



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Lethbridge

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

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Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Lethbridge

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[Justice Bielby in the chair]

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen. I think we'll get started if you wouldn't mind taking a seat. If everybody could sit down, that would be terrific. Good evening. Thanks very much for coming out to this hearing of the provincial Electoral Boundaries Commission.

I'm Justice Myra Bielby. Normally I am a judge of the Court of Appeal of Alberta, but at the moment I'm chairing the Electoral Boundaries Commission. The other members of the commission are, to my far left, Jean Munn of Calgary, then Laurie Livingstone of Calgary, and, to my far right, Gwen Day of Carstairs and Bruce McLeod of Acme. We've been on the road now for about 10 days visiting different parts of Alberta, and we'll continue our public hearings next month as well.

Over this time a lot of my friends and neighbours have asked: "Gee, what is this all about? Why are you doing it?" So I thought I'd start with a thumbnail about what the Electoral Boundaries Commission is and the reason for having it now. The commission's work is needed because Alberta has experienced a huge increase in population growth over the last eight years, since the last time the Electoral Boundaries Commission sat. Our population has increased net by more than 20 per cent, by more than 800,000 people, since 2010, notwithstanding the recent economic climate.

In 2010 the boundaries commission made a recommendation which saw the current provincial map created. The Legislature at that time passed legislation accepting the recommendations of the boundaries commission to increase the size of some constituencies physically and to decrease the size of others physically to attempt to bring the population average closer to the norm, closer to the median in each of these ridings.

Last time, in 2010, the average population was 40,800 people. If you divided the provincial population by 87, you got that number. So the boundaries commission at that time had a series of public hearings, received written submissions, and ultimately made recommendations that resulted in 85 per cent of the boundaries of our constituencies embracing populations within 10 per cent above or below that median figure. But that's all changed because we've had many people move into the province, and they haven't moved equally or proportionately into each of the 87 constituencies.

Of course, as we all know, each constituency elects one MLA in each provincial election, and we have 87 Members of the Legislative Assembly sitting in the Legislature in Edmonton, passing laws to govern Albertans. The voters in each constituency vote for their MLA and select one MLA at each election.

We have a challenge now because our population has increased by more than 20 per cent since the last time this was done, and that population has moved disproportionately into certain ridings – the larger cities, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie – and not so much into the smaller cities and the other ridings in Alberta. Now if you take our population and divide it by 87, you get 48,884 estimated, about 8,000 people more per constituency than eight years ago.

I should stop and say that these figures are based on estimates that were provided to us by the Alberta Treasury Board, but on February 8 of this year the census people in Ottawa, Statistics Canada, have promised to release the population figures from the 2016 census. So at that time we'll adjust the population figures that we'll be working with. I don't expect that there'll be a huge change, but there may well be some small changes both in the average number and in the figures that we give on each of these maps for the two constituencies in Lethbridge and neighbouring constituencies, which at the moment are based on these estimates.

What these numbers mean is as follows. Looking at the Cardston-Taber-Warner map by way of example, you see some writing in red and a number and a percentage figure in blue. The blue is the population figure on which the current configuration of Cardston-Taber-Warner was set in 2010. In 2010 there were 37,289 people in that constituency, which was 9 per cent below the provincial average of 40,800 at that time. Now there has been an increase in that constituency of about 5,000 people, but because that's smaller than the average increase in the other constituencies overall in Alberta, we see that Cardston-Taber-Warner is now 11 per cent below the estimated provincial average. So the red is the estimated figure at the current time, and the blue is the basis on which the constituency boundaries that we now have were set.

Our growth hasn't been spread evenly across all constituencies. Our job is to recommend changes to the Alberta government, to the provincial Legislature to bring this back more into line. Why we're doing that is this piece of legislation, passed by the Legislature in 2009, called the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, which requires a commission just like ours to sit every eight to 10 years in Alberta, to go through the province, to hold these public hearings, and to make recommendations to the province so that they can adjust the boundaries in time for the next provincial election. It seems very early to do that – I'm sure you're thinking that – but we understand that the returning officers like to have a year's lead time for setting up the actual structure of voting. That's why the legislation sets out certain dates and we're having to follow those dates in our work.

But the changes that we're going to recommend are not based simply on numbers. If it was just a numbers exercise, we wouldn't have had to do anything. We could have just sat in Edmonton with a pencil and a ruler and figured it all out and made 87 blocks in the province, each of which had 48,884 people in it, and our job would be done.

But the legislation gives us other factors to take into account. I want to go through those factors with you here now because one of those factors is what you, the public, think is important. Our goal overall is to create clear and understandable boundaries for constituencies. The factors we take into account are not just relative population density but also common community interests and organizations, including those of First Nation reserves and Métis populations. We're told to try to avoid breaking up community and neighbourhood boundaries. So we look at a city like Lethbridge. You've got different neighbourhoods, different communities within Lethbridge. If we determine that we have to move a constituency boundary, we're going to try to not break up those.

Two times ago – I was just reading a little bit over the dinner hour – in Calgary the commission recommended putting a line down a certain road because it was anticipated that that would be paved and become a major road over the next eight years. Well, that didn't happen, and in fact the road was built in an entirely different direction. The constituency as it was set – well, houses were built right on the constituency line, so there were people who had houses that were in two constituencies. We're going to try to avoid that; that's one of our goals in this. It's not always possible to see into the future, but we're very interested in hearing from members of the public about these places where there's a sense of community so that we don't inadvertently divide something up.

7:10

We're also going to try to take into account municipal boundaries, not just city boundaries but the boundaries of all towns and villages, and try to avoid creating trouble there. We're going to try to follow those and also county boundaries where we can. Many of the current constituencies are bounded on one side or another by a river,

by a provincial boundary with Saskatchewan or B.C., by a major highway, and we're also going to try to honour those, where we can, in our work in making these recommendations.

This isn't a closed list. That's the list that's set out in the legislation, but there are many other factors that we've been hearing about in our travels across the province that people think are important for us to take into account. We want to hear what you think is important for us to keep in mind in this part of the province.

Those are the constituencies. You see the map. That's Lethbridge-East up there on the screen. We've brought constituency maps and covered them up with plastic because we've found that it's been really helpful, when members of the public make suggestions about boundary changes, to have them mark it on the plastic. Then our clerk takes a picture of that, and that becomes part of the public record.

When we go back and we're having our deliberations as to the actual recommendations we make, we can see what people actually thought, because people have been bringing to our attention a surprising number of little oopses that appear to have happened in the past, where neighbourhoods or communities or parts of counties are hived off and put with another constituency, probably because people didn't realize that the river turned there or that there was a roadway or whatever. We're inviting people to participate during the course of the evening. When they make their presentation, we may ask them to put a marking on one of these maps to help us remember what the comment was when we get back to sitting down and looking at all of our 87 constituencies. Our job is to make 87 recommendations, one for each constituency.

We're grateful that you've come, that people are prepared to come and make oral submissions tonight and also to send in written submissions. We've been gratified by the response in writing. Last time over the course of the year they received about 500 written submissions. This time, over the course of what's now three or four weeks, we are at 450 written submissions. There's been a big response, but I have to concede that that's largely because it's much easier to make a written submission. If you go onto our website now, you can make your submission right on the website – type it right in, hit send, and we've got it – or e-mail it in. There are lots of social media platforms that we're using that would take a submission, and of course there's always the post.

In the course of our work – I'll just review what our task is and what we're going to be taking into account so that you know the job ahead. Once we get our submissions, finish our oral submissions, we'll be sitting down, making our 87 recommendations, going through each of the submissions, and going through each of the constituencies one by one. Of course, they're all pieces of a puzzle, right? That's part of the challenge here. If you make a recommendation to change a boundary in one constituency, obviously it affects the constituency that's immediately next to it, so we don't want to ignore that reality.

We're obliged to make interim recommendations to the Legislature before May 31 of this year. When those are made, they'll be filed with the Legislature and placed on our website and, I'm sure, the Legislature's website as well so they're available to the public. The public, including you, will have a second chance to make comments once you have the actual draft submissions in front of you. Sometimes people find it easier to provide input when they know what you actually have in mind rather than just by talking about things generally. So there'll be a second chance to make written submissions after May 31, and we'll be having a second round of public hearings in late July, early August.

As a result of that, we'll be making a final report – we'll no doubt change or buff up our interim submissions in some way – which has to be filed with the Legislature by October 31 of this year. The

Legislature will then take that into consideration. While it's not obliged to, it has always in the past passed legislation incorporating the recommendations of the Electoral Boundaries Commission, so it's not going to be surprising at all if that's what happens this time, and that's our goal.

Now, if you were involved the last time, you'll recall that the Legislature created four new provincial constituencies to help address the influx of population growth between '96 and 2002, or whatever the period was then. This time the Legislature has not created any additional constituencies, so we have only the 87 to work with. The commission doesn't have the power or the jurisdiction to increase that number or to decrease it. If that was going to have occurred, it would have occurred before the commission was struck. The type of submission of, you know, "Gee, this would all be solved if we just made some new constituencies," is probably true, but we can't do that. So we're looking, basically, for your thoughts on how we move 87 pieces of pie around on the plate, but you still have a whole pie at the end as a result of that.

Equality or parity of population in each constituency isn't our only goal or our only consideration, as I've indicated. Our courts, including the Supreme Court of Canada, have interpreted our legislation as meaning that each Albertan has the right not to have the political strength or value of his or her vote unduly diluted. That said, our legislation permits variances in population between constituencies of up to 25 per cent above or below the provincial average and for a maximum of four constituencies up to 50 per cent below the provincial average. We only have two of those special constituencies now, that the Legislature approved the last time, below the provincial average, and they are Lesser Slave Lake and Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley, right up against the Northwest Territories border, where there are huge distances.

Notwithstanding the permitted population variance of 25 per cent up or down on the other constituencies, last time the commission brought in recommendations that saw variances of less than 10 per cent in 85 per cent of the constituencies in Alberta. So just because the Electoral Boundaries Commission has the ability to go up to 25 per cent, you shouldn't assume that we will without good reason because representation by population is the basic underlying principle of democracy at play here. The people who vote in Lethbridge-East, their vote should relatively have the same effect in their constituency as a person who votes in Cardston-Taber-Warner. We have to keep in mind the goal of relative vote parity while nonetheless taking into consideration all these other factors.

In summary, our job when we get down to making our decisions will be looking at the actual population in a riding; for example, in Lethbridge-East it is right now 44,927, which is about 8 per cent below the estimated provincial average. We'll compare that to the provincial average, and we'll see that you're 8 per cent below. Then we'll consider these other factors that I've listed and the things that you might tell us today, and we'll decide whether there is any acceptable reason to keep it at 8 per cent below provincial average or whether that has to be addressed in some way and, if so, how it could be addressed, how the boundary would be moved out a little bit in one way or another to pick up some additional population. It's the same job for Lethbridge-West, Little Bow, et cetera, all the way along.

With that in mind, I'm going to invite our first registered speaker to come forward. We're going to ask our speakers to stay within the 10-minute time limit, please, because we're fully subscribed here tonight and have a waiting list, in fact, of people who want to speak. That's 10 minutes per speaker, and then there will no doubt be some questions from the panel. We haven't been shy in asking questions in the past, so I expect that'll be the case here tonight.

I'm going to call on Sierra Garner to come forward if you wouldn't mind.

Okay. How about Pat Stier? Yes. If you wouldn't mind coming forward and taking the mike.

I should mention that *Alberta Hansard* is here. They're recording everything that we say tonight. That will be put on our website within a day or two, so if you want to relisten to parts of this, you can do that. All of our public hearings will be on the website orally, and within a couple or three days there will be the written transcript on the website as well. So whatever you say here will be public in that fashion.

Hello.

Mr. Stier: Hi. Good evening. Thank you, Madam Chair and to all the board members. It's good to see you. I'm the MLA for the constituency of Livingstone-Macleod. I don't have a lot to mention here tonight, but I thought it might be of some use to some of you who perhaps have not done the job that I've been doing for the past few years, to have some insight from the guy that's driving the highway till 11 or 12 o'clock most nights, trying to get home from a huge riding that's immense. How successful I may or may not be in focusing on my constituents and providing the proper service that they may want is up to the individual to judge, I suppose, but I thought I'd just give you some insight into what it's like.

7:20

Let me just start by saying that if you don't have the map in front of you, I think you may have access to it readily enough. The north end of the riding actually is up west of Calgary, just shy of Bragg Creek, and that's up around townships 22, 23, if you have the NTS system in front of you. The south end of the riding is just above Waterton Lakes park. It doesn't include the park, but it is a riding boundary that has been adopted, one could see, I suppose, from the tributaries and the waterways and the watercourses down in that southern end. It therefore covers north to south 19 townships or 114 miles in length, and that converts to 183 kilometres.

The width of the riding, basically, similarly covers about nine to 10 ranges, kind of wider at the bottom and narrower at the top, but nonetheless that works out to about 87 kilometres. The riding itself if you were to draw that square out roughly without looking at all the little bits and pieces you've had to add in here or there – it's not a perfect square – would come to about 15,921 kilometres. As a comparison I would like to draw your attention to the city of Calgary, which is instead four and a half townships north to south and three and a half east to west. So that actually works out to my riding being about eight and a half times larger than the city of Calgary. In other words, you could put nine cities of Calgary in my riding.

Populationwise I see the figures here tonight, and I think they speak for themselves. The area has to the north a concentration of population, and the area from Longview north up to the Priddis-Bragg Creek area was added on in the last redesign. That came in, I believe, as a result of some other manipulations, and I wasn't involved at the time when that occurred. Nonetheless, that area has more affiliation with the city of Calgary and the towns of Okotoks and High River and the Highwood riding than they do with any other community in the riding going to the south. There is a large amount of different land use up there, with high-end acreage homes, estate homes, et cetera, et cetera, a large ranching area, of course, too. It still maintains its agriculture uses. But that area there to the west of the Highwood riding, that sort of long neck up there, is certainly a different use as compared to the other zone. We had to block off for election purposes this riding into three zones to work effectively. The east side, along highway 2, involves the towns of

Fort Macleod, Granum, Claresholm, Stavely, and Nanton. That is, of course, quite a bit different land use, quite a different land character. Certainly, agriculture is the primary land use in that region there, but the towns themselves are not very large, and they can, you know, range from a couple of thousand to 3,000 to 4,000 max.

Further to the south in the southwest corner is the Crowsnest Pass, which is a municipality of five former individual towns, Pincher Creek, Cowley. A lot of that area, of course, is quite mountainous, hilly terrain. It in itself is another separate area of land use. Lifestyle is quite different there in the pass and quite a lot like the lifestyle in the Waterton Lakes area, by the way. I'd like to point out at this time, yet, that the Waterton Lakes area and the Crowsnest area in the south of Livingstone-Macleod are separated by a boundary.

I'm not suggesting that if you were to alter something, it might be based on what the land is used for, what the culture is like, what the lifestyle is like, but that is something I wanted to point out.

In my travels I can certainly tell you that – luckily, I'm a farm boy by nature, but I did have a lot of different kinds of experiences. It's been an area that I've been proud of – it has some of the best scenery in the world – but it certainly is one that can be difficult to manage when you're living towards the one end of the riding and trying to travel to all these communities. There are over 22 communities in my constituency. There are all kinds of different occupations and businesses in all of them, and there are three school boards. I have 14 councils that I deal with. So it's quite a large area to manage when you consider that a large area like the city of Calgary only has one council to deal with. I've got 14, and they all have different needs and values and expectations of their MLA.

I thought it would be good just to tell you that these things might be of some use in your deliberations, how it is day to day. I put on over 70,000 kilometres in a year, generally speaking, trying to serve the community as best I can, and that includes, of course, trips to Edmonton to do my job there. I spend probably, therefore, in the neighbourhood of about 700 hours in my driver's seat just trying to do the job as compared to the average local urban riding, with nothing against my urban colleagues. Sometimes they might spend 10 minutes to get across to where they're going because some of those ridings in the cities are very small. Sometimes I do feel that there needs to be some sort of attention paid to how these things are distributed.

But I would like to point out that according to the figures that I've obtained, 50 per cent of the population is in the two major cities and the other 50 per cent is in the rural areas, including the mid-size cities and the towns and the open agricultural country areas. I would not want to see the cities, therefore, take any more seats from the rural. We have trouble enough as it is. I don't feel that seats should be leaving the rural. If anything, I think that there's got to be some way where we can maintain our coverage to the best of our abilities, but I do recognize that the cities do have their needs as well according to the population. There are just some constraints you will have that you will not be able to adjust.

But I do not feel – and I wanted to make this point clear – that the city ridings should go beyond their city boundaries. It's a different lifestyle; it's a different form of land use. It's altogether a different kind of thing, and I don't personally feel that someone that is primarily covering an urban setting – I don't necessarily feel that in all cases they could perhaps serve a rural area as well if they had a blend of the two. It would be a difficult thing, I should think.

Those are most of the comments I had. I didn't really have a prepared speech or anything as compared to when I'm sitting in the House, but if you have any questions, I'd be glad to answer some of them.

The Chair: Yes. I'll kick off with some questions. Your presentation has been extremely helpful because it focused on exactly our job, which is to look at the constituency boundaries of your constituency of Livingstone-Macleod and see, frankly, if they could be moved to increase your population to a degree. That doesn't mean that's the only factor. These other things that we've talked about are relevant, too, but that is one of the things we have to look at. We don't want to make a mistake. We don't want to leave bits behind that shouldn't belong in one area or make the line in a silly place. So it was terrific to hear from you.

I'm going to ask you some questions, and this is affected by the fact that we were in Olds this morning and heard those people. They were talking about Banff-Cochrane there, too, so I've got in mind some of the things they recommended for their area, but it impacted on Banff-Cochrane, which is your neighbour immediately to the north.

Mr. Stier: Certainly.

The Chair: If we look at Banff-Cochrane, we see it's got 31 per cent more than the provincial average by way of population. It has really grown.

Mr. Stier: Has it? I didn't know that.

The Chair: Yeah. It's huge. That's one of the biggest populations in the province. That's above the 25 per cent permitted average, so there will have to be a decision made there. Maybe the answer is just no to this question, but is one of the options moving your northern boundary? Not the bit that goes into Highwood but the northern boundary that immediately butts up against the B.C. border: if we move that north into Banff-Cochrane, would you be able to pick up some population? Or is it just that the population isn't close to the border of the constituency there? It's hard to tell looking at the map.

7:30

Mr. Stier: Let me just talk about that for a second, just to be clear about where you're speaking of. If there was to be an addition north of the current boundary, it would then, therefore, take in the community of Bragg Creek and then take in the community of Redwood Meadows and all the acreages in between. But there is a reserve nearby, and I don't think you'd see a large amount of population there. I don't know how far you were thinking of going. There is some room to do something there, but really the only community between there and Canmore is Bragg Creek.

The Chair: How many people live in Bragg Creek, do you think?

Mr. Stier: In the town itself there can't be more than 1,200.

The Chair: Okay. If we wanted to consider adding population to your riding, I'm hearing that you think the bit at the bottom perhaps is better off with Waterton, which is in Cardston-Taber-Warner. What about moving all of Waterton into Livingstone-Macleod?

Mr. Stier: That would not make any difference to me because when I'm on the road for two, what's another three-quarters of an hour to get down to my good friend Barney, who's here tonight? He's the mayor of the town here. That would be fine. But, you know, when it comes down to that, there's not a lot in between Pincher Creek down to Waterton. That could be arranged.

I think the point I was making perhaps was, though, that Waterton, Crowsnest, all those heavy mountainous terrain areas have like needs, and both of them are now going to be provincial parks, as you may or may not be aware, instead of one. One is a

federal park, by the way. There are some matches there. I can understand that, certainly.

The Chair: Yes. I heard that announcement about the parks.

Okay. Just looking at all the options, do you have any other suggestion of moving into Little Bow or Cardston-Taber-Warner that might add some population to your constituency?

Mr. Stier: Well, certainly, if you look to the – you want to add to it?

The Chair: Right. Potentially, you could add up to 7,000 people here.

Mr. Stier: Yeah. You know, my colleague from Little Bow is here tonight. We haven't discussed anything like this, but the only way to add population is to try to scoop up some of the small towns to the east of the current boundary and go up highway 23. You've got Nobleford, Barons, Carmangay, and Champion, and there's a bit of population in there. Otherwise, you've got open farmland, and there are not a lot of folks there. They've got large tracts of agricultural property there.

By the way, if I could, though, before we get too far along, if you're looking to add, it would be my conclusion that Highwood has grown tremendously. I live, actually, in the corner of Highwood myself. That's where I've grown up. Okotoks is my small hometown. If that was to be added in, that would be the faster way versus the other two options you've mentioned to add to my current constituency that I have, to take some of Highwood if that becomes a consideration.

The Chair: Okay. This is a test here. Well, I see, happily, that they're 15 per cent over the provincial average, so they might have some people to spare.

Mr. Stier: Yeah.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Livingstone: Just while we're talking about Highwood, you had mentioned the piece of your riding that goes up into that Priddis area, and as you said, that fits more naturally with Highwood, probably. If that were to go into Highwood, is there population adjoining your riding that could shift south out of Highwood to join you so it would help reduce their numbers and put yours up?

Mr. Stier: Yes, there would be. If you look at a couple of boundaries there, there are a vast number of acreages. I'm not sure what the detail is on your map, Ms Livingstone, but if you look at highway 7, it goes west out of Okotoks, and highway 783 goes south out of Okotoks. If you took out a couple of townships there, you would wind up with a significant number of acreages, which can add up fairly substantially. There's no small town in that little cube I've just pulled out, but there are quite a few people living in that area.

The Chair: You talked a lot about commonality of interests – those are my words – and, for example, the Waterton and Crowsnest areas have similar interests.

Mr. Stier: Right.

The Chair: Would the people in Highwood have similar interests to the people in the northern part of Livingstone-Macleod?

Mr. Stier: No question.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Stier: It's a trading/business area. It has been for a century. Everybody that lives in Okotoks knows people in Turner Valley and back and forth.

The Chair: Okay. Questions, panel?

Ms Munn: Yes, I have some questions. You had spoken earlier about that little piece at the top of the riding being put into Livingstone-Macleod. Undoubtedly, it was done to do something about the population.

Mr. Stier: Yeah. Actually, if I may, that was part of the Foothills-Rocky View riding, which is now Chestermere-Rocky View. That northern area from Longview north used to be part of Foothills-Rocky View.

Ms Munn: Yes, and I suspect that it was added to Livingstone-Macleod to do something about the population. But I thought that one of the things that you mentioned is that that little piece has much more to do culturally, with respect to commerce, with Calgary.

Mr. Stier: Okotoks and Calgary, yes.

Ms Munn: Right. I'm wondering if there wouldn't be a negative impact on the southern part of the riding if you were to take more of that population, Okotoks north, where the orientation is to Calgary. How would that help the rural question?

Mr. Stier: I'm not exactly following you, but I've got an idea that I might have confused you a moment ago. I was suggesting that the – I've drawn a circle around the Longview north, Okotoks, High River, Calgary area. All of that is a similar land use and a similar lifestyle and culture.

Ms Munn: Yes.

Mr. Stier: For me, to take a bit more of it was a question posed by the chair, not a suggestion by myself.

Ms Munn: Right. And I had thought you were saying at the beginning that it was a strange piece to be part of Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Yeah.

Ms Munn: If we make that piece bigger, wouldn't that even be stranger?

Mr. Stier: Oh, certainly, it would. But the question, again, was a different scenario that she had presented than what I was commenting on earlier.

Ms Munn: If we were required to increase the population in Livingstone-Macleod, wouldn't there be more commonality with the population if the eastern border of the constituency were moved further east?

Mr. Stier: Certainly, that is true in that particular zone of land use and culture. That's a large agricultural area that would match with the towns of Claresholm and Stavely and so on and so forth. You know, the question was: can we find another 7,000 or 8,000 population? The only thing I can grab in my mind quickly in that particular central area would be population centres like three or four small hamlets, villages, or towns, yes.

The Chair: Nanton, Stavely: they wouldn't add up to 7,000 or 8,000 people if you took that rim of towns along the highway there.

Mr. Stier: Nanton and Stavely and Claresholm combined would. If you put Claresholm in, yeah. But they're already in there.

Ms Munn: They're in there, yeah.

The Chair: They're already part of the riding. Okay.

Great. Thanks.

Other questions? Bruce.

Mr. McLeod: Sure. Thank you for your presentation. In your presentation you made a statement that it should not go beyond the city boundaries because of the rural-urban types of issues that arise. But then, again, are you talking directly about the city of Calgary and the city of Edmonton?

Mr. Stier: Yes.

Mr. McLeod: Okay. We were in Fort McMurray, and we were in Peace River, and Fort McMurray was saying: that's how we live.

Mr. Stier: Yes. Exactly. Because the town is that small, people are interacting more with their rural neighbours. Similarly, you will find that same case in Medicine Hat. Cypress-Medicine Hat, as an example, has a blend. But when we're talking about a major metropolitan centre, that's a different piece of business.

7:40

Mr. McLeod: Thank you. I just wanted clarification on that because we've heard a lot of positive things about the rural-urban partnerships in a lot of areas, and then we've also heard the opposite. So I just want to be clear on what you were talking about.

Mr. Stier: Yeah. I was talking about the two major centres only in that comment.

Mr. McLeod: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Stier: Thank you.

The Chair: Virtually all of the smaller cities are hybrids. I mean, in Lethbridge there are two ridings and some rural area around it.

Mr. Stier: Yes. For clarification – I apologize if I confused you on that – smaller centres like Lethbridge, a prime example, are very acquainted with their rural neighbours and what goes on in the rural. Larger centres are not. The values are totally different.

The Chair: Thank you.

Other questions?

Mrs. Day: Yeah. I'd just like to clarify that your riding consists of, like, three zones that you've kind of blocked them into, and if we increased the zone in the north, it's the same issues still there and the same lifestyle, and if we increased it to the south, it would be similar with the other zone.

Mr. Stier: Yeah.

Mrs. Day: Yeah. I'm sure you wouldn't want more miles. So more population is better, but longer miles is not necessarily the goal.

Mr. Stier: It goes with the territory. I mean, ideally, I'd love to have them all real close. I wouldn't have to drive so long, but that just doesn't work.

Mrs. Day: I bet. Okay. That's very helpful, the way you've described your area. Thank you.

Mr. Stier: Thank you.

Mr. McLeod: One more question if you don't mind. In some of the other presentations that we've had, some of the MLAs in some of the areas in northern Alberta, for example, suggested possibly more offices, more staff, more resources. Would that be an asset towards helping you with your area?

Mr. Stier: No question – no question – but, you know, my office budget is set by certain parameters. I usually spend up all of my parameters, and a high amount of my budget goes to gas and mileage compensation for my vehicle.

Mr. McLeod: Yeah. It's about the resources. You know, they talked about that at least they get to talk to a human being in an office. They may not get the face-to-face right away, but if they're talking to one of your assistants, at least they're getting answers from one particular place, and they're not waiting for a return call. That's what we're suggesting.

Mr. Stier: That's certainly true, but I would beg to offer this. Technology has changed a lot in the last 10 years. I was around when they did the last redraw, but I wasn't involved at this level. I was a municipal councillor at that time or just prior to being one. Technology has made up for a lot. My work now has shifted. Even in the past few years that I've been – this is my second term. It's changed quite a bit. I'm doing more on social media than I did in 2012. I'm able to connect with more people more effectively with social media than I was in 2012 because of the improvements and the number of people that are using it commonly now. So having an office doesn't necessarily answer the problem I've got. I need to clone me about four times. That's what I need to do.

Mr. McLeod: I don't think they've gone there yet, have they?

Mr. Stier: No, they haven't.

The Chair: Maybe for eight years from now.

Just talking wish list here, we can make recommendations in the report about things that would assist in creating effective representation totally outside of the size of the constituency. We've heard in the far north, in Peace River, which is the largest constituency in the province, that the MLA up there, the Deputy Speaker, thought that if she could have another half-time person in her second office, that would solve a lot of her problems. I just want to specifically ask you because you have a large constituency here in the south, nothing like Peace River but still a large constituency: I take it you don't have a second office right now.

Mr. Stier: I don't, and that was an option. I run pretty frugal. I could stretch if I wanted to on that. I find, though, because of the training that my two staff have, who are marvellous – and their backgrounds are marvellous for what I need – that it's more than adequate in that regard right now.

The Chair: Where is your current office?

Mr. Stier: Well, actually, that's one point I forgot to mention. Thanks for asking. When I became elected, it was in Fort Macleod, in the southeast corner of the riding. I moved it more central, to Nanton.

The Chair: So even though you live farther north, you have your office in the centre of the riding?

Mr. Stier: Yeah. I don't spend a lot of time in my office in Nanton, quite frankly. My office is out there. It runs on gas and keeps me warm.

The Chair: Other questions?

Okay. Thanks. You've been extremely helpful. Thank you very much.

Mr. Stier: Thank you for your time this evening, and good luck. I know what it was like on the last occasion, and it was quite a lot of work. I look forward to seeing you again.

The Chair: Thanks so much.

Is Sherry Hunt here?

Ms Hunt: I'm actually not presenting. I was accidentally on the list.

The Chair: Okay. Well, don't go away because I'm sure we'll have some extra time at the end, and I'd love to talk to the people who were here for a bit at the end.

Shelby MacLeod.

Ms MacLeod: Yes. We're coming.

The Chair: Could you start by telling us what constituency you live in?

Ms MacLeod: I actually live in Lethbridge-West, but I'm here representing the Lethbridge-East constituency.

Mr. Zielke: I'm Dale Zielke. I live in Lethbridge-East.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Ms MacLeod: We're here to say that we support our rural neighbours, and we like Lethbridge-East just the way it is.

The Chair: Looking at the map, Lethbridge-East has about 44,927 people in it at the moment, and it's 8 per cent below the provincial average. Leaving Lethbridge-West alone for the moment and just talking about options – we've got you here, and this is our chance – if we found that we had to consider moving the boundary to increase the size of Lethbridge-East, which is up on the screen right now, which would be the way that you think we should do that that would work the best?

Ms MacLeod: Well, we know that if we gain something, we have to take something away from someone, and that's why we're very cautious about taking anything away. We're in a growth. We're moving to a 100,000 population in the near offing, so that's why we're thinking that we're going to be factually in a better position. We don't want to take anything from anyone.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Munn: Well, that point, I think, is really important. What are the trends for growth in Lethbridge-East?

Ms MacLeod: Well, the city of Lethbridge right now says that we will have a 100,000 population before year-end, they believe, of 2017. Theoretically, if you divided the city in half, we'll each have 50,000 people.

Ms Munn: Is the growth equal in east and west?

Ms MacLeod: It's pretty consistent, according to what I've been told by the city fathers or the city statisticians. That's why last time we got the little panhandle at the north part that went up Stafford. That was originally the Lethbridge-West division because it was straight up 13th Street. I think we got 2,000 in population in 2010. Now, Lethbridge-West has grown exponentially on the west side by the new hockey facility, and the east is growing on the south and on the north in Legacy parts and Coulee Creek.

Ms Munn: These are new neighbourhoods that are being developed as we speak?

Ms MacLeod: New neighbourhoods, yes, as you speak, and some of them are not even on your map.

Ms Munn: Okay.

The Chair: Not to cross-examine you – but that is my way – that would mean an increase in population of 9 per cent in Lethbridge in total by the end of 2017.

Ms MacLeod: Well, that's what they're telling us from city hall.

The Chair: Okay. That seems like a lot.

Ms MacLeod: It does. They're doing this 100,000 population, and they keep saying that by the end of 2017 we'll be at 100,000. I think the population right now is 90,000-plus in their articulation.

The Chair: Thank you.
Anything else you'd like to say?

Ms MacLeod: No. I think we like to be good neighbours, and we like it how it is.

The Chair: Anything you'd like to say about Lethbridge-West, seeing as you live there?

Ms MacLeod: Again, I can't speak on behalf of them, but from my conversations with the Lethbridge-Westians that I know, they like it how it is. Their biggest thing: they'd like a third bridge. But that's not what we're here for.

Ms Livingstone: I just had one question. We had a submission that came in in writing that suggested to us that the way people who live in Lethbridge think of east and west is not the way we currently have the lines drawn. I thought I'd get your input on that. Is there a more sensible place for us to put the existing line that would align with the way people in Lethbridge talk?

7:50

Ms MacLeod: I've been doing this for 40 years. I'm an old person. I don't think you could find anything more efficient than 13th Street as one of the major dividing lines. The little panhandle: it took a while for people to get used to that. We used to have it where the hospital was in Lethbridge-West, but we lost that because of disparity. To divide across the river, that would make Lethbridge-East huge and Lethbridge-West considerably smaller. I believe the population of Lethbridge-West is 37,500 or something like that and growing but not enough to carry the day on their own. So if you divided it at the river, we'd have to take something from our neighbours, and I don't think we would be in favour of that.

Ms Livingstone: Okay. Yeah, I just wanted to make sure. I had some other people in Lethbridge comment on that.

Ms MacLeod: Well, it's a natural divide because people on the west side of the river – we're all homogeneous, getting along kind of folks, but we live a little bit differently.

Mr. Zielke: I think the signage in the last election, when it was west and east, was rather confusing because then there were people that were floating signs across into the other area. I think there has to be more, perhaps, you know, control over signage and so forth. We had other candidates on 13th putting up other signs in another jurisdiction, so there was some confusion there for folks. I was even asked about that as well.

Ms Livingstone: I was going to have one more follow-up. Is there something else we should call them instead of east and west if that's confusing?

Mr. Zielke: I always prefer east L.A.

Ms Livingstone: I did tell people I was going to L.A. today.

Mr. Zielke: Yeah. Exactly.

Ms MacLeod: To be honest with you, as old as the boundaries are, I don't think you could find anything that is more appropriate because it's been like this for many a year. Our newcomers have difficulty, but then for a newcomer to any community, like with some of the Edmonton boundaries or Calgary boundaries, it's really confusing, so I'm not sure you could rename them.

Mr. McLeod: That was my question. We also had one submission that basically said that we should change the name to maybe Lethbridge-University or something, just that separation, to a certain degree.

Ms MacLeod: Well, if you look at our population, it's more than just the university and the college, so that, to my way of thinking, would just be, you know, cutesy.

Mr. McLeod: Cutesy?

Ms MacLeod: Yeah.

Mr. Zielke: I think that for some of our older population it might be disrespectful as well, and they might have some confusion there as well, possibly.

Mr. McLeod: Well, thanks. You've clarified that.

The Chair: Are the boundaries of Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West together contiguous with the municipal boundary of Lethbridge?

Ms MacLeod: Yes.

The Chair: It's not a hybrid in any way?

Ms MacLeod: No. We're not a rural.

The Chair: Okay. Thanks.
Gwen.

Mrs. Day: Yeah. I just was going to refer back to one of the submissions that came in. I think he said Lethbridge-Oldman for Lethbridge-West so that you could associate it with the river.

Ms MacLeod: I suppose, but to me with the amount of money that you would have to spend to retrain 40,000 voters, who are a mostly older generation, I'm not sure that that would make a lot of sense.

The Oldman River runs, you know, from here to there. It goes through Highwood, and it goes through Little Bow. I mean, it doesn't make sense to me.

Mr. Zielke: I think you would get some push-back on the name itself because of the gender involved – I'm just saying that – possibly from the university area.

Mrs. Day: So you're quite content with the names. It was just one submission, so we just had to float it. But you're quite content with the names?

Ms MacLeod: I think so. In previous years people would come up with ideas, but I don't think they've ever found names better than Lethbridge-East, Lethbridge-West going back in the generations until when it was once just Lethbridge.

The Chair: You just mentioned that there are some senior citizens living in Lethbridge, of course. Do you have any information about the average age of the community? Is it slightly higher, maybe, than the Alberta average?

Ms MacLeod: Well, now, my data is getting old because I'm getting old, but at one time we had the highest population of senior citizens per thousand in the province. We've considered a retirement community for some people from Edmonton and Calgary because we have wonderful chinooks, we're close to the U.S. border, we have an airport, et cetera, et cetera, so we have a lot of retirees here. Our condo business has done well, so it's evident that people come to this community to retire.

The Chair: That said – and I'm hearing you on: don't change anything – we have to consider all possibilities. Just to discuss other possibilities theoretically for the moment – and we certainly haven't made our minds up, believe me – are there areas around the city of Lethbridge which also contain this similar profile of retired folks living in them?

Ms MacLeod: Well, if you mean communities . . .

The Chair: Not communities but areas: farming, acreages, towns, anything close to the borders.

Ms MacLeod: Well, off the top of my head, I would say: not so much. Coalhurst is growing, as is Coaldale, but they are unique in their own jurisdictions. People would perhaps retire there but not at the rate of the data that I once knew on Lethbridge. Also, because of the university and the college, people can do sessional teaching and such.

The Chair: Okay. Thanks.
Are there other questions?

Ms Munn: Would it be possible to consider doing some written submissions on growth projections for Lethbridge?

Ms MacLeod: We will do our homework for you. Yes, we'd commit to that.

Ms Munn: I think it would be really important information because if there's serious and credible evidence about growth in the city of Lethbridge, that might end the question.

Ms MacLeod: Okay. We will commit to do that for you.

Ms Munn: Thank you.

The Chair: Anything else?

Ms MacLeod: No. I think that's great, then. Thank you for coming to Lethbridge.

The Chair: Our pleasure. Thank you for being here tonight.
I'll ask David Schneider. Good evening.

Mr. Schneider: Good evening. My name is Dave Schneider – you've got that part sorted out – and I'm currently the MLA for Little Bow. I appreciate being given the opportunity to speak here tonight to your panel regarding an important topic, potential electoral division boundary changes. I'm sure that you have heard many ideas in your travels so far as to how you could look at the changes of boundaries throughout ridings of the entire province. I thank you for serving, certainly, on the commission in this important process. Far be it from me to change, probably, how the process has been going, so I'll just get to it.

Little Bow just about surrounds the city of Lethbridge – it isn't up there – all but a portion to the southwest of the city. A good portion of Little Bow's boundaries are natural boundaries, those boundaries being a portion of the Little Bow River system on the western boundary, portions of the Oldman and the St. Mary rivers on the southwestern boundary, portions of the Bow River along the northern edge and the eastern side of the riding, and, of course, the Oldman as it runs where the Bow River and the Oldman confluence turns into the South Saskatchewan.

The population of the riding according to the latest estimate is 30,627. I don't know if that's what the number is up there. I think it's up just 2,000, just under 2,000, from the last census population numbers. I believe that according to the latest provincial estimate of population for the province each constituency, ideally, would be in that 48,800 range . . .

The Chair: We've just popped the map up on the screen.

Mr. Schneider: Yeah.

. . . which means, of course, that Little Bow is certainly within the 25 per cent variance as laid out in the legislation.

Little Bow includes all or parts of the MDs or counties of Vulcan, Lethbridge, Taber, Wheatland, and Foothills. Also, the southern portion of the Siksika Nation is included in the riding. Little Bow includes 15 municipalities plus the nation, of course, and represents some 90 councillors and mayors and one chief. Coaldale, just east of town here 10 miles or so, is the largest town in the riding, with a population of about 7,500 residents. We also have six school boards represented in Little Bow, with 34 schools in the riding, and a rather large number of hamlets and unincorporated communities.

8:00

The Little Bow riding is just over 12,000 square kilometres in size, which equates to twice the size of Prince Edward Island. I don't know if anybody has ever been there, but it is a large riding, just like my colleague's is. His is somewhat bigger, I think.

Of course, we have several highways that run through the riding, highway 23, highway 3, and highway 36 being the major highways. There are certainly lots of secondaries that weave their way through. Those little secondaries: I kind of call them feeder highways for the cattle and grain industries, which make up the bulk of the industry in Little Bow. Little Bow also contains the largest cattle-feeding area in Canada; 60 per cent of all Canadian beef is produced right here, just northeast of town, in Feedlot Alley.

Wilson, a town to the south, and Vulcan, 60 miles to the north, would be the biggest grain points in the riding that put grain in position for export. Grain is drawn, certainly, from the riding, but

also a lot of grain comes from the western – it would come from Mr. Stier's riding. The rail was taken out of that riding several years ago, so a lot of grain comes into the Vulcan area from the west and the south.

Clearly, we are largely an agricultural riding. We have a McCain's plant in the far southeast corner of the riding. That is an agrifood plant. It requires a lot of potatoes that are grown both in the riding and outside of the riding to service that particular industry. We have several greenhouses and varying sizes of those as well throughout the riding that market their products within and outside of the riding. Agribusiness, of course, is big business throughout this riding, whether it's fertilizer sales or chemical sales or machinery sales. Anything that services agriculture has found a home here in Little Bow.

We also have two hospitals in the riding, one in Vulcan and one in Coaldale, and a small amount of ambulance service, but, as the lady before me said, that's a discussion for another day, I expect.

You know, in a nutshell that somewhat describes the riding and its boundaries and its population.

We know the population. When we start to talk about boundaries in Little Bow, I think of what common community interests might be, and it does go further than that when you live in a rural community. For instance, there is a 4-H community in just about every town throughout the riding. A club like 4-H certainly binds the agriculture community together, and lifetime friends are made through that organization. Members' life skills: I mean, their motto is Learn to Do by Doing. Of course, we're in our 100th year of 4-H in Alberta, and a good portion of this riding is full of people that use 4-H. It's invaluable for rural families.

There are ag societies throughout the riding, in towns, scattered across. It's instrumental in fundraising for communities. We find there that we have rural people and town people that converge to become part of the boards that make up these ag societies, and they work towards common goals. You know, communities in rural areas have been here since the province was born.

My grandfather crossed the Atlantic Ocean and worked his way across Canada and got out to a little place 30 minutes east of Vulcan called Armada in 1908 and homesteaded out there. I mean, the name of the place is still on the map, but there's nothing left of Armada. But in its time there was a school, and there were stores, and there was an elevator for grain and on and on. I mean, there was commerce going on in Armada.

The people that still live out there and live in the greater communities of places like Lomond and Enchant and Travers and Champion and Vulcan all know the people that lived out there. There's a history that's a binding, communal force. It's an unseen, invisible force of sameness, I would call it. That's nothing that's ever even been said before. You know, these people survived the Depression, two world wars, and every kind of weather event you can imagine. As recently as the 2000s we had BSE. That went through every rural riding. Every Albertan that had a cow was affected and everybody in Canada the same way. Communities are brought together through things like that. We become stronger when we survive these events. We grow closer, and our communities are that much stronger. All of us that live in rural Alberta understand those things.

I'm not saying that the cities don't, but when we're out in the middle of nowhere and surviving on things that we make with our own hands, it is very encouraging to be able to – well, I'll just give you a for instance. You know, we know our neighbours. They're likely people that have a history in the area, so you know all of those people and their children and whoever their parents were. Our neighbourhoods, you know, certainly in this riding, stretch for miles

and miles. If you are a farmer that happens to be working out in your yard and you look out 10 miles to the west or somewhere and see a puff of smoke, you realize that there's a fire going on. You throw a scoop shovel in the back of your truck, and you race off to go help put out a fire in a rural situation. Certainly, the volunteer fire departments are on their way as well, but all the neighbours: even if you don't know whose land it is, he's a neighbour of yours, because you would expect him to return the favour in exactly the same way.

Those things all make up the network of rural Alberta, no question about it. If someone happens to be sick or passes away and can't get their crop off, can't get their hay up or something to that effect, I mean, the local guys will come in and help with that kind of stuff, do their own work and do the work of the person that's in trouble as well.

Histories interconnect throughout these rural ridings. There's no question. I guess that in our towns and villages the same things occur. We all know each other. It doesn't mean we like each other, but we've met, and we understand who we are. Farm kids all go to town schools. That's another shared community right there. The community of people that have children who go to that school is not confined to the town. It's made up of rural and urban, and all of a sudden you have a bigger community of people. When something is going on at that school, like a football game or whatever is going on, you have a bigger community. Your kids are playing hockey and you're rubbing shoulders with people that have the same thing going on in their community 15 or 20 miles away in a different direction. It's all interlinked. Certainly, you know, your doctor is probably a member of the Kinsmen Club, or he's down at the ag society volunteering for a bar night at some fundraiser. That doesn't happen everywhere. It certainly happens in rural Alberta.

I think I should probably stop because I'm going to run out of time, but I'm just trying to give you a sense of what rural community is and, certainly, what Little Bow's rural community is. As far as boundaries are concerned, like I've said, the rivers make up a good portion of that. They're natural boundaries. We don't cut communities up too much in Little Bow with electoral boundaries, which is good. Counties and MDs are cut up a little bit in this instance, but our community is whole, and it needs to stay that way. Keeping rural rural and urban urban is important to the folks of Little Bow. We're proud of the communities that we've built, and over time we have come to know the people that live in those communities, mostly because there's a history, a history that somehow binds us together in rural Alberta.

I can say how many miles I put on a truck every year – it's roughly the same as Mr. Stier's – doing your best to represent all the people, 39,000 and some-odd. Like I said, there are six school boards that have to be tended to and 90 councillors on several different councils. I know that you people are charged with ensuring that representation is not just equal but effective, and I get that. But without even thinking of it, I've lived in a rural riding my entire life. Little Bow is a rural community. That's what we do. That's what we are. Community interests and organizations are roughly the same across the entire riding, and we're proud of that. To be honest, I'm sure that most would like it to stay that way.

Little Bow meets the criteria as laid out in the legislation. I guess I'm always open to suggestions on what might have to happen. I'm not going to be somebody that's negative about the entire process. I understand that there are only 87 ridings allowed. You have no authority over that, and if we have to do something to make them a little more equal, then that's what we have to do.

I think I'll stop. I'll yield now. Thank you very much for the time.

8:10

The Chair: Okay. Well, you've opened the door to the very question I was formulating in my mind. Thank you very much. Last time you were only 9 per cent below the provincial average, but now you're 19 per cent, which is – well, we have to look at it. No preset view, nothing: that's the spirit in which I'm asking these questions. Looking at that, based on your knowledge as a lifetime resident of the area, is there part of the Strathmore-Brooks community that has the same binding communal force as you think exists in Little Bow?

Mr. Schneider: Well, I wouldn't be a bit surprised. Once you've been an agriculture community and you either have a lot of cattle or a lot of land going on and everybody understands all that, I think it's easy for that to be an additional part of a community. That would make sense.

The Chair: What part of Strathmore-Brooks?

Mr. Schneider: Oh, man. I just love that boundary. That's the one that's natural. Boy. I'm just like my colleague from Livingstone-Macleod. I haven't talked to Mr. Fildebrandt about this at all. It looks like he has a little bit of an issue – does he? – as far as population.

The Chair: In Strathmore-Brooks? Well, he's 7 per cent over.

Mr. Schneider: Yeah. He's 7 per cent over.

The Chair: That's why my eye was drawn in that direction.

Mr. Schneider: Yeah. In the last – now, I wasn't the MLA at the time – we took a little notch out of Highwood at the top there, and that had to be to add population, I think, at the time. It would have to be up a range road or something because, certainly, the natural boundaries are now going to disappear.

The Chair: Okay. We'll talk about Highwood, then. Is there part of Highwood that would, you think, work well with the culture and community in Little Bow?

Mr. Schneider: Well, you know, just north of that little piece that was added in the last boundary change, if the Highwood River were followed up to – now I'm going to have to go up there.

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Schneider: I mean, this isn't very clear because it's kind of fuzzy, but the Highwood River kind of runs along here, and there's some development here that would, you know, just take that small little nick out to this boundary, which is the river as well. Pat and I were just talking about it. I mean, we don't know what the population might add there. It might add 1,500 people. I don't know what that does to the mix. It's not much. It's 41,000, maybe, all of a sudden.

The Chair: Sure. Okay. Before you leave, our clerk is going to give you a marker and ask you to draw that line on our laminated version, and then he'll take a picture of that. When we come to our deliberations, that'll be part of your submission, and we won't forget what exactly you had in mind there.

Mr. Schneider: I've met your clerk. I know.

The Chair: Okay. All right.
Any questions?

Mrs. Day: Well, I guess the question that we face throughout Alberta and that we've posed to many MLAs is that some people in the urban centres, of course, believe that the variance isn't quite as – how would I say? – allowable in today's world, in that it should be reduced so that there's more parity with other ridings, because of technology. Now, I heard your other MLA mention that technology is making it easier for him to connect. I'm sure it has something to do with demographics and, of course, cell service and Internet service. How is that for you in your riding?

Mr. Schneider: Yeah. You know, as far back as I can remember, there's only ever been one office in Little Bow, and when I won the election, within two months, I think, I had another office. I moved one out here to Coaldale, and I moved the one that was in Carmangay north to Vulcan. So we have pretty good coverage now, but of course that comes out of your budget. I have some really good staff that have been working in this industry for – I don't know.

Glenn, how many years have you been working?

Mr. Miller: Seven.

Mr. Schneider: Seven or eight. Yeah.

They're good with constituents. They can answer questions and move on, and I just kind of get a report of what's going on, which I like.

Yeah. There are very few areas, I would suggest, unless you get out into the eastern end, where the grazing reserves are, that there isn't cell service, but there isn't any population either unless you're a four-legged critter. Yeah. I'm wide open to whatever you've got that's good for Alberta. You know what? It's all about what's good for Alberta, and I'm all for that. I really am.

Mrs. Day: If we were to go to the east, because Strathmore-Brooks is plus 7, is there a natural – because, obviously, you've got to cross a river there, so a bridge is the issue there.

Mr. Schneider: The bridges are an issue there, yeah. Towards the north end there is a bridge at Blackfoot Crossing, and then all the way down to – well, I'll go point it out for you. Bow City is right here, and the other bridge is here, so this whole river – you know, there's not a lot of commerce that travels across this. Yeah. There's something up here, Carseland. Certainly, some go this way, but this really is a boundary. It's a natural boundary.

The Chair: Anything else?

All right. Well, thank you very much. Your comments have been extremely helpful. Again, I'd ask you to stop by our clerk, and he'll give you a marker. That would just be terrific. Thank you so much.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you for the work you're doing.

The Chair: All right. Terry Shillington. If you could start by giving us the name of the constituency in which you reside.

Mr. Shillington: Right. My name is Terry Shillington. We're in Lethbridge-East, and my partner here is Cheryl Meheden, who doesn't have the privilege of living in Lethbridge-East but knows the constituency pretty well. First of all, thank you for being here and listening to our concerns. I appreciate the time that all of you are taking. I want to say, too, by way of introduction that our MLA, Maria Fitzpatrick, would be here if she was not on holidays. She's off in some warm clime.

My basic summary for this invitation is that I think the present boundaries for Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West are very comfortable. In that I echo what Shelby MacLeod said. The primary

north-south boundary is 13th Street, and then it kind of jogs more toward the river as we get to the north end of the city, 26th Avenue. I think that's a comfortable community of people. There's no perfect way to saw a city in half, but 13th Street works as well as any, culturally. I heard you with her toying about both different names and also a radically different division of the city. If you're going to divide it differently, you would have to do it on maybe 6th Avenue, and then you'd have half of Lethbridge-West on one side and half on the other. It doesn't make any sense to me.

I think a north-south division is the one that makes sense, and I think the names east and west are as clear as any. I wouldn't call Lethbridge-West West Oldman or Lethbridge-Oldman because the whole city feels they own the Oldman River or share it, so that would be confusing.

Anyway, Cheryl would have another comment because she teaches at the community college. You were discussing Lethbridge as a retirement community, and the average population age would probably be higher than some of the Calgary constituencies, for example. However, there's a very lively university and college both within the city, so I see it as a very diverse city in terms of age and spread and political views and so on.

You want to add to this, Cheryl?

8:20

Dr. Meheden: Sure. When we talk about demographics, I think it's important to note that we do have a college and a university here. Each has about 7,000 to 9,000 students, depending on how you count full-time and part-time. When you end up with 20,000 people in your population of 95,000 people that are students, some of those are migrant, so we always want to make sure we count our census during the time when they're here. But that does make a significant difference because we are quite divided in age. We do have a high young population, but we have an older population as well. They have different wishes.

The Chair: Anything else?

Dr. Meheden: If I could just comment quickly on some of the things that Terry said. I agree that the boundaries make sense to me. I live in Lethbridge-West, so we'll have to have an arm wrestle about that later.

Some of my more generic comments would be about things like the variance. Half the provinces in Canada have a 25 per cent variance, and then the other half have between 5 and 10 per cent. I think that's quite significant, and I'm wondering if maybe we might even consider lowering our variance to maybe 15 per cent or down to 10 like the others. That wouldn't affect Lethbridge-East or Lethbridge-West, but it would certainly affect some of these other areas.

As my colleagues before commented, I think there are really good advances in technology. I know the Alberta government has invested a lot in the SuperNet, so there are many rural communities that are connected that way.

I also think that there are some other elements that we should think about. We've talked a lot about size and geography, and I think it's important – size matters – but I also think that there are other variables that aren't getting lots of talking time that need to be considered in this decision. They include things like adding language and cultural diversity to the equations. You'll see more of that, certainly, in an urban area. Also, I think the diversity and the social caseloads that you see in an urban area are also greater, so you're spending more time in the MLA's office dealing with those kinds of things.

I know you referenced earlier about the common community interests. I'm not sure how well defined common community interests are, but I would just like to say that we want to stay away from discriminatory criteria so that when we talk about some of these groups of populations like newcomers and other Canadians, we don't look at dividing them. Or high or low income or things like that: I think it's important that we try to be inclusive in working toward something that's the best for all Albertans.

The Chair: Okay. This is an important point. Just so I understand it, you're saying, when we're defining community of interest: don't group it by ethnic or socioeconomic factors alone.

Dr. Meheden: Exactly.

Mr. Shillington: Lethbridge is actually quite a diverse culture, quite a variety of all those factors.

The Chair: Anything else?

Mr. Shillington: I have nothing to add unless you have questions.

The Chair: Yes, yes. I'll ask you the same question we've asked everybody unless they happen to mention it in their presentations without prompting. I understand your position that there should be no change to Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West, but in the spirit of keeping variances lower, which you also endorsed, I'm going to ask the question. We have to consider this. We haven't made our minds up, of course, but if we had to increase the size of Lethbridge-East to try to add 5,000 people to it, should we go north, south, or east? I'm hearing that we shouldn't go west.

Mr. Shillington: Well, no, I don't think you should go west because then it would create an imbalance with Lethbridge-West. Having said what I said about, "This is a very comfortable set of boundaries," the one community that Lethbridge shares a fair amount with is Coaldale. We've just completed sharing a police force; however, we did for a while share a police force. That's a jog that doesn't have any natural boundary, but a lot of Coaldale people work in Lethbridge, so there's a lot of commonality there.

The Chair: What's the population of Coaldale?

Mr. Shillington: Well, I think, about 5,000. It's just very tidy numerically but not necessarily in terms of boundaries.

The Chair: I know it's not very far out of Lethbridge. I just have this memory of driving through it.

Mr. Shillington: It's about 10 minutes out.

The Chair: But what would the population be between your eastern boundary and Coaldale if, you know, we were to go out in that direction?

Mr. Shillington: If you went straight down highway 3, there's no community between – what is it?

Unidentified Speaker: There are acreages.

Mr. Shillington: There are a few acreages and businesses, but – what is it? How many kilometres to, like, Coaldale?

Dr. Meheden: Fifteen.

Mr. Shillington: Fifteen, yeah. Ten minutes, if you think of it, and not a lot of rural communities. There are a few little pockets of people.

The Chair: Thank you. Even though you're claiming not to speak for Lethbridge-West, seeing as we have a Lethbridge-West resident here – and the variance there is smaller, at 5 per cent. Again, just because we have to explore this with everyone, that would put you at about 3,500 or 4,000 lower than the provincial average. How would you recommend – like, what could be taken in to address that if we felt that we had to do that, to make that recommendation?

Dr. Meheden: To include more population?

The Chair: Right.

Mr. Shillington: Is Coalhurst presently in Little Bow?

The Chair: Yes. I heard from the last speaker that it was, yes.

Mr. Shillington: Yeah. Coalhurst has a connection to Lethbridge.

The Chair: What's the population of Coalhurst?

Dr. Meheden: I have no idea.

Mr. Shillington: I'd be guessing.

The Chair: Smaller than Coaldale?

Mr. Shillington: Two or three thousand, something like that.

Unidentified Speaker: Growing.

Mr. Shillington: Growing, yes. It's a bedroom community for Lethbridge in many ways.

The Chair: Are there new developments of houses there, for example?

Mr. Shillington: Oh, absolutely. Yeah.

Dr. Meheden: I would want to put a disclaimer on that because that would seem to exacerbate your problem with Little Bow, which is already at a projected 19 per cent.

The Chair: No doubt about that. Every decision affects the decision next. Absolutely no doubt about that.
Questions?

Mrs. Day: Someone mentioned it earlier. We were encouraged today to really look at growth patterns. No, that's not something in the written mandate for us, but this is going out eight or 10 years before they'll do this again. You're aware, also, what the city of Lethbridge's growth plans . . .

Mr. Shillington: Roughly. It's something we celebrate in that, you know, Lethbridge boasts about a very gentle population increase. It's not an explosive growth. There's growth in different sides of the city, and I think that's probably due to good city planning. There's growth on the west side, both north and south, and then on the east in Lethbridge, both the south and the north, but it's kind of gentle, gradual growth. So I don't see Lethbridge exploding in numbers in the next 10 years.

Mrs. Day: Okay. Thanks very much.

The Chair: Just as an aid to that, looking over the last eight years, Lethbridge-East appears to have grown by about 1,800 people, and Lethbridge-West appears to have grown by about 4,000 people. I understand that you're saying that that growth rate could be expected to be consistent in the future.

Mr. Shillington: That's the expectation. Now, the recent industrial development might change that a bit but I don't think radically.

Dr. Meheden: It has a lot to do with available land space for development, and the big chunks of available land space that are being developed right now are on the west side.

Mr. McLeod: That's all that white space that we're seeing on the map.

Dr. Meheden: Yeah.

Mr. McLeod: Okay.

Mr. Shillington: The industrial park is in north Lethbridge, so that cuts off some of the . . .

Mr. McLeod: Right. But what I'm looking at when I look at that: I see all the white space with the current community heading towards the west and the south.

Dr. Meheden: Uh-huh.

Mr. McLeod: Okay.

The Chair: Anything else?

All right. Well, thank you very much. You've been very helpful. Thanks so much.

Mr. Shillington: Thank you.

The Chair: All right. Doug Cooper. Is Mr. Cooper here?

Mr. Cooper: Yup.

The Chair: If you could start, Mr. Cooper, by saying which constituency you live in.

Mr. Cooper: You bet. I'm in the Cardston-Taber-Warner riding. I live in Stirling. Sorry; bear with me. I didn't know I was next, so I didn't have my computer open.

The Chair: That's okay.

8:30

Mr. Cooper: Thank you for coming. I appreciate the probably huge task that this is. I've sat on a number of boards, and I appreciate challenges sometimes like this, especially when you have some very tight parameters, so we can appreciate what your challenges will be.

I just wanted to talk about a few things that I felt impressed to approach you with as a board, as a commission. Hopefully, it might help in your decision-making. I think what I'm more addressing a little bit is the, I guess, if you will, lifestyle and some of the natural boundary type things, some of the natural cultures that we face, especially in this area. In our area there are natural boundaries, especially by culture, community, religion, geography, and other indicators that we have. This is because of a number of reasons.

In southern Alberta a lot of these natural boundaries came because when some of the first pioneers came, they built irrigation canals, things like between Cardston, Magrath, Raymond, Stirling, so there became a natural culture that kind of settled there, those people that would build them based on that, on religion, on the agricultural end of things. Sugar beet production is a huge thing that happened in this area and still plays a significant role in the area.

Then because of the agriculture you see a lot of natural migration with the Hutterite colonies, the Mennonite population. We see a lot of common bonds in communities, I guess within communities, in

the area. We understand that those naturally happen. I just wanted to address one thing that happened federally that kind of went against those, and it may give you something to ponder about as well. An example was when the federal riding changed here recently. Lethbridge used to incorporate the areas of Magrath, Raymond, Stirling, those areas, and then it was shifted over to the Medicine Hat riding, so we became Medicine Hat-Cardston-Warner. It's been interesting as we talk to people. That dramatic change that happened: there's very much a disconnect in that riding from the Medicine Hat population to what was Lethbridge.

Sixty per cent of Stirling, for example, goes into Lethbridge to work every day. This is our natural shopping area. Family generally will reside here, back and forth. We found that that much of a dramatic change was quite impactful. We felt very disassociated with the other part of the riding. That's nothing against the MPs, but it certainly speaks to the fact that that presented much more of a challenge to the MP to be able to meet the needs and the cultures and the diversity of the riding. In our riding we have a Blood Tribe reserve. We have oil and gas. We have farming. We have ranching. There's such a great diversity of things that we have going on in the riding.

The one thing that I kind of wanted to talk about, too, was representation and access. I kind of wanted to highlight that it's vital to suggest that to me one of the most important parts of the electoral process is representation and not only representation but accessibility to that representation. In our rural riding Pat Stier explained, I thought quite well, when we were listening to him and Dave Schneider that it's a challenge to reach out. I have a friend, George, who's on the very outer reaches of our riding. He's out in the Aden area, and it's an hour plus to get even to Milk River for him. Then he turns around and then still has to, if he wants to go to an MLA's office – the MLA's office is in Cardston, and then the other one is in Taber. It's maybe another hour for him to reach that. George is an elderly person, and as a result, it makes it a little bit of a challenge for him, especially in maybe inclement weather, to access that directly if he's going there.

You heard about the time commitment that the MLAs put in to try to reach out to those areas. It's that balance. There are good roads, but George, for example, is still on dial-up on Internet. You know, it becomes a challenge in some of those areas for some of these people, especially maybe the elderly folks that are in those areas, to be able to gain access to that.

Where I'm kind of leading with that is that I think the big concern for those people in rural areas such as ours, where they are fairly expansive already, is to not make those any bigger, to not make it more challenging for you to not only have the representation but to have access to that.

There's an appreciation for the urban ridings and the concentration that happens there. I think Pat quite – I won't go into that. He explained that his colleagues find that it's quite easy to access some of those people because time constraints are taken away from going across the city unless you get in rush hour traffic.

I know Paul Hinman is the former MLA for the Cardston-Taber-Warner area as well as one for Calgary-Glenmore, and he said it was a night-and-day difference between the two. He had served in both areas, and he said it was just a huge difference to be able to reach out to his constituents compared to what we have now, you know, when he was in Calgary-Glenmore versus Cardston-Taber-Warner.

The one thing that I did want to address within that framework that you've been asked to work in – you know, the chair mentioned that you don't want to dilute votes, and there's an appreciation even in the rural areas for that. I guess the question is that in order to not dilute the votes, the hope for the rural areas is to not have that ability

to even vote taken away. If there's such a great distance, some people may refrain from voting or it may make it more challenging for them to vote, especially those maybe based on age. That is a concern that we do feel. The key, I would suggest, is the right to vote and effective representation for that vote.

One point – and I'm sure it's been brought up to you – is that in the cities there are 44 ridings that service 51 per cent of the population, and in the rural areas there is 49 per cent of the population and there are 43 ridings. So it seems like they have done a reasonably good job of finding that balance, but what you're asking here is how much tweaking needs to be done, and I guess that's the big question.

I guess my recommendation, as far as somebody coming from a rural area, is to please not make dramatic changes but to maybe look at, you know, small changes that would still allow us that representation, understanding that there is a variance. I know that there's been some voices out there that have said, "You know, let's change the variance down to 5 to 10 per cent as an average," which would certainly take away from our feelings of that being effective representation. If we had to be in that threshold, we'd have such huge areas that it would be very challenging.

A thought, you know, as you look at the ridings here and such: Cardston-Taber-Warner is a fairly natural area of Taber, Stirling, Magrath, and Cardston. They all tend to be fairly common in so many ways. We also have the Blood Tribe in our riding. Then we go down over to the border there. Those are very natural. There's a lot of interaction.

Potentially even leaving our riding the way it is but understanding that Little Bow and some of those other ridings have deficiencies, a thought, perhaps, is taking some of those and moving them east a little bit. You've got Strathmore-Brooks, which is over – you take Little Bow and move it over to Strathmore-Brooks, and then maybe take part of Livingstone-Macleod and move it over into Little Bow, and that would accommodate that. Then your variance may come in with Cardston-Taber-Warner being maybe where it is now. I'm not sure how close those numbers would be for population for Lethbridge-West, but maybe even grabbing a portion of that or such, too, might correct that, to pick up a little chunk of that because of their great population growth.

I'm not sure if that's helpful, but it is just some of the feelings that I had and I wanted to share with you. I just hope to have you understand some of the challenges we do face. I'm sure you've heard it in other areas, but again we appreciate the challenge you face and if there's anything there to help.

8:40

The Chair: Well, I'm very grateful you came out tonight not only for your very clear presentation, but it's very helpful if we have somebody from every constituency. You're the first person we've heard from Cardston-Taber-Warner, so that's great.

You were talking a moment ago about perhaps solving some of the variance concerns in different constituencies in southern Alberta by moving the eastern boundaries further east. If we were to look at that approach for Cardston-Taber-Warner and move your boundaries into Cypress-Medicine Hat, is there part of that constituency that has the same type of community of interest as your constituency?

Mr. Cooper: Yeah. Foremost, Bow Island would very much share commonalities with what we have in this area. Foremost and Bow Island do tend to go a little bit closer to Medicine Hat. It is a bit more of a natural boundary for them, but it is kind of borderline, too. You know, Bow Island sort of almost can go either way. They're about 45 minutes one direction and an hour in another

direction from, say, Taber. But when we have the schools, there's a great rivalry between Stirling and Foremost. Those are similar agricultural things, school-related rivalries, so there are similar things there. That's kind of that borderline. You would still have people going to Medicine Hat, I'm sure, for their trading area, but in an electoral thing if you were to pull a little bit of that in, that's a possibility.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Questions?

Just one on your friend that still has dial-up Internet. Is that because he just hasn't gotten high speed, or it's not available?

Mr. Cooper: It's not accessible. In a lot of those areas, in New Dayton, which is about 10 minutes down the road from us, our friends are still on dial-up. A lot of the rural, agricultural areas are. In Stirling we literally just got access to Axia. They came in, and it's all fibre optics. As that happens more, I think some of those factors will come out to negate, you know, some of that contact and connectivity issue, but it'll take a while. Even some of those remote areas – like, Stirling is just Stirling proper. All the surrounding residences around us have no access still.

The Chair: Okay. Thanks so much. Very helpful.

Mr. Cooper: No, thank you very much.

The Chair: All right. The next speaker is Brian Reeves. If you could start off by telling us your constituency.

Dr. Reeves: I'm in Cardston-Taber-Warner in the forgotten part of Cardston-Taber-Warner, I presume, from our last presenter, if I may make a snarky remark. You have my written presentation, so in the interests of time because I need to drive back upwind to Waterton tonight, I'll just sort of summarize it. I appreciate this opportunity.

What our council is proposing is that the eastern boundary of Livingstone-Macleod be moved from the Waterton River at Stand Off to the Belly River at Stand Off. You have a map in the last – I'll draw it up there. My submission shows that. We go down the Belly River to the boundary at Waterton Park and then turn east on the park boundary, which is a federal-provincial boundary, and then south to the international boundary. That's basically what we're proposing, and I'll talk a bit about why we're proposing that.

But first just a little bit of background about ID 4, which is Waterton. I don't know if you're aware, but improvement districts with councils are a very rare phenomenon in Alberta. There are only two of us, Banff and Waterton, who have elected rather than appointed councils or councils that are simply managed by Municipal Affairs. We are in fact an advisory committee to the minister. We are elected. Alberta was smart many years ago. They set aside IDs for every national park.

In the case of Waterton and Banff and Jasper, for that matter – when we lost our local school divisions in Waterton and became part of what is now the Livingstone school district, the minister created ID 4 or, I should say, erected it. It wasn't resurrected because it wasn't ever there before. We had a town council who had been elected, and we said: okay; we're here to do things. We never had a council. We had no powers because in the national park the national park runs everything, and we have as citizens very limited powers even though we're citizens of Alberta. We were available for provincial grants, and we began to take on community, social, and recreational infrastructure improvements and have used our MSI money and provincial grants and federal grants to do a number

of things to enhance Waterton both for the people who live there and the many visitors we have. It's done quite well.

Unfortunately, like other resort communities but even more so, we have a very asymmetric population. If you read the current census, whichever it may be – I don't look at them anymore. I think it was 80 last time or 120. There's usually a census in the spring. Our winter population went down to 12 one year and got back up to 60 now, and in the summer our resident population of workers and visitors and cottagers, leaseholders, and residents is 2,800 people. We have visitations of up to 10,000 to 12,000 on the busy weekends. We are kind of stressed out, and this year, as you can expect, is going to be very stressful since our campground is already sold out. It sold out within five days of it being open by the feds.

The Chair: It's those free admissions that the federal government has given out.

Dr. Reeves: That's right. Many problems. We'll see how they solve them.

That's the history of how we came to be. Just a little bit about the history of the park boundary. At one time, when Waterton was created in 1898 as a forest park, it was only eight square miles. Then when it became a dominion park in 1912, the boundary was extended right up to the Crowsnest Pass. The whole of what is now the Castle wildlands and the Castle provincial park was part of Waterton Lakes national park. It was that until somebody, including my maternal grandfather probably, decided in about 1928 or 1926: "Well, we can't look after this huge area north of Waterton. All the visitors are coming to Waterton anyway, so let's just give it back to the dominion forest." This was all dominion forest reserve until 1948 or '52. I'm off a few years there. It was not provincial land administrated or provincial Crown land. It was all federal Crown land, except for the Crowsnest Pass, all the way up to the communities of Canmore, et cetera, east of Banff. The history has changed a lot, and our boundary has changed a lot. The last living off from our park was in 1952, when they needed more land for Wood Buffalo national park and took an area up there and incorporated it. We lost half a township, so our eastern boundary is half of what it was back then.

Why we propose this – this was motioned by council, and that's why I couldn't submit earlier; we just had a council meeting on Friday – is that it is a natural boundary, the Belly River rather than the Waterton River. The eastern boundary now of Livingstone-Macleod begins at the junction of the Oldman River, which, by the way, is not Oldman. It is a Piikani Blackfoot name for the Creator, so I take a little offence at the young man's remark about Oldman. Actually, the original name for this river here was the Belly River, but the good citizens of Lethbridge didn't want the Belly River flowing past their great city in the late 1890s, so they changed it. So the Oldman River now flows down to the Bow. Before the Oldman joined the Belly, and the Belly flowed to the Bow. But that's history. My grandmother remembers some of that. So it's a natural boundary to extend it down the Belly River. It incorporates a little bit of the western edge of Cardston county, about 500 people, and incorporates changes to the location of Waterton in terms of its riding association.

8:50

Waterton's boundaries and markets have always been primarily northward, as Pat talked about a bit. Pincher Creek, the ranchland country, the foothills country, has been a natural area for Waterton since the beginning. Our first paved roads came from Pincher Creek before the war, and before the war until 1940 we were part of the riding of Macleod. Then in 1940, when the province changed the

ridings, we became part of the riding of Cardston, which sort of grew and expanded and kept expanding east. As the riding expanded, we found that the interests became more and more agricultural and now very much agricultural, and that's appropriate. We're a very large riding, and agribusiness is very important. So the folks in the foothills, on the edges, are less of a concern to the MLA and to the powers that be in Edmonton. The same thing happened federally and was corrected in the last adjustment by the feds. It would be very nice to be in the same riding as the federal riding, Foothills. The boundaries are very, very similar for the two ridings. Our tourism and all that points north.

One thing that I didn't put in the brief is that the area around Glenwood and north has some very large agricultural enterprises. We have Hutterite colonies and a number of large agricultural farms. Their market location for their grain is Macleod. What we call the Blue Trail, which goes north up there, takes its name from when the highways used to be red and blue. By the way, I'm a historian, archeologist, so I do fall back on that. You see many, many semis pulling grain and cattle heading north. So there are links both to Pincher from that area in terms of the natural market where people go and to north of Fort Macleod, less so to Cardston for a market area, a service area. Part of that is because we have, of course, the Blood reserve. Until the roads were upgraded, there was even less traffic across the reserve and to Cardston than there is today.

So that's my presentation. If you want me to draw it on there, I'd be glad to do that for the audience.

The Chair: Thank you. Yes. But I have a couple of questions first. If I may summarize your presentation, you're suggesting that the Waterton area be moved into the Livingstone-Macleod constituency and out of the Cardston-Taber-Warner constituency. Am I right in that?

Dr. Reeves: Yes. That's correct.

The Chair: About how many people would that take from one constituency to the other?

Dr. Reeves: Probably about 600, depending when the census will be taken.

The Chair: Okay. Do you have any other observations about how population might be addressed in either of those two constituencies through moving the boundaries in other ways?

Dr. Reeves: Well, I live in Calgary quite often. I was at the University of Calgary for a long time. My businesses were there. He's quite right about his concern about that area west of the Highwood riding. Its natural affinity is to Calgary, and it would help a lot if that was readjusted otherwise. In terms of the eastern boundary does it make that much difference if it's highway 2, just east of highway 2? In fact, they could put it down halfway between the two because I think the first time it's going to run down the highway or close to it, or move it over east of highway 23 and incorporate those other communities. Vulcan is a growing community. It's part of the Calgary market area, in particular. So that would help adjust the population.

In terms of Cardston-Taber-Warner, perhaps looking at readjusting the boundary with Little Bow, I think that boundary south of the city of Lethbridge, Little Bow, could be readjusted so that that would go back into Cardston-Taber-Warner. Readjust the eastern boundary of Little Bow over towards highway 36 so you capture, if not the towns, at least some of that agricultural area, the irrigated agricultural area north towards the Red Deer.

The Chair: Thank you.

Any other questions? Gwen.

Ms Munn: Yeah. I'd just encourage you to do some doodling on our maps for us. That would be great.

The Chair: Thank you.

All right. The next speaker is Bridget Pastoor. If you could start by telling us the name of the constituency in which you live.

Ms Pastoor: Lethbridge-East. I am, to note, a retired MLA representing Lethbridge-East. I thank you very much for letting me appear because, obviously, I'm a johnny-come-lately. I come with no numbers; I come with no rivers. What I come with is just, I think, a personal observation from my own experience. What I'd like the committee to look at – it won't happen in this go-round, but I'd like the conversation to start in this go-round for 10 years from now. What we're getting is, obviously, more and more urbanization. I'd like to see if we couldn't at some point in time somehow have a rural-urban; rural I think is what I've heard it referred to as.

As an MLA when you go to Edmonton – and it doesn't matter what party you're with – you are going to listen to other MLAs that are from agricultural areas. I certainly know what it was like to go to Edmonton, and they'd go: hmm, southern Alberta; I wonder where that is. I'd like to see more of the conversation long before – I'd like for the grouping to be able to discuss somebody that drinks the milk and somebody that's actually made the milk before it hits Edmonton. So it's simply a personal observation. If this committee could look at this and, I don't know, put somebody on it in some sort of way, particularly for larger rural areas. It'll never work with a big city like Edmonton or Calgary – I don't see how you could incorporate some of it – but certainly up north and down here I think that that idea could be incorporated. That's just my only observation.

Again, I thank you very much for letting me be a johnny-come-lately.

Just one more comment. My daughter was on a farm east and north of Strathmore, and I can't tell you how many times she pulled her hair out because she absolutely had no computer; you know, she couldn't get on the Internet. It's just imperative – it's absolutely imperative – especially in a province like this, that people have that at their fingertips.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Okay. Before you leave, just in the spirit of going to the rural or the hybrid idea, if we were to take your constituency of Lethbridge-East and include part of the surrounding rural area, which part do you think should be included?

Ms Pastoor: You know, I don't really think it matters that much because we are basically agricultural in this area. Now, I'm talking around Lethbridge. As has been mentioned, there's oil and gas further south, of course. I don't think it would matter, but it would tend to, I think, go naturally. Like, you're talking about Taber, or you're talking about Coalhurst and Coaldale. Again, you're looking at towns to create the numbers. So I don't think it matters where you go. I think you have to look and see if we're really getting a rural conversation to go with the urban conversation. Small towns. I used to, obviously, go to AUMA, and I was on the board for FCM. I could talk to somebody in New Brunswick, and for small towns and rural the conversations are the same. Many of the problems are the same. So I'm not sure that I would say which way to go. I think the numbers might indicate it. I would look for a strong agricultural component.

The Chair: Just because you're so familiar with the area – I'm sorry; we've lost our map.

Ms Pastoor: Well, I'm very familiar with Lethbridge-East.

The Chair: Yeah. But all that driving: you've been outside Lethbridge-East, too.

We've lost our map of Lethbridge-East, but what part of the area east of Lethbridge is largely agricultural without those towns that you're urging us not to include just because they would solve our numbers?

9:00

Ms Pastoor: Well, it would go south. The gentleman that was before me, I think, had some interesting ideas on how to move some of those numbers, and it was kind of along the same line as what I was thinking. Yeah, I'd probably be more inclined to go from the very south part and go east. It's kind of hard because, of course, as you get closer to what we call urban areas, we have a lot of acreages and those kinds of things, and that's a different conversation than somebody that's actually worried about if we get zebra mussels in our irrigation pipes. A totally different conversation.

The Chair: Okay. So can you . . .

Ms Pastoor: You guys are getting the big bucks to figure that out, so I'll let you, but that's the concept that I'm looking for.

The Chair: I'm a volunteer. I'm a volunteer.

Can you suggest what part of Little Bow, because Little Bow surrounds you there, is more agricultural? Would that be the southeast portion?

Ms Pastoor: Yes, I would think so. Please don't quote me on that because I don't have the figures to back it up.

The Chair: Okay. And the same philosophy in relation to Lethbridge-West, that it should become a hybrid?

Ms Pastoor: I think there should be hybrids, period. So where we could make them happen, I think, would be of benefit to all Alberta because the conversations will be different. We're clearly being dominated by the urban conversation, and the rural conversation is exceptionally important, especially down here, because we all like to eat.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.
Questions?

Mrs. Day: I might weigh in on the hybrid. We're hearing all different opinions about that, of course, as we travel throughout Alberta, and we have some examples in the Grande Prairie area and Fort McMurray. Of course, it's not just Fort McMurray proper but the lands around it, and they're also split into two things. Yet other people say: do not do it. What I heard you say was: do not do it when it comes to the large, metropolitan cities, but in the small cities that work and are very agriculturally connected and interconnected – you see that it's a good conversation to have, a good possibility to explore.

Ms Pastoor: I think so. Of course, as we all know, Alberta is so diverse. In fact, I'm going to use an example. If you have a conversation with somebody in the Crownsnest Pass and a conversation with somebody in Pincher Creek, which are, like, 20 minutes apart, it's a totally different conversation, totally different culture. You know, these guys have had a lot of coal, and that's a whole other issue. Now they're getting a lot of tourism built up.

Pincher Creek is, basically, strongly agricultural and cattle people. So if you go to Grande Prairie, their conversation on who they would want to be at the table is, yes, partly agricultural, but they have a huge oil and gas component, that we don't have down here. It would be – yeah. I think we have to look at people rather than groups. I think that was discussed in terms of ethnics and that sort of stuff. We have to look at people, but the conversation should be, I think, broader than the little, it'sy-bitsy areas that we live in.

Mrs. Day: So you as a former MLA could speak to this. If you were elected in the city of Lethbridge proper and then had agricultural folks for miles around, you'd be able to balance that in Edmonton, to represent both sides of their lives.

Ms Pastoor: I would hear a lot of the conversation long before I ever got to Edmonton, yes.

Mrs. Day: Okay. Interesting. Thank you very much for your comments and for being here today.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you.

The Chair: Yes. Very, very helpful. Thank you very much.

All right. Our last registered speaker is Sierra Garner. Hello. If you could start by giving us the name of the constituency in which you reside.

Miss Garner: Okay. Well, I'm a youth. I'm going to school here in Lethbridge. Technically, I would be in Lethbridge-East, but I also on the weekends reside in Cardston-Taber-Warner.

The Chair: Thank you.

Miss Garner: I am the vice-president south for the PC Party, so I get the great responsibility of travelling all over southern Alberta. I sit on a couple of different CA boards in southern Alberta, so I've been to every single one of these ridings here. The big thing when it comes to the youth representation is that it is really hard for someone such as myself, who ranches just outside of Waterton, to get to the other side of my riding for a board meeting.

The ridings down here are so big in the rural areas, and they're too small in the urban areas. Little Bow: it takes almost three hours to get across sometimes. You've seen that MLAs are not able to represent their whole riding and talk to every single one of their constituents just because it is so hard for them to be able to even do it and find the time to do that. When I was looking at some of the maps, I was looking specifically at Cardston-Taber-Warner just because that's what I'm a little bit more familiar with. I look at the Waterton side of it, and if you were to put Waterton into Livingstone-Macleod, how is my MLA supposed to go to the very top part of it and come to the very bottom? It's just going to spread it out a little bit more, in my opinion. What I would suggest with Cardston-Taber-Warner is to keep it the same.

The last people who did this did a great job in everything that they did, and I think that if we're able to keep things how they are right now, it would help with the representation of both the rural and the urban. It kind of comes to the communities. If you look down south, we've got more – Medicine Hat is more oil and gas based. You look at Lethbridge, and it's about half and half with the public service as well as the agricultural service. You go outside of Lethbridge, and you've got such things as the sugar beet factory, which is a huge contributor to our economy. You look at such things as the McCain factory, another huge contributor to our economy. Those, again, have a different viewpoint than a lot of people that you would see in the city.

The Chair: Thank you. Now I'm going to ask the question I've asked everybody else. I don't want to exclude you, even though you just said you don't want any changes in Cardston-Taber-Warner, because we have to consider all possibilities here. When we get to your constituency and we see that it's 11 per cent below the provincial average, if we were inclined to move a border to try to pick up some population, which border should we move to try to respect the type of communities you have in Cardston-Taber-Warner, what we've been calling the community of interest?

Miss Garner: When I look at the map, what I would suggest is to start in the eastern side and move everything kind of up a little bit. Now, that would put Waterton – it would actually add a little bit more. If you take the southwestern side of it, go up a little bit, then that's where you can go into Livingstone-Macleod. Then they can pick up a little bit of Banff, they can pick up a little bit of Highwood just to even out that kind of viewpoint there.

The Chair: Okay. Thanks.
Questions?

Ms Livingstone: Just one. We heard the former MLA suggest that she thinks that mixing, like, Lethbridge-type urban with the rural areas that surround it is a good idea. You said that you've travelled through a whole bunch of these ridings. Do you have any opinion on that kind of a mix happening?

Miss Garner: Around the Lethbridge area? Yes, to a point. Lethbridge-West is going to be a tough one because I don't think that those numbers that were given to you guys are going to be correct whatsoever. I think that Lethbridge-West is going to be populated a lot more than what it's going to need to. With that kind of viewpoint there, you would then probably have to take Fort Macleod a little bit, take that away from Livingstone-Macleod.

Even then I think you're still going to have Fort Macleod, which is solely based on agriculture. Essentially, it's all agriculture from a youth viewpoint as well. That is not going to mix with – you go to Lethbridge, and over half of our economy is based on the public sector just because we have so many jobs available through that. So I don't think it would work down here in southern Alberta, but essentially that's what's going to have to happen for those to open up.

Ms Livingstone: Okay. Thanks.

The Chair: Other questions?

All right. It's wonderful to see somebody who's under 30, I'm guessing, under 25.

Miss Garner: I'm 20 years old.

The Chair: Yes. Thank you so much for coming.

Mrs. Day: The youngest yet.

The Chair: The youngest yet. The future.

All right. Well, thanks so much, ladies and gentlemen, for coming, for making the time to come out and speak to us today and answering our questions and letting us take you in directions that perhaps you hadn't thought of when you came. We're on the road tomorrow morning to Medicine Hat. As I say, we'll be working on this. Our interim recommendations for your constituency and all other constituencies will be made public before the end of May of this year. I invite you to stay tuned and get back to us with your thoughts.

Thanks so much.

[The hearing adjourned at 9:10 p.m.]

