



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Lethbridge

Thursday, May 29, 2025
6:30 p.m.

Transcript No. 2

Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Lethbridge

Public Participants

Drew Adamick
Randy Bullock, Reeve, Cardston County
Jeff Coffman
Belinda Crowson
Jeffrey Deurloo
Maria Fitzpatrick
Keith Gardner
Cheryl Meheden
Cameron Mills
Tamara Miyanaga, Reeve, Municipal District of Taber
Rob Miyashiro, MLA, Lethbridge-West
Scott Paul
Ken Sears

6:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 29, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Good evening, everyone, and welcome to this evening's presentation of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. Thank you, everyone, for coming. We know that there are other things going on this evening, and we appreciate your attendance.

First, my name is Justice Dallas Miller. I'm the chairman of the commission, and I serve as a supernumerary justice of the Court of King's Bench in southern Alberta.

I want to introduce the other commissioners very briefly. Right next to me is Susan Samson, a long-time resident of Sylvan Lake. For those of us in the south, that's central Alberta's representative. She's an experienced municipal politician, councillor and served a full term as mayor of Sylvan Lake. She has volunteered throughout her community for years and was a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth diamond jubilee medal in 2012, and she's volunteering for several projects in her community with a focus on public health care.

Next to Susan is John Evans, KC, a lawyer based in Lethbridge here but has a province-wide practice with a firm known as Stringam, and he focuses his work in Lethbridge. He conducts trials across the province, and his legal ability has been recognized by being awarded KC, or King's Counsel. John volunteers as well as a member of the Alberta Judicial Nominating Committee.

On my right is Dr. Julian Martin, a retired history professor from the University of Alberta. Julian has two degrees from Cambridge, and we're fortunate he came back to Canada to teach. He has volunteered on many committees in his home community of Sherwood Park, and in a sense he's our capital city region representative on the commission. Julian has also served on provincial tribunals such as the Surface Rights Board and the Land Compensation Board.

At the far end of the table is Mr. Greg Clark, an entrepreneur and consultant in the information and knowledge industry. We're privileged to have Greg. As a former MLA he served one term in the Legislature for Calgary-Elbow. Greg also is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth platinum jubilee medal for his community work. He currently serves as the chairperson of the Balancing Pool of Alberta, a very important organization that you don't realize affects your life. Greg holds an MBA degree and the ICD.D designation.

We are your Electoral Boundaries Commission.

For the start of the evening I'd like to have a few suggestions as to how we can make this run a little smoothly. First of all, silence your cellphone. Don't turn your cellphones off because we want to keep up to date with what's happening. The microphones: don't worry about that. They are professionally handled and taken care of by Cine Audio, and an audiofeed will go eventually to the EBC website in the public hearings section. This evening's proceedings will also be transcribed by *Alberta Hansard*, and we'll have the transcript on the EBC website a few days after the meeting.

Now, in order to give you some context and some background as to why we're here and why you accepted the notice to come here and present – and before I go to the PowerPoint, I want to introduce one other person. Where is he? Aaron Roth is sitting at the back next to the post. If you have copies of your written submission, please provide a copy to Aaron. He'll keep track of it for us. He's the administrator of the commission.

For those of you who are presenting this evening, we have to have some time limitations. I believe we're full in terms of presenters, a full group of 10 presenters, so we're going to limit you to about seven minutes with three minutes for question and answer from the commission after your presentation. You could convince us to give you extra time if you give us a report on the hockey game and it's positive, so keep that in mind.

You've been introduced to the Electoral Boundaries Commission. Our task, first of all, is to come up with a proposed revised set of electoral boundaries across the province. Why? Because according to the legislation every two election cycles we must look at the electoral boundaries. That's been the law for quite some time irrespective of other changes. However, this time around we have a significant change in that the government has passed legislation to add two more electoral districts to Alberta's Legislature, so we're expanding from currently 87 electoral divisions or ridings or constituencies to 89 for the next provincial election. That's one of the first tasks we have to deal with as a commission. As you're aware, each electoral division elects one Member of the Legislative Assembly to sit in Edmonton, and voters across the riding are the ones that choose that MLA.

In addition to the move from 87 seats to 89, population has changed, and it has changed significantly in Alberta. Just to give you a background, the last Electoral Boundaries Commission issued their final report in 2017, and as you can see from that bar graph, the population that they relied upon was just in excess of 4 million people. The population that we are dealing with now is 4.88 million people. That's based on the latest Statistics Canada census supplemented and verified by the Office of Statistics and Information of Alberta Treasury Board. So we've moved significantly in terms of population in addition to the increase in seats.

Again, to give you some perspective, the last Electoral Boundaries Commission had a ratio of 4,062,609 population divided by 87 seats. The average number then resulted in that 46,697. The target range for an acceptable electoral district is the range minus 25/plus 25 using that 46,697. That was the last Electoral Boundaries Commission, 2017. This time around when we are able to give our final report – by the way, our final report is legislatively mandated to be submitted to the Speaker by late March 2026. We will issue what's come to be known as an interim report in late October of this year.

We're starting off these public hearings – maybe I should have said this at the beginning – in southwestern Alberta. We were in Pincher Creek this morning – beautiful Pincher Creek; beautiful day – and we came to Lethbridge for this evening's session. This is our first day of public hearings. Starting next week, we cover Edmonton, Wainwright, Westlock, St. Paul. The week after we hit Calgary and some rural areas, and the final week we do the north: Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Slave Lake, and places like that. So we'll be on the road for the next three-plus weeks in meetings exactly like this, and we'll be hearing from Albertans in terms of their concerns about boundaries, about population, about where the constituencies should be divided, and things like that.

6:40

The population did not expand or grow evenly across the province, so that's why we have got the very challenging task of making sure that the 89 ridings produce what we call effective representation. Effective representation means that there is relative equality between the electoral districts in terms of population. We do not have the one person, one vote; that's an American system. In Canada we call it effective representation, and it's backed by legislation and Supreme Court of Canada authority.

When we complete our work or when we actually put pen to paper and start writing our reports, after our public hearings are concluded in June, we will be taking into consideration what we hear at meetings like this. But we are also compelled to look at several factors, and those factors include, and these are legislative factors: the relative population density throughout the province, common community interests and organizations – that's a big, significant factor; that can include industry, culture, art, values, and

things like that – geographic pieces – geography is a great way to create communities and make lines of demarcation and boundary – communication and transportation routes across the province: they will come into play when we prepare our report.

As well, we need to make sure that we have understandable and clear boundaries, and that is a challenge, more of a challenge than most people realize, because it's a significant task. In addition, we are tasked with naming the constituencies, or the electoral divisions. I don't think it's a challenge in this particular part of the province, but we'll see. We have to name the constituencies that we recommend to the Speaker. And we have an all-encompassing other factor in the legislation that allows us to take into consideration any information that might be of assistance over and above what we hear and what we get in terms of submissions on the website and in terms of the population and boundaries.

That little bit of background and introduction gets us to this point. That is the current electoral map of the province of Alberta, demarcating all 87 boundaries. You can see a larger version of that at the back of the room, and the electoral divisions for Lethbridge and surrounding area are also posted. We were in Pincher Creek, so we had the bordering ridings for that community this morning.

And here we are in Lethbridge. We have 10 presenters, I believe, and the list I have – I'm just going to run through the presenters. Maybe just identify yourself, and then I'll call you up in order.

Drew Adamick.

Cheryl Meheden.

Merrill Harris.

Just in time. Ken Sears. Okay.

Jeff Coffman.

Maria Fitzpatrick.

Belinda Crowson. Oh, there you are. Okay.

Jeffrey Deurloo.

Rob Miyashiro. Maybe coming back from Edmonton. Who knows.

Scott Paul.

Keith Gardner.

Cameron Mills.

Tamara Miyanaga. Did I pronounce it right?

Mrs. Miyanaga: No. But it's okay.

The Chair: I'll call you Tamara. How's that? Tamara.

Randy Bullock.

Okay. We've got some time for those individuals who haven't responded to show up.

We'll start with Drew. Will you please come forward? You can have a seat. The microphone will pick up what you have to say. Identify yourself, tell us what you do, and please proceed.

Drew Adamick: Thank you very much, hon. Justice Miller and members of the Electoral Boundaries Commission here. My name is Drew Adamick. I'm an entrepreneur, living here in Lethbridge, running a financial planning and advisory practice, serving clients not just all across Alberta but also all across Canada as well, too. I'm glad to be here on the traditional Treaty 7 territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy and the Métis Nation of Alberta Region 3 and all of those who call Lethbridge and area home. My presentation to the commission today here: I was in the process of preparing a written submission, but considering time constraints, I decided to keep it as brief as possible, respecting everyone's time here, understanding that the commission's legislative authority and the guidelines are bounded here.

The feedback I'd like to give would be that when you're making your recommendations, while I understand the government has

recently removed the requirement that municipal boundaries be respected, at least that's what I may have heard online, too – correct me if that isn't the case – I do believe that when we look, especially with urban boundaries within Alberta here and especially here in Lethbridge, we are a growing community. Who knows if we might end up getting one of those two new seats down here, depending upon how population grows, but I do believe it's important to make sure that any urban issues within the urban communities – you know, again, in southern Alberta, here Lethbridge, Medicine Hat as well – be respected and that the boundaries be respected as much as reasonably possible. I know you've got a tough job balancing out boundaries, and you're factoring populations and everything, too, there, balancing urban, suburban, and rural areas of the province.

Other considerations I would like the commission to take into effect would be particularly in regard to rural Alberta, regarding making sure that communities aren't necessarily divided unnecessarily by too much length. I understand in this day and age as well, too, especially with things like Zoom, that it's easier to do virtual presentations in meetings, but there is still that important connection factor, the MLA as ombudsperson, and having that local role is important. While outside the purview of the commission, I would kind of recommend that perhaps maybe something I would suggest if there are further concerns about that would be that the provincial government increase budgeting for rural MLAs to have more offices in their constituencies, you know, if there is any anticipation. We all know that people always like that option to go into the office to see their MLA in their office as opposed to calling or e-mailing.

The other thing, another consideration would be the rights of Indigenous communities throughout, making sure that Indigenous land, nations, and their traditional territories are also reflected within the boundaries as well, too. For example, down here in Treaty 7 territory making sure that the interests of Indigenous and First Nations communities are also taken into consideration so that their collective communities across the land are also not, as much as reasonably possible, too divided up as much, making sure that they also have, you know, their ability to have effective representation, too, in the provincial Legislature.

That's, more or less, in summary just kind of my feedback as well, there. I'm well aware of the work that you all do there. You know, I don't envy your task, too. It's always very important and a very important part of our democratic process. So I'm just here to give – that's my two cents' worth here.

The Chair: Thank you.

Any questions?

I may use this opportunity to maybe clarify something. On the electoral division map you will see that Lethbridge-West – I'm just going to give you population numbers to give you some perspective. In the 2017 Electoral Boundaries Commission the population in Lethbridge-West was 46,525. This time around, using the updated statistics, it's 67,725. Lethbridge-East, in the 2017 EBC report, was 46,204 – I guess it's up there, but you have to have better eyesight than I do to read it up there – and then this year's population figure will be 53,599 for Lethbridge-East. So it gives you some perspective and some numbers, though.

Okay. Thank you very much, Drew. Where do you live, what constituency?

6:50

Drew Adamick: I live in Lethbridge-West.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

Drew Adamick: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Cheryl Meheden.

Dr. Meheden: Good evening.

The Chair: Good evening. Please proceed.

Dr. Meheden: I have notes, but don't worry; they're 14 font, double spaced.

My name is Cheryl Meheden, and I'm a resident and voter in the electoral district of Lethbridge-West. I've lived in Lethbridge for more than 30 years. I'm a business owner, retired professor, grandmother, and community advocate. I care about my city and my neighbourhood. I am an engaged citizen and am active on municipal committees and in my neighbourhood association. I tell you all of this so that you know that I am vested in this city and that I'm a willing participant who works to make Lethbridge better.

I'd like to start this presentation by sharing some of what I've learned so far about this process and perhaps repeating some of what has been said earlier. A news release from the Alberta government and also shared by the hon. Justice Miller was that under the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act the population of each electoral division in Alberta must not be more than 25 per cent above or more than 25 per cent below the average population of all the proposed electoral divisions. We heard that earlier. In consideration of this 25 per cent threshold, according to Elections Alberta information there are currently nine electoral divisions in Alberta with populations greater than 25 per cent of the average electoral division population. I'm going to come back to that in a minute. This indicates that there are Alberta regions who are underrepresented in the Legislature.

I would further quote the Hon. Mickey Amery, Minister of Justice and Attorney General, who stated, "The amendments we are proposing are essential to keeping up with Alberta's significant population growth and ensuring fair, effective representation for all Albertans in the legislature." Knowing these things, I agree and I understand that Alberta's population growth warrants a redistribution of the electoral boundaries, and there are ways for the minister to meet his goal by changing the electoral boundaries in Lethbridge-West. I would propose that as the fourth-largest city in Alberta and an expanding urban centre it is reasonable and democratic for the growing population to receive appropriate representation in the Legislature.

As a resident and voter of Lethbridge my needs are very different than a resident and voter in Barons or Coalhurst or other rural territory. The municipalities are also very different, some of which include their economic and taxation structures, their population attraction versus population densification strategies, access to services, infrastructure needs, and so on. As we've learned, when the boundaries were redrawn in 2017, the average population per district was about 46,000, I think, and today that number is closer to 55,000. In 2017 it made sense to incorporate rural territories into Lethbridge-West, and now in 2025 it makes sense to remove these territories as the population of Lethbridge currently surpasses 11,000, which coincidentally is almost exactly two electoral constituencies.

Having said that, in a strictly numerical sense political equity is not the same as political equality, and in a province as vast and geographically diversified as Alberta a balanced approach is needed, one that reflects population growth in urban areas while still ensuring that rural voters have a meaningful voice in the political process. This has already been accounted for when we factor in things such as population and representation in some rural areas. Special consideration for districts with significantly lower

populations already exist, and this contributes to political equity. For example, districts such as Slave Lake, Fort McMurray, Cardston-Siksika, and three others have populations that are less than half of the average, which is double what the 25 per cent threshold set out by the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act requires. I understand why this is necessary, and at the same time I recognize that a failure to adjust urban seat counts could lead to vote dilution, where many thousands of urban voters become underrepresented compared to sparsely rural ridings.

The special considerations for rural areas like Cardston-Siksika, Fort McMurray, and others are already provided, with those areas having acceptable disproportionate representation. To put that in perspective, in these underpopulated rural regions one of their votes is the same as three Lethbridge votes, which is far off from, you know, the American one person, one vote democracy that they used to be able to try and achieve. I understand and accept this disparity, but what I would not understand is changing the electoral boundaries to add rural areas to the city of Lethbridge. The rural territory that was added to Lethbridge-West in 2017 should be returned to the Macleod area from which it was taken. This would result in better representation for everyone, both urban and rural.

The opposite approach, which may include carving out Lethbridge-West and adding in other rural territories, dilutes the democratic legitimacy of Lethbridge voters because, as identified, urban and rural voters have important but different needs and issues. To be more democratically legitimate, the city of Lethbridge should have its rural electorate removed and allow that electorate to become part of a district which shares its needs. Rural areas have special considerations that are not met when they are part of a city.

I would conclude by saying that redistribution by restricting Lethbridge to having two representatives within the urban geographic boundaries and without outlying rural territories would accommodate for the population growth that Lethbridge has experienced and would still ensure that Lethbridge has fair representation that aligns with the guidelines that you've set out in the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. I would hope that the committee considers the differences between rural and urban areas to be fairly and effectively represented as opposed to diluting the representation of Lethbridge voters.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. Thank you for that well-reasoned presentation. I have a question.

Dr. Meheden: Sure.

The Chair: If you can explain briefly: what part of the country or the rural area is in Lethbridge-West?

Dr. Meheden: Coalhurst is part of Lethbridge-West.

The Chair: Oh, okay. Yeah. I should know that.
Okay. Any other questions? Yeah.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. Lovely presentation. Very logical. Always like that. I want to reinforce something that you acknowledge, and that is that, you know, this commission is all about what constitutes effective representation. We have a lot of suggestions in the act about the lines of inquiry one might pursue in deciding upon that for a particular district or a set of districts. But also we heard a lot this morning about what would constitute effectiveness, which is something I hadn't really thought about very hard but, obviously, is part of our brief.

I would also like to suggest to you if I might, just for your further contemplation, that there is a significant difference between

population and its balancing and the number of eligible voters. We have to struggle with that one, too, perhaps under the category of any other things of significance. The number of eligible voters in both Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West is almost identical. It seems at first blush to be good, and it's about the middle of the pack across the whole province, 35 and a half thousand eligible voters according to Elections Alberta. I'm not quite sure where I'm going with it, but any moral talk – and we're bound to hear lots of it – about balancing populations for cases in order to promote equity and the like, you know, fail to understand that there are many other factors for us to juggle as well.

Thank you.

Dr. Meheden: You're welcome.

The Chair: One brief question before I let you go.

Mr. Evans: Cheryl. Is it all right if I call you Cheryl?

7:00

Dr. Meheden: Sure.

Mr. Evans: You made a comment that Coalhurst was part of . . .

Dr. Meheden: I might be confusing federal and provincial electoral boundaries.

Mr. Evans: Yeah. If you look – I double-checked because I thought that maybe I was wrong, but the north boundary of Lethbridge-West is highway 3. This is the south side of highway 3, so there are really no rural communities involved in Lethbridge-West, but that's not to take away from the point.

Dr. Meheden: No. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, ma'am. If you have any written material you want to leave, leave it with Aaron at the back.

Dr. Meheden: Good. Thank you.

Mr. Evans: Thank you.

The Chair: Merrill Harris? No-show. Okay.

Ken Sears.

Ken Sears: Hello, commissioners. My name is Ken Sears. Just to give you a little background, my great-grandfather got off the train in Brooks in 1910, looked around, got back on the train, and came down to Nanton, and now my family are down into six generations in those foothills, so I do have some understanding of rural Alberta, at least rural southern Alberta. I came here in 1971. I went away for a while, came back, and I've been back for the last 25 years. I'm presently retired; actively retired.

Now, because of my background, I had wanted to come to the presentations in Pincher this morning, but my truck decided it didn't want to do that, and that will be relevant to maybe some of the things I'm going to say about the ability of people in rural Alberta to access representation.

However, what I've really been thinking of – and I'm going to try and limit myself to more and more smaller and smaller areas in southern Alberta, but I've been thinking about the highway 22 corridor that runs from what is now called Diamond Valley, the real estate agents' term. It was Turner Valley, Black Diamond. It runs straight south and hits highway 3 just east of the Crowsnest Pass.

Now, the reason I want to talk about that is that if you go down that highway, off to your west very quickly on you go by the Eden Valley Indian reserves, two little ragged bits of land. You can't see

them on most maps until you actually focus down on it. You've got to keep hitting that plus button.

The Chair: Sorry. What's the name of the reserve?

Ken Sears: Eden Valley. It's a Stoney reserve. It's actually more closely related to the ones north along highway 1 to Canmore. Culturally, it exists in and of itself, and that's part of the point I'm trying to make here.

You go further south and what you're doing is that you're going over the forest reserve on your west. As you get down to the Chain Lakes reservoir, you've got forest reserve on both sides in the Porcupine Hills. You know, you have this narrow little strip of land which is the municipality of Ranchland. It has a grand total of 97 people in the entire municipality, but it's functional, and it's not that isolated in that a lot of the people in there have relatives or have land over the Porcupine Hills further. They exist within the context of other municipalities as well.

The reason I'm bringing them up is that Ranchland also has on its very southern border the Grassy Mountain coal site, and that is a fault line. That is a political and social fault line in this province. You cannot find two communities more different – Crowsnest Pass, 8,000 people living on coal mines and many of them working across the border in B.C., and those ranchers, those hard-core mossy back ranchers, to the north of them – yet they are represented by a single MLA out of Claresholm, and I, for the life of me, do not see how she is able to honestly and fairly represent both communities. That's a fault line.

You go down from there and then – I guess what I'm doing is I'm identifying, in my mind, problems here. I can talk about that part of the country for a very long time. But the point I'm making is that these rural ridings, particularly, have contained within themselves disparate and sometimes extremely unlike groups, you know, what you're sort of talking about here with common community interests, those sorts of things. Any riding is not a monolith. It's not the same. It contains within itself all sorts of different groups, all sorts of different cultural groups, political groups, interest groups.

When you look at that and people say, "Well, gee; we've got a riding with that much smaller population," in some ways, yes, you do. But given distance, given visibly disparate interest groups – I live in Lethbridge, yet I can name you more social groupings in southwestern Alberta, in rural Alberta than I really can in Lethbridge. They tend to get lost in the larger population, which is not to say that the larger population should be in any way discriminated against. One person, one vote. I understand you're saying that this is not the whole point, and I understand that in Canadian context, but these ridings have to make some legitimate geographic and cultural sense.

As I said, I can identify the Crowsnest Pass, Ranchland as a fault line. But then I come closer into Lethbridge, and what we've got on the west border here is this narrow little corridor that joins this weird, hourglass-shaped riding of Cardston-Siksika, which has a population of 25,291, far below the median. Yet Cardston-Siksika, as I understand it, exists simply because you had an MLA who said: I don't want to have to try and represent people from the Saskatchewan border all the way to Cardston.

The Chair: Okay. Sorry. I'm getting the warning that you're running into the deadline.

Ken Sears: Oh, sorry.

The Chair: I just want to correct, though. Cardston-Siksika, in my understanding from the data I have, has a population now of 47,000.

Ken Sears: Okay. One of the problems I've had is trying to find accurate numbers. Okay. But Cardston-Siksika is. . .

The Chair: Within the range.

Ken Sears: It's just in the range. You know, it does not – anything north of about Vauxhall socially exists in the context of Cluny and Gleichen and the Blackfoot reserves up there and Calgary. So, again, it's not really representing a coherent social group.

I'll do this really quickly. Okay. I'll get really fast to this. There is concern and there's concern in Lethbridge that, gee, we've got these two ridings here, and these are smaller rural ridings with a smaller population. Somebody is going to come along and say: let's take a portion of Lethbridge and put a big wedge of the rest of southern Alberta, and it will all come down to Lethbridge, and it'll make the numbers, and it'll look really good. Well, that's what I call the Costco version of redistricting. People drive in to Costco all the time in Lethbridge, and they drive through their hometowns, and those hometowns are dying. In order to maintain a viable political system in rural southern Alberta, you have to not – you have to resist the temptation to turn those ridings into a mixed riding. They will be buried, and they will be lost.

I'm sorry I took so much time, but that's, you know . . .

The Chair: Okay. Any questions from the panel of Mr. Sears?

7:10

Mr. Evans: I have one question.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Evans: If you're looking at the legislation, with the changes to the legislation in section 14 and the relevant considerations now we're able to, regardless of the municipal boundaries, take into account communities of interest. Is that what you're really – you're saying: look, these things should be more than just a physical boundary; we should have a community aspect of common interest, common focus, common goals.

Ken Sears: I would say "the common interest" is such a vague term that almost anything can be poured into that mould. That's worrisome. To me, the common interest is – and I haven't seen any indication of this in previous redistricting – almost an invitation for some smart politician in Edmonton to decide to play games with that because anything can be a common interest.

Mr. Evans: I mean, the legislation says communities of interest and then it says: including municipalities, regional and rural communities, Indian reserves, and Métis settlements. So I suppose it's somewhat restricted by virtue of the surrounding examples. Is that what you're talking about in terms of, like, for example, where you talked about the Crowsnest Pass versus the ranchers to the north? To me, what I understood you were saying was there's a sense of community, a sense of a commonality with respect to Crowsnest Pass but different from the ranchers in that community. Is that . . .

Ken Sears: Oh, yes, very much so. That was the point I was making. In any riding you have these subgroups. Now, I happen to be a very big fan of the municipal governments because they really do have a one-to-one, you know, voter-vote relationship.

Mr. Chair: In an nonward system.

Ken Sears: In an nonward system. I mean, we're just talking rural here. That, to me – I look at Ranchland. They represent their

interests, as the town council of Crowsnest Pass represents their interests as they see them. The question I had with that, and this was – I guess I had just identified what I thought was a problem with that particular riding.

Mr. Evans: Sure. What I'm interested in, Mr. Sears, is what would – I mean, your point is well taken in terms of that community interest could be – I mean, assuming there is a smart politician in Edmonton, they could do something magical with that. But we have the catch-all: any other factors the commission considers appropriate. Would you be able to share with us what factors we should be considering to help us achieve the goal you would like us to achieve?

Ken Sears: Again, "any other factors" is a such broad, you know – I mean, so . . .

Mr. Evans: No, I'm asking you to . . .

Ken Sears: Okay. Just what I think?

Mr. Evans: Yeah.

Ken Sears: I think one of the things you have to do is, first off, in this context you have to look at the urban-rural divide. It is there, it exists, and I think that has to be taken into consideration and honoured. But then you have to start looking at all the things they've talked about over the decades, which is what highways cross a particular geographic area, what, you know, different cultural groupings are there.

Eden Valley reserve is not in any way, shape, or form the same as the surrounding territory, nor really in a deep, important sense are the Blackfoot reserve or the Blood reserves. They exist in and of themselves. They have connections and interconnections with the surroundings, but they have a different existence. They have a different identity.

Even southwestern Alberta: everybody talks about Alberta as being oil and gas. If you look at southwestern Alberta, the seven municipalities in southwestern Alberta, oil and gas in this part of the province is not a growth industry. Oil and gas reserves have been declining for the last 20 years. Sometime in the 1980s they went down and they started resurveying every last piece of ground in this province, starting around Waterton. They went right down to Precambrian. They know what's in the ground. Southern Alberta, southwestern Alberta is not an oil and gas industry anymore.

The Chair: We're going to have to use the chair's prerogative to wind this up.

Ken Sears: Okay. Sorry there, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you for your engaging presentation. Let me ask you this one question: are you for or against blended ridings?

Ken Sears: I'm against them. They don't work.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. Thank you very much for your comments.

Mr. Jeff Coffman. I know we're on a time clock here, but because a couple of people have missed, I'm being a little loose with the time limit.

Mr. Coffman.

Mr. Coffman: Just seeing if Aaron wanted to provide a score update. It's 3 to 1 Oilers.

The Chair: Good. What period? Sorry. Still any time left? Oh, good.

Mr. Coffman: There's hope.

The Chair: Well, you get five minutes extra just for that.

Mr. Coffman: Well, thank you. Thank you. I'm glad they're winning, then.

Good evening, commission, Justice Miller, members of the commission. Thank you for the opportunity to address you. My name is Jeffrey Coffman. I've been a resident of Lethbridge for 33 years, living both in Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West. I hold a bachelor's degree and master's degree, both in political science, from the University of Alberta and the University of Lethbridge respectively. I served four terms on Lethbridge city council. For the last 14 years I've taught the municipal government courses at the University of Lethbridge, and I undertake policy work for smaller municipalities and have acted as an interim CAO, most recently for the town of Coalhurst.

In my time this evening I'd like to respectfully ask the commission to consider three points in your final report, and I have one additional question at the end for the commission. Since you're all very well versed on your legal and legislative obligations, I won't add any background to my legislative references.

The first point is to request that the commission's final report emphasize the values and prescriptions set out in section 14 of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act with specific references to, one, the section 3 Charter stipulation, and that population must be a dominant consideration in drawing electoral boundaries; two, that electoral districts ought to have understandable and clear boundaries; and three, that considerations of communities of interest are paramount, especially as they relate to municipal jurisdictions with populations at or near the district quotient, in this case being the 54,929. I do trust that the commission will submit a factual, data- and evidence-driven report, so these three conditions will inevitably be part of your considerations. By including this emphasis, it's my hope that the government cannot misinterpret the necessity to redistrict the province towards effective representation.

The second thing I wish, respectfully – or, actually, the second thing I state is that I support the commission in following the data, especially as it is intended to meet the obligations under section 15(1) of the EBC Act. There are nine constituencies that have a deviation greater than 25 per cent over the quotient, seven of which are in Calgary and Edmonton. Calgary-North East and Edmonton-Ellerslie are the two districts that require the most attention, with 55.1 and 50.1 per cent positive deviation respectively. Any reflection on the principle of the Charter requirement for effective representation ought to lead the commission to recognize that the significant growth in our largest city has led to inequitable and ineffective representation in the Legislature. I do support following the data, and I know you will.

My third and final point comes from both my academic studies and my teaching. Political scientist Arend Lijphart has written extensively on the processes of redistricting for fair and effective representation. The second of his 16 criteria state, and I quote, the boundaries dividing the electoral districts must coincide with local political districts.

Respectfully stated, municipal boundaries are not simply demarcations of local jurisdiction. Municipalities are unique policy units, each with its own political identity and values. I'm certain that Mrs. Samson can attest to the fact that Sylvan Lake is not Red Deer, nor is it Rocky Mountain House, nor is it Red Deer county. As a former councillor and as an interim CAO I know that the

citizens of Lethbridge are not the citizens of Coalhurst and vice versa even though they are separated by nine kilometres. Each is different.

7:20

And when I say "different," I'm not referring to any ideological alignment or how someone votes. By differences I mean communities of interest. Dr. James Lightbody, formerly of the University of Alberta, would identify this as, quote, the local norms and expectations, unquote, that lead municipalities towards their own approaches and policy directions to meeting local challenges, and these challenges are different for each community. When you take part of a large urban centre to create a rural-urban, district, you fail to understand or respect the fact that the residents in both the urban and rural communities have different cultures, economic and historic values, goals, and considerations. For example, the local norms and expectations for the people of Coalhurst or Picture Butte or Lethbridge county are different from the local norms and expectations for Lethbridge residents.

If we think of this in a federal context, nowhere in Canada does a federal riding cross a provincial boundary. The ridings of Lakeland, Alberta, and Battlefords-Lloydminster-Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan, represent the residents of Lloydminster, Alberta, and Lloydminster, Saskatchewan, respectively. The city of Lloydminster is divided to acknowledge the two communities of interest, and I ask the commission to remember this when redistricting for population growth, especially in Edmonton and Calgary.

For further consideration on community of interest, I'd suggest the commission read the literature of Dr. John Courtney from the University of Saskatchewan, Dr. Jennifer Smith from Dalhousie, or Dr. Réjean Pelletier from Laval.

These are my three points, then: that the report emphasize the values and prescriptions set up in section 14 of the EBCA, especially regarding section 3 of the Charter; that electoral districts ought to have understandable and clear boundaries; and that the considerations of communities of interest – in this case, municipalities – are significant.

My question, then, for the commission regards a rumour circulating in our community, and you've heard one presenter this evening already refer to it. On January 29, 2025, the *Lethbridge Herald* quoted John Middleton-Hope publicly stating that "another constituency association will be formed in the near future in anticipation of a possible third [district] being created in Lethbridge." The *Herald* continues citing Mr. Middleton-Hope as stating his desire to "make sure the other two [districts] in Lethbridge also go Conservative."

My question to you is not the source of his information, but given the previous statements and understanding of Calgary and Edmonton combined with the data of Lethbridge-West and Lethbridge-East, Lethbridge neither needs nor deserves another constituency. As a leader in this community and somebody who was approached to try to verify these sort of statements, my question is quite simple: has the commission been tasked by anyone with creating a third constituency in whole or in part involving the city of Lethbridge or surrounding area? I know the answer to that question, but I'd like to be able to advise the people of this community.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Coffman. Perfect timing; your time was up. However, I can assure you that you are the fourth presenter this evening. We had two this morning. No one has hinted anything

or said anything to the commission about what you just quoted at the end.

Mr. Coffman: Oh, thank you.

The Chair: We've heard nothing about that.
Okay, Susan? We've got time.

Mrs. Samson: I have one question. We've had numerous written submissions and, if I can use the term "follow the data," clearly the people who took the time to write have said that they do not want to see hybrid ridings, rural ridings, anything like that. But we also saw some very strong – and they're in the minority of written submissions, of encompassing the rural communities of Coaldale, Coalhurst into the city of Lethbridge. We saw that suggestion more than once, and it surprised me because it came from people like yourself who are knowledgeable about politics at the municipal level. They had very good reasons about: I live in Coalhurst; I travel to Lethbridge; I work there; I go there for recreation; I shop there; I just actually sleep in Coalhurst; I don't do anything else there. What are your thoughts on that? Not living in this area, is the closeness – particularly, you're the CAO of Coalhurst. Is there a closeness there that would not rub them wrong if they became Lethbridge?

Mr. Coffman: Thank you for the question. Yes, it definitely would rub them wrong because the people of Coalhurst see themselves as being unique from the citizens of Lethbridge. It's literally seven minutes from my house to the office in Coalhurst. We are just that close. However, I can attest that there are distinct identities, serving for 14 years as a member of council in Lethbridge and working as an interim CAO in Coalhurst. There are distinct cultural values and identities in the two communities, and the same would hold true with Coaldale as well. Following the data and working with the numbers to expand, to encompass that broader community – because it would have to be contingent. I won't use the word "gerrymander," but you wouldn't create something unusual. You're going to put one or both constituencies, again, over a threshold. If we're trying to stay as parity with the quotient as we can, including them is going to throw off your numbers.

Culturally I would say that they are distinct. Otherwise, the people of Coalhurst would actually sleep in Lethbridge; they would buy a house in Lethbridge; they would live in Lethbridge. But they choose to live in Coalhurst; they choose to live in Coaldale; they choose to live in Picture Butte for a reason, and that reason usually goes back to their values, to what they value in community, to what they're looking for for their culture.

Does that answer your question?

Mrs. Samson: Yes, it does. I think that's what we need to hear, the reasoning, because that scenario could happen anywhere in Alberta.

Mr. Coffman: Absolutely.

Mrs. Samson: But we're talking about it here. Thank you. Excellent.

The Chair: Okay. Any other questions of Mr. Coffman? [A timer sounded] I guess that's the final bell, Mr. Coffman.

Mr. Coffman: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Our next presenter is Maria Fitzpatrick. Ms Fitzpatrick.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Okay. Bonsoir. Good evening to the members of the panel, and thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you this evening. I have some notes here for my presentation. This presentation is from my experience as the MLA for Lethbridge-East from 2015 to '19 – I'm happy to see my colleague here – and from my heart. I love Lethbridge.

Now I'll begin as soon as I can get my notes up. As you mentioned about the current population, we did increase in population, but I think we still sit in the same position as we did in 2017. I presented in 2017, and my presentation was to maintain the boundaries in Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West because I felt the boundaries that were there provided an opportunity for the MLA, myself, to meet with my constituents. I will tell you that I have walked every street in Lethbridge-East from Hardieville to Six Mile Coulee. I have been on every street, and I have talked to the constituents of this riding. When I talk to the constituents of this riding, I hear common concerns, common values in terms of our constituency, in terms of our city. Many people feel the same way I do. They love Lethbridge. It's a really wonderful place to live, and I'd like it to stay that way.

Okay. The constituency is made up of a very diverse population. I would say that there is a feeling in this community that everybody is welcome in this community, and I'd like it to stay that way, as I said before. We have many white-collar workers in this constituency and in Lethbridge-West. We have people at the university, at the polytechnic, at the hospital, at the research centre. We have local businesses, Indigenous businesses, and we all operate very much as a community. We are Canes fans; we are Bulls fans. I'm telling you that unless you live in this community, you do not know what that means unless you go to a game, and then you can feel what this community feels like.

7:30

In Lethbridge there are also blue-collar workers, and all of those workers are represented. They're represented because they can access their MLA, and I'm telling you that I saw people in my office, I saw people at church, I saw people in the supermarket, I saw people on their doorstep, and they talked to me about their concerns and about possible solutions, and I have to say that I brought those to our caucus and to our government in Edmonton.

I would say that I've probably had a conversation with the majority of people in this constituency. I live in this constituency. I walk, I drive, I attend events, I go to the swimming pool, and even though I'm no longer the MLA, I still hear about the issues and concerns that people have and I am asked: what can we do about it? I think the key thing is that no matter who I'm talking to, whether it's a nurse at the hospital or whether it's somebody who's doing genome research out at the research centre, the concerns are the same; the feelings about our community are the same. People have talked to me about coming and doing a presentation tonight. In fact, I played golf last night, and the three people I played golf with said: are you gonna talk about this; are you gonna talk about that? And I have included that in my comments.

Certainly, everybody has concerns about our health care in Alberta right now. In Lethbridge we have incredible concerns about the possible contamination of the Oldman watershed. That's our only source of water, and it will affect us. It will also affect anybody downstream, right to Hudson Bay. They talk about it, and they want to know how we can stop those things.

I volunteer on five different community committees, and every single committee talks about those things. They talk about our health care. They talk about the contamination of our water. They talk about, you know, how do we deal with hate? That came up since the boycott at Coutts. They have those concerns, and they talk

to me about it. I can't say if they talk to the current MLA, but they talk to me.

I'm here to say that this is our community and we have common interests; we have common concerns. We have a commonality where I talk to somebody, and they tell me how much they care about their neighbour.

We had a fire on our street a couple of years ago, and the entire neighbourhood was out – coffee, tea, whatever for the firemen – to help the families that were affected by that fire, and that happens every time there's an incident in this community. An incident can happen outside our community: yes, they'll be concerned, and we certainly showed that when the Fort McMurray fire happened, but we come together as our community, and we're proud of Lethbridge.

I guess that my last comment to you is: please don't change the boundaries in Lethbridge. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Both west and east: is that what you're saying?

Ms Fitzpatrick: West and east.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Ms Fitzpatrick.
Any quick questions? Yeah.

Mr. Clark: Hello. Good to see you. Yeah. Great to see you again.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Great to see you.

Mr. Clark: First off, thank you for your submission. I appreciate it. I haven't had a chance to speak yet today, so thank you to everyone who has submitted so far and to those who are here in attendance. It means a lot. This is democracy in action, and it's good to hear a few different perspectives, so thank you very much for that.

I actually have just kind of almost a tactical question. As a non-Lethbridgian or Lethbrider, I just observed that Lethbridge-West is slightly larger than Lethbridge-East, population-wise. Our numbers have Lethbridge-West at 57,725, or just a little over 5 per cent above the average, and Lethbridge-East at 53,599, or about 2 and a half per cent below the average. Where's the growth in Lethbridge coming from, east or west? Or is it fairly balanced? And would it make any sense to just nudge the line over a little bit to reduce the size of Lethbridge-West a little and increase the size of Lethbridge-East, just by moving over a few streets? Are there sort of natural boundaries there? Again, I don't know Lethbridge that well.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Okay. There probably is a natural boundary, but if you talk to anybody in Lethbridge, 13th Street is the boundary. If you're on the east side, you're in Lethbridge-East. If you're on the west side, you're in Lethbridge-West. Even though – I don't know – I guess that at some point the river would be the boundary, but it isn't right now.

The population, I think, is well managed in terms of the two constituencies because there is a slight difference in the population in east and west. There are probably more blue-collar workers in Lethbridge-East, and if you have a conversation in Lethbridge-East, the conversation is like this. If you have a conversation in Lethbridge-West, it's probably more, I want to say, university oriented. That may not be exact, but that's certainly the way people have described the city to me. Personally, you know, you go over the river, I can go to No Frills on the east or the west. It doesn't matter. But, as I said, I love Lethbridge, and there's so much here that people are involved in and that they do.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Okay. Thank you. Anything else?

The Chair: No, but Mr. Clark's question may be carried over to the next presenter, who's a city councillor.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Okay. And I will say that I am also a recipient of the Queen's platinum anniversary medal as well.

The Chair: Oh. Congratulations. Thank you.
Okay. Miss Belinda Crowson.

Ms Crowson: It's the bird. Crowson.

The Chair: Crowson.

Ms Crowson: I am not here as a member of city council.

The Chair: Oh. But you might have answers to some of the questions.

Ms Crowson: I might, yeah.

The Chair: Yeah. Thank you.

Ms Crowson: Thank you very much for allowing me the ability to speak to the commission on this. As you noted, my name is Belinda Crowson. I'm here today as a local historian, and I want to provide you some context and history on the Lethbridge ridings and on Lethbridge in general, which will give you some sense of why we are a little different than the rural areas around us.

Lethbridge was one of the original 25 electoral districts that Alberta created. The original riding, called the Lethbridge riding, covered the town of Lethbridge and a wide swath of rural areas. Lethbridge, though, changed very dramatically in those early years of Alberta. In 1906 we became a city, and we went through a population boom that quadrupled our population in just a few years. Recognizing that, in 1909 the Lethbridge riding was divided into Lethbridge District and Lethbridge City, so we have had a riding that has only been urban since 1909. We have never included rural areas since 1909, a long precedence for our community.

In 1913 the Lethbridge District, a rural riding, was divided into Taber and Little Bow, so in 1913 the only riding that used the Lethbridge name was the Lethbridge City riding. Understanding that, in 1921 they just removed the city part. So we have been the Lethbridge riding until we were divided in 1969, when the city had grown large enough to have two ridings. Lethbridge-West and Lethbridge-East were at that time created.

When they divided Lethbridge, they chose to divide us along 13th Street. When you were asking about natural boundaries: at some point, yes, the river will be the natural boundary. But to me right now 13th Street is an incredibly natural boundary; 13th Street was originally created as Westminster Road. It is one of the oldest roads in our community, and it's actually an old range road. It has been a divider even before there was a Lethbridge. The original plan for Westminster Road was to go from coulee to coulee. It has always been a separating road. It was named Westminster Road deliberately, being named after the Westminster district of London, England, so it is actually named after Parliament. So how apropos that we actually divide our Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West ridings by the Parliament of Westminster.

7:40

It makes a lot of sense, and that boundary is natural to Lethbridge not in a geographical way but in an understanding way. The city uses 13th Street to divide almost all of our neighbourhoods. London Road on one side, Victoria Park on the other; Westminster on one side, Senator Buchanan on the other; Legacy Ridge on one side, Uplands on the other: 13th Street is used by the municipality as a boundary, and it's still used by the province as the boundary.

In 1969 when the two ridings were made for the 1971 election, west Lethbridge had just started to be annexed and was just starting to grow. That's where the 13th Street came because west Lethbridge was not very large definitely at that time. I have no doubt that as west Lethbridge is growing – and, yes, it is the fastest growing part. We have this weird thing in Lethbridge. We don't have an east side in Lethbridge; we have a north, a south, and a west because west Lethbridge is so new. But as the west side keeps growing, I don't doubt that at one point we will just talk about east and west Lethbridge, and the east and west ridings will make sense much more in that context. That's how we get today to the two ridings: as I said, 116 years of only being within the city itself.

You also have to understand that Lethbridge, though: not only is our riding separate from the area; Lethbridge has always been a little bit separate from the area. We actually had the rural areas of Lethbridge back in 1918 threaten to boycott Lethbridge. We were the only city in Alberta, not the only community but the only city in Alberta, that voted to stay wet. We wanted to keep alcohol when they voted for prohibition. You know, Edmonton and Calgary: no problem going dry. Lethbridge said: let us keep booze, please. And some of our rural communities who did not want alcohol threatened to boycott us and not let their young people here. That is just one of the many ways that we have stood out from the rural areas.

We have three postsecondaries in Lethbridge, which makes us a very different community than many of the surrounding areas from a population area. We have had all sorts of ways that we stand aside, and to me that boundary of keeping it only within Lethbridge makes not only sense today, but it makes historic sense, and it truly reflects how different we are from those surrounding communities.

I know that earlier you asked Mr. Coffman about Coalhurst. I recently did a history of Coalhurst for the community, and, yeah, we're not the same. We both shared a coal mining past, but in many other ways – the thing about the city is that we've always had very strong rules. Historically if you wanted to not follow the rules, you would have lived in Hardieville and Coalhurst – right? – so the values, the personalities of the communities developed in very different ways and remain so today even though they are as close as they are.

I wanted to, again, provide you that context and give you a sense of why the ridings work for Lethbridge historically and today.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Ms Crowson. Do you have a printed version of that? Sorry. Could you share something with the commission?

Ms Crowson: I could. I'd have to fix it up. It's just notes for myself right now, but I certainly can provide you the history of how we got here. Yeah.

The Chair: Please do. You would confirm that Lethbridge west is the growth portion of Lethbridge?

Ms Crowson: It is, especially because we always compare north, south, and west. East and west kind of grow the same, but west is growing a little bit faster, and like I said, I assume that at some point

that boundary will be moving to the river. I don't think it's there yet.

The Chair: Okay.

Any other questions?

Mrs. Samson: Excellent. I learned a lot.

Ms Crowson: And if you ever want a tour when you're down in Lethbridge, give me a call.

The Chair: She does a great cemetery tour.

Okay. Thank you so much.

Mr. Jeffrey Deurloo.

Mr. Deurloo: Yeah. I included a slide deck for this.

The Chair: Okay. Great.

Mr. Deurloo: Hello. My name is Jeff Deurloo. I am a GIS technician and developer that works at the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute. My technical background: I have a bachelor's degree in computer science and geographic information science. I am very into, like, maps and location data and all that, so this will be a very technical presentation.

As we get into this, the one thing that I am going to request from the committee is that the city boundaries are respected when drawing city boundaries. For Lethbridge, specifically, I want two constituencies completely contained within the city. No sharing with bedroom communities.

Yeah. It doesn't fill for whatever reason. Thank you. Thank you.

The Chair: We're in good time, so there's no reason to rush through your presentation. We're well ahead of schedule, actually.

Mr. Deurloo: Okay. Good. It is a very dense presentation. In rehearsals I'm like: oh, God, I have to really rush to get the seven minutes.

Anyway, I see a city boundary as a clear and understandable boundary that should be respected and followed. I also kind of see that – I know that we have 25 per cent deviation as the standard. I think 10 per cent is probably a bit more – yes, it is a bit tighter. I think the previous committee did a pretty good job of getting a 10 per cent deviation. That would be, like, the 50,000 to 60,000 point. Lethbridge's population, 110,000 divided by two: that is smack on the deviation, very, very close. As someone that lives on the south side of the city and in Lethbridge-West, I just feel that I have more in common with anybody anywhere inside the city than anywhere outside.

A quick map of the situation in Lethbridge. Yes, we have the boundary between the two ridings. That will probably have to move. That's okay because the west side is growing much faster than the east. But, again, the central point I do want to keep hammering over and over again: respect the city boundaries. Lock that in place. Do not deviate.

Before I get into how exactly I would do it, I'm going to quickly go over the situation in the other areas around the province. Again, rounded to a single decimal point, Lethbridge is exactly 2.0, and then Red Deer currently is also roughly 2, Strathcona county also roughly 2. Then for the smaller cities, in my opinion, I would like one urban and then one blended constituency just because they're a little bit high. I think St. Albert and Grande Prairie, the constituencies they have right now, are the template that probably should be followed for communities like Airdrie and Medicine Hat.

Then, very quickly, for the cities of Calgary and Edmonton, dividing their Statistics Canada July 2024 by your average riding

size, you get, you know, 28.6 and 21.7 for Calgary and Edmonton respectively. You can fit at least 28 constituencies in Calgary and at least 21 in Edmonton, so that's two more in Calgary, one more in Edmonton. If flooring that, so taking only 28 and 21, is what it would take to ensure that none of the constituencies in those two cities are crossing outside the city limits, I think that's an acceptable trade-off.

Now going back into Lethbridge. Because I am a GIS person, I'll kind of walk through how I would split it. Previous boundary commissions, as kind of discussed, used 13th Street. They also used Stafford Drive. If you go north to south, you use Stafford Drive, and then when you hit St. Basil's, it switches over to 13th, and it goes 13th all the way down south again. I think it's just a matter of finding a different switchover to go from 13th and Stafford.

Going into the city. Since that quarterly Statistics Canada data only goes to the city level – it doesn't really have census block subsidy as far as I could see – I used the '23 municipal census for this little exercise. At that point the city had a population of 106,000. If my math with the census tracks, the west riding had 56,000; the east riding had 50,000. In that scenario, we'd be moving 3,000 people. Because that's a difference of about 6,000, add 3,000 to east: that would make the numbers balance.

I'm just going major road by major road, like, east-west roads. From St. Basil's the next major one I would probably look at is 9th Avenue North. Using that, you'd be moving, like, about 1,200 people over. Not quite enough. Go down to 5th Ave, you'd be moving about 2,600 people. That's pretty good. But, you know, I'm going to go a little bit south to the highway. That moves about 3,500 people, and that is a little bit more than enough to handle the 3,000 that we're looking to move if we're using the '23 municipal census as our guide.

As a quick summary, the blue line there is what I would suggest the boundary would look like and the green line is the current boundary as it currently exists. Yeah. That basically covers the ground of what I wanted to cover.

7:50

The Chair: Do you mind just going back and putting that back up?

Mr. Deurloo: Yeah.

The Chair: Thank you. Keep going.

Mr. Deurloo: Yeah. That's basically the main thing I wanted to cover, just using the highway. The cool thing is that it's such a clean and elegant way of handling things. Like, the north side would be using Stafford, the south side would be using 13th, and the populations would be, as far as I could tell from the municipal census, pretty balanced. That's what I would suggest.

I also admit that because I was looking at this and I was looking at like, "Oh, God, I'm going to run out of time," I did come up with a quick suggestion for the surrounding areas and mapped it out and then cut it out for my presentation altogether, but really, really quick, the process was: okay; let's glue together Taber-Warner and Cardston-Siksika to see if we have two. Like, we have 47,000 and 50,000; the sum is about 97,000. To get to your 10 per cent deviation, you need at least 3,000 and no more than 23,000. Is there any community nearby outside that hits that? Well, Strathmore has 16,000 people, so if you grab that, put that in, the combined will be about 3,000 over, so it's like 113,000 total.

Then there were, like, a whole bunch of splits, but the split I came up with at the end is that you split it north-south. The south riding has Cardston county, Blood reserve, county of Warner, entire MD of Taber, Forty Mile county; call it Cardston-Taber-Warner. If the math is correct, it should be 56,000 people. Then the north riding

would be the entirety of Lethbridge county, the entirety of Vulcan county, Siksika reserve, the portions of the current Cardston-Siksika that sit inside of Wheatland county, plus grabbing Strathmore to make the numbers work, 57,000 people. I made a map for that, and then I was like: oh, I'm not going to have time; I got to scrap that.

Mr. Clark: Send that in. We'd love it.

The Chair: Send that to us. Talk to Aaron about how to send that.

Mr. Deurloo: Yeah.

I would dub the northern riding Little Bow and revive a name from the 2010 commissions and earlier.

Mrs. Samson: We'd like to see that.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Jeffrey. Very detailed and innovative, especially if we're going to move the boundary at all within the city.

Any questions from the panellists?

Mr. Evans: I have one question. We've heard lots of comments on – I liked your drawing the line farther out past 13th and Stafford, but you'll agree with me that once you hit 16th Avenue, 13th Street becomes a nonfactor, anything south.

Mr. Deurloo: Yeah. It curves around Scenic and then it just kind of takes a straight line. I'm just saying: preserve that line as it is.

Mr. Evans: Right. We're just making an arbitrary line.

Mr. Deurloo: Yeah.

Mr. Evans: Isn't the natural geographic boundary the river? You've got significant growth. Potential and future growth, projected growth, actually doubles in the dirt on west Lethbridge. The growth is going to be accelerated there.

Mr. Deurloo: I think you're probably about a decade away from moving the boundary to the river just because, like, right now it's about a 60-40 split.

Mr. Evans: Bear in mind that this doesn't get addressed again for at least . . .

Mr. Deurloo: At least eight years. Yeah.

Mr. Evans: And more likely nine, so what we do today: we need to be projecting into the future of where we think things are going to be.

I think they were pretty brave when they made the dividing line 13th way back in the day because west Lethbridge had next to nobody there. You had a university. You had the very rudiments of a community being developed over there. What are your thoughts in terms of us being that type of forward thinking, bearing in mind that this isn't going to be addressed for probably eight to nine years?

Mr. Deurloo: Like, I don't necessarily hate it. I think you'd have to consider how much of an over – if you want to overcorrect for west, I think you still have other options before you hit the river. Like, you're using Stafford at the highway in my proposal, but Stafford goes all the way to 6th Avenue South. That would be the first thing I would check, and then at that point, instead of using 13th Street, you might say: okay; the river on the south side, south of Whoop-Up Drive, Stafford north. You can do this in, like, pieces.

You don't have to jump all the way, using the river the entire way, just yet.

Mr. Evans: There's not a big population west of 13th Street in any of that. But to me, notwithstanding the history, there can't be a difference in the sense of community on the west side of 13th Street versus the east side of 13th Street. In fact, that area in what we would say is the downtown core: that is a community and with the same community interests. So if we want to look at things from a microcommunity perspective – I'll say, like, a cell perspective but not a terrorist cell. They're going to have – you know, there are numerous microcommunities within even the downtown core.

The Chair: Greg?

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Sorry. I've just got one quick question. I'm going to just actually point at the map, if you don't mind. Apologies for the sound quality. Again, the advantage of having a couple of Lethbridgers on the panel.

This area here is basically that. If this blue line was basically the river there, does that – so I've got a bit of GIS magic, and that tells me that that's about 5,000 people. I'm just kind of curious. Is that a natural sort of grouping, or is that larger?

Mr. Deurloo: Well, yeah. That is a neighbourhood, Senator Buchanan and Staffordville. I suppose you could glue them all together. Obviously, I don't have the entire census in front of me at this second. It's possible because, like, you can clearly see in the base map that I am cutting through one of the neighbourhoods, Senator Buchanan, there. This was something that I just kind of quickly threw together that seemed like a pretty easy solution. Yeah. Like, Scenic is a very good north-south line to use even though there are not very many people between Scenic and the river. It's just a few seniors' homes and a couple of apartments.

Mr. Evans: Yeah. I'd live there.

The Chair: Julian, do you have a question?

Dr. Martin: Yeah.

Thank you very much, Jeffrey. You know, I followed along with your prose version of the GIS work that's in your head. I actually followed that, and what I would like to suggest to you is: don't feel bounded by a 10 per cent variation. Try on a scenario that's 15 or even 20. I mean, just do those thought experiments because the act does give us the latitude, which, obviously, we would wish to use very sparingly. It does give us the direction that: okay, fellas; it's normal to use that variation. It's not obscure. It's not in the legislation as a concession to incompetence by the commissioners.

Mr. Deurloo: Yeah. And, obviously, when you're putting municipalities, you're not going to have, like, a clean onto the 1,000.

Dr. Martin: Obviously right, and it would be madness to try for that kind of mathematical parity.

I'd be interested, if you are going submit to this commission your general sketch that you described for us, in how you would move all those pieces of territory. Do a version where you use a larger variation as well.

Mr. Deurloo: Okay.

Dr. Martin: Thanks.

Mr. Clark: And perhaps smaller. I mean, give us sort of the perfect. I'm just interested if you're willing to do it because it's really interesting work, and you've obviously got some . . .

Mr. Deurloo: Yeah, I am very interested in this kind of stuff. I know the written deadline is basically passed. I've only really done it with, like, the two that have surrounded the city because, obviously, I'm not going to cover all 89 ridings in a 10-minute presentation. That's kind of ridiculous. Yeah.

Dr. Martin: We would be particularly interested in the territory that you did describe.

8:00

Mr. Deurloo: Yeah. Okay.

Dr. Martin: I think the reason you're presenting it and the reason why perhaps you modelled it in the first place is trying to deal with some issues that have Lethbridge pretty much at its centre.

Mr. Deurloo: Yeah.

Dr. Martin: You know, again, for us to be able to see a scenario that provides a greater context and the ripple effect of moving boundaries: that's very helpful stuff.

Mr. Deurloo: Okay.

The Chair: Okay. Jeffrey, thank you very much, and please – don't tell anybody this – just get your written stuff to Aaron Roth. I know you may have missed the deadline for the written submissions.

Mr. Evans: Justice Miller is giving you an extension.

The Chair: Yeah.

Mr. Deurloo: Sounds good.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you so much. Thank you for all the work you put into it, obviously.

Okay. We have one more presenter before the break, and I see he just arrived. Rob Miyashiro. Just in time. Welcome.

Member Miyashiro: There's a storm brewing out there. I thought I was going to get blown away.

Mr. Roth: It's 4 to 2.

Mrs. Samson: It's 4-2? Thanks.

The Chair: Okay. Good.

Member Miyashiro: Not quite bad at all.

All right. Thank you to the commission for hearing my presentation today, and oki, which is the Blackfoot word for welcome. My name is Rob Miyashiro, and I'm the MLA for Lethbridge-West. I'm currently the MLA, and I say "currently" because I don't feel that my position as MLA entirely defines who I am, nor does it reflect my journey to how I got to the present. I'm a lifelong southern Alberta resident, born in Lethbridge and raised in Taber. Well, can't say I grew up in Taber. That would be debatable. I attended the University of Lethbridge, and I resided in Lethbridge for about 45 years, almost equally split between Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West and spread around to the north side, west side, and the south side.

I was a human services professional for over 40 years in southwestern Alberta providing services and supports and

developing new programs in the fields of children's services, disabilities' employment, mental health, and seniors. While I was in the seniors' sector, I was the executive director of the Lethbridge Senior Citizens Organization for 17 years. My workplaces included Picture Butte, Cowley, Kainai First Nation, Lethbridge, and I also had a really cool position that was regional in scope, so I got to travel around southwestern Alberta.

Commissioners, I've also participated on over 60 boards, working groups, and committees, local, provincial, and national. I also served two terms on Lethbridge city council from 2013 to 2021. I'm also very proud to state that I was the first and only Japanese Canadian and Okinawan Canadian elected to Lethbridge city council. I'm one of the only few Japanese Canadians and Okinawan Canadians ever elected to a provincial Legislature in Canada. I'm telling you about this to give you a sense of who I am and also to lend credence to my claim of knowing my community and my region.

As Councillor Crowson probably told you, the provincial constituency boundaries pertaining to Lethbridge have only included the boundaries of the city of Lethbridge – have only included the boundaries of the city of Lethbridge – since 1909. There are four important reasons I'd like to highlight to maintain the boundaries for Lethbridge-West and Lethbridge-East. I'd like to elaborate on that.

Firstly, the diverse nature of our population. In the past 10 years the demographic makeup of Lethbridge has changed dramatically. We have the largest Nepali Bhutanese population in Canada, and we now experience secondary migration of this group from other parts of the country. Lethbridge accepted the largest number of Syrian refugees beginning in 2016, with more Syrians arriving steadily to the present. Lethbridge has welcomed almost 600 Ukrainian refugees since 2022. We have seen an influx of newcomers from many African nations to our community and, I dare say, my neighbourhood, Legacy Ridge, which is split by Lethbridge-West and Lethbridge-East boundaries. We're home to people from at least seven different African countries. Lethbridge is also home to a large population of immigrants from all parts of India as well as Japanese Canadians, Chinese Canadians, and Filipino Canadians. Of course, we're home to many urban Indigenous peoples, mostly Blackfoot from the Kainai and Piikani nations.

Secondly, representation of diverse voices matters. I explain the growing diversity of our population to provide context for the concept of representation: like community represented by like community. It's important that residents can (a) see themselves in their elected officials, (b) be confident that elected officials understand their needs and will act in their best interest, or (c) be confident that elected officials will treat them fairly relative to others in their constituency.

To further illustrate the first point, after I left the city of Lethbridge city council, I was approached by someone who asked me if I knew what she missed most about me being on council. I said, "Must be my great debating skills and repartee." She said, "No." What she missed was that she no longer saw herself represented in our elected officials in the city. She was Japanese Canadian. This is an important aspect, I believe, of our democratic values and how representation works for people in our community.

The third thing is diversity of an urban setting. The diversity of our community is a feature that enriches the entire community. Now, as I love food, as people here might know, I can say with all honesty that the diversity of a community's restaurants is entirely reflective of the ethnic makeup of its residents. Where we once had Italian, Japanese, and Chinese food as our most exotic culinary offerings, Lethbridge now has dozens of ethnic restaurants. Unfortunately, because of geography or community makeup or

settlement patterns, this type of diversity of ethnicity and food is not present in rural areas and smaller urban municipalities closer in proximity to Lethbridge. Combining any part of the city of Lethbridge with the rural areas or smaller municipalities would really do nothing to ensure appropriate representation for residents of Lethbridge.

The fourth thing is population. Both Lethbridge-East, which is approximately 48,000 people, give or take – it's probably more now – and Lethbridge-West, which is approximately 50,000, are really close to the provincial average that was cited in the 2016 to 2017 Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission for riding population. But there are ridings, like Edmonton-South and Edmonton-South West, that have exploded to up to 80,000-plus while Edmonton-Ellerslie and Calgary-North East are also well over the average. So perhaps the focus needs to be on providing adequate representation for these large urban ridings rather than creating rural-urban, or urban, constituencies.

One thing I'd like to note . . .

The Chair: Sorry, Rob. I was gesturing. Sorry. Just pause there. I want that clicker because I want to show a point that you just made. Keep going. Keep going.

Member Miyashiro: Okay. I thought you were like: stop it. I can take a hint.

I want to point out something that Jeff was talking about when he was talking about boundaries. What the commission might not be aware of is that we are almost at the western edge of the city limit growth in west Lethbridge. In fact, a new subdivision that was just approved on the west side of 30th Street takes us right up to the border with the county, up just by Sunset Acres. Mountain Heights – not Mountain Heights; further south of that. Watermark, I think it's called, is also moving out that way. But on the southeast corner of the city we have large residential developments that are beginning, started about three years ago. The Southbrook neighbourhood: the second – literally, the second – that the lots were all serviced, they sold lots and started building houses. This is no word of a lie. If you go towards the southeast corner of the city on the highway out on highway 4, you will see almost a fully developed residential neighbourhood that was not there three years ago, including the school. Maybe just three years ago.

I think when you're looking at the internal boundaries of what Lethbridge-West and Lethbridge-East could look like, the fact that it looks like there's a lot of land in the west: it's relatively encased by the county to the far west and a bit to the northwest. Also, the northwest corner of the west side in the city's boundaries is designated as economic development area. It's not residential. It's more for light industrial, commercial.

Mr. Evans: Sorry. What area was that?

Member Miyashiro: That's the north. It's called the west Lethbridge economic development area. It's south of highway 3 on the northwest corner of our city limits on the west side.

The Chair: Near the Y?

8:10

Member Miyashiro: It's way north of that. Right directly south of highway 3.

Mr. Evans: Yeah. So where that concrete . . .

Member Miyashiro: Right by there. Yeah. That area where the concrete plant landscaping is is constituting the beginning of what

was designated as the west Lethbridge economic development area. So that's not designated . . .

Mr. Evans: Is that the boundary, the road that runs directly west from there?

Member Miyashiro: Yeah.

Mr. Evans: Okay.

Member Miyashiro.: So it'd be everything north of Walsh Drive. I can't remember what that was.

Mr. Evans: Yeah.

Member Miyashiro: And right to the highway. You can tell from there because just west of the cemetery on the west side there's a large electrical substation, and that was purposely built there to accommodate any new more commercial development than residential.

I think that's important for the commission to know, that unless the residential development on the west side grows just a bit to the west but more to the south of where everything is, it might not grow as fast as some of the stuff in the southeast corner of the city, which is – people want to be on the south side, right?

The Chair: Can I get the fourth point again? I lost track of it.

Member Miyashiro: Yeah. Sorry. My fourth point was more about population. We talk about roughly – if you look at our populations on west and east, they are very close to what the estimate should be or the target populations are whereas I know some of my colleagues in caucus there, their ridings have almost as many people as the city of Lethbridge. My point, I guess, to that one was that I think these discussions are important because we're looking at future development for electoral boundaries, but really the urgency, I think, from talking especially with my colleagues and with people in Calgary that are northeast in Calgary: they're dealing with huge numbers. So we can kind of look at things like Lethbridge and say, "Well, that might be nice," but I think the urgency is for proper representation in those larger urban areas.

The Chair: Can I stop you there, Rob?

Member Miyashiro: You can stop me there.

The Chair: We've got about five minutes before break, so let's pose any questions from the panel to someone that really knows about boundaries. Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much. I, actually, was particularly taken by your theme of the diversity of new communities, in fact, that have come into Lethbridge in the last decade pretty much. Any anthropologist will tell you that food is culture, and I think it's an interesting way to assess a community and its growth over time. I thank you for the whole suggestion although it must be said that anywhere in Calgary you can get anything you want from any country, so I don't know how far this line of measurement could take you.

But your other point, to contrast that, was what you would get in, you know, 20 miles into Taber or 20 miles into Siksika. I think that was your general point, was it not?

Member Miyashiro: Yeah. The point was that to combine a more rural area with any part of Lethbridge, if you were even looking at increasing the size of a riding in Lethbridge just to encompass more people in the rural – you know, we all know how widespread some

of the rural ridings are. I mean, Lesser Slave Lake is, like, 16,000, 17,000 people, a five-hour drive from corner to corner.

Dr. Martin: Maybe 28,000. That's still low.

Member Miyashiro: Right. But it's just to say that we have the kind of community and the kind of constituencies in Lethbridge – the type of population and the type of representation, I think, that would be required are a little bit different because we have changed demographically. I think that's important. It's important for me to say. It might not be as important for the commission, but it's important for me to say that that is something that I talk to constituents about, that they want to know that there is someone representing them.

And it is about the food, Dr. Martin

Mr. Clark: I look forward to coming back and trying out some of these restaurants.

Thank you again for your presentation. I guess I'll ask you – I couldn't see you behind the pillar, so I don't know if you were here for some of Jeff's presentation, some of that back and forth. Just maybe remind me again: where is the growth in Lethbridge? You'd mentioned southeast. I guess I'm just thinking that if we're going to tweak in terms of perhaps moving a boundary a little bit one way or a little bit another, as it stands now, west is a little bit bigger and east is a little bit smaller.

Member Miyashiro: Right.

Mr. Clark: Is that logical in your mind, that east actually has a greater growth potential and therefore it makes sense this way, or is there a need to perhaps adjust to accommodate for greater growth in the west?

Member Miyashiro: Thanks, Mr. Clark. West Lethbridge has at least four or five new neighbourhoods being developed right now, right?

Mr. Evans: That doesn't include the new development on the Lethbridge University land.

Member Miyashiro: Exactly, right?

Mr. Evans: They've given it the go, but nothing has happened yet. Yeah. I don't know how big that development is going to be.

Member Miyashiro: The Canyons is almost at their limit now with roads. Like I said, Watermark hasn't been developed. It's just a school and the fire hall there. So there's some room for growth there. Copperwood has a little bit of room for growth. Garry Station has a bit of room, not a lot. Again, there's a new development plan on the west side of 30th Street that would take it right to the county line. Country Meadows is another one that's moving towards that entry. Then once you get to that, you're up against the county on two sides.

On the north side, which is mostly part of the east, there's enough development space that's been approved in north Lethbridge for residential development for probably 30 years. Yeah. There's lots of growth. BlackWolf, too, is just getting under way. Right up to the county line on the north end of Lethbridge on the north side there's enough room for one, too. There's been one big area structure plan done for that area.

Then in the southeast, like I said, where Southbrook is, there's room for growth because there's a subdivision that's going in south towards on Six Mile Coulee. Then there's Southbrook, where the

new school is, and they're all pushing out to the southeast towards Wilson Siding.

In terms of land mass I think you want to look at – without annexation issues on the west side, there's probably a similar amount of land ready to be developed, maybe a little bit more on the west side. So, yeah, looking at those issues.

The Chair: I think we'll have time for one more question. Then we're going to have a break because we've been sitting here for almost an hour and a half.

My clicker isn't working. I was trying to get to the map, so if somebody can help me with that.

Another question.

Mr. Evans: What are your thoughts on the geographic boundary of the river in terms of west and east?

Member Miyashiro: Right. Well, like I was saying, too, if you wanted to split out historical Lethbridge-West neighbourhoods out of Lethbridge-West...

Mr. Evans: What do you mean by that?

Member Miyashiro: ... I think that that's slightly problematic for me being the ...

Mr. Evans: Oh, the MLA. But if you weren't the MLA?

Member Miyashiro: Yes. If I wasn't the MLA, you still look at historically what neighbourhoods are grouped together. Downtown has been a part of, really, Lethbridge-West because that's how it identifies and that's where the downtown area is. When you move further to 13th Street for Lethbridge-East, that still makes sense. I know Jeff was talking about Stafford Drive and all the weird jog at, you know, St. Edward Boulevard and all those things. I don't think that's as problematic because most people will know during an election what side of the road they're on. They're just told where they are, right?

I think in terms of future growth there are a lot of coulee top areas on the east side of the river. When you're looking at the growth and you see the river as the natural boundary, I'm not sure how many years out that'll be because all of this stuff – I don't know if you can see this. Did I just move something? Oops.

The Chair: That's a natural break time.

8:20

Member Miyashiro: I'm messing with your stuff.

If you look at – let me just show you. Like I said, here's where some development is, but here is where the giant amount is going to take place, right in here because there's nothing right here right now. Yeah. This is where the big development is going to take place here, a lot of this part in here because the university is right there, right? There's lots of room for development here, but for the foreseeable future the developers have focused more on the stuff that are going up to the boundary, just past 30th Street. Like I said, this part right here is designated as the west Lethbridge economic development area, so there's not going to be any residential there. If you look at it that way, they're not going to build houses this side up; this part is already developed, actually, right up to about there.

Mr. Clark: So hand to heart, which is going to grow in the next five to 10 years? Lethbridge-West or Lethbridge-East has more people at the end of the day in terms of growth?

Member Miyashiro: Lethbridge-West will have more people because they have more people now.

Mr. Clark: Sorry. Will the growth be even between the two, or is one going to grow more than the other?

Member Miyashiro: I think we're going to see a lot of growth in the southeast, so in Lethbridge-East, in the next 10 years. I'm not sure when they're going to top out their development.

Part of the issue is, too, that the city doesn't want to have too many development fronts at one time, right? It just stretches your resources too much. We had to build a new fire hall in the southwest corner in order to accommodate growth. That means the next fire hall has to go into the southeast to accommodate the growth there. So there's a point where the city is going to just say – they're trying to put the brakes on for development where it makes most sense and it's sustainable. And a lot of you know this, that when we start putting fire halls in and stretching the resources in the city, then your taxes are going to go up, and then there's no way around that, right? There are no subsidies for fire halls and for firefighters.

The Chair: Susan wants to shorten our break by asking one last question.

Mrs. Samson: This is a really short question. You can deal with this later.

When I'm looking at Lethbridge-West following highway 3 at the top of the map there, if you want to look at that, why is that line so weird? Like, why isn't it following the highway clearly? You know what I'm saying?

Member Miyashiro: I know what you're saying.

Mr. Clark: Is that a city boundary?

Member Miyashiro: Yeah. North of highway 3 east of the river is all parkland, right? Right where the river is and that corner of – here; I'll show you. Right here, just so you know.

Mrs. Samson: Oh, okay. It's a geographical ...

Member Miyashiro: Yeah. Just remember 13th Street, Stafford Drive, coulee top river valley development. There's nothing going to go in there, right? Tollestrup gravel is right in here, ball diamonds, a waste-water treatment plant. It looks like there's a lot going on right in here, but really it's not developable.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you for your well-thought-out and very relevant presentation, Rob.

We're going break now for about 10 minutes. We'll be back at 8:36.

Member Miyashiro: Thank you very much for your time.

[The hearing adjourned from 8:24 p.m. to 8:36 p.m.]

The Chair: Okay. We have now had our evening break. Our next presenter, and we have five presenters, is Mr. Scott Paul.

Mr. Paul: Good evening, commissioners. My name is Scott Paul. I'm a retired lawyer, now author and storyteller. I've lived in Lethbridge for 32 years, raising two daughters here, and purposely retiring here as well. I'll echo the sentiments of many of the

previous presenters. I love Lethbridge, and it's a place that I'm connected to and call home.

I prepared a small written submission, that I submitted online, but I feel humbled because I heard such good presentations earlier. My written submission was brief, concise. It essentially said: populationwise, why are you even looking at Lethbridge? You have bigger fish to fry, in my mind. To use a legal phrase that I would use from time to time, down here it's *de minimis*. You have significant issues to deal with, and while you may be tempted to tinker, I would encourage you to not for the very reasons that have been stated by previous presenters.

In place of what I was going to submit, or repeat, and I didn't want to repeat, I'm going to offer up a story. I grew up in a small farming community near Brooks, a place called Rainier. One of the panel members will know where Rainier is because I went to high school with John in Brooks, where we were bused from. My father raised cattle, grew hay, and farmed land that had been broken, homesteaded many years before.

We had a community school, one that I'm very proud of. It turned a hundred years old three years ago. It's called Alcoma. In Rainier that part of Alberta was homesteaded by pioneers coming from Tacoma, Washington, settling in Alberta, a lot of them, anyway. They wanted to recognize their roots, and they called the school Alcoma: "Al" for Alberta, and "coma" for Tacoma, where they came from. When I graduated in grade 9, because it only went up to grade 9, in 1976 we had a graduating class of 17 students. It was a vibrant farming community, but over time that has changed, and it's reflective among my classmates at that time. Many of us moved on. Most of us moved on. A few stayed to farm the land, but not many. We moved to Calgary. We moved to Lethbridge. We moved to Vancouver. One man moved to Switzerland.

When I go back to Rainier, when I talk to my classmates who remained on the farm, we don't talk about things like public transportation, bike lanes, overcrowded schools. Their interests are far different than the ones I deal with daily. They're talking about commodity prices, irrigation, input cost. They're also talking about: will Alcoma school survive? There's been declining enrolment, and their funding keeps getting pulled back because it's tied to school population. So we have very different interests, and although we still connect at a personal level, a nostalgic level, we don't connect on the more primary issues that are local to our communities.

There's a rural reality, and there's an urban reality. I've heard very compelling arguments against the hybrid model, and there's a flip to that, not just the urban perspective. I think of Alcoma school, a declining population, and I would want an MLA fiercely and fearlessly promoting that school and trying to maintain that school because it's such a vital cog to that community. Yet if we pull that into an urban riding, if we pull outlying rural areas into urban ridings, we start to take away. We water down both the community and that MLA's agenda to push in Edmonton for funding for that school. I want to see Alcoma in another 50 years. I don't want to see that school be taken out, and I think effective representation by MLAs committed to that community, that diverse group of interests is so, so important.

As you consider the larger picture – and I think the larger picture lies north here. For Lethbridge, if you chose to tinker, I would hope that that would not include a tinkering including outside neighbouring bedroom communities. I chose to retire in Lethbridge. I could have chosen to retire in Coaldale or in Coalhurst, and from an economic point of view it's probably cheaper to live there, but there's a reason I retired to Lethbridge.

It was brought home to me by the speakers before when Maria Fitzpatrick was talking about the Canes and the Bulls. People identify with that. Belinda Crowson, who talks about a historical

boundary, the Westminster Road. I'd never heard that before, yet intuitively I understand that. Intuitively, when you have neighbourhoods in Lethbridge, that 13th Street does demarcate the neighbourhood. And then when Rob Miyashiro talked about the diversity of ethnic restaurants, that speaks to something which I don't think you will find necessarily in Coalhurst or Coaldale or those outlying regions.

So I would urge the commission to leave Lethbridge ultimately alone, leave these lines alone, and move to the bigger issues, which are in Calgary, the exploding growth, the exploding growth in Edmonton.

I'll add just a couple more things. I was a divorce lawyer, and I had clients across southwest Alberta, Pincher Creek, Crowsnest Pass, Coaldale, Coalhurst, Lethbridge, Cardston, Magrath. They brought different issues to the table. Notwithstanding that the common themes are custody and child support and dividing up property, the way they approached that and the communities they came from were very different. I recognize that as a lawyer. I didn't recognize Lethbridge-East versus Lethbridge-West, but outside there are different interests, values. I believe that Lethbridge is distinct, and I would encourage you to keep the lines written as they are.

I think there is some danger in trying to project population growth. I think Mr. Miyashiro has indicated where population growth can occur, but we don't have a crystal ball. We don't know what's going to happen. We have relative parity between the two, and I would encourage the commission that the most significant work you will do will be north of here. I don't want to discourage you, but I would almost say: leave us alone.

Those are really my comments, and I would just leave it at that, subject to any questions you might have.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Paul.

Mr. Evans: I'm interested, Scott, in your thoughts on community interest. You heard Mr. Coffman. I don't want to put words into his mouth, but essentially community interest was defined by municipal boundaries, and those had a significant demarcation of where those community interests began and ended. Do you agree with that?

8:45

Mr. Paul: I think for the most part I would. If we look at celebrations that are marked here in Lethbridge, I think that you will find a greater diversity in those community events than you would find in outlying communities. They will be different.

You know, I met Betty McKay*, and she's from Brooks. I was talking to her just yesterday. They have in Brooks a bull-a-rama, which I've never heard of. It sounds very interesting. They park big trucks around a hotel up there, the Brooks Hotel, and there's a bull riding event right in the middle of the town.

I think our celebrations reflect our different communities, and I think that you will find that in outlying areas here. I'm not sure where you live, John. I know you were living outside of Lethbridge for a while. I suspect that you would find that the celebrations that mark your community, that make your community are different than the ones here. We may all celebrate a Canada Day, but even in that, we celebrate it differently. In Lethbridge we have a swearing-in ceremony for new citizens. That's a big part of our community each year.

I would tend to accept Mr. Coffman's argument on that.

Mr. Evans: The example that comes to my mind is that if you go east of Taber and you take Grassy Lake and you take Burdett and you take Bow Island and you take a significant segment of the

*This spelling could not be verified at the time of publication.

population there, many would refer to them as Mennonite origin. Their cultural assimilation, the fact that they're so similar that they don't seem to be governed by municipal boundaries, and the same might be said for the LDS communities in the south: Raymond, Stirling, Magrath, Cardston, even extending into Warner and farther.

Though there are some factors – and I think that the legislation gives us the ability to look at those – that transcend political lines, 13th Street is just an arbitrary line that was put in place and has been there for some time. But it seems to me that there's almost a different mindset in terms of west across the river, one side or the other to some degree, having lived in both.

Mr. Paul: Yeah, there may be, yet I don't see any reason to move beyond what we're doing now. The old maxim is that you don't have to fix it if it ain't broke. I guess, tonight I have a greater appreciation of what Lethbridge is because we've had some fine speakers describe both the historical, geographical, and that wonderful presentation by the man with the GIS. I don't see compelling reasons to change things.

Any other questions from the panel?

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Scott. Appreciate it. Yeah. We'll look forward to your book.

Our next presenter is Keith Gardner.

Mr. Gardner: Hello, everyone. My name is Keith Gardner, like you just said, and I want to, first of all, take some time to thank you folks for coming down to southern Alberta. The work you're doing right now is the work of democracy, and that's really important, especially in today's day and age. It's not nothing, and I want to just say that I appreciate it.

Funnily enough that you mentioned Stirling just a moment ago, that's where I grew up. I spent my life until I was 20 in Stirling. My parents still live there. They raised my nephew there, and I still go back there pretty frequently. I moved into Lethbridge to go to university, and I've had the ability to live in Ottawa and Edmonton before I moved back to Lethbridge about six years ago to raise my daughter here.

Before I get too far into biographical details of my own life, I want to make my main submission clear right off the jump here. I think that Lethbridge should maintain at least two constituencies which are entirely contained within the boundaries of the city of Lethbridge, so that map that's displayed right there, that's just fine with me, and I think that that's the way it should stay. Here are some reasons why I think that.

The city of Lethbridge to me, especially having grown up in the neighbourhood, in the region, I think that it does represent a distinct community of interest separate and apart from other communities in southwest Alberta. We've had lots of conversations about, you know, Coaldale and Coalhurst. We've mentioned places like Stirling and Cardston and Magrath and Raymond, and I would say that Lethbridge is pretty fundamentally distinct from those places. I could even draw an argument that those places are pretty distinct from one another, too. If you're in Raymond on a Friday night in the fall, you're going to know that there's a big football game going on. You're not going to see that in a place like Magrath or Stirling. It's much more in the water in a place like Raymond than it is in those other places.

Residents of our community here in Lethbridge face challenges that aren't experienced by families like my parents in Stirling, families like my own when I was growing up in Stirling. We have to think about ballooning housing costs. We have to think about

downtown social disorder in this community. In Stirling those things aren't an issue. There's no downtown to speak of in Stirling.

Lethbridge is also identifiably different in its population dynamics from the surrounding communities. We're much more diverse in terms of our cultural backgrounds, our economic participation, our occupational profile. I had a chance to look at some of the statistics that are aggregated by the province on their big data dashboard. If you have a chance to look at that, it's fun when you get to see the big spikes in population and other stats.

Just on the note of cultural and economic diversity in Lethbridge: Lethbridge is significantly more diverse than these outlying communities. When you think about the proportion of our community that is of Indigenous heritage, we have about 6.6 per cent of our community is Indigenous. You compare that to a place like Raymond, it's about 3.5 per cent, 3.2 per cent in Picture Butte. We also have about just shy of 7 per cent of our community speak a language other than the two official languages. If you go to a place like Fort Macleod, that's 4 per cent. If you go to a place like Raymond, that's 1 per cent. Very, very few folks don't speak English or French in those communities, whereas we have a very thriving linguistic diversity in this community.

Finally, I think it was Rob who mentioned that he used restaurants because he thinks a lot about food, which is great, but about 15 per cent of our community here in Lethbridge identifies as a member of a visible minority community. If you go to places like Stirling, where I grew up; Coaldale; Coalhurst; you're seeing those numbers slip to below 5 per cent and, in many cases, 1 or 2 per cent.

All of this is to say that taken together as a city, Lethbridge is a very different place than the places that surround it. It's very unique and I would argue discrete from those places, so having a boundary that involves Coaldale, Coalhurst, Sterling, Raymond, whatever it is in a riding that also includes big chunks of Lethbridge, that really, I think, takes away from the representational capacity of the system to, say, have a member of a Filipino community or the Nepalese community have a serious shot at having an MLA that looks like them or at least someone who speaks meaningfully to their needs and their cultural identities.

On the flip side, if we think about it from the perspective of people in Stirling or Coalhurst or Coaldale or wherever it is, incorporating outlying communities into constituencies in which Lethbridge is a major part would kind of compromise those communities' ability to be meaningfully represented by their MLA. I think this is kind of Scott's point, too. You know, I was actually thinking about schools, too. I think about how differently people like my parents in Stirling think about schools. My parents take care of my nephew, like I mentioned. He's about almost exactly the same age – they're six weeks apart, my daughter and my nephew. My daughter goes to LCI here in town. That school is full to bursting. It needs renovations desperately. Stirling is not Alcoma, but it is not a large place. The concern has always been: will there be enough young families to continue supporting a high school in the community that I grew up in? When we consider schools in areas of provincial jurisdiction and the ways that those are approached in a major city or a mid-size city, at least, like Lethbridge versus a smaller community like Stirling or Coalhurst or Raymond, that presents representational difficulties for the MLA who would be representing both of those areas.

I think this is going to be my last point. If mid-size cities like Lethbridge get drawn into constituencies with large rural areas, I'm concerned that it'll exacerbate some of the existing rural and urban divides that we see in the province right now. For a long time rural-urban divides have really driven politics in this province. There's always going to be an element of that. My point is that after the

commission, after you folks are done your work, I have no doubt there will be lots of seats in Edmonton, there'll be lots of seats in Calgary, and there will be lots of seats that are primarily rural, but if we do not have seats that represent the unique, discrete interests of a mid-sized city like Lethbridge or even extrapolating to places like Red Deer, Medicine Hat, or things like that, you're losing that set of interests.

Last point. If seats like this one don't exist, there'll be a stronger incentive for the parties to pick a side without understanding that there are many Albertans for whom rural or big city are both uncomfortable descriptors for them.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gardner.

Any questions from the panellists?

Mr. Gardner: I felt like I just regurgitated everything everybody else said.

Mr. Clark: That's the disadvantage of going last.

Mr. Gardner: Yeah.

Dr. Martin: But it was well done.

Mr. Gardner: Yeah.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. Gardner: Thank you.

The Chair: Cameron Mills.

Mr. Mills: Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak with you here today. My name is Cameron Mills. I'm a proud Lethbridge resident. I'm also raising my three boys here in town along with my wife. In a professional capacity I work for the town of Coaldale, where I'm the director of growth and investment. I'm not speaking to you here today in that capacity or as a representative of that community, but it does frame if you will sort of the lens through which I look at the world, working in a capacity where economic development is my principal priority. Probably my singular identity is literally baseball coach. I did miss my son's game, for which I'm the head coach, this evening, and the text messages from my wife and other coaches suggest that the team missed me greatly. We did not do well. The Oilers did win 6 to 3, though. Balance is important.

Balance is really the theme through which I would look at this particular issue. If I may, I'm just taking a look at the broader region and the electoral districts in terms of how that works. Unlike Lethbridge, Medicine Hat combines rural and urban representation through the Brooks-Medicine Hat and Cypress-Medicine Hat districts. I believe that this promotes a more integrated and co-operative approach for regional planning and economic development for that region. Proof of this lies in the recent publication of the southeast Alberta economic opportunity strategy and implementation framework. Municipalities in that region were provided with a \$200,000 grant from the province to promote regional co-operation and economic development. That was between Medicine Hat, Redcliff, Bow Island, Foremost as well as the counties of Cypress and Forty Mile. My preference – and I'm likely not going to make a ton of friends here in the gallery today, but that's okay. We can disagree.

By redistributing electoral boundaries in Lethbridge in a way that also brings urban and rural under a unified electoral umbrella, I believe that our region would be much better positioned to pursue a more integrative approach to regional development and collaboration, especially as it relates to the development of the

agrifood value-added processing sector and realizing the full potential of what has been branded as Canada's Premier Food Corridor.

My proposal is to merge the existing Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West with surrounding rural areas to create four blended ridings, shown here as Lethbridge-Livingstone, Lethbridge-Little Bow, Lethbridge-Taber and Lethbridge-Cardston. Doing so will better serve the regional economic interest, acknowledging Lethbridge as the hub of the regional economy and tying Lethbridge to the food production corridor to the east, to the resource and tourism economies of the west, to the very important Coutts border crossing to the south, and to the major transportation corridor to the north connecting Lethbridge and the region to the rest of the province.

Simply put, Lethbridge's current electoral division risks entrenching urban-rural divides by carving out the city into isolated segments that do not include the rural communities that rely on Lethbridge as a regional service hub. This structure can create tension or disconnection between the needs of Lethbridge and the interests of surrounding municipalities like Coaldale, Lethbridge county, and Picture Butte, all of which contribute to and depend on the region's broader economic success.

As an alternative, the proposed new model ties Lethbridge into the developing agrifood manufacturing economy, known as Canada's Premier Food Corridor, to the east; provides Lethbridge with a direct tie to Alberta's main border crossing with the United States to the south; connects Lethbridge with the resource development and tourism economies of the west; and connects Lethbridge with a voice representing the massively important transportation corridors to the north.

Additionally, such a model would eliminate what I believe is an unnecessary effective representation issue in the form of Cardston-Siksika as a riding. This riding currently stretches from the border all the way to east of Calgary, making it entirely too large and fragmented to offer effective representation to those living within the riding. It groups dozens of communities that are disconnected from one another and ignores real world economic relationships that exist outside of that riding.

To conclude, the proposed realignment of boundaries as depicted here isn't just a geographic improvement; it would serve as a strategic signal to the province that southern Alberta is serious about growing its agrifood economy as one integrated region centred in Lethbridge. As many of you probably know, Lethbridge already supplies potable water to numerous surrounding municipalities, including Coaldale, Picture Butte, Lethbridge county, and others.

It also remains the educational anchor of southern Alberta. Students from across the proposed new divisions pursue studies at the University of Lethbridge and Lethbridge Polytechnic. Our industry in those areas relies on those institutions to train their workforce. Many of their graduates enter careers in the agriculture and food sectors, contributing directly to our shared regional economy. These educational pathways reinforce the need for a boundary system that recognizes and reflects how deeply interconnected our communities are.

Finally, Lethbridge serves as the health care hub for all municipalities in these proposed new divisions, with care centred around the expanding Chinook regional hospital. Lethbridge will soon also be educating doctors at the University of Lethbridge with a focus on expanding access to rural medicine specifically, with graduates who are intent on providing health care not only to Lethbridge residents but residents across these four divisions and beyond.

That is why I believe it is critically important to bring the Medicine Hat hybrid model over to Lethbridge and break down the existing urban-rural divide that risks standing in the way of maximizing our region's potential.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mills.
Greg.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you. Appreciate that presentation, and thank you for putting together the PowerPoint slide.

Part of our role here, both through legislation as well as the core reference cases that guide our work, in particular the Saskatchewan reference – one of the elements of that in describing voter parity is that “factors like geography, community history, community interests and minority representation . . . need to be taken into account to ensure our legislative assemblies effectively represent the diversity of [the] social mosaic.” I guess I’m curious how you feel that carving up Lethbridge into four pieces, especially given the context of what else we’ve heard today about the unique nature of Lethbridge as a city, satisfies that requirement.

9:05

Mr. Mills: I don’t fundamentally believe that there’s a significant difference between the people in the rural regions relative to the people of Lethbridge. That’s my perspective on it. I understand that there’s perhaps more ethnic diversity within the city of Lethbridge itself. That is true within Lethbridge. It’s also true within regions of Lethbridge.

It’s also true that other areas are diversifying at a significant rate. Taber has led the charge with respect to Alberta’s rural immigration program, for example, within the region. Within those capacities, I believe that the benefit of addressing regional representation outweighs the potential benefit of, you know, perhaps visibility concerns that were raised here this evening. To put that into perspective, one of the issues that I think is incredibly important to consider in terms of the success of Lethbridge itself is that, as was mentioned, Lethbridge provides water, for example, to surrounding communities. Water is something that the province has significant jurisdiction over.

If you’ve driven to the east of town, you’ve driven through Coaldale. It’s growing significantly. It’s about 10,000 people now. To the east of Coaldale within Lethbridge county you’ll see the McCain french fry plant. That plant has recently received a \$650 million investment from the McCain corporation, their largest investment they’ve ever made into a plant. That’s going to fundamentally double the size of that plant. The reason I bring that up is that the McCain plant which is located east of Coaldale draws its water from the city of Lethbridge. To put it in perspective of how much water it draws, the McCain plant uses fundamentally the same amount of water in a given day as the town of Coaldale, a town of 10,000 people. It is a very significant customer, and that represents one plant.

The province’s economic strategy involves growing the agrifood corridor and finding, you know, potentially upwards of 10 additional McCain plants to open within the broader region between Lethbridge and Medicine Hat, which represents billions upon billions of dollars of potentially local or foreign direct investment into our region. On the flip side of that water issue, though, the city of Lethbridge is in charge of, you know, providing that water. They’re the only ones with the capacity to treat and produce water at that scale, for which we’re very thankful to be customers, but in order to do that, they need access to water; they need rights for water.

Within the region I believe the figure is that approximately 97 per cent of the water rights are held by the rural jurisdictions. Lethbridge and the other urban jurisdictions represent 3 per cent of the available water rights. In order for Lethbridge to grow, it needs access to those things. The water issue is one issue amongst many where both the urban and rural need to work together in order for everyone to benefit.

The Chair: Father Time is not kind to us. I’ve got two more presenters and 20 minutes.

Mr. Mills, your presentation is very interesting. I’m going to ask: could you stay in the audience?

Mr. Mills: Of course.

The Chair: Let’s do the last two presenters, and if we have time to engage your dialogue tonight – I think you’ve touched a nerve and there may be some questions. I’ll just excuse you from the podium now.

I’ll call on Tamara.

Mrs. Miyanaga: Thank you to the commission. I’m Tamara Miyanaga. I am from the MD of Taber. I farm north of Taber. I’m a proud U of L alumnus. I reside on a third-generation mixed farm with potatoes as our primary crop. The family was interned during World War II and lived in a wooden granary at a time when the Japanese couldn’t own land. Currently the farm is run by three cousins who are trained as engineers, accountants, and irrigation technologists. We farm near the north boundary of Taber-Warner. I share those details so you understand that most farms reflect a strong academic and research side.

I’m the first female reeve for the municipal district of Taber, that boasts a population of 7,924 with a median age of 27.4, a youthful municipality. Through council motion, due to our concern about the impact electoral boundaries have on the residents, we have a request of the commission.

The MD of Taber has the Oldman River running through it, which is the dividing line for the current provincial ridings of Taber-Warner and Cardston-Siksika. Two ridings and double representation in the municipality have been very beneficial. Rural communities value their legislative representation. As mentioned in other presentations, urban value their uniqueness, but the same holds fiercely true of rurals, and it is not ideal to grab areas just to meet the population threshold. MD of Taber is diverse culturally, socially, and economically wide. The MD includes the hamlets and the communities located within Barnwell, Taber, Vauxhall, Grassy Lake, Hays, and Enchant.

Alberta and Canada’s housing demands have seen an outflow to rural areas. The hamlet of Grassy Lake shrank to a small 300 population, but within the last 10 years the last lot was sold, and the population has ballooned to 1,000. The MD of Taber is building a subdivision of 48 lots. We are unique, and we implore the commission that the electoral representation must follow the legislation and take in much more than the population. We need representation that reflects the rural lifestyle.

When oil declined, compounded by the unrest of the pandemic, agriculture provided economic stability. The immense physical size of rural ridings is demanding on the elected Member of the Legislative Assembly. Diversity within the riding is incredible, as noted by Councillor Crowson when she referenced that the city of Lethbridge is not the same as Coalhurst. Residents of Vauxhall on highway 36 and rural residents residing in the north end of the MD of Taber, which is currently represented by Cardston-Siksika, are drastically different than Strathmore. It will dilute the representation

and concerns of the area, which provides economic stability to the province, if we just grab rural boundaries to meet the population threshold.

The federal electoral boundaries review provided possible riding realignment options. It allowed for discussion and suggestions on the impact of the change. In the end, due to public impact, it altered the proposed boundaries. This process is challenging. We ask the commission if the proposed boundaries will be available to Alberta residents for comment prior to the final draft being presented to the Speaker.

The Chair: In answer to that question: yes. It's my failing that I didn't outline the process at the beginning. We're mandated by the legislation to provide an interim report by the end of October. That interim report will be filed with the Speaker, put in the *Alberta Gazette*, and available to the public. In the succeeding five months the public can have input and response to it, and in late March of 2026 we have to then submit our final report. You do have a window.

Mrs. Miyanaga: Thank you. Yes, that is actually very important to the MD of Taber and our residents.

The Chair: Thank you.

Any questions of this presenter?

Dr. Martin: I'm going to blame Mr. Mills for this because he sparked a thought, and I'm going to ask it of you instead. Taber is growing. Wonderful. Lots of issues as you scale up. I'm glad you're there to help oversee that. I wanted to ask a bit about the economic geography, so to speak. I wanted to ask about the connectivity to Taber of some of the surrounding villages. Think of Vauxhall, for example. Is that where people from Vauxhall – they go to Taber, right?

Mrs. Miyanaga: Not necessarily.

Dr. Martin: Where do they shop?

Mrs. Miyanaga: They have a direct route to Lethbridge. They go to Brooks. Rural people are very mobile, and they'll go to where the best deal is or where their economics make sense.

Dr. Martin: Then Taber's economic – is it an economic magnet for the surrounding countryside?

Mrs. Miyanaga: Because it has the largest population, in the MD of Taber, it has some natural opportunities that we don't have in the other municipalities. They have great recreation, retail has increased, so people do naturally come. We have three large implement dealerships, so people do make Taber a central hub. But our neighbours to the west in Coaldale, to the north, Brooks: those centres see lots of activity as well.

9:15

Between the town of Taber and the MD of Taber and those other rurals we work really hard, but it is not lost on me, the last presenter, that we need to have a better relationship with the city of Lethbridge. But I do catch my breath when I see that diagram.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Sorry. You don't like the four sort of . . .

Mrs. Miyanaga: I do worry that you could have four representatives from the city of Lethbridge.

Mr. Evans: I have a question.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Evans: Tamara, in terms of your – where would you change the boundaries to achieve the goal that you're talking about with respect to Taber? Bearing in mind some of the comments that Mr. Mills made, because, I mean, that economic corridor aspect is interesting.

Mrs. Miyanaga: I don't think you have to get caught up in municipal boundaries. I think rural people – and I do count Coaldale, Taber, Bow Island, Brooks in a rural segment. We all quite pride ourselves in that fact. So I don't think you have to worry about that municipal boundary. You could look at a bit of population, because I recognize that that's one of the primary factors, but I don't think you should reach out to a Strathmore just to build the number.

I'll speak personally. This is not – the other comments were council approved and verified. Personally, Cardston-Siksika doesn't make sense, so we struggle with that because our residents are represented by them with Vulcan. Somehow we need to fix that, and I believe the next speaker will speak more eloquently to that.

Mr. Evans: How would you change? Let's think about – I don't know if we could put it up on the screen, but if you look at the Taber-Warner constituency, would you change the east boundary? And would you change the north boundary?

Mrs. Miyanaga: Okay. We could go north a bit more. Brooks probably is more natural than Lethbridge. But, again, this is my own personal, so I want to be very careful. We really want to see what those electoral boundaries look like before we have a big comment.

Mr. Evans: I'm thinking about, like, the community interest, sort of the commonalities between.

Mrs. Miyanaga: Well, we see it federally, the challenges of having – in our Bow River riding we have from Chestermere, Strathmore, Brooks, Taber, Bow Island, and it's immense, so it is a challenge for the MP. We need more than that. I mean, our requirements with the province – the province deals with municipalities so intensely, and if we don't have that connectivity to the Legislature, I very much worry that urban concerns will become the priority of whichever government is elected, so I'd like to keep it more rural.

The Chair: Can I just confirm that you are the reeve of the MD of Taber?

Mrs. Miyanaga: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Chair, can I just squeeze in here?

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Clark: Previously there was a Cardston-Taber-Warner, if I'm not mistaken.

Mrs. Miyanaga: That's right.

Mr. Clark: More of an east-west orientation. Notwithstanding sort of not specific, is that a more natural sort of alignment than the north-south in terms of the way Cardston-Siksika is? I know you're not in Cardston-Siksika, but is it a little more natural to go east-west for you, or is that . . .

Mrs. Miyanaga: Again on a personal note, yes.

Mr. Clark: Yeah, just you personally. You take the reeve hat off. Yeah.

Mrs. Miyanaga: This long, narrow: no. I do represent the residents who are north of the Oldman River, so it hasn't been a natural fit.

Mr. Clark: So just to make clear, that boundary, the Oldman River: the county of Taber is on both sides?

Mrs. Miyanaga: Yes.

Mr. Clark: I see. Okay.

Mrs. Miyanaga: So there is beauty in having two MLAs.

Mr. Evans: Does it stretch into Scandia, your MD?

Mrs. Miyanaga: No. Bow River.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Right there.

Mrs. Miyanaga: Our north boundary is the Bow River.

Mr. Evans: Okay.

Mrs. Miyanaga: Thank you.

The Chair: So the takeaway for your presentation: you really want to see our interim report. Okay. Good.

Thank you.

Mrs. Miyanaga: All is well.

The Chair: That takes us to Randy Bullock. Is Randy here? Oh, okay.

Mr. Bullock: Good evening, everyone. Am I the last speaker tonight?

The Chair: Yes, you're the last scheduled speaker.

Mr. Bullock: Okay. Great. Well, thank you. I appreciate this time being allocated to me. My name is Randy Bullock. A little bit about myself. I grew up in west Lethbridge and, like Tamara, I'm also a U of L alumnus. I forgot about that, but that was a long time ago. Currently I'm a resident of Cardston county. I have lived in Cardston county for the last 17 years, and I am also the chief elected official of Cardston county. I'm acting as the current reeve, and I've been the reeve for five and a half of the last seven years. So I've been exposed to the changes that were made prior to the election in 2019, and I'm here to speak about the configuration of Cardston-Siksika.

With the permission of my council and the area residents, I'm here to express observations and concerns with this current layout. We like to call it the figure eight. Prior to the 2019 election the boundary was realigned in an obscure north-south layout which extends from the United States-Canada border northward 260 kilometres to the Strathmore area, as outlined here. This configuration does not represent the demographic of the south. Historically, when my father-in-law served as the MLA for two terms, the configuration was an east-west layout, just as you mentioned earlier. It was called Cardston-Taber-Warner.

It's already been said here tonight at this microphone that Albertans are connected by highways. Highways 5, 4, and 3: it's a big corridor of a lot of economic activity that connects our industries and our people.

I took the time prior to coming here tonight to reach out to other elected officials, both urban and rural elected officials, within Cardston-Siksika, and I haven't found one elected official that finds merit with the current layout, and let me tell you, I've talked to several, multiple councillors, reeves, mayors. They feel that they are underrepresented. We want our MLA focused on the needs of our immediate area. To make the MLA travel in such a large area – I said 260 kilometres; all I did was google that because I didn't really know the distance that he was going – makes it very difficult. I don't know how anybody could represent that many rural and urban municipalities. That's unfair to him. How does he engage with the people? How does he hear the people's needs? It just doesn't seem like it's feasible for him to do that under the current configuration.

We want something similar to the old east-west boundary. Cardston, Raymond, Magrath, Stirling, Warner, even the Blood Tribe: you know, that was all part of the other configuration, and this figure eight should have never happened to begin with.

One point I'd like to touch on: Cardston county is considered a have-not municipality. We're not flush with cash. We'd like to do many infrastructure improvements, and we're competing with larger, more affluent rural municipalities and urbans for the allocation of funding. We're competing with the MD of Taber, Vulcan county, county of Lethbridge. Those three municipalities have much bigger pockets than we have. So we're actively, continually lobbying our MLA to hear us because we need their help. We need grant money to survive. It would be nice if we didn't have to compete with the larger, more affluent municipalities. We've even heard our MLAs say: there's only so much that can go around; my area is so big; there's only so much to the pie. One mayor of a local town in Cardston county said: how does this hourglass configuration help us with regional planning and infrastructure? When it pinches off like that, the communities of people are not connected.

9:25

I think I've said enough. Please reconsider Cardston-Siksika as one area of needed change. Connect the people with a more efficient boundary, connect the people and their economies. If you're going to remember one thing from me, remember this: it's not too late to change the figure eight.

Mr. Clark: I like it. I'm typing that right now.

Mr. Bullock: I've talked to mayors, councillors, reeves. We know why it was done previous to the election. That's no front-page news. But I think I echo the concerns of hundreds if not thousands of people with this configuration.

The Chair: Why are you the only person speaking to this issue today? Why aren't there any other elected officials here from that riding?

Mr. Bullock: To be honest with you, I mean, I reached out to multiple. I came here tonight thinking that my voice would be heard, that I could make a difference, and I don't know if they felt the same way, because this is a public hearing. We know how public hearings go. There is the impression that you're here just to follow the protocol. Will they actually listen to us? That's another story. I guess I'm here tonight thinking that you'll listen.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Bullock: I think it's my duty as well. As a reeve representing about 5,000 people – that's not considering the towns' elected

officials that I contacted – there is an obligation to be here tonight as a reeve.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.
Other questions?

Mr. Evans: Yeah. I have a question. Randy, imagining you went back to the way it was, so east-west, how far east would you go? What would you think would be sort of the common-interest economic corridor?

Mr. Bullock: The alignment seemed to work. My father-in-law was the MLA for two terms. Broyce Jacobs was his name. He lived in Mountain View, Alberta. He was able to canvass that east-west corridor with no problem.

Mr. Evans: And it extended into Taber?

Mr. Bullock: It did. It included Taber, yes. Cardston-Taber-Warner. I mean, it doesn't have to be exactly that, but the southern towns are more interconnected with each other socially, economically. But when you go up to a pinch point like that, I don't know of any of my people that are going north up that way.

Mr. Evans: How far north would you go, in your mind?

Mr. Bullock: I know that one of the considerations is population, so that's for you to figure out. I honestly don't know what to tell you. I have heard the talk here tonight of mixing rural and urban. I don't know how I feel about that. I know that could work, but I guess I'm elected to represent rural Alberta right now. I'm not an urban . . .

Mr. Evans: Does Glenwood extend over to – I mean, I'm looking at it a little more blown up, but if that stands up north and you go to highway 3, you include Brocket and Pincher Creek, would that . . .

Mr. Bullock: That's in the MD of Willow Creek, actually. Yeah.

Mr. Evans: But we don't have to – we're not bound by MDs.

Mr. Bullock: Yeah. Well, yeah.

Mr. Evans: I'm more interested in the community interest aspect from your perspective, or the connectivity of and commonality of the various communities and the people that live in them.

Mr. Bullock: I think it's more east-west linear. To go up that far, I don't see the connectivity there with Fort Macleod. I don't.

Mr. Evans: Okay. That's what I'm interested in. Thank you.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Dr. Martin: You mentioned that many of your fellow reeves and mayors were conflicted about whether to come and make a presentation, but I hope you will, when you talk to them, tell them that we are doing more hearings, and there are more opportunities. There's going to be, you know, a virtual interaction phase as well as these kind of public hearings. We're definitely going to be down in Medicine Hat and the like, so tell them to show up.

Mr. Bullock: I have your e-mail, and to one of my fellow reeves on the phone yesterday I read every event that you're going to be at, so he most likely plans to come to Calgary.

Dr. Martin: Oh, okay.

The Chair: Brooks is open. Please send some of the rural people to Brooks. We don't want that mixed up in Calgary.

Mr. Evans: We could have a bull-a-rama.

The Chair: Yeah.

Mr. Bullock: What I'd like to know is – I received the e-mail, and not too many people were aware it was going on. Why did I receive the e-mail? Who else received the e-mail?

The Chair: Well, we can speak to that. I can speak to that partially. Every municipality, every reeve, every mayor of the province received a letter. Am I not correct, Aaron?

Mr. Roth: The municipalities.

The Chair: Yeah. Everyone got it.

Mr. Bullock: Okay. Probably it's kind of . . .

The Chair: It was right after Easter; late April, actually.

Mr. Bullock: Okay. That makes more sense.

My fellow councilmen said: go ahead and do it. I got text messages from them all day today: this is what you need to tell them. So I'm representing multiple people.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. Yes.

Now, we're just past closing. I did cut off Mr. Mills partly because I just could sense the table filled with questions here. Are there any other questions of Mr. Mills? He came up with the . . .

Mr. Evans: I would love to see his proposal again and then ask some questions.

The Chair: Please come forward. Let me ask you this right out of – it's the chair's prerogative. Your model replaces five ridings with four, does it not?

Mr. Mills: It does.

The Chair: Okay. That's music to the commission's ears.

Mr. Mills: Correct. Southern Alberta would be represented by six ridings, east to west.

The Chair: Okay. And have you done the math on the population?

Mr. Mills: I have. I don't have perfect statistics, but my, I think, reasonably conservative estimates have each of those ridings between approximately 52,000 and 62,000 people, with Lethbridge-Taber being the smallest of the four. Cypress-Medicine Hat would grow because that would put Foremost and Bow Island into that riding.

The Chair: Okay.

From the left, Mr. Evans, questions across. One question per panellist.

Mr. Evans: Thank you. Yeah. I just want to know in terms of Lethbridge and Medicine Hat, just from a general perspective, where have you divided that? How have you divided up the city?

Mr. Mills: Within Lethbridge itself?

Mr. Evans: Yeah. And then Medicine Hat.

Mr. Mills: Medicine Hat is currently split in the same way. That's fundamentally the current. The current is this, and then Cypress basically just moved.

The way we looked at this was that Lethbridge-Little Bow would encompass – we use north of 6th Avenue; 6th Avenue, when you're in Lethbridge is Whoop-Up Drive. The main bridge that connects from east to west Lethbridge is 6th Avenue once it's on this side of the river, so 6th Avenue being the dividing line north-south, everything east of the river and everything west of Mayor Magrath Drive, which then turns into 26th Street North, so fundamentally north Lethbridge being within Lethbridge-Little Bow and Lethbridge-Taber encapsulating basically everything 26th Street and east as well as Mayor Magrath Drive.

The new subdivision that was mentioned as growing within south Lethbridge would be within Lethbridge-Taber. Lethbridge-Taber, again, is the smallest of these municipalities but also contains a relatively significant growth portion of Lethbridge and also has Taber and Coaldale, which are the largest of the small urbans within the region and also the fastest growing of those. That riding I would expect to catch up over time.

Mr. Evans: What did you estimate its population to be?

Mr. Mills: Approximately 52,300 for Lethbridge-Taber. Lethbridge-Little Bow would have been at about 58,200. Lethbridge-Cardston, which is basically south of 6th Avenue and west of Mayor Magrath Drive – that's the riding I would find myself in; I live down by the college – as well as the southern portion of west Lethbridge south of Whoop-Up Drive, and that would merge to the area that encompasses Pincher Creek, I believe, to the west as well as Cardston and those communities to the south, down to the border.

9:35

Mr. Evans: What were the streets again? Sorry.

Mr. Mills: That would be west Lethbridge south of Whoop-Up Drive, so south of that dividing bridge line, and on the east side of the river it would be south of 6th Avenue and west of Mayor Magrath Drive, which is also highway 5. And then Lethbridge-Livingstone would be the portion of west Lethbridge north of Whoop-Up Drive. The population estimate for Lethbridge-Livingstone would be 64,000, approximately.

The Chair: Thank you.

Susan?

Mrs. Samson: I'm going to pass.

The Chair: Okay.

Julian?

Dr. Martin: Well, thank you. It's fascinating to look at maps. We all – well, certainly speaking for myself, I'm obsessed by looking at maps, but I wanted to ask you about the economic geography that you allude to and surely must be a key part of your argument.

Mr. Mills: Absolutely.

Dr. Martin: So I'd like to hear a lot more about it, and you can't do it here tonight, but this kind of envisioning we see in the map comes out of a lot of economic planning, study, and struggling, I presume. I think the rationale has to be located in the economic geography, the magnet feature, as I expressed it to one of the other speakers. The magnet feature for the entire region has to be a key part of your argument to justify this. So am I right in thinking that

you see health and medicine and, indeed, medical research; you see irrigation planning and services; you see other farm and particularly agricultural side servicing as keying on Lethbridge as its service core?

Mr. Mills: Yeah. Absolutely. Obviously, the economic argument, I think, is pretty key, and I think it's pretty clear. As I described, if you look at the economy of the Lethbridge-Taber region, for example, it's centred around food production, particularly in the growth sector of agrifood processing, just taking a raw product and turning it into something value-added, which is something the province is obviously very eager to achieve. We share water across that region, we buy water, so we're very interconnected that way.

Same thing with Lethbridge-Cardston, again with respect to the idea that, you know, Lethbridge is the hub of the economic region. What happens with respect to, you know, access to the border down at Coutts, which is Alberta's primary border crossing, obviously impacts Lethbridge economically a great deal, right? So there's that connection there. Lethbridge-Livingstone: a number of speakers this evening have talked about the development of the eastern slopes of the Rockies. This would tie some representation from Lethbridge to the region which is also considering that, so the MLA tasked with that riding would be tasked with balancing the considerations of those communities.

I think what it fundamentally comes down to for me is this idea that there are really two ways of looking at it. I really do believe in the effectiveness of local government. I believe, as a Lethbridge resident, that our elected officials here in Lethbridge are doing a spectacular job representing local issues and dealing with them locally. I also think that they do a phenomenal job representing those local issues to the province. I know they engage in, you know, trips to Edmonton to speak to ministers about Lethbridge's concerns, and I think they've done very well for that.

I believe that it would be an opportunity for the province to look at the MLA's role as bridging those local concerns. We have very effective local representation that considers those local issues and only those local issues, but an MLA would be tasked with looking at things on a more broad perspective and understanding that the economy doesn't end where the city border ends, nor does the need for water end where the rural border ends, so having someone that can work with disparate councils and say, "Look, these are the broader regional issues that we have to solve, and let's solve them together." I think that's an incredible opportunity.

The Chair: You wouldn't be concerned, as I think a previous speaker was, under your model, of all four members of the Legislature living in the city of Lethbridge, would you?

Mr. Mills: I would not. It's certainly possible. It's also possible that none of them live in Lethbridge. To me, I trust the people that are elected to do the right thing fundamentally. I don't know all of the existing people in those ridings, but I don't really believe I have to. I know the types of people that tend to run for this office. I believe in them. I believe they're moral people. I believe that their job is to represent the interests of their riding and also the interests of the broader province, which is their mandate.

From my perspective, the same argument could be said if we say: well, it's really important for the MLA for Lethbridge-West, that represents a portion of west Lethbridge, to live in west Lethbridge. Well, then how can we possibly live with the Cardston-Siksika riding, right? Their representation is just as important as anyone else's. The reality is that we're always going to be drawing lines. MLAs are always going to have to travel to a certain extent. They're always going to have to represent diverse views. My experience in

working with MLAs as well as municipal councillors is that they generally do a pretty good job of doing that.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Clark: One quick question, then. More a point of clarification. You work in Coaldale?

Mr. Mills: I do. I live in Lethbridge.

Mr. Clark: That's really the essence of my question, coming back to the question of communities of interest. You live in Lethbridge, work in Coaldale. Why don't you live in Coaldale? What's the difference? Like, what is it about Lethbridge that says: I want to live in Lethbridge. There's obviously something different.

Mr. Mills: Sure. Well, there are a few things. Prior to working for the town of Coaldale, I worked for the largest real estate developer in the region. So when you were asking about where the houses are going, I was, you know, biting my lip because . . .

Mr. Clark: You know where they're going.

Mr. Mills: . . . I know. Largely in west Lethbridge, south Lethbridge.

Anyway, I took an opportunity to go work for the town of Coaldale. The town of Coaldale generally takes a little bit of a different approach to how we do administration. I won't get into it, but I had an opportunity to work with a really great team out there. I had just finished renovating a home a block away from my mother, who needed some care, in south Lethbridge from basement to second storey, and I will move when I die because I'm never doing that again.

But the other reality for me is, again, my role with the town of Coaldale as director of growth and investment. I oversee economic development, planning, engineering, as well as communications and government relations. I deal with all the grant work as well within my department, and we have a relatively small staff that works extremely hard for that community.

I find that I do my job best by not being a resident, and the reason I say that is that my job is to provide my elected officials with advice. Sometimes that advice doesn't always make everybody happy. I mean, everyone is aware of that. If there is an issue – that generally is the planning department – that's brought forward to the council like, you know, I'm suggesting we rezone a parcel next to someone else, if that person next to them was my kid's hockey coach, it would be very, very difficult. My job is to provide advice which is professional in nature, and I find that I'm best doing that without needing to worry about what I'm going to hear at the grocery store after I leave work.

The Chair: Mr. Mills, thank you very much.

We have one short question, and then we're going to conclude.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. I'm just a little slow off the hop because

I'm new to this. I think we all are. The concept that you're presenting, when we talk about a big region like that and we're talking about building together for economic reasons being one of the main goals, could we look at redrawing but leaving the city of Lethbridge alone? I know the population is there. The four types of squares aren't going to work, but could something like that? What we have – I agree with you – does not currently work. But could Lethbridge – would that be a consideration? Could you speak to that, where Lethbridge is a stand-alone city and represents its unique interests and the economic driver is the lower part, as identified there?

Mr. Mills: I don't think that would be as effective. Again, I look at this as an opportunity to look at the issue a little bit differently. I believe that Lethbridge is fundamentally tied to those other communities. I do not believe that it's fundamentally unique and different from those other communities. There are elements of the community that certainly are, just as there are elements of the community in Foremost that are different from the community in Bow Island.

9:45

Again, the reality is that, you know, my son plays on a baseball team here in Lethbridge with other players from as far away as Milk River, right? People come in. There are Milk River players, Claresholm, Fort Macleod, Foremost all within that region. That's one example amongst millions where these are people that travel in and travel out of the community. I look at it as being part of a broader region.

To me, I don't really think it would work as well. I don't think it would serve the goal of tying our economic interests together and promoting the sort of co-operation that I think can exist to really maximize our potential.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Mills, we've been going since 9 o'clock this morning, and we've gone over a little. Thank you so much for your presentation. Make sure that Aaron gets your PowerPoint and any brief summary of your presentation as well. If you could do that, that would be appreciated.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you to all the presenters. Thank you to everyone for coming out and for the thoughtful presentations and the enthusiasm with which you all presented. We thought we had a difficult job before this evening; you haven't made it any easier for us, by the way. But thank you very much.

I do encourage you, especially some of the latter presenters, to tell your people to go to Brooks. Don't send them to Calgary. We've got enough presenters in Calgary. Brooks and Medicine Hat have some time slots, and that's next week, Thursday and Friday.

Thank you very much.

[The hearing adjourned at 9:47 p.m.]

