



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Public Hearings

Medicine Hat

Thursday, January 26, 2017  
1 p.m.

Transcript No. 14

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**

**Electoral Boundaries Commission**

Justice Myra Bielby, Chair

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

**Support Staff**

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

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

## **Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Medicine Hat**

### **Public Participants**

Drew Barnes, MLA, Cypress-Medicine Hat

David Carter

Alan Hyland

VaLinda Ivanics

Rick Massini

Blake Pedersen

Heather Pigott

Jo Pigott

Kris Samraj

Bruce Symington



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[Justice Bielby in the chair]

**The Chair:** All right. Well, good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I hope we'll have as much fun as the retirement party next door this afternoon. You've found yourselves at the public hearing of the provincial Electoral Boundaries Commission. My name is Justice Myra Bielby. I'm a judge on Alberta's Court of Appeal. I normally reside in Edmonton, and I'm at the moment also chair of the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission. Let me introduce the rest of the commissioners. To my far left is Jean Munn of Calgary. Then we have Laurie Livingstone of Calgary. To my far right, Gwen Day of Carstairs and Bruce McLeod of Acme.

The Electoral Boundaries Commission is sitting now because it's required to do that under a piece of legislation, a law called the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, which in its current version was passed in 2009, but other versions of it date back to the foundation of the province, in the early 1900s. That legislation requires the Legislature every eight to 10 years to strike a boundaries commission to look at the constituency boundaries in the province and see whether they should be adjusted in advance of the next provincial election. We've been appointed for that job.

The legislation also provides that the panel be chaired by a judge or the Ethics Commissioner for Alberta, and it directs the Premier to appoint two members of the commission and the Official Opposition to appoint two members of the commission in consultation with other opposition parties, and it requires two of the members to be from rural Alberta and two of the members to be from urban Alberta. We're not sitting that way just because of that requirement, but somehow we started out this way 10 days ago, and we have rigidly held our positions since then, so that's the reason for the set-up at the front of the room.

What, you ask, are we doing? Why is it so important to look at the boundaries of our constituencies in Alberta? The goal of the legislation is to make sure those boundaries and the population contained within each constituency as a result of those boundaries are set at a number which allows our MLAs to effectively represent Albertans in the Legislature. Representation by population is a fundamental principle of our democracy, and that translates into a desire to have every Albertan's vote have relatively the same effect as every other Albertan's vote.

This time the commission's work is particularly needed, however, because Alberta has experienced a phenomenal growth rate in the last eight years. I was surprised when I started this to find out that, notwithstanding the recent economic downturn, our population has grown by more than 20 per cent. Since 2010 more than 800,000 people have moved into Alberta, but they have not moved into each of our 87 constituencies in equal proportions.

When the last provincial boundaries commission made the recommendations that were enacted that turned into our current constituency boundaries, 85 per cent of those constituencies fell within 10 per cent of the provincial average population. But at the moment we have a huge swing because of this disproportionate immigration, if you like, from the rest of Canada into different constituencies. Our smallest constituency at the moment is 25,192 people, and our largest is 79,034 people, around an estimated provincial average of 48,884. That average figure is calculated by taking our provincial population and dividing it by 87.

Just to review some of these points more slowly, Alberta has 87 provincial constituencies. The Legislature did not increase or decrease that number from the last occasion. So when the commission sat in 2009-2010, at that point the Legislature created four new constituencies, raising the number from 83 to 87, which

helped the constituency address the large number of people that had moved into the province in the eight years prior to 2009. We haven't had such an increase, so we're left with 87. We don't have the power to change that. We can't increase it. We can't reduce it. We're looking at the same geographic pie as was looked at in 2009-2010, but we're being asked to address whether that pie should be cut into 87 different-sized pieces than the map you see on the screen there.

Of course, we know each constituency elects one MLA. There are 87 MLAs in the Legislature in Edmonton. Voters in a constituency choose their MLA by a majority in each provincial election, and right now our increase in population of over 20 per cent has skewed the number of people who are represented by each MLA. Instead of each MLA representing 40,000 people plus or minus 10 per cent, we have MLAs representing as few as 25,000 people and MLAs representing as many as 76,000 people. That's against an estimated population figure, as I say, of 48,884.

Now, these figures are estimates based on information that's been given to us by the Alberta Treasury Board. Fortunately, we'll be able to get actual census information on February 8, when Statistics Canada will release the population data it collected in the 2016 census. We'll adjust the figures, including the red figures on the maps that represent the current estimated population, to the actual figures we get from Statistics Canada, and this 48,884 figure will no doubt be adjusted, but I don't expect by a huge amount.

As I say, our growth hasn't been equally distributed across all constituencies. Our job is to recommend whether changes are needed to certain constituencies to increase or decrease the population represented by the MLA in that constituency to something closer to the provincial average of 48,884. This isn't just a mathematical exercise. If it was, we could have stayed at home and taken out a pencil and a ruler and divided up the province into 87 pieces, each with the average number of voters in them. But the legislation instead directs us to consider other factors in addition to population. The overarching goal is to create clear and understandable constituency boundaries, and the factors we're going to consider are not just relative population densities but also common community interests and organizations.

One of the things that we've been finding particularly helpful – and this is our ninth day of having these public hearings around the province – is when people tell us where particular communities are that we shouldn't cut up. I'm not just talking about cities and villages and towns because, you know, we pretty well know where they are on the map. People have identified for us – for example, yesterday a man came in and spoke in an impassioned way about how the Waterton national park constituency of 500 people felt more closely identified with the other communities in the Rocky Mountains than with the prairie communities. The geography and the nature of being in a national park gave that community a particular quality, and he thought he'd be better represented by somebody who represented the other communities that had the same interest. This community of interest isn't just municipal communities. It can be tied together by ethnicity, by occupation, by geography. I'd say this is probably the most important individual factor in the minds of the different people who have made representations to us at this point.

We're also directed to consider community and neighbourhood boundaries. To the extent that Medicine Hat has different neighbourhoods and communities in it, we're to keep those in mind when we're drawing constituency boundaries. If we decide to recommend a change – and we haven't. Know that. We're just asking ourselves this question. We don't want to cut a community in half.

For example, somebody was telling us a story last night about the last commission dealing with a growth area in Calgary, and they drew a constituency boundary along a certain road allowance because it was anticipated that the subdivision would develop along that roadway, but it didn't. The roadway was built with a turn in it, so today the constituency boundary runs through three houses. So the people who live in those houses are in two constituencies, depending on what room they're in. We don't want to do that. We want people to tell us about their concerns particularly so we can avoid doing that if possible.

#### 1:10

We also, of course, want to respect municipal boundaries not just of the big cities, not just of Medicine Hat or Calgary, but also of towns and villages to the extent possible and, to the extent possible, county and municipal district boundaries.

Finally, the act says that we should take into consideration geographical boundaries. We learned yesterday, for example, that the Little Bow constituency is almost completely marked or delineated by rivers, and the person who was speaking took us around and showed us all the rivers that bounded that constituency. No doubt the previous commission was taking those rivers into account and said: "Gee, people will understand. They'll remember where their constituency is because it's within the circle created by these rivers." Well, not every constituency has natural boundaries like that, but to the extent they do, to the extent a highway or a major roadway runs along a constituency, we're to try to adjust our boundaries so you don't take a little sliver off next to the highway and put it into some other constituency, to try to respect those boundaries that people think about and have in mind when they're thinking about their constituency.

But the most important factor that we have to consider today is your input, what you think we should take into account in relation to your constituency in particular or in relation to this exercise in total that we're doing. The list of factors that I've gone through here are not limited to those factors. It's open-ended. That's the message we've been giving to each of the people who have come to public hearings in front of us in the last nine days.

We have another week of public hearings to go before we've completed our tour around the province. At that point the commission will get together, go through all of the recommendations and submissions, and come up with a recommendation for each of our 87 constituencies. We'll be making 87 recommendations, remembering, of course, that if we move one boundary, the boundary of the next constituency is automatically affected by that as well, so moving even a single boundary has a ripple effect or can have a ripple effect.

In addition to the comments we receive at public hearings like this, we've invited written submissions, and I'm pleased to say that we've received 450 written submissions in the last three weeks whereas in 2009-2010 they received 500 in the whole year that they were operating. I have to confess that I think we've got more submissions because we now have a website, and it's easy to write your submission right on the website and just click and it's over the Internet to us. Otherwise, people have been e-mailing them using various social media platforms, and of course we're still receiving written submissions by post.

We'll accept those submissions up until February 8 so that if there's something you think of after today that you think should be added or you talk to a friend or family member about this and they think, "Gee, I wish I had gone because I have something that I'd like to share," they can still make that submission by writing, and to the extent that the Statistics Canada actual information might affect their submission, they can send in a supplementary submission up to

February 17. Hopefully, that won't happen, but because of the coincidental setting of our deadline with the Stats Canada deadline we wanted to make sure nobody was cut off if they felt the actual numbers were critical.

Once we've devised our 87 recommendations, we'll put them into a written report, and we have to file that report with the Legislature by May 31 of this year. When we file it, we'll also post it on our website, which is [www.abebc.ca](http://www.abebc.ca), and I'm sure the Legislature will put it on their website as well, so it will be out in the public by the end of May. At that point we'll be inviting further written submissions. It may be that people will have something to say or more to say when they see what's specifically recommended for their constituency rather than just a general discussion today. We'll have a second round of public hearings to receive inputs on our 87 recommendations. That round of public hearings will be in late July, early August. We'll then meet again to see whether we want to update or change any of our 87 recommendations, and then we'll file a final report with the provincial Legislature no later than October 31 of this year. In the normal course the Legislature will then review that set of recommendations and introduce legislation to enact them so that they'll be in place for the next provincial election. That's the process, and we are relatively close to the front end of that process at the moment.

I want to reiterate that equality or parity of population among all constituencies is not our only consideration. While the Supreme Court of Canada has interpreted the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act as meaning that each one of us has the right not to have the political strength or value of our vote unduly diluted, the legislation permits us to have some variance from the provincial average. For most constituencies it allows a variance of 25 per cent above or 25 per cent below the provincial average, but don't assume that we will just go up to that variance without a reason for doing it. The last commission was successful in containing that variance to well below the 25 per cent. In the last commission report 85 of the constituencies had a variance of less than 10 per cent. So the constituencies as they exist today, which were created based on that 2010 report, were virtually all within 10 per cent of the average at that time.

If you look at the maps that we've put on the wall, you'll see the numbers that they used the last time. They're in blue. The Medicine Hat constituency, for example, had a population of 39,759 in 2010. That was just 3 per cent below the provincial average of 40,800. But now Medicine Hat has a population of 44,469 – the red figures; that's current – which is 9 per cent below the provincial average, because while Medicine Hat has grown, it hasn't grown as quickly as other parts of the province. We can vary up to 25 per cent, but don't assume that we're going to do so. In the past provincial boundary commissions have tried hard not to go up to that high a variance.

We have two special constituencies, and I should have mentioned that. If you look at the provincial map in the middle – you might not be able to see it – in the north Peace River, which is our largest constituency geographically in the province, and, just below it, Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley fall into a separate category, where they're allowed to be more than 25 per cent below the provincial average. Those provisions are in the act, I think. Certainly, back when the province was created, there were huge areas in the north which were below the average population. That's reduced over time, but those two constituencies are still put in a special category which allows them to be below. But they're not exempt from our look-see, too. We must make recommendations in relation to their borders, and it may be that there'll be some border adjustment there to see an increase in the population closer to the median population in relation to those two constituencies as well.

I'll spell out what our job is going to be, once we've finished our public hearings and gotten all our written recommendations, so that you know what our task is and, then, what we're going to be hoping you tell us today. Our job with every constituency is to look at the population figure, compare it to the average population figure, see whether it's above or below, and, if it is, decide whether any of the factors that I have discussed today or anything that you bring to our attention in these public hearings justifies keeping the population size above or below the provincial average by a substantial amount. Then if we think that there is a reason, we'll leave the constituency alone. But if we think there isn't a good reason, we have no choice; we're obliged to recommend the constituency boundary be moved until the population size is closer to the norm.

For example, looking at Cypress-Medicine Hat, we see that it's 16 per cent below the provincial average. One of the questions that's in our mind today here in Medicine Hat is that if we decided we had to increase the size of Cypress-Medicine Hat so that it has a larger population, should we go north or west? We can't go south into the States or east into Saskatchewan, so we've got limited options there. What are your views as to how the size of that constituency could be effectively addressed? That's one of the things that we're hoping to hear from you today.

I want to emphasize that we have not prejudged any constituency. We've just started our work. We've been travelling constituency to constituency. We've been putting our focus on individual constituencies around the province, and we'll cover them all by the end of our public hearings, but we haven't made our mind up in regard to anything. Everything is open. But we do have a job to do, and we're going to do it, so we're glad that you've come out today and are going to help us with that.

**1:20**

Now, be aware that *Alberta Hansard* is here today. They're recording our remarks. Everything I say and that you say will be recorded, and that will be made available through our website within a couple of days, so you can listen to this public hearing or any of the other public hearings we've had if you want to. A written transcript of the remarks will be prepared by *Hansard* and will also be posted on our website in a few days, so if you'd rather read it than listen to it, that'll be available, too. The more important thing is: know that you're being recorded when you speak, in case that's important.

We've had a number of people register on our website. That's great, and I thank you very much. We're going to ask these people to limit their remarks to 10 minutes, and then the commission may have some questions for you. In that way we'll be able to reach everybody who wants to speak. If we have some extra time at the end before the hearing is over and if people who were here who haven't registered have decided in their minds, "Oh, yes, I have something to say," we'll hopefully be able to hear from you as well.

In the last few minutes there have been people in and out of the room, so I'm just going to call the list in order and see if these people are here. They registered online to attend. Reid Erb? Okay.

Heather Pigott. Please come forward, Mrs. Pigott, and have a seat at the microphone. It would be helpful for *Hansard* and for me if you would tell us the constituency in which you reside.

**Mrs. Pigott:** Hi. I'm from Strathmore-Brooks.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Pigott:** I just had a few comments to make. It is my belief that Strathmore-Brooks should remain intact, that the constituency falls within 7 per cent of the average population and is geographically sound, with natural borders and two complete

counties, Newell and Wheatland. It follows a trade corridor, which is highway 1, and although being an MLA for this constituency is an enormous job because it covers a large area, including many towns and villages and a city, the constituency functions well as it stands. It also has common interests such as oil, gas, and agriculture that are shared across the constituency.

**The Chair:** Thank you. I'd just ask some questions here. You've indicated that Strathmore-Brooks is a large geographic area for the MLA to cover, and while it's 7 per cent above the estimated average figure, the constituencies on either side of it, Little Bow and Drumheller-Stettler, are well below. There's been discussion, when we've been to other places, about the borders of those constituencies, and I wanted to share my recollection of that with you so that you know what other people are saying or suggesting and you have a chance to respond to it.

There's some suggestion that the travel distance in Strathmore-Brooks – I'm putting the positive first – could be reduced by making it more circular; in other words, changing the area that it covers so that there isn't such a big distance northwest to southeast. In doing that, that would incorporate part of Drumheller-Stettler or part of Little Bow. What do you think about those ideas?

**Mrs. Pigott:** I'm not quite certain how to respond.

**The Chair:** You don't have to. People have been suggesting things, and I don't want you to not know that.

**Mrs. Pigott:** Okay. I do believe that Drumheller-Stettler is largely agricultural, and it has common interests as well unto itself.

**The Chair:** Well, we heard that Little Bow is largely agricultural, very agricultural, and part of Strathmore-Brooks is agricultural as well.

**Mrs. Pigott:** Absolutely. Both ends.

**The Chair:** So do you think they would have a common culture, in a sense, in those two constituencies?

**Mrs. Pigott:** Definitely agricultural bonds. As well, there was a large area of oil and gas in Newell, but there are also portions of that in Strathmore as well.

**The Chair:** Okay. And what about in Drumheller-Stettler? The same type of bonds or less so?

**Mrs. Pigott:** I believe they have strong agricultural bonds in there, yeah.

**The Chair:** Now, one of our speakers suggested that the town of Drumheller – this is bold – be taken out of Drumheller-Stettler and added to Strathmore-Brooks because that was a more logical connection than with the rest of Drumheller-Stettler, which is rather like Australia. There's a desert in the middle, where very few people live, and then the communities are all around the edge of the riding, which is a big riding. The portion that's in the southwest of the riding, which butts right up against your riding, is a natural fit, and Drumheller is part of that. Do you care to respond to that idea?

**Mrs. Pigott:** Are they suggesting that another portion of the constituency be removed and Drumheller added?

**The Chair:** No. At this point just adding Drumheller. I mean, anything is possible, but that's not what I'm trying to get at right now.

**Mrs. Pigott:** That would make for a more extensive constituency, yeah. It could be a lot more ground to cover.

**The Chair:** Just by adding Drumheller? It's right on the border of the two constituencies.

**Mrs. Pigott:** The main centres for Strathmore-Brooks are Strathmore and Brooks. Depending on where the MLA is situated, it would cause a greater distance.

**The Chair:** Because the MLA at this point doesn't have to drive out to the northeast part of the constituency as often?

**Mrs. Pigott:** Right.

**The Chair:** Okay. Now, I am going to ask you questions that you may not have an answer for, but I don't want to let you go because we may not hear from other people representing these constituencies here although we did yesterday in Lethbridge. If you look at the map up there – I can't see it from here, but I do have a document with the population – in Drumheller-Stettler the population at the moment is about 23 per cent below the provincial average. That's very close to the 25 per cent cut-off. We don't know what the Stats Canada census figures are, but we might be driven into some change. We don't know.

If we had to increase the size of the Drumheller-Stettler constituency, do you have a view on what would be the best way to do that? We've also already heard your comment about moving it southeast into Strathmore-Brooks. Any other suggestions about moving it outward to include more population by going either south to Cypress-Medicine Hat or north to Battle River-Wainwright or any of the other surrounding constituencies?

**Mrs. Pigott:** It has been suggested that if it must grow, a logical addition would be the Langdon and Rocky View county areas east of Chestermere.

**The Chair:** And that's in the Drumheller-Stettler constituency?

**Mrs. Pigott:** No. Sorry. That's west of Strathmore.

**The Chair:** Okay. I'll get back to that, but any thoughts on increasing the size of Drumheller-Stettler?

**Mrs. Pigott:** No thoughts, no.

**The Chair:** Okay. So what you were just saying was if we wanted to increase Strathmore-Brooks? Okay. Sorry. Those two communities were?

**Mrs. Pigott:** Langdon and Rocky View county east of Chestermere.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Do you have any thoughts about what might be done? Again, without saying that it should be done, in looking at Cypress-Medicine Hat – it's 16 per cent below the provincial mean – if we were tasked or challenged with trying to increase the population of Cypress-Medicine Hat, any thoughts on how that might occur in terms of moving a boundary? Okay. Thanks. Thanks for answering those surprise questions.

Any other questions?

**Ms Munn:** Yes, I do have some questions. Do you have any ideas about what the trend for growth is going to be in Strathmore and Brooks?

**Mrs. Pigott:** My understanding is that Strathmore is a bedroom community and has grown. Brooks has JBS in it, and there are a number of immigrants that come through the community through that. But with oil and gas changing, we've also lost a number of constituents moving to other places for work.

Does that answer your question?

**Ms Munn:** Okay. But over, say, the next 10 years is the Strathmore population expected to grow significantly?

**Mrs. Pigott:** I couldn't answer that.

**Ms Munn:** All right. Okay.

**The Chair:** Questions?

**Mr. McLeod:** Just picking up on what you said earlier about the Langdon-Rocky View area, when I look at the map here for Chestermere-Rocky View and currently look at the numbers that are going to be there, they're about minus 4 per cent while you're plus 7 per cent. You're suggesting taking up more of that area into them. How about going the other way? Have you got a comment on that? Moving that boundary of Chestermere east into yours to reduce your numbers to a certain percentage and adding to Chestermere-Rocky View: have you considered that?

1:30

**Mrs. Pigott:** No, I haven't.

**Mr. McLeod:** Have you got any comment on that?

**Mrs. Pigott:** I don't think so. No, I don't have any comment.

**Mr. McLeod:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Just to be more specific, we're only pounding here a little bit. If we decided we had to do it, is there a natural point to which we could move that line between Strathmore-Brooks and Chestermere-Rocky View that would reduce your population by 7 per cent?

**Mrs. Pigott:** I don't believe I know the numbers well enough.

**The Chair:** Is there any major north-south highway that goes . . .

**Mrs. Pigott:** Highway 1 goes right through.

**The Chair:** What's the next highway east of highway 1?

**Mrs. Pigott:** In Brooks highway 36 goes north. As far as east I'm not sure.

**The Chair:** Okay. All right. Thanks.

Gwen, do you have any questions?

Thanks so much for being so helpful.

All right. Our next speaker is Drew Barnes. Where do you reside, Mr. Barnes, which constituency?

**Mr. Barnes:** Cypress-Medicine Hat. I'm the MLA for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Barnes:** Okay. First of all, thank you, all, for your work. For four reasons I'd like to advocate that you accept the variance for Cypress-Medicine Hat and leave Cypress-Medicine Hat as it is. The first reason is the distance we are from Edmonton. In the five years that I've been representing Cypress-Medicine Hat, I am very



aware of the six-hour drive, the time it takes to get in and out of Edmonton. Fortunately, we're blessed with the new development of a new airline carrier direct to Edmonton, but that's only a recent development. It was always amazing to me that our MP could fly home from Ottawa quicker than I could fly home from Edmonton before this service began. So I hope that continues.

Never mind the distance for me; I'm well compensated for what I do. But think of the constituents. You know, think of the people on the Saskatchewan and Montana-Alberta borders that have to get to Edmonton from time to time to have their voices heard. It's seven hours, seven and a half hours as a drive. So I think the variance of that makes sense. I'd suggest that Peace River and Cypress-Medicine Hat are the two furthest constituencies from Edmonton, and for that reason we warrant a variance.

Secondly . . .

**The Chair:** Sorry. If I can interrupt, you're at what we're calling section 15, which is a section of the act that allows those four special constituencies to be created that are below 25 per cent of the provincial average. We heard in Drumheller yesterday that they wanted to be a special constituency as well. So is that what you're asking for, not that you need to go there but that that's another reason for leaving it as is?

**Mr. Barnes:** We don't need to go there. I think you can accept the 16 per cent. Maybe there are four others that warrant, you know, that exception more.

One of the earlier questions, I believe, from Ms Munn was about some growth areas. In Cypress-Medicine Hat Desert Blume and Dunmore are two parts of Cypress county that, you know, have had significant growth in the last few years. Of course, it's slower now because of the overall economy, but I believe that Dunmore and Desert Blume will continue their growth once things are on a stronger footing.

My second reason for asking that Cypress-Medicine Hat be left the way it is is the size. You know, I don't know if it's 200 kilometres by 200 kilometres, and small communities and farms and ranches spread throughout. A large part of it, of course, is the Suffield army base, but everywhere else are towns like Schuler, Hilda, Irvine, Aden, Foremost: 150 to 350 people that deserve getting representation. I think it's important to not make it bigger.

The third reason is the values. Agriculture, oil and gas: rural values are very, very consistent. Whether I'm 80 or 120 kilometres southwest of here in Aden or Foremost or what used to be called Conquerville or I go 80 to 90 miles northeast of here to Schuler and Hilda: 100-year farms and ranches, rural people with a lot of the same values. Cypress-Medicine Hat fits in well with that. Our two biggest municipalities, the south, I think, 17 or 18 per cent of Medicine Hat that I represent, around 17,000 or 18,000 people, and the town of Redcliff, about 5,000 to 5,500 people: of course, a lot of these people have rural backgrounds and have come from rural Alberta, so the values are very, very consistent throughout Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Probably the fourth reason I want to talk about is the split between rural MLAs and urban MLAs. You know, the last information we have from the census that I've seen shows that 50 per cent of Alberta's population lives inside Edmonton and Calgary. Of course, they have 44 of the 87 ridings right now, and that seems fairly consistent and fair, more MLAs than aldermen. I think the breakdown between urban and rural is pretty good right now, and I'd be hesitant to see that change.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you. If I can ask a question, Medicine Hat is a riding that we've called rural or hybrid, as is Grande Prairie, another example. Some people like that idea conceptually, and some people don't. It would be helpful to hear from somebody who actually lives with it. Do you think you could more effectively represent your constituents if you were representing an entirely rural riding rather than having part of Medicine Hat city in it?

**Mr. Barnes:** I think there's little difference. First of all, again, the values are the same. The needs are the same. I think in some ways this might help urban people in Cypress-Medicine Hat to understand rural people's needs and help rural people to understand urban people's needs. I think it's a well-functioning constituency now, and I think there are some growth opportunities. I'd like to see it stay that way.

**The Chair:** Okay. I hear that you don't want your constituency to change, but we will no doubt have to consider all options when we get down to the task.

**Mr. Barnes:** I understand.

**The Chair:** If we felt that we had no choice but to move a boundary to increase the population of this constituency, your constituency of Cypress-Medicine Hat, to something closer to 48,800, would you prefer that we go north or west? Preference is the wrong idea. Do you think it would be better to go west or go north in terms of how well you could effectively represent that added population?

**Mr. Barnes:** You know, hon. Chair, I don't think it matters if it's west or even if it's more northwest or just straight north into Drumheller-Stettler. Obviously, the easiest one sizewise would be more into Medicine Hat. I don't know if there are any natural separations now. It is set pretty good now where the Trans-Canada highway and Carry Drive are the two things that separate Cypress-Medicine Hat from Medicine Hat. The Trans-Canada highway is obvious. Carry Drive is one of the busier thoroughfares right by Medicine Hat Mall. I bet I've said a hundred times, especially to school groups, that if you want to know the difference between Cypress-Medicine Hat and Medicine Hat, it's easy. Earls is in Medicine Hat, and Original Joe's is in Cypress-Medicine Hat. They're across the street from each other.

**The Chair:** Do you know, by chance, what the current size of Medicine Hat city is?

**Mr. Barnes:** I believe it's 63,000.

**The Chair:** Thanks.  
Questions?

1:40

**Ms Livingstone:** Just one question following up on the discussion you were just having. The current Carry Drive boundary is an obvious one. Is there another major thoroughfare or something that would be equally distinguishable if we did have to bring into your riding a little bit to give you a little more population and balance it out?

**Mr. Barnes:** Thanks for that question. Four or five blocks north of Carry Drive is Southview Drive. It's not as travelled as Carry Drive, but it's a pretty busy street as well.

**The Chair:** Anything else?

**Ms Livingstone:** No.

**Mrs. Day:** Hello. Thanks for being here with us today. It's great to talk with somebody that is functioning in a hybrid. We didn't get to Grande Prairie. Because of weather, we couldn't get in there. They also are kind of built like your riding is here. We've heard lots of back and forth: good, bad, and don't ever do it kind of thing. I think that because you're an agricultural, smaller city, that seems to work well. So how long ago did they do this? Was this just since last time? When did they form you like this?

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you. I believe it was the time before. I think it was in 1993, in that election, that the current boundaries were set. There is some history, though. Thirty-five, 40 years ago Cypress and Forty Mile county used to be all on their own, and Redcliff and Medicine Hat were separate constituencies. I think for just one eight-year period it became, actually, Cypress-Redcliff. So Cypress, Forty Mile, and Redcliff were a constituency, and Medicine Hat was on its own. Then as the rural depopulation happened and Medicine Hat grew, they came up with the situation where I'm pretty sure that Cypress-Medicine Hat is 17 or 18 per cent of the city of Medicine Hat, and Medicine Hat is the balance.

**Mrs. Day:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Sorry. Could you just repeat that figure?

**Mr. Barnes:** Okay. I think that Cypress-Medicine Hat is 17 or 18 per cent of the city of Medicine Hat, and Medicine Hat is the balance.

**Mrs. Day:** My second question to you would be the other thing that was suggested to us, that if we do a hybrid, we keep the number of people in the rural and the number of people in the urban centres about balanced. Would you say that yours is about balanced in population?

**Mr. Barnes:** No. I think about 60 per cent of the voters live in the Medicine Hat part; about 70, 72 per cent are Medicine Hat and Redcliff combined, so kind of the urban part. The other 28, 30 per cent are Cypress county and Forty Mile county.

Back to Dunmore and Desert Blume, Dunmore, on the east edge of Medicine Hat, has got to be 1,500 to 2,000 people. Desert Blume would be about the same. Even though they're not their own incorporated municipalities, they're sizable places.

**Mrs. Day:** Okay. Great. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Where is Desert Blume located?

**Mr. Barnes:** Immediately south of Medicine Hat, kind of southwest, pretty close to the airport in Medicine Hat.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thanks.

Any questions?

All right. Thank you very much. It's always helpful when someone who's doing the job comes along and tells us what it's like. Thanks so much.

Okay. Our next speaker is Alan Hyland. It would be helpful if you'd tell us the constituency in which you reside.

**Mr. Hyland:** I reside in Cypress-Redcliff.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Hyland:** It's a pleasure to be here this afternoon. I was here a little early. I got my days mixed up. I had it right in my book, but I was here yesterday to present, and you guys weren't here.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you for being persistent.

**Mr. Hyland:** I should tell you a little bit about myself. I spent 18 and a half years as the MLA for Cypress and Cypress-Redcliff. We just had the two names. The history that Drew gave you is right about when it was changed. One of the other redistributions had Redcliff tied in with Brooks looking for population, and that didn't make any sense. When it was presented, we debated it, and we got it changed to what it is now, and it's stayed there since.

I guess I might want to approach it from the amount of time it takes to cover an area like this. When I was in Edmonton, I travelled somewhere between 40,000 to 60,000 kilometres a year. You take 40,000 clicks at 100 kilometres an hour, that's a lot of working hours out of your schedule. Where do those hours come from? Well, most of them come out of your sleep at night. Your travel: you go in the daytime and you come back at night most often because people need to see you and they're working, so you've got to do it after. That creates some time problems.

The distance from Edmonton, as Drew said, is another one. One time we had air flights, and you could drive back faster than what you could flying. You could be back sooner. I had a young family then. Actually, I didn't have a family when I was elected. I had a family after I was elected. It gets so that your kids wouldn't come to you because they didn't see daddy all week, and they make strange because you'd be home on weekends. Then by the time you're ready to go back on Sunday, they would go to bed because you're going to be gone when they got there.

I tell that story because it just shows the time it takes and the dedication it takes to do it. It's not just the guy that gets elected or the gal that gets elected; it's the family that has to do this. I don't give a damn what they say. Anybody who gets elected to an office of any kind – and I've been town councillor for quite a few years, too – it takes family to do it, too. You can't do it yourself. It's not possible to do it yourself.

I know it's hard to make calculations in with the plus or minus 25 per cent. What's the right percentage? Is 25 right, or is it more, or is it at 50 or 25 or whatever it is? Which is right, I don't know. But I think the thing that we've got to look at, too, is the peoples' right to get to their MLA. If it's too far away, how many people can you see in a day? How many people could Drew see or could I see in a day versus if you lived closer or if you lived in the city?

The other thing that a lot of people don't realize is that you meet with your town councils, you meet with your school boards, you meet with your – well, not hospital boards anymore, but there was. So every time you draw a line, if you don't carve a whole rural area out and put it together with something, you increase those boards. For example, when I was there, I met with six different school boards. You'd normally do that once or twice a year. Then you got municipalities, and you got all the other groups as well.

The one thing that I've seen that bugged me through the years was in redistribution. When they cut, they would just draw a line and not take into consideration the way business runs whereas if they had moved it and taken it the way the people do their business, there wouldn't have been as much friction. You could accomplish the same thing, but just because it's a straight line, I don't think it – it looks good on a map, but does it help instead of using trading patterns?

I don't know any of your backgrounds, but I'm reminded of what a former Speaker of the Legislature said in a constitutional conference in Ottawa many years ago. He said: I've sat here for two days listening to speakers that were political scientists with no practical political experience. He says: now I'm going to listen to the members that are elected and get the view of the practical political experience. I'm just trying to give you that practical

political experience as best I can from the time I spent holding that position.

Thank you.

1:50

**The Chair:** Thank you, sir. I'm going to ask the same question that I asked the other speakers and that I've been asking everyone throughout our public hearings. I understand your passionate concern to keep things manageable for the constituents and the MLA in Cypress-Medicine Hat, but we have to consider all possibilities when we're doing our work. When we come to considering this, we have to look at what our options are, and that includes the option of moving the constituency boundary either west or north to increase the population size within the constituency to something closer to 48,800 people. Do you have any views as to how that could best be done?

**Mr. Hyland:** You asked previously about the joint seat. I think that would be the way to do this one because if you don't – I don't know if you looked at the federal distribution. One of the stupidest things I think they ever did was that they've got from Medicine Hat, they've got from the Alberta border to the B.C. border and all across, and they've got Medicine Hat and Taber – no, Taber isn't even in it. Medicine Hat is a city, and it goes down to Cardston. That's one constituency. How the hell do you represent that? You know, you're the width of the province, so you've got to get them out.

I think this constituency has worked well that way. We were working together before anyway, the two MLAs, so it wasn't a big thing when it changed because people think the same and have the same interests. I think it works.

**The Chair:** It was suggested that we could add Taber to your constituency. What do you think about that idea?

**Mr. Hyland:** Well, that would be speaking against my recommendations because I had said that the travel pattern and business pattern – Taber generally goes toward Lethbridge, and the cut-off line is about Grassy Lake, so I don't think that would be a good idea.

**The Chair:** Okay. What about going as far north as Hanna? This was a recommendation.

**Mr. Hyland:** That's back onto the one where I said that at one time they included Redcliff with Brooks. That's just the reverse. There's a lot of area between here and Hanna. You're two and a half hours out of here to go to Hanna if you don't follow the speed limit, so you've got a long way to go.

**The Chair:** What about going back and putting Brooks back in your constituency?

**Mr. Hyland:** Well, it would make more sense than Hanna. But when you said Hanna, are you going to include Brooks, then, too?

**The Chair:** Gosh, I don't know. You know, you've got the benefit and burden of the fact that we've heard from a hundred people already, and they all had their own ideas, and I just want to put these ideas out to speakers who live in these areas because sometimes the ideas of people who don't live in an area don't make any sense at all, but other times they're good ideas. So I don't want to miss my chance to get your view because you're a long-time resident here and you also have had deep experience in the area.

Okay. Thank you.

Any other questions?

**Ms Livingstone:** You'd mentioned that Grassy Lake tends to be the cut-off between people headed to Lethbridge, people headed to Medicine Hat. Are there any other natural trade routes, dividing lines in this area that you think we should know about that would help us avoid making terrible mistakes if we do move things?

**Mr. Hyland:** No. I think that's more or less it. Like, Brooks comes into that although there's a fair amount of Brooks that goes to Calgary. The hospital board is the same. The hospital board is south. Other than that, no, I don't see that there's any – it's surrounding about the right spot now as far as that's concerned.

**Ms Livingstone:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Jean?

**Ms Munn:** I don't have any questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

Great. Our next registered speaker is Christopher Billard.

All right. Jason Krein.

Reid Erb.

All right. Well, then, we get to the good part of the meeting, where the people who are so interested in this topic have come out even though they haven't registered to speak. We welcome anybody who'd like to come up to the mike and tell us what they think about the issues that are being discussed today, either in relation to the local constituencies here or in any aspect of the province.

Please, sir, in the back, and then in the front. He had his hand up first.

**Mr. Samraj:** Hi.

**The Chair:** Hi.

**Mr. Samraj:** My name is Kris Samraj. I have a couple of questions. One, it seems like there is a long-term trend of people moving away from rural communities into urban communities, so the problem that Mr. Barnes is talking about of districts that are kind of unmanageable is going to become more and more of an issue. Are there any other provinces or jurisdictions that are trying different things to help solve this problem?

**The Chair:** Before I try to answer that, I'm going to ask what constituency you live in.

**Mr. Samraj:** I live in Medicine Hat. I'm just here trying to understand this process a little bit more, and seeing as you guys have been travelling around, I thought you might be able to shed some light on that.

**The Chair:** Every province has similar legislation, not identical but legislation which requires a look at constituency boundaries from time to time. The most recent boundary commission that affects the same area as Alberta is the federal boundary commission, which sat in 2012. It recommended I think about 41, maybe 42 provincial constituencies within Alberta, and their average population size was 106,000, and they fell within 5 per cent of that number for each one of the constituencies that was created. This was a cross-Canada initiative. There was a boundary commission in every province and territory at that time, and they all sat at the same time, and then they all made a report. There was legislation changing the constituency boundaries to a degree for the last federal election. That's perhaps the most direct comparison.

I know there is very similar legislation in B.C. There used to be in Saskatchewan, but they have more recently gone to legislation which requires a maximum 5 per cent variance from the provincial average size. That's all I can say, specifically.

**Mr. Samraj:** I guess my question would be kind of out of the box here. There's no way to guarantee rural representation. You know, with so many people moving to the city, I'm just trying to think of the way to balance that for the people that don't live in cities. Perhaps there's no answer to that one, there.

I have a second question. When we were talking about moving the district west here, you asked Mr. Barnes if he'd be amenable to it moving further into the city. My instinct would be that it's better to have a hybrid thing, where it's half urban, half rural. Obviously, I defer to Mr. Barnes on this. For me, the diversity of constituents: there seems to be some value in that. But are there any objective factors in helping us decide whether a hybrid district would be preferable to one where it's mainly urban or rural voters?

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, what we've heard – and that's all I can tell you about this – is that some people are concerned that the rural voice won't be as loud in a hybrid if the rural voter is smaller in number than the urban voter. But we've just heard from Mr. Barnes that that's not been his experience, and he is comfortable with a hybrid.

Some of the other considerations are that there are some hybrids that aren't true hybrids because, really, what you're doing is taking an acreage country or suburbia around a city, and that's not truly a farming community. Even though it looks like you've got part of the country, it's really city-oriented people who are being added through that hybrid. We've also heard from people, including a former MLA in Lethbridge yesterday, that hybrids were the way to go. She felt that it added to the strength of the rural voice, that if you had a couple of hybrids, each of those MLAs would have to address their agricultural component, so you had two voices rather than one voice on certain issues that were particularly important to rural people.

So the answer to your question: all over the map.

2:00

**Ms Livingstone:** The legislation itself doesn't provide us with any direction on that. We've got other general factors, but it doesn't address that. I can add to what Justice Bielby said. That's why these meetings have been very important, especially in areas where they have had hybrids, to hear if it is working for them and how it's working. In other areas we've heard the people. For example, in Red Deer last week both the urban constituents and the rural constituents were very clear that neither one of them felt that that mix in that particular area would work, whereas in Fort McMurray we heard that it's working. Here we've heard that it's working. So that's where this individual input at the local level really matters, to hear where the communities of interest seem to intersect.

**Mrs. Day:** I'll add a couple of things to that as well. In practicality your city of Medicine Hat would be way over, so you have a municipality as a whole – the numbers won't work, so blending an area with the rural was a good solution to keep the numbers where they need to be. You know, if you had a city of a hundred thousand and you had 48,000 in one and 48,000 in the other, you had a whole component city, then the numbers work. You see that happen in Alberta, too, for the small cities.

I think, too – you know, you asked that question earlier about: is there somewhere guaranteeing that rural seats remain even with depopulation? It was in our act prior to – I don't know. Was it 2003? Does anybody know when that changed? It was 40-some here and

43 here. It was challenged in the Supreme Court, I believe, so that changed: 87 ridings, and here you guys go. There's no directive to us any longer. In Saskatchewan and Alberta there was in the past, but that wasn't held up.

**The Chair:** Actually, I'm going to be a lawyer-judge here. It's 1991. The Saskatchewan legislation, which was, I think, identical to the Alberta legislation, went to the Supreme Court of Canada, and at that time the Supreme Court of Canada did not say that a specific guaranteed number of city seats and a specific guaranteed number of rural seats was unconstitutional per se but then gave a number of directions as to what constitutional boundaries legislation should include to be constitutional, because the Charter of Rights says that every citizen has the right to have a vote of relatively equal weight. That's the way it's been interpreted.

So Alberta changed its legislation responsibly to try to address those five or six guidelines that Justice McLachlin, who is now chief justice – she wasn't then – set out in the legislation, and she set out exactly the things that are in our act. It's like the people who wrote our act were just following her judgment along: ping, ping, ping. She talked about relative boundaries, common interest, common groups of interest, municipal boundaries, city boundaries in big cities, geographical features. So that's where our current legislation comes from. The Supreme Court of Canada did not say that something that guaranteed a certain number of rural seats was unconstitutional. But she gave directions, and the current act reflects her directions. I'm just guessing it would have been hard to meet those directions and still create this guarantee. I know of no province that has a guaranteed number of rural seats at the moment.

**Mr. Samraj:** Okay. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

All right. The gentleman in the front row.

**Mr. Massini:** Thank you very much for being here, and thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Rick Massini. I live in the city of Medicine Hat. I'm part of Drew's riding, the Cypress-Medicine Hat riding. I didn't really have any comments before I heard – I guess I sort of follow Stephen Covey's advice in a way: I'd like to seek to understand than to be understood. But I have a couple of questions and maybe some suggestions.

First of all, one of the foundations of our nation was representation by population. I accept that. But certainly, our country, our province, our culture, politics, everything around us has changed significantly since 1867. I'm wondering if maybe there needs to be an adjustment to that foundation.

I see the whole concept of rep by pop as putting a focus on representation. I think every citizen in the province, in the country is entitled to equal representation. Now, that doesn't necessarily mean equal ratio, and I hate to think that this whole exercise becomes one of trying to arrive at a ratio versus trying to guarantee representation and access to your representative, because that's a big part of all of this. In the larger centres – they have 40-some MLAs, I think, in Edmonton, Drew? – all I have to do is to walk down to the nearest strip mall, likely, to find my MLA's office, and I can pop in and have a coffee and share my views and hear what my MLA has to say. In some cases in rural Alberta it's a 200-kilometre drive to talk to your MLA. So I don't see that that represents equal representation. I would hope that in your deliberations that's an element that you keep in mind.

The rural area isn't just depopulating. The nature of the rural area is changing significantly. We have groups of people that have come in and basically are absorbing a great deal of the farmland. By and large they're not necessarily that political. They tend to take care of

their own needs and wants. You know, we don't have that same kind of communication with them on a political level. Again, rural Alberta isn't just depopulating; it's changing in nature.

I'm suggesting that maybe in adjusting the notion of rep by pop – we talked about hybrid models with respect to the physical makeup of jurisdictions, but I'm wondering if there isn't a hybrid formula or a hybrid model that might be used in determining these ratios. I don't think it's any longer so many people per MLA, that ratio. I think other factors have to come into it like distance and sparsity. I don't know how to do that, but I'm just offering that as something else to keep in mind when you're making your decisions.

I think that's all. Just let me check. Yeah. The last note I had here was: maybe a reconsideration of the essence of representation is something that we need to consider as well.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Great. Just to make it clear – and I know you know this – we can't change the Constitution, and we can't change the provisions of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. But what we can do is to consider the factors that you've talked about, distance and sparsity of population, as what is part of effective representation, which is what the Supreme Court of Canada has directed us to do, not equal representation but effective representation and what's required to be effective. Population numbers are part of that, but they're not everything.

**Mr. Massini:** I appreciate that.

**The Chair:** Questions?

Thank you so much, sir.

**Mr. Massini:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** All right. Yes. Please come forward, sir.

**Mr. Carter:** Thank you, Your Honour, members of the panel. As I mentioned earlier, you have my applause for what you are doing.

**The Chair:** Just for *Hansard*, because I don't want to get in trouble with them later, could you give us your name and the constituency where you live.

2:10

**Mr. Carter:** I'm very happy to do that because when I was Speaker, some of the people I appreciated most were those in *Hansard*. We were able then to deliver things the next day, which had not been the case in previous years.

I'll make a number of comments with respect to the physical aspects of where I live and where I used to live. I'm one of Drew Barnes's constituents in Cypress-Medicine Hat. I'm not quite the most southeasterly one of the residents, but I live on the other side of the Cypress Hills. In many respects my location – even when I was a Speaker of the Legislature and represented a Calgary constituency, on occasion I would find refuge in the Cypress Hills to get away from the demands of question period and the administration as Speaker.

In actual fact, from where I live now, to get to the Edmonton Legislature takes me seven and a quarter hours. I grew up in Saskatchewan, and from where I now live, it takes me five hours to get to the Legislature in Regina. Again, as Drew Barnes articulated – and I appreciate his comments because he indeed articulated some of the challenges of the distance of the present boundaries of the constituency of Cypress-Medicine Hat. Indeed, that's one of the problems. If we go to the other aspects, I know of constituency boundaries and the impact that they have.

I applaud my dear friend and former colleague in the Legislature Alan Hyland. He spoke from the heart. I've seen his youngsters grow up at a distance. I certainly have seen the wear and tear on both he, his wife, and his family. Indeed, I have great courage for him. You've seen part of his ongoing courageous medical challenges, and I think in part that goes back to those terrible hours on the road in all kinds of weather. So, indeed, there is a price to be paid.

Are there other prices to be paid in terms of the pressures on those who are MLAs or MPs? That turns up in other forms such as marriage breakdowns. There's another aspect of the whole constituency situation and the distance. Any MLA – and I've believed this for some time – who lives within an hour's drive of Edmonton and can get home every night is far less likely to face the challenges not only with family; they're far less likely to face the challenges of divorce. I know whereof I speak.

One of the great things about being a rural MLA is this. Again, as Alan and Drew know, you are in a better face-to-face relationship with your constituents. Having been an MLA for two separate constituencies in Calgary, it's very difficult as to how you come in contact with individuals and constituents. In terms of the rural areas, therefore, with all the various school boards or entities that you come in contact with, you have better interface than in a big city, where it's easy to just – you're seeing faces in the crowd.

In actual fact, there's a comparison here for a rural MLA in the sense that they're like a city alderman. I've often said and given due credit to those alderpersons because they're easier to find because they're closer to home and they're going to see each other in coffee shops, for example. Therefore, city councillors, you know, have that direct interface. Then you go one step further with an MLA, who has a far larger area, in the rural areas, to be in contact, but, again, they're in more direct face-to-face interface with their constituents, a heightened possibility as compared to city MLAs in the commercial areas.

The real thing about constituency boundaries – and it's been raised in terms of various constituencies here – is to follow the economic flow when you're doing the boundary interface. For example, where I live and for most of the citizens of Medicine Hat: who wants to go to Lethbridge? We have to go for certain medical procedures these days, but the real flow is all the way to Calgary. And so it is when you're looking at Drumheller or Three Hills or Strathmore. Again, the real draw is where your money goes, so that takes you into Calgary.

Then you're into this wonderful challenge for your commission in terms of: how do you carve up the general pie around Calgary and Edmonton as our two largest entities? Again, it's not so much the physical thing; it's the travel on the highway. It's far different now that we have paved roads as compared to, when some of us started, a lot of gravel as well.

For a moment I reflect upon something which is not part of your commission, but it's that as Speaker there comes a time where there's a physical entity, the bricks and mortar, to be dealt with: the Chamber itself. Now, when I was there, I made the place more wheelchair accessible. This takes us back to 1986. We also then installed a better sound system and access all the way around, made it better protected from the fire point of view. But when you go and look at the seating plan of the Legislature, there will indeed one day come the spot where we can't cram any more seats into the place. The last time, when three more seats were added, I understood, but I shook my head in disbelief.

Now, I know that the essential problem is population and representation. I am surprised to read in the last number of days that Edmonton city council feels they should have yet another MLA,

and then that would challenge you, I know, or your successors eventually, when more seats may or may not be added.

There's a real difficulty there as to how you divide up even large constituencies. I represented from 1979 to 1986 the constituency of Calgary-Millican, which was from downtown Chinatown, the Bow River at the centre, in a slice all the way out to the rural area, almost to Shepard. So there I was, an urban MLA who, fortunately, grew up in small communities, having to represent this huge slice of pie.

You know from your own study today that now there are at least two other constituencies and all this massive explosion. Again, the next constituency was Calgary-Egmont, which now no longer – it sort of disappeared. When I was there, again, the commission carved off what was then Kingsland. Again, that constituency has changed radically because of the population that came in.

I would be very interested to know – and I'm sure you will, of course – the new stats coming out from the federal government. I'm wondering how recent their figures are because, again, this does reflect on the area of Brooks. It certainly impacts upon Cypress-Medicine Hat and Medicine Hat, but down . . .

**The Chair:** I understand that the census has fixed a day in May 2017 as being the day where they will attempt to fix those figures.

**Mr. Carter:** Good. Thank you for that information.

I believe there will be a bit of a shock to the system, perhaps just to me, the impact of the oil and gas collapse. I believe especially that there's much evidence around Medicine Hat and Redcliff as to the number of units that have been mothballed and how many people previous to that moved off into Saskatchewan. I believe that there has been some kind of a – I'd be interested to see what percentage we have in terms of a decrease in population.

Thank you very much for allowing me to come and speak to you.

2:20

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, sir.  
Questions?

**Mrs. Day:** We haven't had too many former MLAs that have served both rural and large urban centres like yourself. That's an interesting experience you've had, and I thank you for coming today to share with us. I guess my question is: I hear throughout rural Alberta – and we started in Edmonton; we've had some input from Edmontonians – this whole thing about the expectation by rural people to have a face-to-face with their MLAs. Could you perhaps shine some light on that compared to the expectations of those in the city riding that you represented?

**Mr. Carter:** Other than the city of Calgary, as an example – one of the real difficulties is that a lot of your voters, constituents, don't even know you exist unless you're going door to door, so much of the interface there would be is with a community association that lies within the boundaries of the constituency. It's easier to be cloaked in anonymity, almost, as an MLA in a large city because of representation. You have other members of the Legislature, so you're treated more as a bloc, a working bloc, even within your own caucus, let alone within the Legislature. You're representing this bigger mass of individuals.

Again, you come back to the interface. With both Drew Barnes and Alan Hyland – the same is true with the present Speaker, Mr. Wanner, and it was also true before that with Rob Renner and, again, with Jim Horsman. You're much more visible in your community, and your community is much more defined. As I mentioned, they bump into you in coffee shops. Now, granted, it's tough to do a coffee shop routine in Hilda, Schuler as compared to over at Foremost.

Having travelled these vast distances with regard to the various ridings that I did, I have great sympathy for the fact of the wear and tear on MLAs in that situation. You have to go a long way to get somebody to even sit down with you over a cup of coffee. So in that sense it's a far more interpersonal relationship for the MLAs to be valued. But, again, the wear and tear is too much, not only on the family and the individual but on your vehicles. In the provisions as made through various committees of the Legislature as to the mileage allowance and all the rest of it, you know, that do factor in – you have to replace your vehicles more often, and you as a rural MLA are not, by and large, properly compensated for the amount it costs you to try to serve your people.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Further questions?

All right. Thank you so much, sir, for coming forward and speaking to us.

Is there anybody else? Yes, ma'am.

**Ms Ivanics:** Just a quick question.

**The Chair:** Sure. If you wouldn't mind taking the mike and giving us your name and the constituency in which you reside.

**Ms Ivanics:** VaLinda Ivanics. I reside in the Cypress-Medicine Hat constituency.

**The Chair:** Sorry. If you could say your name a little more loudly.

**Ms Ivanics:** Sorry. It's VaLinda Ivanics. Neither one is easy. I'm actually a resident of the county of Forty Mile. I just simply wanted to ask if the number of constituencies is something that's on the table at this time, a change in the number.

**The Chair:** No. Last time the province added four constituencies, the Legislature added four constituencies, so it went from 83 to 87. The federal government added three constituencies when they did their review in 2012. But this time in this review: no additional constituencies. It's beyond the jurisdiction of this commission to add constituencies. If that was going to have been done, it would have been done before we started our work.

**Ms Ivanics:** Okay. Thank you very much, and thank you for meeting with us.

**The Chair:** Oh, thanks for coming out.

Yes. Somebody else had their hand up. Yes, sir.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Good afternoon. My name is Blake Pedersen. I live in Cypress-Medicine Hat, but I was the MLA for Medicine Hat from 2012 to 2015. First, I'd like to thank you for coming to Medicine Hat and actually talking to the people. It is very much appreciated. We are one of the constituencies, as was mentioned by a number of other people, that is probably the farthest from the seat of government, which is Edmonton. It doesn't matter which way you slice or dice this part of the province, you're not going to change the distances, but what you could have an impact on is the amount of area that the representative is expected to cover as well as the accessibility of that elected representative. Those are the issues I see in this part of the province.

In my elected capacity Drew and I worked very well together, and as was mentioned, in the past the representatives of both Medicine Hat and the various versions of Cypress-Medicine Hat worked well because Medicine Hat really is a rural city. Even if you do live in the city, there are so many close ties to the rural environment. Many individuals in Medicine Hat live here, but they

still have working interests in the agricultural or rural setting, or they've retired from the rural into the urban area. The ties that bind this particular area are very strong, so splitting us up one way or the other is not going to have a huge impact, personally, from my point of view, on this riding.

What you do struggle with, though, is that we are in the far southeast corner, so we are butted up against the limitations of the Canada-U.S. border and the Alberta-Saskatchewan border. So when you talk about "where do you go from here?" you have very limited avenues, especially when you look on the board at some of the other ridings. Other than one riding that's listed, we're all below the average, so where do you slice and dice it to make us all a little bit below average? You're not actually bringing too many levels up closer to where you want to be. You're still dealing with negative factors.

As was mentioned, when I was the MLA for Medicine Hat – this just touches on distance – I could easily hit six or eight different events in one day, and, you know, people would appreciate that. But when you talk about the rural representatives, for them to go from one side of their riding to the other to get to two different events in one day is a massive challenge. Even if you get those groups to organize it at different times of the day, the travel time, the preparation time are incredible. I think you have to look at it from the point of view of: not only is population important but also the size of the riding that you're trying to represent and geographically how it's set up. I appreciate the idea earlier of more of a circular or – I understand that you can't do square, straight lines, but you look at some of the ridings that are in place, and it's a long distance from end to end, top to bottom, side to side.

One of the things that is interesting to me personally – and it's something that I don't see being talked about or presented here – is the impact of the larger urban centres. If you consider us – I work with other organizations – the south zone, which incorporates Calgary, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat: what is the impact that they're going through? If you treat it as a hub-and-spoke idea, if they're going to redistribute any of their riding space or their geographical distances or boundaries, that's pushing out towards us. We have nowhere to go. It's infringing upon us. So that is my question: if that's going to impact us, what does that do to allow us to go either farther west, farther north, or farther northwest, from our point of view? How does that impact Cardston-Taber-Warner, Little Bow, those areas? I think that if you treat those in isolation or in silos, we may not get treated the way that we would prefer to be treated in that aspect.

Like I said, changing the boundaries is not going to change the distance that is required. If you live down at Onefour, changing the boundaries is not going to make it any closer to the seat of government, which is Edmonton. Those realities are so important to make your elected representative accessible not only to the individual but the individual to the representative. I think that's first and foremost, the distance and size of each riding more so than the population in a rural area.

2:30

The expectation, as was mentioned before, is that if you're living in an urban area, say, in Calgary or Edmonton, you don't have those responsibilities of travel. You can be home every night, you know, if you live in Edmonton. It's like a normal job. But travelling six hours, driving back and forth from Cypress-Medicine Hat or Medicine Hat or Little Bow or up in Grande Prairie, that time that you spend behind the windshield: if you follow the rule of law and you don't spend too much time on the phone, that is a lot of time that is windshield time and you don't get things done whereas if you live in Edmonton, yeah, I think you should be able to cover

more of your population – that expectation should be there – versus all the distance that's travelled in the rural areas.

I would just leave that with you. Hopefully, if the consideration is made to make changes, size more than anything is critical when you're trying to cover that. Population definitely is an issue, but when you get into the sparse rural areas – and I don't see this changing any time soon. I mean, this is the way of where the future is going. Urbanization is happening. People like to go to the larger centres for the services. This will continue to be a challenge for rural areas, but I think expectations of what you consider fair for an urban riding populationwise – I don't think you can apply that evenly and fairly to the rural area. I think you have to have geographical size be, you know, a paramount decision-maker in that process.

Again, thank you very much for coming down here. It's hugely appreciated. Hopefully, you're gaining some information that will help you make some very well-advised decisions.

**The Chair:** Thank you. A comment and a question. Nobody has suggested the hub-and-spoke style of hybrid ridings. One other person at a public hearing urged us not to consider it. You're the second. I haven't read all of the written submissions yet. They continue to come in. Just know that it hasn't come up.

In relation to my question, I asked your predecessor what he thought, if necessary, about reconfiguring Cypress-Medicine Hat to include one of, say, Hanna, Brooks, or Taber because other people have suggested that to us on our travels. I'm going to maybe change the question slightly for you. Again, we haven't made any decision, but when we come to looking at the possibilities, do you have any view, advice, or thought about the possibility that we might together reconfigure Medicine Hat and Cypress-Medicine Hat to take in one of those three towns – Hanna, Brooks, or Taber – so that the average population size in the two constituencies is somewhat closer to the provincial average?

**Mr. Pedersen:** Thank you. I do appreciate that you do have some tough decisions to make. Obviously, whatever decision is made, you may not please everybody. I would suggest that if you do come down to options, if you're talking about complete communities, you actually go to those communities and you talk to them and find out: "This is what we are proposing as a possible solution to this situation. If we were asking you as a community to basically move your representation from here to there, which way would you like to go? How would you like to be represented?"

As was mentioned, there are natural trade boundaries or directions or trade corridors. If all you're doing is disrupting that, people will not change the way they live, and they will feel very frustrated. I don't think they'll feel very well represented or listened to if that is imposed upon them. I would suggest that if you do come up with options, you go to those communities with the understanding, again, that you may not please everybody, but at least allow them to have their say.

**The Chair:** Well, unfortunately perhaps, we don't have the ability to strike committees to go out and conduct polls or whatever, but it's our hope that as a result of this public hearing process people in those communities might write in, which is very easy to do on our website, just with a click, and tell us – not that we're asking them to agree or what have you, but say that if there had to be an adjustment, which of those three communities do they think would fit better into Cypress-Medicine Hat and why? That would be very helpful to us.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Yeah. I agree. I mean, until those identified communities know that they're in play, I don't think you're going

to see much action on it. If I lived in Hanna and I knew that I wasn't, you know, in jeopardy of losing my current existing representation, I'm not going to be too excited. But if I'm identified as a location within the province within a certain riding that, "Sorry; look, we might adjust this boundary," you might see the participation rate go up quite dramatically. Again, respectfully, if the decision is made to actually take entire communities, those communities, because they are unique pieces that are being carved and moved – the rest of the riding is not being impacted – I think that they deserve the right to be heard at a different level. Like you say, it may be more of talking to their councillors or their reeves or whatever, but I do think they need to be given that opportunity to speak.

**The Chair:** Thank you.  
Questions?

**Ms Livingstone:** Sorry. I have one. I was just seeing up and down the line who was going first. Again, this is just something we've heard elsewhere that I thought I'd get your reaction on as a former MLA. The current Deputy Speaker, who's way up in Peace River, suggested to us that in her experience additional resourcing could help make the riding smaller in some ways for her, if she had enough funding to have two full-time constituency offices with full-time staff in them. In your experience, would additional resources have helped you better use your windshield time if you had someone to drive you or, you know, having multiple offices? Is that something that can help make the constituency more manageable?

**Mr. Pedersen:** For myself it wasn't that issue because I was in Medicine Hat proper, so it was a much different challenge to make it to every event or to make yourself available for your constituents to talk to you. Again, I felt that in the urban setting one office was certainly enough, but definitely in the rural ridings I do see that that would be a huge benefit for them. Having those extra resources would allow – essentially, you're allowing a cloning of your representative to take place so you can have representation throughout your whole riding or across your riding. Those situations I think are best determined by the rural MLAs. I wasn't one of those, but I do see value in that because it could help reduce the amount of times that you're travelling to and from and trying to sort out what the issues are: when do I need to be there? How do I get there? How do I get from here to there and the other place all on the same day? I think that's a great observation by that rural MLA.

**Ms Livingstone:** Yeah. Not within our mandate, but I'm trying to get the reaction from some of the MLAs and former MLAs to things their colleagues have said.

**Mr. Pedersen:** And even in saying that, too, Laurie, some of the urban MLAs that I did serve with – because of the cost of doing business within urban ridings is much higher than, say, in a rural or some place like Medicine Hat, where I was quite easily able to budget all my expenses and have a surplus over at the end of every year, some urban MLAs still had a struggle in balancing their budget and maintaining an office space just because the cost of doing their business in their riding was so expensive. So touching on that, it does have a monetary value on both rural and urban MLAs. I appreciate the fact that on a rural side it has this impact, and on an urban side it has this impact.

**Ms Livingstone:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Great. Thanks.

2:40

**Mrs. Day:** I have more of a comment than a question for you. In going back to your suggestion, a great suggestion, about asking the community before we move them, I think that with our time constraints and some of those things we're dealing with, that may be impossible. But what we have in place is that we come out with an interim report. Basically, everybody will kind of chew on that, and then we'll have another opportunity to go around the province in July and August and then make changes, if we see any needed, before we submit it. So there is that kind of built in. It's not quite as personal, one-on-one, meeting with the council in Delia or whatever, but, you know, there is a second step. So just be assured of that.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Fantastic.

**The Chair:** Thanks so much.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Anyone else? Yes, sir, please.

**Mr. Symington:** I'm Bruce Symington. I live in Medicine Hat, and I came here to learn what this was all about. I just had a vague idea of what your mandate might be, but I have a couple of thoughts.

One of them is that due to the difficulties of travel and servicing large areas of the province, like the Cypress-Medicine Hat MLA has to, you should be willing to accept a certain deviation from ideal in order to accommodate that. As a general premise, the large ridings should be allowed to be below. Sixteen per cent is still within your 25 per cent, and 16 per cent is not too bad. From the point of view that good representation is the goal, the people in Calgary centre, who have common needs, common concerns, and an MLA who is just around the corner, can be very easily served. That MLA should be able to handle servicing a larger population in order to be providing proper service for both groups.

The other thing I'd like to note is that while we have a large rural population, we also have a large geographic area, and the concerns of the people in the northeast part of that large area are probably somewhat different from the concerns of the people in the west, who have irrigated land, or the people in the south, who are struggling with drought, et cetera, et cetera. You know, there are greater needs, concerns in a large geographic area like that than there are in a small city riding.

I also looked at the map over here, and I noticed, as one other person mentioned, that a large percentage of the ridings are below the ideal population. There are a few in Calgary, Edmonton, and, I believe, up around Banff that are higher than optimal. You know, overall, it looks like it's not too bad. It's not deviating too far from ideal. If anything, I think you should be willing to accept that, especially with these large geographic areas.

Now, another question that was asked earlier was: where is a good dividing line in Medicine Hat? I would suggest the river. The river in Medicine Hat is a very large geographic feature, and it divides the north third of the city from the south two-thirds of the city. If you were going to do some adjustment to the riding and encompass, say, Brooks and Redcliff to the northwest of us, dividing along the river would help facilitate that. If you were going to choose between those three communities, Brooks would be the one that, I would suggest, would be the right one.

One other point: I'm a civilian; I'm not a politician.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you so much.  
Questions? Comments?



**Mr. McLeod:** I've just got one. You suggested the river in Medicine Hat as the potential dividing line. Looking at the two maps and the current residents there, is there a bigger expectation that there's going to be more growth in the north section of Medicine Hat or more growth in the south?

**Mr. Symington:** I think it's fairly close to balanced. There's probably a little more growth in the south, but the north has a couple of good-sized growth nodes also. We are growing in both directions albeit slowly in the last few years.

The other thing about this riding that's interesting when it comes to the river is that if you look at the map, you'll see that the river basically enters on the west boundary about halfway from south to north and then bisects the riding in a northeasterly direction. Getting from one side of the river to the other is a challenge, and this is one of the things that contributes to the difficulty of getting around within this vast riding. That's one of the other reasons why I think that dividing along the river would be a thing to consider.

**Mr. McLeod:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thanks very much.  
Anyone else?

**Mr. Pigott:** I'm also a civilian. Lots of MLAs. My name is Jo Pigott, and I'm from Strathmore-Brooks. I've heard a lot of really good comments about dividing the constituencies and populations and hybrid communities.

I look at the numbers on the maps, and the thing that jumps out at me is that, aside from small variations, the populations haven't changed a lot in southwestern Alberta. The variation numbers that we're seeing are probably due to, I'm guessing, the increase in urban population. My suggestion would be to – I mean, it's working right now. There have been a lot of comments about travel. You know, we live in rural Alberta. Everybody travels.

You've asked a lot of questions about where would be a good dividing line. It would seem to me that every time you make a division, something has to be lost, right? The next riding gets bigger or smaller, and eventually all of those ripples will make it back to an urban centre, which will create a number, not just one or two, of more hybrid ridings. Medicine Hat's riding, Grande Prairie's riding

are all in areas where they have a similar economic structure, whether it's oil and gas or agriculture. When you start making these divisions and taking these hybrid ridings that are surrounding Calgary and Edmonton, a lot of those communities don't have similar business structures or economic models, if you will.

I would think that the ridings work the way they're set up, aside from the population variances that we've seen, and that they should just be left alone. You've asked a number of times about including Hanna or Brooks or Taber into Medicine Hat, and when I look at the numbers on the map, I don't see where the makeup is coming from. If you take Brooks and put it anywhere else, that means you have to take roughly 15,000 people, or a reasonable number, from somewhere else and bring them into that constituency to make up for it, and then it works further north and further west into the urban centres. I think it works the way it is.

There was a comment about making a variance for urban populations. You know, our population hasn't changed. The biggest change is in the urban centres. I realize that this is not an issue that the commission can deal with, but in the future it should be looked at. This is our area, and this is our population growth. It has nothing to do with the rural environment. We just keep chugging along the way we are, plus or minus a few thousand people. My thoughts.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much. Thank you for just spontaneously coming up. That's a help.

Questions, anyone?

Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Pigott.

Anyone else? Last chance.

**Mr. Symington:** You get off early today.

**The Chair:** We do, at least 11 minutes early, before we drive back to Edmonton. I'll have that experience myself today.

Thanks very much for coming out. Again, I reiterate that if you have any second thoughts or further comments, just go to our website, type them in – we'll get them – or pass that information along to your friends and neighbours if they want to make a comment as well. Thanks very much for being interested in this enterprise.

[The hearing adjourned at 2:49 p.m.]





