what's up there? Four? – 3.77 per cent or so between our population and the expectation to be verified by StatsCan.

We are located between major population centres, in which some of our population chooses to work, but we have remained largely and relatively homogeneous and largely agricultural. This is not to say that we do not see growth in our major towns, which are located along major transportation corridors, but we remain largely connected to the two counties, Mountain View and Kneehill, that largely comprise the riding and have historically.

The median income of the riding is \$53,174, which puts us below the provincial average. Agriculture is the primary industry. No single municipality in this riding has more than 8,300 people living in an urban setting. In point of fact, while there is an oil industry and some towns have become bedroom communities to an extent, only 9 per cent of the riding is comprised of immigrants. The population, industry, and needs of the communities within Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills are largely homogeneous in nature and are thus best represented as a single unit.

Finally, while I recognize that it is beyond your mandate to explicitly note the culture of a given riding, although I did see it on a nice diagram up there, I hope that you will see the merit of including it as a consideration. I live and work in the western and eastern extremes of the riding of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, but for all intents and purposes I see a single group of people with a

singular, unbreakable bond. Whether public or private school, adult or teenager, I have witnessed over and over again how similar in mindset and values my fellow citizens are. Oh, sure, we disagree with each other from time to time, but it's more for sport and entertainment than anything else. When the chips are down, the ballots cast, the harvest needs to come in, we all pull together as one community here.

I have seen the rise of the Rural Roots movement in the face of urban encroachment, student votes, which I administer, student protests, which I do not, which show little or no generational divide. The citizens across this great constituency volunteered to assist farmers to get their harvest in when the weather refused to cooperate for more than 10 days last fall. I personally – and I'd like to note this – had more than seven neighbours and 12 students volunteer to assist, and it's an hour's drive for some of them.

I am proud to live and work in the riding of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. I'm honoured to represent it in my own small way. I implore the commission to leave our riding largely untouched in the redistribution rather than threatening to slice it up as they did in 2010. I realize it's a different commission, different time. They wanted to slice it into three pieces, divide it so that my grandparents, whom I can see from my house, would be in a different riding than me, and my neighbours to the south who helped us would be in a different riding than that. I understand that it's a difficult job. The people who live in this riding are more than just constituents drawn together arbitrarily. They're my neighbours, my friends, and my family.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. I'm going to ask you the same question that I've more or less asked everybody unless they happen to address it in their remarks. You're correct that Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills is relatively close to the provincial average in population size, but you're bordered by a number of constituencies that aren't. As has been pointed out, Banff-Cochrane is well above and the others are somewhat below. Based on your knowledge of travelling this area extensively, do you have any suggestions to make in regard to aligning constituency boundaries for some of the other constituencies; for example, a bit of Kneehill county that apparently ended up somehow in Drumheller-Stettler, anything like that?

Mr. Robertson: Oh, sure. From time to time that boundary has been drawn and redrawn and redrawn. Sometimes it's square, and sometimes it follows the river. It seems a bit arbitrary to me, whether it's in or out. It just depends on the relative population size. I believe that half the time it's been in and half the time it's been out of the Olds or Didsbury or Three Hills ridings. It seems like a good move to include it this time around if we're adjusting.

9:10

The other thing is – and I'm looking at the Airdrie one in particular – that there's a great deal of sort of that rural thing going on there. I've heard from members not that they're unhappy that they're represented from Airdrie but that they have different needs and different desires and different wants. With the inclusion of Crossfield, in particular, and the surrounding area it would make some sense to continue down that 2A corridor. I understand that, in particular with Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, there might be some temptation to include Sundre. Sometimes it is included, and sometimes it isn't. From a distribution perspective, they're more in need of Sundre, and it doesn't necessarily align with our highway corridors.

That being said, it seems like a logical step to therefore include places like Water Valley and Cremona and all of that. There's a

definite feeling out in that part of the riding that they are distinctly different because of the agricultural base. There seems to be a dividing line right at the highway there between the type of landform that you're encountering east and west of the highway on the Cowboy Trail.

Ms Munn: Which highway is that?

Mr. Robertson: The Cowboy Trail, highway 22.

If you're making a dividing line, that's not a bad place because Cremona is largely agricultural and largely focused on that kind of thing. Once you get east of that Cowboy Trail, you're going to notice that the parkland and all of that drops off relatively rapidly, not that the hills immediately drop off, but it becomes agricultural land almost instantaneously whereas if you go west of it, it's very parkland. You still get into forestry reserve and all sorts of things like that. I think that's reflected in the timber industry, that runs up and down that highway constantly between Cochrane, in particular, and Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, whereas there's very little, say, timber once you get east of the Cowboy Trail.

The Chair: Any other thoughts on anything that might or might not be wisely included in your riding? Just looking at the map here on the wall, if I look at the boundary with Banff-Cochrane, there's a little cut-out there that looks like an upside-down set of stairs. Do you know what that is, what that represents?

Mr. Robertson: You're looking at sort of Water Valley. That's particularly because there is basically one road in and the same road out again. You know, I spend a good deal of time in and out of Water Valley. There are quite a few wonderful camps out there, and my children attend a couple of them. It is distinctly different landform, but I can't say that culturally they're that astronomically different. If anything, they're even more small-town and even more aligned with us. I understand that on the map it looks kind of bizarre to sort of slice in and slice out again.

Cremona and Water Valley used to share a fire department. Now they have separate departments, but they are united with each other in case of any calls and that kind of thing. So there is a tie between Cremona and Water Valley that has been important strategically.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now I'm going to ask you to go way out on a limb there. You've already talked about Airdrie. If we were to move a boundary in Airdrie, anything we should or shouldn't keep in mind?

Mr. Robertson: I think the move in 1993 is a particularly instructive one in that account. Slicing Airdrie in half was a bad idea. It created two rural ridings where you had these large population basins at the bottom which really needed a more urban representation and had particular needs in trying to align a transportation policy with Calgary and all sorts of things like that. They're really becoming that bedroom community.

You know, we call Carstairs a bedroom community, and there is a chunk of the population that drives, but if I'm honest, I don't think it is a true bedroom community. The whole population doesn't pick up and leave during the day. It might seem like that sometimes, but most of them are farming or in local businesses. They're not traversing all the way to Calgary. They might traverse to Airdrie, perhaps. Particularly the rural area surrounding Airdrie: I know that was constantly part of the redistribution, and that area has seen a lot of volatility throughout Alberta's history. That southern boundary of our riding there could quite easily extend closer to Airdrie but

not so close as to infringe on their potential expansion so that we'd then run into the same issue again, as we did in '93 and '96.

The Chair: Is there a natural dividing line there?

Mr. Robertson: Not in particular. There are secondary highways that we can call one way or the other. I'm not sure – on the map I can't see it particularly – how far down you get to Madden. I travel the area fairly regularly. It's just that I'm not sure where – there's no sign. I'm on the board of the Cremona Congregational Church, and we have several people who attend from Madden and the surrounding area there, too, so it's culturally aligned, I suppose.

The Chair: Right.

Other questions?

Thank you so much.

Mr. Robertson: Thank you.

The Chair: All right. Don MacIntyre? He's not here at the moment. We'll move on to Jason Nixon. Good morning.

Mr. Nixon: Good morning, my friends from *Hansard* and the panel. It's good to see you today. My name is Jason Nixon, as mentioned, and I have the distinct pleasure of being the Member of the Legislative Assembly for the beautiful riding of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. I've worked with my office staff and have heard from many of my constituents about the boundaries commission and thought it would be a good idea to stop by today, have a brief visit with you, and talk about some of the things that I'm hearing.

First, a little bit about my riding. The population of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, according to my last Speaker's office budget, which was the last number I have, is about 44,000 people, so it is still within the current standards. That's about 11 per cent, probably, below what the new population average would be. It's still nowhere near the 25 per cent. It's a constituency that's about 23,000 square kilometres. Currently, I believe, it is the second-largest constituency south of Edmonton. Drumheller-Stettler, I believe, is the largest.

We currently have 14 municipalities and over 90 elected municipal officials. If I count all of our summer villages and those types of things, the numbers become astronomical. I won't try because if you ask me to name them, I will accidentally miss it, and then that will end up in the paper, and I'll be in trouble. We have four school boards, 28 trustees, three significant hospitals, and several other medical-type facilities that spread out through the vast land mass. We have 27 schools, including 11 high schools; of course, multiple agricultural societies and community groups; more community centres than I could try to count; and two sawmills, one out of Rocky Mountain House and one out of the Sundre area, that both work together to manage our forest reserves inside the west country, which makes up a tremendous amount of the constituency of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

One thing that I think is very important and often overlooked but, I believe, is important for the commission to remember is the effective representation requirement. In the rural areas we need to do whatever is possible to ensure that we have effective representation. If rural ridings increase in size dramatically or the number of stakeholders increases significantly, we run the risk of creating an even more dramatic divide in representation between rural and urban representation.

I love doing my job. It's a great privilege to do it, and I hope I continue to do it for many years. One of the great challenges that you will find for my rural colleagues versus my urban colleagues is

the tremendous amount of windshield time that we have to spend to be able to get to our constituents. I do close to 60,000 kilometres a year to get across my constituency. It is a factor that has to be considered as we go out to represent our communities. There's a point where the driving will become impossible. I'm not saying that I'm at that point in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, but it is a thing that has to be considered.

Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre is also unique in that it has two First Nation reserves that also work very closely together up in Clearwater county and interact very closely with the community of Rocky Mountain House and the county of Clearwater. It would be important to keep those within the same area going forward.

9:20

In addition to that, looking at the county of Clearwater – I am the only MLA for the county of Clearwater – there's only, really, one large community within the county of Clearwater, and that is Rocky Mountain House. But Rocky Mountain House has a very close relationship with the village of Caroline, which is south of it. Again, I know you would hear that from all their municipal officials as well, that it's extremely important to keep Caroline and Rocky Mountain House working together going forward.

The other issue is that we see tremendous similarities on what the last speaker was referring to as the Cowboy Trail. That's the highway 22 corridor. It's a natural trade corridor. The issues that I face representing Rocky Mountain House are very similar to the issues that I face in Sundre, in the communities. They face similar issues with west country issues. Both of them have vast areas, all the way to the B.C. border, to the west of them that face similar issues in emergency management, tourism, forestry, and similar agriculture issues when they're there. They're very similar issues, which makes it easier to effectively represent them because you're not driving a few hundred kilometres south and all of a sudden just changing the complete topic or focus when you're working with those communities.

With that, I think my main goal would actually be to take some questions from you guys about our constituency and see if I could answer them.

The Chair: Okay. I'll start. That's the privilege of the chair. Do you have the population of your two reserves?

Mr. Nixon: I don't have that on me.

The Chair: We've heard a speaker here this morning suggest that – well, based on Alberta Treasury Board, your population figures, at 41,900, are slightly lower than what you gave us. There was a suggestion that this be addressed by dropping your southern border to include part of Banff-Cochrane, which is well above the provincial average. I appreciate that you might not want to comment on this, but what do you think of that idea?

Mr. Nixon: Well, if you're asking where I would add if I was the one trying to add to it – I will answer that – then Banff-Cochrane on that map would be a natural spot because, again, you have that highway 22 corridor. There are a tremendous number of similarities on the highway 22 corridor. If you look at the map, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre where Banff-Cochrane butts up to it – I mean, it's not the best map – that whole stretch down there is very similar to everything that we represent, has similar issues. The communities are interactive, you know, through Water Valley, Bergen, all those types of communities down there, so it would be natural, for sure.

Now, I would say that it would be very tough to represent parts of Cochrane, the town itself, and represent my constituency at the same time. There is an extremely big difference between the community of Cochrane, a bedroom community of Calgary, versus Rocky Mountain House or Sundre, but the area, particularly the Mountain View county area between my constituency and Mr. Westhead's constituency, is definitely similar. In fact, I would say that those communities have more in common with my communities currently than they do with the rest: Banff, Canmore, Cochrane.

The Chair: Okay. Perhaps a harder question. Looking to the constituency immediately north of you, which is West Yellowhead, they're so far below the provincial average that it looks like legally we have to look at that. I'm not saying that we've decided to do this, far from it, but I just want to get your take on it. If we decided that we had to drop that down into Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre and push the whole constituency along the west border down a bit, is there a natural dividing line that you'd suggest?

Mr. Nixon: No, and I'm going to tell you why. It would create a tremendous amount of difficulty. The area between Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre and West Yellowhead up there is extremely remote. The distance between Rocky Mountain House and the community of Drayton Valley I have to drive because we share a school board, so I often do drive up there, and there is not a lot of civilization between those two communities. It would be extremely vast. So you would have to add a tremendous amount of land mass to get it down there, and then my concern would be, then, that you would be breaking up Clearwater county, which currently has one member of the Legislature, and have somebody from extremely far up north all of a sudden trying to represent Clearwater county.

I don't know the Yellowhead riding as well – I'm sure you'll be speaking with people from there – but I think it would be more natural to move it towards the east in that case just because of the land mass between.

I mean, another example would be that if you look at the map, on Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre's western boundary we butt up to Banff-Cochrane there as well. Naturally, you think: well, that'd be a way to go in there. But there just would be no significant ability for us to be able to get across there, I mean, because we have mountain ranges in the way. Transportation would be a significant issue. You would literally have to go down to Cochrane and drive around. So I would hesitate to break up Clearwater county.

That would be my answer to that question, Your Honour.

The Chair: Sure. Of course.

Other questions?

Ms Munn: I don't have any questions.

Ms Livingstone: You already covered everything I was going to ask. Thank you.

The Chair: Thanks so very much.

Mr. Nixon: Okay. Thanks for your time.

The Chair: Well, thank you. It's always great to hear from an MLA.

All right. Leo Puerzer.

Mr. Puerzer: My name is Leo Denis Puerzer. I'm a fourth-generation Albertan. In fact . . .

The Chair: Could I interrupt by just asking where you live, which constituency?

Mr. Puerzer: Oh, I live in Airdrie.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Puerzer: To say that I have a connection to the land is obvious. My ancestors go back to before there was even a province. I can trace them back to the 1700s, so to say that I have a connection to the land is obvious. I also must say that to live in Alberta, you're required to have a sense of humour. One of the best jokes I heard lately is that the economy is so bad that the 10 wealthiest people in Alberta have had to move back in with their parents. I thought that was quite comical.

Anyway, I live in Airdrie. We have excellent representation. We have over 62,000 people in our riding, and we're quite comfortable with that. I think that 59,000 are people under the age of four, but that's just from my visit to Walmart lately. Anyway, you already addressed the idea of increasing the number of ridings. I agree that we don't need that.

It's not my riding, but there are two ridings that need to be adjusted. Those are ridings 65, Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, and 52, Bonnyville-Cold Lake. From what I've heard from people in St. Paul, Two Hills, Elk Point, they would like to join Bonnyville-Cold Lake. That's just what I've heard. I don't live in that riding; I have ancestors that live up there: ancestors, relatives, whatever. Anyway, they're interested in changing that riding.

This is not exactly demanding of the commission, but I would like to see more citizen-initiated referendums, plebiscites. In the United States they call them propositions. They would be on the ballot whenever there's an election. I could offer two as examples. These are plebiscites that I would like to see on the next ballot in the next election. One would be: should Alberta remain on Mountain Standard Time year-round, yes or no? The other one would be: should there be photoradar on all provincial highways? I know there are some MLAs that are initiating these I guess they call them referendums. I'd like to see them voted on by the people in the next election.

Also, I would like to see – I've watched politics for many, many years. There seems to be a breakdown in both the Legislature and the House of Commons, and that is in the role of the Speaker. The Speaker is supposed to be an independent arbitrator. More often than not the perception is – and it's not always real – that the Speaker is more often than not siding with the ruling party. That really causes a lot of discord.

I would like to see a direct election of the Speaker of the House that would be province-wide, a simple 51 per cent. To participate as a candidate, you'd have to divest yourself of any interest in any political party or any political action committee. A lot of people told me the very same thing. We need a fair Speaker. Not to say that they're not trying their best. I'm not saying that, but the perception is that the Speaker is biased towards a certain party. That causes a lot of – quite frankly, we have a lot of discord in the Legislature right now. I think that would go a long way to addressing that.

The Chair: My turn?

Mr. Puerzer: Yeah. Absolutely. I've been babbling on.

The Chair: No, no. Not at all. You've been very clear. Thank you.

You're quite right. We don't have jurisdiction or authority to make the suggestions about citizens initiating referendums, but

there are many people here in this room, so you may have had another audience on that point.

I am very interested in the fact that you live in Airdrie because we haven't heard from anybody from Airdrie yet. Now, we're going to Calgary for two days of public hearings. Perhaps that's where we'll hear from the folks who live in Airdrie, but I don't want to miss this opportunity to talk to you.

9:30

Our figures are a little bit different than yours in regard to the number of people who live there, but that's probably because it was approached a little bit differently than maybe the strict city census because there is some rural area around. But just saying that we're likely to be looking at a population about 19 per cent above the provincial average in Airdrie . . .

Mr. Puerzer: Yeah. We're at 62,500, I think.

The Chair: Not saying that we've made any decision on that, because we haven't at all, but what would be a more natural way to reduce the size of Airdrie, then, otherwise? Should we move the northern boundary south, the southern boundary north? What do you think?

Mr. Puerzer: Well, from what I've heard, there's some push to split it down highway 2. So on the east side it would be in a different riding, and the west side would be in the Airdrie riding.

The Chair: Do you think that would be a good idea?

Mr. Puerzer: Well, we don't associate with people on the east side of the highway, anyway. That's an Airdrie joke, by the way.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Puerzer: If you live in Airdrie long enough, you'll know what I'm talking about.

That would be a fair one. I don't know whether you'd join up with the – as much as I try to prepare things, I never get it all right. Part of the Airdrie riding would join up with either Chestermere – that'd be probably logical – or Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. If you divide it down highway 2, part of that on the east side would join up with either Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills or with Chestermere.

The Chair: Okay. I'm sure that we'll eventually, maybe not today, hear the suggestion of moving the Airdrie border west into Banff-Cochrane to try to address their 31 per cent over the average. Does that make any sense to you?

Mr. Puerzer: Well, Airdrie doesn't look big on the map, but it's fairly widely spread out, so I would more think along the lines of splitting it down highway 2, so the east side would be in either Chestermere or in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

The Chair: Thank you so much.
Questions?

Mrs. Day: I'll ask a question. Thank you for coming today from Airdrie, all that way. I'm just looking at your riding, in that you're one of those rural ridings, where you have a combination of a large agricultural area and the city of Airdrie. Are you in the rural area or right in the city?

Mr. Puerzer: I live right in the city although I have my postal address in Beiseker. I kept that for other reasons.

Mrs. Day: Okay. Do you see that working well in your riding, all the agricultural component and the people being represented there along with the people . . .

Mr. Puerzer: Oh, yeah. Absolutely. I've been to meetings with my MLA, and there are a lot of people from the rural part of the riding and a lot of people from the city.

Mrs. Day: Okay. Great. Thanks. That's all I need.

Mr. McLeod: There was a suggestion that possibly the northern part of Airdrie could form up with Olds-Didsbury, for example.

Mr. Puerzer: Yeah. I've heard that, too.

Mr. McLeod: Is there more development up there? I'm kind of familiar with Airdrie.

Mr. Puerzer: Crossfield has really boomed. There are a lot of new houses up.

Mr. McLeod: In the northern side?

Mr. Puerzer: In Crossfield, yeah. That's north of Airdrie.

Mr. McLeod: Okay. I know there's a lot of construction and housing going on in the southern part of Airdrie.

Mr. Puerzer: Absolutely. Yeah.

Mr. McLeod: Yeah. So Airdrie is expanding quite a bit, is it?

Mr. Puerzer: Yeah. We're growing every day. There are new houses going up every day. You drive by one day, there's a vacant lot; the next day there are a bunch of houses up. So it's growing.

Mr. McLeod: I noticed a little kind of blimp in Airdrie there, going down, you know, kind of the bottom quarter there. Is that the area just by Balzac there?

Mr. Puerzer: Yeah. It's just north of Balzac, I think.

Mr. McLeod: Would that Balzac road sort of be a natural boundary?

Mr. Puerzer: I think so. It is, yeah.

Mr. McLeod: Okay. All right. Thank you.

Mr. Puerzer: Yeah. I have to look at my other map, but as much as I try to prepare for things, I'm never fully.

The Chair: Any other questions, panel?

Actually, you've been wonderfully prepared, I think.

Mr. Puerzer: I'm not used to talking in front of people.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much for being willing to suspend that and coming and talking to us today.

Mr. Puerzer: Well, thank you for your patience.

The Chair: Oh, not at all.

We're going to turn next to Rhonda Wise.

But I'm wondering, Mr. Clerk, do we have a small provincial map that I could be looking at while I'm holding the hearing just so that I can focus a little bit better? Thanks.

Good morning.

Mrs. Wise: Good morning. My name is Rhonda Wise. I am not so much here to talk about the boundaries although I will give a little bit of input. It stands to reason that Crossfield and Balzac would be a really good addition to bringing Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills down, and that would bring it straight across, but that's just my opinion.

I'm here to talk about the election itself. I have run, and . . .

The Chair: I'm just going to interrupt and ask you which constituency reside in.

Mrs. Wise: Carstairs.

The Chair: Thanks so much.

Mrs. Wise: I've done most different elections, and I'm here to talk about the elections themselves. They have been talking about electronic voting. I definitely disagree with that. I believe that people should be able to face you with an ID with a picture on it to let you know that they are Canadian, over 18, and living in Alberta for the last six months so that they can vote. They have talked federally about going electronic, and I'm hoping that the province doesn't go that way. They're already talking down in the States about how that has been fudged because of people hacking in and doing votes. That's one thing.

The other thing is that – it sounds horrible, but the municipalities, the province, and the federal don't get together and use one demographic for boundaries. They're always changing. When you have people coming in, they go, "Well, I just did my census," or "I voted here last time, but I don't this time" because they're different governments that are running at that particular time. I understand that, you know, you have a certain amount of people that are on that ballot, so that's where they have to vote, but there should be some sort of continuity between all governments to be able to have a person come in and say, "Okay. I've been here before. This is where I'm supposed to vote," instead of coming in and being sent off to Crossfield or Olds or whatever because they're in the wrong place. That would be something that I would like you to look at.

The other thing is that when somebody comes in to vote, they will then know – for instance, I brought a map because I work for Canada Post also. If you use the same kinds of boundaries that Canada Post uses, people then know exactly where they're supposed to go. They do this on a regular basis where they get their mail, so they know that if they get their mail on the Westcott Road on the north side, they will go to Didsbury. If they get their mail on the south side, they would go to Carstairs. If you took a look at what Canada Post is doing – and they do it every day – that would help you when you're doing up your boundaries, too. It's the public that needs to know where they're supposed to go to vote. You want – and this is the point of having elections – everybody having the ability to come in and vote if they're old enough and living in the province. That would be my suggestion, to use Canada Post, if possible, to get their boundaries.

The other thing: first-time voters on a list – I guess what I'm trying to say is that we have a nomadic province. Unless they live on a farm, most people will move around either from a first family home to another home, sometimes in the same town. If this panel is able to check with the county, check with the towns, and have those lists done for the new areas because when somebody comes in – like, Scarlett Ranch in the last election was a disaster because we had no information on it at all from Carstairs, so everybody that came in had to be written down, had to be notarized to be there, and then they could vote, but it took so long to do. If this panel could talk for all those areas, for instance the Quantz area, in the county – there are a lot of those coming up everywhere.

If you talk to the county and they give that to you, you already have the land locations. What I'm seeing is that we're coming in with a name. That's what you're looking for, the name, and then you go to vote. Rather than do that, I know that in your database you can actually take column A, which is a name, and move it to column B; column B, which is an address, move it to column A. The land doesn't change. The house doesn't change. When they come in, they can actually come in with their address, go there, then you can check the name. If you check, what happens is that you have Joe living on an acreage outside of Carstairs, and he moves to another acreage. He has to have the land location. He can still vote because he's in the right area. He's still in the province for six months. But if you go by his name, he has to go to the polling station where he used to live, and then we have to send him there. So if he ends up – he might have to drive to a different location rather than actually voting at that polling station where he's living now.

9:40

People are supposed to send in changes of address. They have advanced polling, all of these things, but if you can do the actual address rather than the person's name because they move so much, you will be better off because that house doesn't move. That land doesn't move. So you can actually change the name or whatever, but that's who's voting. It's a thought. I know the municipalities do that. The towns, they go by address. I mean, the house, if it doesn't blow up, is there, but so and so has changed four times. Then they're living in there, but they can still vote. I noticed that the province and the federal do not do that. They do it by name. So you get somebody coming in from Ontario into Carstairs, and they are still able to vote in Alberta if they've lived there six months.

Anyway, those are my ideas.

The Chair: First of all, a comment and then a question. I don't think we have jurisdiction to deal with the method of administration of voting at a poll level. We could make a recommendation but not anything more than that. I'm sure that you're taking this up with the chief returning officer, who might have a more effective ear to speak into than perhaps the people in this room today. That's just a thought.

In regard to electronic voting, when we were up in Peace River, we were made aware of a problem with people living in very remote areas, either who have to come into town by canoe or have to spend a tank of gas to vote, which reduces the turnout, as you might imagine. Some suggestion was there that at least for those remote municipalities electronic voting might be practical. Any suggestions there?

Mrs. Wise: Well, what I was thinking of is that if you go with the majority and if you're looking at electronic voting, you have people that can hack into the system. They've hacked into the banks. They've hacked into some government issues. They've hacked into – just this week it was the casino, and they pretty well shut them down by saying they had bugs and mice or something and said not to go there. So you're getting all these people that can hack in. Yes, I understand that there's a problem with the smaller rural communities, but as long as they have a venue and it's all electronic, they can still come in through that back door and fudge the election results. So that would be up to the government, whether they decide to do that or not.

The Chair: Okay. Thanks very much.

Mrs. Wise: You're welcome.

The Chair: Questions?

All right. I didn't want to hog the microphone, but I do want to invite your comments on some of the suggestions that were made here today. Because you work for the post office, you've got a more specific knowledge probably than anybody else of some issues. We have no preset plan to move any boundary, far from it. But just looking at the map that's up at the screen, some of the constituencies, not yours, are well above and some well below the provincial average, and we're hearing some suggestions here this morning about what we should do to move those boundaries. Without going through that whole list, do you have any view on those suggestions?

Mrs. Wise: Well, again, I was looking at the map earlier, and Drumheller-Stettler is in the negative and so is Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. Those two areas, of course, would be your first target, because you want to balance that off.

The Chair: Right.

Mrs. Wise: Everybody else is sitting at a plus, and Alberta is expanding. There's just no way of – I mean, it's going by leaps and bounds with people coming here. I would suggest to go out although I agree with Airdrie, Balzac, and Crossfield because that would take that straight across, but those other two would be where I would focus on. If you have to move a boundary, that would definitely be the place to go. How far? I would go Drumheller. I would go that direction.

The Chair: So reorient to the east to try to pick up numbers?

Mrs. Wise: Yes. Although there is a lot of space in between places – there's a lot of driving – I would still go that way.

Mrs. Day: Thank you for coming, Rhonda. Just a quick question: as this constituency sits at minus 4 per cent and you mentioned growth a couple of times in your comments and expansions and subdivisions of Carstairs and all the towns, really, do you think a minus 4 per cent should be sitting in place now for the next eight to 10 years, as according to legislation, to give room and buffer in this area for growth? Do you understand what I'm saying?

Mrs. Wise: Yeah. All I can see is the corridor. The corridor that's highway 2 is always going to expand. It's always going to get bigger. The buffer: I think you still have to go east-west. You have to think of those two because so much happens on that corridor, and it's not going to decrease, by any means. It's just going to increase. You're going to have more, more, more people going along that highway 2.

Mrs. Day: Okay. The other suggestion I'd have for you. We have some laminates of the different constituencies here and Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills over here. If you have a suggestion for a boundary – and we should have mentioned that earlier to a couple of the other people – Aaron, our assistant, can give you a marker, and then he'll photograph that. It'll go in the record, so when we are, you know, digging in deep and looking at all these things when we're sitting down to do the mapping, we can pull that up and see what people have suggested from this region. That would be helpful.

Thanks.

Mrs. Wise: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

All right. Now we're going to excuse Ms Munn, who has to go to another matter right at the moment, but she still will be in the building. She'll come right back. She's volunteering from her law practice, and there was one matter she just couldn't avoid dealing with today. We'll have available the transcript of everything that's said, so she'll just read what's going to happen in the next few minutes rather than being here to hear it.

Patrick Alexander, if you could start by telling us the constituency where you reside, sir.

Mr. Alexander: Okay. You bet. We're from Clearwater county. We're in the constituency of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. I'm Pat Alexander, reeve of Clearwater county, and this is Curt Maki, deputy reeve of Clearwater county.

The Chair: Welcome.

Mr. Alexander: First of all, I want to thank the commission for the opportunity to be here and to present on the boundary review. Council understands and appreciates the importance of the various considerations the commission needs to address in the electoral boundaries review and the process and all the different issues that you'll have to deal with.

At this time I'd like to indicate that the boundaries of the Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre riding are extremely large. It's a very large riding. It's one of the largest in the province. I wanted to maybe mention a little bit on the human factor side of it, and that's the amount of travel that an MLA has to do, whoever it is, when they're trying to meet all of the commitments throughout the municipality and the boundaries of the Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre area. Certainly, there's a huge amount of travel time, and it puts a huge strain on the MLA's workload to visit all the communities. We have Bentley, Rimbey, Eckville, Rocky, Caroline – it's a village – Sundre. Those are all the communities that are within the boundaries of this constituency. Certainly, the travel time is huge, and the time away from the family is very large. There's a commitment pretty much every weekend where there's something going on within the community. I think that's probably the case in most of them, but in this case it's road time to get to them all the time.

We do have a very large west country, you know, where there's a commitment, too, and we have three First Nations communities. On the population – I heard you ask the question – it ranges around 2,500, and it varies somewhat with the three First Nations: Sunchild, O'Chiese, and the Big Horn.

9:50

The Chair: Sorry. What was that number again?

Mr. Alexander: It's around 2,500.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Alexander: It does vary because I've talked to the O'Chiese chief, and he said that they have a lot of people that are resident but some that are not but who travel back and forth.

I spoke also at the federal boundaries and about the boundaries that are going north-south, which is more difficult for Clearwater county in the sense that our trade patterns are east-west. I think that by comparing an MP to an MLA, it is very different in the sense that, from the municipal perspective, we deal 99 per cent of the time with our MLAs and our local provincial government because we're under the provincial government. We do have a few federal things, and we deal with our MP but not with near the frequency that we do with an MLA.

Certainly, we understand the need for the review to ensure effective representation for all Albertans. Currently our constituency is rural and urban, and it's fairly balanced rural-urban. I think you heard some of that rural discussion from the AAMD and C presentation a few weeks ago. Currently in our communities we work very closely with the town of Rocky Mountain House and the village of Caroline, and I think that it's very important that we keep our county together and not split that in the sense that I think that in the future – I mean, we're talking 10 or 15 years – you likely won't see three governments there. You'll probably see one in the future that would govern that community of 20,000 within Clearwater county. So I just wanted to mention that.

I think that combining us with a large metropolitan area also causes more issues in the sense that we have such a large area, with urban and rural, and having effective representation on the rural side of it gets lost when you have large urban centres involved within the boundaries of it. I think that, for example, in having Sylvan Lake as part of our constituency – and we do go right around Sylvan Lake – it's a community of 15,000 people, so it would certainly change the representation of rural. But there are places to the south, the region to the south of Sylvan Lake, that we could expand to to line up more with the north part, because we go down the east side of Gull Lake and take in the Rimbey area. So there is some opportunity, I think, to expand. I think council had the discussion that if we were to see, you know, some changes, east would be the best direction for us. I know it does probably cause you some issues when you're looking at our neighbouring constituencies and where they sit in their balance.

Again, I wanted to mention our strong working relationship with the town of Rocky Mountain House and the village of Caroline and that we would like to make sure that we keep that work opportunity. We've won awards from the provincial government for our collaboration, and we have a document that we work with called Stronger Together. So we want to see that, you know, maintained as much as possible.

Our economic trends are certainly east-west, not north-south. We spoke to that during the federal review. Now we're in the Yellowhead constituency, and for our MLA to go from one end of that to the other is a seven-hour drive, an eight-hour drive. It's very taxing on the individual to cover the whole area. I mean, he does do it, but he doesn't get much home time when he does that.

I think what typically we would like to see is that our boundaries stay, you know, pretty much the same, but should the commission decide to make some changes, we would like to make sure we reflect on the common rural community interests as well as the regional trade and travel corridors. Also, council would encourage the commission to ensure a balance of urban-rural residents within the district.

If expanding, again, we would like to see the boundaries expanded east-west. Our main corridors, our trade corridors, are highway 54, highway 12, highway 11, highway 27, and highway 53, and that's why we think that probably there is some room to expand to the southern-east portion of the constituency. We would recommend to probably not go to the south to take in the Banff-Cochrane area because that changes our whole rural aspect. It's just a lot different perspective there than what our rural perspective is. I think they have more commonalities with the Calgary region than we would have.

I think that's about all. On behalf of Clearwater county council I thank you very much for the opportunity to address the commission and have an opportunity to speak.

The Chair: Thank you very much.
Any questions?

Ms Livingstone: Just one clarification: when you just spoke of not wanting to extend into Banff-Cochrane, were you referring specifically to the urban Cochrane area or that you'd prefer not to expand anywhere into that?

Mr. Alexander: There are probably not very many residents straight on the south side of it. There are just not very many people. The question before to our MLA: to the north you don't really see very much population till you get an hour north, to the town of Drayton Valley. You have, you know, quite a few farms that start around the Buck Creek area, but there is a pretty large area between highway 53 and Alder Flats where you don't have very much population.

Ms Livingstone: Yeah. I just wanted that clarification. You're probably right that to make any population difference, you may have to dive into the urban area of Cochrane. Okay.

The Chair: Okay. Just along that line, moving east to Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, as you suggested, if you took all that area surrounding Sylvan Lake into Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, do you have any feel for how many people that would add to your constituency?

Mr. Alexander: No. I don't think I could give you a good answer on that. Well, I have a map here in my thing, and I can leave one of these with you, too. I think that if you went, like, from Sylvan Lake, you know, straight down south to the bottom end, it would take in a considerable amount of population. It's more densely populated than even when you get out into our area. But to give you a number, I would be guessing.

The Chair: Okay. Thanks. I just thought I'd cover that off.

Mr. McLeod: What would be the natural line, then? Is there a highway? Is there a boundary line, a river?

Mr. Alexander: Currently we are on highway 781 south of Sylvan, but then when it gets down to 370 or 592, just before Markerville, it then heads back to the west. You know, there's potentially some opportunity there. I don't like to speak for those people, but, I mean, you're going to have to do, potentially, something.

The Chair: So is there a highway or a river or something in Innisfail-Sylvan Lake that suggests an eastern border to your constituency if we were to move east like you've mentioned?

10:00

Mr. Alexander: Range road 20 would probably be – it's pretty straight through and would take in, you know, quite a bit of population that way potentially.

Mrs. Day: If I may, I would ask one more question similar to the one I asked your MLA. If you moved it east, would the culture and the values and the way the people live in that area be similar to that of those in the west part, in the Rocky area? Is that a homogenous fit?

Mr. Alexander: I would say yes. I mean, looking in the Markerville area, it's a large agricultural area. It's a very good agricultural area. Largely what we are is agricultural. I mean, we have a huge amount of oil and gas in our municipality and our constituency. Currently our population, what you see on the map, is permanent residents, but we'll have a daytime increase in shadow population of 1,500 plus when it's busy in the oil fields and forestry and that. We have a lot of . . .

The Chair: Do they stay in camps, or are they just day trippers?

Mr. Alexander: They're usually travelling from the highway 2 corridor on a daily basis.

Mr. McLeod: One more, please. You talked about urban-rural in your presentation here. We heard a term yesterday which was a little different. It was "remote rural area." Would you consider part of your constituency more remote than others?

Mr. Alexander: Well, this constituency takes in Nordegg, which is a hamlet an hour west of Rocky. The population there is between 80 and 100 full-time, but in the summertime, like, there are just under 300 lots out there now and cottage houses. So that population will significantly increase during the summertime. We'll see during a long weekend in the summer an influx of 30,000 to 50,000 people in our west country. So remote? If you were living out there, there is some remoteness to it, but it's also an area of the province where a lot of people want to go, too. If you go north into the Alder Flats area, it's a remote area, but the people love it. They live there, that's the lifestyle they like, but it is more remote, yes.

Mr. McLeod: Thank you.

The Chair: It can be reached by highway, though.

Mr. Alexander: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

The Chair: Okay. I'm letting my day job intrude into this question, but forgive me. I know there's a prison in Nordegg. Do your numbers count the prison population?

Mr. Alexander: No. It's not there anymore. It's been closed for, oh, probably close to 20 years or more now. Yeah, it was.

The Chair: Shows what I know. Okay.

Mr. Alexander: But there are some – Enviro has a youth camp where they work with young men, which is at Shunda Creek, so it's just . . .

The Chair: Kind of a young offenders facility type thing.

Mr. Alexander: Yes. It's a rehabilitation centre.

The Chair: Okay. Are they included in that number of 80 to 100?

Mr. Alexander: No. They only take in, I think, about a dozen at a time, but it rotates. They do have a staff, too.

Mrs. Day: I have a few more questions; sorry. If you go east – I'm not familiar with that area of Alberta – are we going to be taking in any small towns or villages, or is that all fairly sparsely populated rural land if we went, like, up to Sylvan, not including Sylvan? "Would it add much?" I'm saying. You're adding volume, but are you adding people?

Mr. Alexander: The small communities there, like the hamlets, would potentially be Spruce View, Markerville. If you were on range road 20, it would go down right on the edge of Olds here on the east side. I'll leave you these maps here that you can look at. It would take, you know, right down just about to the edge of Didsbury.

Mrs. Day: Okay. Then the second thing is if you wouldn't mind, again, using our map. Mr. Roth there will take a photo and add it from your suggestions so we can see it on a visual format as well.

Mr. Alexander: Sure. You bet.

Mrs. Day: Great. Oh, one other thing struck my mind when you were talking. As a reeve of a county and from that perspective I know you have a certain perspective, but we hear the words “rural” and “urban” a lot. What is rural and urban to you? Is Rocky Mountain House rural or urban?

Mr. Alexander: Well, I know that Mayor Nash is here.

Mrs. Day: I’m putting you on the spot.

Mr. Alexander: They’re rural.

Mrs. Day: They’re rural. Okay.

Mr. Alexander: Yes. I’ve had the previous mayor of Red Deer tell me that he felt he was rural in comparison to our large cities. But any small town: the reality is that they’re in rural Alberta. Rural-urban, rurban, whatever you want to call it, I think that we have a very strong relationship with our urban partners because we’re a small community in the sense of 20,000 people within Clearwater county borders.

Mrs. Day: Okay. Now you just said partnership with urban partners, meaning Rocky Mountain House and Caroline?

Mr. Alexander: Yes.

Mrs. Day: Okay. So they’re both rural and urban in a sense?

Mr. Alexander: Yeah.

Mrs. Day: We’re combining those words. Okay. It’s interesting as we go along and we’re using those two terms. It’s an interesting conversation.

Mr. Alexander: Yeah. We’re providing a lot of regional services.

Mrs. Day: Right. So you’re interdependent really.

Mr. Alexander: Yes. Waste, fire, FCSS, library: all of it is regional. It’s not individual.

Mrs. Day: All right. Thank you.

The Chair: Anything else?
Thanks so much.

Mr. Alexander: Okay. I’ll leave you with these maps here.
Did you have anything?

Mr. Maki: You’ve covered it all.

Mr. Alexander: I’m sorry. I had too much to say maybe.

The Chair: Not at all. Those are laminated maps at the pass, so have at it with a marker and show how you’d recommend we redesign if we have to. Thanks very much.

Bruce Beattie. Good morning.

Mr. Beattie: Good morning. I’m reeve of Mountain View county. I represent currently in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, but I’m actually in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre because of a bit of an anomaly, I think, in the current boundaries.

First of all, thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the public consultation process on behalf of Mountain View county. To begin, I’d like to express my full support for the position taken

by AAMD and C in their submission to the boundaries commission. I know they brought up – and we’ve heard that quite a bit this morning – the difficulties of rural and the size of the boundaries. [interjections]

Mrs. Day: One second. If we could, it’s a little distracting to hear Reeve Beattie speak. Sorry, fellas. We’ll have, hopefully, some time afterwards.

Thank you.

Mr. Beattie: Our county is presently divided into two provincial electoral ridings, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills and Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, and this configuration presents difficulties for a number of reasons. Geographically these are both, of course, very large ridings. The county is divided into two distinct ridings. It’s one of the points you made earlier. I know you’re trying to keep municipalities in one. It’s one of the difficulties that we face as a municipality because we have the two ridings and, therefore, two MLAs.

The natural trading area is not represented. I’ve lived in the county now for about 50 years almost, and in spite of the fact that I know that Rocky Mountain House is a beautiful town, in reference to the mayor, I think I might have been there twice. I don’t think that Sundre is – certainly, people in Sundre do not trade normally in the Rocky Mountain House area. They would come to Olds primarily and Didsbury and on to Red Deer.

The total population of Mountain View county, including the five urban centres within our boundary, is 32,200. We recognize that our population alone does not meet the current average of about 49,000 residents, nor does it fall within the 25 per cent variance. Therefore, we understand the county must be part of another riding. From our perspective it would be preferable to have all of Mountain View county contained within one riding. Likely, the most logical solution would be to add the Sundre area to the Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills riding. This would keep all areas of Mountain View county, including all towns within our boundaries, in one riding. We would only have to communicate with a single MLA. This would keep community differences to a minimum, retain the rural nature of the area, and it would not increase travel time for the Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills MLA significantly but would reduce the travel time for the Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre MLA.

I should say at this time that our MLAs, both of whom work in the two areas, certainly represent us well. It’s not a problem getting in touch with them, but having two separate MLAs, you have to come in – if you want to make a presentation, you’re always asking for two. It just creates issues, I think, within our processes.

10:10

Important to the county is that there is a commonality between all areas of the county. Areas of commonality include community interests, including trade and social interactions, infrastructure, schools, health care and seniors’ housing, and intermunicipal co-operation agreements. Similarly to Clearwater, we have agreements with each of our five urban centres and work with them quite closely. That includes Sundre as part of that process. Mountain View county is rural in nature, and we would not support being included in urban ridings such as Calgary, Red Deer, and Airdrie as was proposed in 2010. We do not share common interests with them, which makes it extremely difficult for an MLA to effectively represent interests of rural Alberta.

In conclusion, Mountain View county would request that the Alberta electoral boundaries review commission consider, one, again including the Sundre area as part of the Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills riding – the Sundre area was at one point part of that; it was

quite a surprise to me when I discovered that we'd suddenly been moved off to the Rocky Mountain House area – secondly, therefore, placing all of Mountain View county into one riding and keeping Mountain View county as part of a rural riding.

With that, I will answer any questions you might have.

The Chair: Do you have any feel for the population in Sundre right now?

Mr. Beattie: It's about 2,700, moving towards 3,000.

The Chair: Thank you.
Questions?

Ms Livingstone: Not from me.

Mrs. Day: Of course. Thank you, Reeve Beattie, for being here today. You've heard some of the other comments about going farther south with basically your area, Bergen and Water Valley, into Rocky Mountain House to support their numbers or for them to go east. Could you comment on that? If you had to look at their needs, stepping away from your request for the county at the moment, which way would be more natural, to go south or to go east?

Mr. Beattie: Well, I'm not keen on the idea of going east. I think that if you start moving into the Olds area, again, it's going to create more problems for us as a county. It's not a natural trading area. I could suggest that people in Olds wouldn't be going to Rocky Mountain House very often. So if we look at the whole cultural aspect, the social side of it, from my perspective Sundre should be part of the Olds-Didsbury constituency. The other adjustments should be made, I think, either through the Innisfail-Sylvan Lake area or – I'm not sure how you're going to include Cochrane and Banff. I guess that while some have talked about 22 as being a natural boundary, I'm not sure if I support that or not. Well, I would say that I don't support it.

Again, without going and trying to look at all the different constituencies, basically what I thought I'd bring to this table was the view of Mountain View county and the issues surrounding that. You know, I hear a lot about the distances and the problems that creates for MLAs.

There are two things I'd like to point out. One is the big mistake of selling off the aircraft because I think that was a very unfortunate thing for rural . . .

The Chair: We had a very exhilarating ride last week in a nine-seater that was cozy.

Mr. Beattie: I think that when you look at the distances that are involved in Alberta and serving rural constituencies, we can talk about the distances behind a windshield. Well, they get a lot shorter if they're in an aircraft. Certainly not in an individual riding, but if you're in Edmonton and you need to go to a northern riding, I think that was an unfortunate decision.

The second part of it is the importance of improving broadband within the province so that there can be more use of electronic communication. If you get into the west of Sundre, you're pretty well hooped when it comes to high-speed. That's another area that, you know, we talk a lot about. I think that you have to look beyond the boundaries. You have to look at how you can communicate in a more effective way.

Mrs. Day: My last question was: when did the change happen that Sundre went into Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre? Was it just the last one?

Mr. Beattie: That's a good question. Roy Brassard was the MLA at that time, so that's going back a few years.

Mrs. Day: Oh, it's going back a bit. Okay.

Mr. Beattie: Still, at one point it was part of that constituency.

Mrs. Day: Okay. Again, I'd invite you to draw on the map for us. I'm hoping we're going to have and I believe that we're going to have an overlay of county and constituency ridings so that we can look at that when we do sit down with mapping.

Mr. Beattie: Yeah. Looking at, you know, our northern boundaries along 587 or close to it and a little bit south of highway 587, if you came west there and then straight south, you could pick off Sundre, and it would make life easier for us.

Mrs. Day: One more. Sorry; I'm really, really pushing it. To the south, when we look at the land base south of Crossfield and expanding the Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills riding – I'm not saying that we will but just saying if it was – for the lands before you, between Crossfield and Airdrie if you look at that map, do you have anything to say about that?

Mr. Beattie: Well, I think that you only need to drive through it and see how it is growing in terms of development, whether it's the population – I mean, we get requests at the county every week for further country residential subdivisions. That's happening on a very consistent basis. I think that over time you're going to see, certainly on that highway 2 corridor, that growth of population. Having just driven through Cochrane over the weekend and watched the – I won't describe them as chicken houses; well, I guess I did – increase in development in terms of the very dense population there and the housing, you're going to see a significant increase, obviously, in population in that area. We don't see that type of development happening in the county; we see much more of the individual country residential. That doesn't increase your population density very much until you get into those more significant areas.

Mr. McLeod: We've talked about sort of the west-south area, but when I look at the maps, district 83, which is the Strathmore-Brooks area and which is also over, does attach to Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. I know that it's on the east side of highway 2 and that the evil part of us are over there, just to let you know that some of us are on that east side . . .

Mr. Beattie: Yes, yes. It's okay. I'm west of 22, which is almost as bad.

Mr. McLeod: What would you think about that area in there?

Mr. Beattie: To move Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills farther in, yeah, I don't see any issue around that. I don't see that that would be a problem. You could increase there although I'd rather see an increase in Sundre.

Mr. McLeod: Okay. On the west side, yeah. I get it, yeah.

Mr. Beattie: I like to have a focal point here, right?

Mr. McLeod: Okay. No problem. Yeah. Thank you.

The Chair: When you go to the map, even though we have been promised this county overlay, would you be good enough to mark the boundaries of Mountain View county on it for us as well so that later, when I'm looking at this, I know exactly the area that's yours?

I hope we have two different coloured markers so that perhaps you could mark the boundary changes that you're suggesting to the east in one colour and then just outline the county in another colour. That would be great.

Mr. Beattie: That might be a challenge.

The Chair: Do your best. That would be perfect.

Mr. Beattie: Fair enough. Okay.

The Chair: Okay. Any other questions?
Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. Beattie: Thank you.

The Chair: All right. I'm going to go back to Don MacIntyre. Is there anyone here for Mr. MacIntyre? Okay.

Well, we've been very efficient, and we've got some additional time here. Is there anybody else who would like to comment? I mean, you've all been here, hearing what we've had to say this morning, and I'm sure you're all interested in this topic. Otherwise, you wouldn't have come. Anybody else who'd like to come forward and make a comment or a suggestion?

Now, believe me, in every single one of our hearings aside from this one someone has come to the mike. You do not want to be the only one that didn't.

Mr. Robertson: I just want to answer Mrs. Day's question. She'd asked when that was chopped off. From my review of the ridings it happened in the 1996 redistribution. Originally, in '93, it was part of it, and then it shifted as a result, but there was a great deal south as well at the same time.

There's a highway that runs just north of Madden there if you look in the Airdrie riding, and Madden is just barely in the Airdrie riding. If you take in that area, that pretty much levels off our population. If you take in part of Kneehill county, that levels off the population. If you take in Sundre, that levels off the population. There's very little change that needs to happen at the edges in order for that kind of thing to happen, and I think there are interests in each of those directions.

10:20

Mrs. Day: The road by Madden: do you know that highway number? Is that a triple number, or is that a county road? I can't remember what it's called. It's not the Acme road. It's further south than that.

Mr. Robertson: It's township road 290, which I believe has a secondary designation as well, but I don't have it for some reason here. I'm missing that map.

Mr. Beattie pointed out to me when I sat back down that the odd shape there is, in fact, part of the county of Mountain View: Water Valley and Cremona. That little bump there is in reference to the county boundaries. They have an agreement with the fire department of the county of Mountain View.

Mrs. Day: Is that a river or creek along that jagged line, maybe?

Mr. Robertson: Not in particular. There's sort of the Forestry Trunk Road and things like that out there. It gets fairly dense with the trees pretty quickly.

Mrs. Day: Great. Thank you.

The Chair: Anyone else? Yes, please.

Mr. Clark: Good morning. I'd like to make just one quick comment. I understand the difficulty of the challenge you have because I had the job of chairing the one three times ago. If I could give one bit of advice: look at the areas of the province that are growing. You can almost draw a line from Grande Prairie down to Edmonton, from Fort McMurray down to Edmonton, the corridor down to Lethbridge over to Medicine Hat. I think one of the mistakes we made years ago was spending too much time just looking at the population now as opposed to looking at the areas that are growing and taking that into consideration.

The Chair: Thank you. That was Bob Clark, for the record.

Mr. Nixon: Jason Nixon again, for my friends at *Hansard*. I will just quickly jump in after seeing everybody. Being somebody who drives all these sections probably the most in the room, I may be able to help a little bit with the roads.

If you look at the south boundary of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, where it butts up to Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, between there and where it heads south to Airdrie, it's actually some of the more high-density area here. Lots of it is agriculture and hamlets, but there are a lot of people there. You were asking me earlier about the northern part of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, which goes into Yellowhead. That is significant bush. If you leave from Rocky Mountain House to go to Drayton Valley, as I think the reeve mentioned, you're about an hour in a car before you see any significant amount of population. As well, in going the other way, into Banff-Cochrane, it's the same thing. In fact, there are a couple of real Forestry Trunk Road types of road there, but in certain times of the year you wouldn't be able to get through to the constituents on the other side.

I can speak a little bit for my colleague in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills because I have talked to him lots about the map. Strathmore-Brooks, on the bottom: all the communities there going north into Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills are very, very similar. As you've heard, you know, there will be disputes on which way would be the best way to do it, but certainly along the east away from the highway 2 corridor are similar communities to the west, significantly.

While I'm not going to tell anybody how to redraw it – that's, well, unfortunately or fortunately, your responsibility – I mean, it's pretty obvious where you've got to pick up the population. Whether or not you've got to move Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills slightly to the east to pick up some of Strathmore and then Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre to the east or however, where you do it, it's going to be to the south or to the east on those constituencies where you can pick it up. You can't pick up any significant population to the west. In the case of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre it's on the B.C. border anyway, so I don't know if they're going to let us go over there. We'll have to assume not. It's tough to pick it up on the north side because it's just so vast and remote out there that you'd be going a long way to be able to pick up any communities.

Anyway, hopefully, that provides a little clarification on the roads. That section all through there: there are lots of natural highways that could form the boundary.

Mrs. Day: In your opinion, which way are you saying you think would be best? South, taking in more towards Banff-Cochrane, or east towards Innisfail-Sylvan Lake?

Mr. Nixon: In the case of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre the easiest – and it's been, I think, pretty established by all the presenters – would be to go, actually, a combination of south and east. There would be a portion where if you went too far to the west side on the south, it would be counterproductive. You'd just end up

in forest reserve, and there just is no population to pick up for the problem that you're trying to solve. But if you go straight south of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, there is stuff through there: Water Valley, Cremona, those types of things along that highway 22 corridor. Then as you head east from the bottom of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, about halfway up Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, there's lots of population along there, too. It could be done without interfering with Sylvan Lake. I do agree with Reeve Alexander that that is a significantly different community. All of a sudden you're trying to represent a place like Nordegg or Rocky Mountain House one minute, and then you're trying to deal with a community that's facing highway 2 corridor issues, which is significantly different.

One of the challenges that Mountain View county has always had is that the majority of the communities, the large urban areas are on that highway 2 corridor. In Sundre, where I'm from – we always say that we're the evil cousin, but I think we're the nice cousins – we're very far away from that highway 2 corridor. So there are always natural tensions – the reeve will acknowledge that – between the highway 2 communities and us, the cousins that nobody wants to identify with, out in the west country.

The Chair: You've been very popular today, I must say.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you very much.

The Chair: Everybody wants Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Yeah. That's where you're at. I mean, the one thing is that the constituencies that are butted up on the B.C. border – you know, you can't go the one way, so you're going to have to go east and south. That's just a little familiarity with it. If you really look at a map, you'll see in the Banff-Cochrane area there is some to pick up, but most of that is woods.

Mr. McLeod: Thank you. I'd really like to thank you for your comments that some of the eastern communities do have similar communities of interest with the west. I do appreciate that.

Mr. Nixon: I don't think I'd say anything different. You might redraw the boundaries to the east there. I certainly wouldn't want to be in *Hansard* saying anything different. I like all my friends to the east.

Mr. McLeod: Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Day: I'll ask one more question. I'm playing a bit of a devil's advocate here, but . . .

The Chair: Excuse me, Mrs. Day, I believe that Ms Livingstone had the floor.

Mrs. Day: Oh, sorry. Go ahead. Sorry. I didn't see that.

Ms Livingstone: I just had one follow-up question. A suggestion was made when we were in Red Deer last week that Rimbey should move to Innisfail-Sylvan Lake riding. Populationwise what would that take out of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre?

Mr. Nixon: It's a hard question to answer because it would depend how much. Like, if you're just saying the community of Rimbey, it's about the same population as Sundre, around 3,000 or so. The issue, though, is how much of the population around the county that would surround Rimbey in between there, so Ponoka county and then as you head south into Red Deer county. Actually, it's pretty densely populated up on the Ponoka county side of Rimbey-Rocky

Mountain House-Sundre, so it would depend how much you're trying to pull into Innisfail-Sylvan Lake at the top. Then, of course, the natural thing would be to then push Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre to the east to make up for that population there and then continue to push Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills to the south and to the east. Yeah.

10:30

Ms Livingstone: Yeah. That's what I'm wondering. Is there blue skying, in having not looked as closely at the maps as I should've, if we took that suggestion? Is there a natural opportunity to shift the other ridings in a logical way so everybody can grab some population somewhere?

Mr. Nixon: I think it's there. I think the problem would be that to get all the way to Rimbey, you would probably pick up too much population going into Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. You know, if you just took the number of the urban – I'm with you on the confusion on those terms, but what I would call small urban – within that rural area, if you take that population number from Rimbey and then you just add it onto the map into Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, yeah, that'll work. The issue is that you'll be picking up a couple thousand people along the way in the county between there and the line. Just looking at the numbers, depending where it was cut, it may be too much. It may not be – you know, I'd have to have the map in front of me, but it may be hard to be able to get all the way to Rimbey unless you were just trying to do a corridor into Rimbey. It might not be as simple as that.

Ms Livingstone: Okay. Yeah. Because that suggestion had been made about your riding, I just wanted to get your perspective on it. Thank you.

Mr. Nixon: Then there's a lake in between – the reeve just reminded me – which is true. On the northeastern portion of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre one of the challenges is both Gull Lake and Sylvan Lake. It's a natural barrier, for sure. You have to sometimes pick up such vast areas of other counties to be able to wrap around into those other small urban communities. I think that's the challenge up there. I think that's the challenge they probably faced in 2010, when they finally decided to add Rimbey to Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre – I shouldn't say "finally" – when they did add Rimbey to Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. As has been mentioned, for a couple of terms, if you look at the history, Sundre was part of Olds, but for most of the history if you go back to when Alberta was formed, Rocky Mountain House and Sundre have been together.

Mrs. Day: My quick question. When I heard Reeve Bruce Beattie talk about having to deal with two MLAs, I guess in my mind came the thought that when you have two MLAs to deal with – maybe I should have asked you this, Bruce – does it not give you more voice in the Legislative Assembly rather than less? Is it not a benefit in some ways?

Mr. Nixon: I can answer that if I go back because I misspoke or misrepresented what I was trying to say. Since the history of the province Olds, Sundre, and Rocky have been together for a tremendous amount of the constituencies. There was a period there in the '90s where they separated out. I just wanted to clarify that.

Yes, you would think that. For example, when we had trouble recently with the Sundre hospital, which obviously impacted Mountain View county considerably, it was very nice to have my colleague Mr. Cooper and I be able to team up to fight for that in the Legislature. But throughout the time that you're trying to

interact with county and particularly county officials, it becomes a tremendous burden, more on them than it is on us. There is some advantage in the Legislature, certainly, but I think what the reeve is talking about is that it can sometimes become administratively burdensome for them to be able to communicate with two MLA offices at any given time. I think that's what the reeve was referring to. I think it's less of a concern for the MLAs than it is for the municipal councils.

Then each county is a little different. You know, the county of Clearwater, which I'm representing, only has one large small urban within it and then the village of Caroline and the hamlet of Nordegg. Extreme portions of the county don't have other towns that have to be dealt with, so they're working together more closely than some other counties.

Mrs. Day: It's one voice.

Mr. Nixon: Yeah.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thanks so much.

All right. Anybody else who'd like to speak? Please.

Mr. Beattie: Well, since everyone else has. I don't want to turn this into a debate, but I think the important part – if you looked at the

numbers, you have 47,000 and you added Sundre, 2,700, you'd be just about perfect. You could have the right number from that perspective.

I think the other thing – I just want to emphasize what Mr. Clark said about looking at where the growth is going to take place. I think if you look at the fact that Strathmore-Brooks and Airdrie are both ones – it's significant how much higher they are. We're certainly seeing growth in our urban centres: Olds and Didsbury and Sundre. I think you have to recognize the fact that over – how many times are we going to change these boundaries? Look into the future and see where that growth is taking place and try to accommodate that within the decision. I think that's going to be very important.

The Chair: Thanks.

Anyone else? All right. Well, I'd like to conclude by thanking you very much for coming and being so forthcoming. We've heard a lot of very helpful things here today, and I encourage you to stay tuned to our website as we move through the province. Then, of course, on or before May 31 we'll have filed our interim recommendations, and you can see what they look like.

Thanks very much.

[The hearing adjourned at 10:35 a.m.]

