



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Pincher Creek

Thursday, May 29, 2025
9 a.m.

Transcript No. 1

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

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Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Pincher Creek

Public Participants

Craig Burrows-Johnson
Monica Zyla

9 a.m.

Thursday, May 29, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Okay. It is 9 o'clock. Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the very first public hearing of the Electoral Boundaries Commission in Alberta. We are pleased to say that we chose the beautiful area of Pincher Creek in southwestern Alberta and look forward to the start of our season of public hearings.

First of all, a special thank you to those of you who have registered. I assume everyone who has registered is here, but we'll go through the names shortly.

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

Other commissioners are – obviously, you see the nameplates at the table. Right next to me is Susan Samson, long-time resident of Sylvan Lake – from a southerner's perspective that's central Alberta – and an experienced municipal politician who served a full term as mayor of Sylvan Lake. Susan was named citizen of the year several years ago in Sylvan Lake and received the Queen Elizabeth II diamond jubilee medal in 2012. She's a dedicated volunteer in her community with a focus on the importance of public health care.

Next to Susan is John Evans, KC, a lawyer with a province-wide firm known as Stringam and who works out of their Lethbridge office. John conducts trials across the province, and his legal ability has been recognized by way of being awarded the KC designation, or King's Counsel. John is a very busy lawyer but finds time to volunteer on commissions like this and the Alberta Judicial Nominating Committee.

To my right is Dr. Julian Martin, a retired history professor from the University of Alberta with a master's degree and a doctorate from Cambridge University, and we were fortunate he came back to Canada. Julian has volunteered, after his retirement, on many committees in Sherwood Park and served on several provincial tribunals such as the Surface Rights Board and the Land Compensation Board.

At the end of the table, next to Julian, is Greg Clark. Greg is an entrepreneur and consultant, focusing on information and knowledge management. Greg has served as a member of the Legislature of Alberta for Calgary-Elbow, so we're pleased to have someone that has that experience on this commission. Greg, too, is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II platinum jubilee medal and currently serves as the chair of the Balancing Pool of Alberta – no, that's not a gymnastics association – and he consults widely and advises organizations relative to proper governance. Greg holds an MBA and an ICD.D designation in terms of board governance.

We are the Electoral Boundaries Commission, and I was told to operate this. Before we get started, because of the amount of time that we've got set aside and there are fewer presenters, we'll be a little bit more informal and we won't stick to the time guidelines and we may very well have much more of a discussion and conversation. You don't have to worry about the microphones; they're all managed by Cine Audio to the far end of the room here. Just so you know, the audiofeed will ultimately be public and put on the EBC website. As well, the proceedings today are recorded by *Alberta Hansard*, and transcripts will also ultimately be on the EBC website. As I said, this is the first public hearing.

Now I wish to go through – oh, before I go further, I should acknowledge one other person in the room, Aaron Roth, who will put his hand up. He is the fellow that makes all this possible. He arranged everything, and he will be graded based on the hotels and the lunches that we enjoy on this trip. He's done a superb job getting everything organized for us.

A few more things then I'll walk through the slide presentation. Ultimately, we will end up on some maps as well. There are maps of Livingstone-Macleod and all the touching or bordering electoral divisions as well put up in the room, so feel free to walk around or make reference to them in your presentation.

We've got the task as an Electoral Boundaries Commission, a task that is guided by the legislation and a timetable that is guided by the legislation, that we must have a report completed, what's come to be known as an interim report, within seven months of our appointment. This commission was appointed by the Speaker of the Legislature of Alberta in late March, so we must have an interim report submitted by late October. That interim report will be public and will be distributed widely and then will be subject to comment, criticism, affirmation, and recommended changes. Then after the late October deadline in the next five months we will take further consultation from the public and create the final report as directed under the legislation, and that must be completed by late March 2026. That's our legislative timetable.

One of the main tasks that we have as a commission is that at the time the Alberta Legislature changed the law or made some changes to the legislation governing the commission, they also said, "We're going to add two more constituencies, two more ridings or two more electoral divisions," and where those go would be part of our deliberation and work going forward. So it's not a matter of just realigning the existing boundaries; we must fit in two more constituencies, and we're going to move from 87 to 89. Of course, everybody knows this, each electoral division or riding or constituency – I use the term "electoral division" because that's the terminology in the legislation, but we're most familiar with and the most commonly used is constituency or riding – has one member of the Legislature. His or her task is to sit in the Legislative Assembly in Alberta and represent their constituency. We are in a democracy. I like to pride ourselves as Canada is probably one of the best countries to live in, largely because of our free and democratic process and system.

In addition to increasing the constituencies, Alberta, as you know, sociologically and demographically has changed considerably over the last few years. Our population has increased dramatically. Just to give you an idea, the last Electoral Boundaries Commission, that concluded its report in 2017, was faced with a population of just over 4 million people, or less than 4.1 million people. Today we are relying on the most up-to-date statistics available to us from Statistics Canada and verified by the office of information and statistics of the Alberta Treasury Board, and the numbers that we're relying on peg the Alberta population at 4.88 million people. So we're adding two more ridings, and we have about 700,000 more people to deal with this go-round.

To give you some perspective, the formula that the Electoral Boundaries Commission came up with last time – well, you see the figure there – 4,062,609 population. That was the number they used back in the 2017 EBC report. Eighty-seven electoral divisions yielded an average population per constituency at 46,697. We operate under effective representation. In Canada we do not operate on one person, one vote, as Americans do. We operate under the principle of effective representation. The authorities have established that effective representation includes or can include a variance of minus 25, plus 25, so the target range for the Electoral Boundaries Commission in 2017 was that range, 35,023 to 58,371. That was eight years ago.

9:10

Here we are now with today's figures, that we're going to rely on, 4.8 million, again, but this time divided by 89 ridings. That

reveals a target or an average for each constituency of that number, 54,929. The target range you will see is 41,197 to 68,661.

Unfortunately, the population growth has not been perfectly aligned in every riding. It's been obviously clustered in the two major cities, Edmonton and Calgary. So the task of this commission going forward – and as I said, today is our first day. We're in this beautiful part of the province. We're in Lethbridge this evening. As in the old tourism commercial we stamp around Alberta starting next week, go all over the province. So we want to hear from you, hear your submissions and information not necessarily exclusively with respect to this electoral division. We can hear about the bordering ones, or we can hear about anything as well. We'll take that into consideration.

But what we're going to be tasked with is following the markers outlined in the legislation, many factors. Where the population density is: that's a big concern for our commission. When we redraw boundaries, we're going to be conscious and have to follow common community interests and organizations. We'll deal with geographic features. As we know, natural boundaries sometimes are created by geography, rivers, mountains. Communication and transportation across Alberta: that's another factor that we'll be concerned with. And we will endeavour to create understandable and clear boundaries in the electoral divisions that we recommend.

Another task – and I don't have this on the screen at all – is that we're tasked with actually naming the constituencies, which is kind of an afterthought. If you have any comments in relation to the naming, we're happy to hear those as well.

Overall, the authority that the Electoral Boundaries Commission has: we have to take in other factors and other considerations that we feel are appropriate, kind of an open-ended authority that we have as a commission. That's why these hearings are so important. If you have some concerns that are not necessarily targeted and fall under one of the very perfect items of the legislation but are factors that we need to know about, we need to hear from you in respect to those.

What you have before you is the complete current electoral map of Alberta, and I believe it's posted as well on the wall behind me. I'm just going to quickly go through the constituencies that border this constituency. To the north you have Banff-Kananaskis. The population figures are there, and if you have good eyesight, you can see those. As well to the north is Highwood, bordering is Cardston-Siksika, and of course here we are in Livingstone-Macleod, and we'll be dealing with Lethbridge this evening.

Those are my introductory comments. This morning we have on our list of presenters, if I can just identify all of them: Craig Burrows-Johnson, if you can just put your hand up. Okay. Sahra Nodge? No. Monica Zyla? Okay.

Craig, you're listed first. Presumably, you registered first, so you get to go first. Normally we have – I restrict people to seven minutes. Take your time. Take your time. We want to have a conversation.

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: Well, I hate to be the centre of attention, so I'll make use of all of my seven minutes, and then I'll let you have the time.

Thank you very much for coming. Welcome to Treaty 7 territory, and good morning. My name is Craig Burrows-Johnson. I'm currently a resident of Lethbridge. I was born and raised in Taber. I'm a graduate of W.R. Myers high school, class of '72. My family has been farming and ranching in southern Alberta since 1903, when my grandfather immigrated from Yorkshire in England to Burdett in what was then the Northwest Territories. In 2005 our MLA Len Mitzel presented our family with a provincial certificate

recognizing us for a century of farming. We're still raising black cattle in the county of Forty Mile after 122 years.

I attended the University of Lethbridge and the University of Calgary and lived for 30 years in Calgary's inner city in the communities of Sunnyside, Kensington, and Briar Hill before moving back to Lethbridge in 2007. While studying and working at the University of Calgary, my focus was environmental design, urban and regional planning, art and architecture, and industrial design. I have been an advocate for and a participant in the Alberta main street program and the provincial heritage preservation program. In 2019 I was recognized by the Alberta government for my work in amateur sport as a founding member of both the Calgary and Lethbridge amateur sport councils.

I dream of the day when the small towns and villages of southern Alberta begin to repopulate after decades of decline, and if this is going to happen, it will require the full and dedicated attention of our rural MLAs. In the last 10 years I have acted as scrutineer for the Progressive Conservatives, Liberals, and the New Democrats in both federal and provincial elections, so I'm not party loyal. I will always support the candidate I feel is best qualified for the position.

During the last Lethbridge election, the by-election in Lethbridge-West this past December, two main political parties nominated candidates who had both served as Lethbridge city councillors. Both John Middleton-Hope of the UCP and Rob Miyashiro of the NDP had strong qualifications in urban politics and affairs, and truth be told either candidate would have been an effective representative for the city of Lethbridge. Having said that, neither candidate had much competence or knowledge of rural issues or agriculture.

Citizens living in the rural parts of Alberta face distinct challenges from those living in urban areas. In my view, urban and rural areas deserve qualified representation in the Legislature of Alberta and members who are drawn from their own community and who are well versed in the issues specific to their areas.

I confess that my views on this have been conditioned not only by life experience but also by the last 20 years of my career, a time when I managed the Lethbridge post office as postmaster, a title that had perhaps more status in the past than it does now. I was responsible for mail service in both the city of Lethbridge and the 55 dependent rural post offices in southern Alberta from Coleman in the west to Manyberries in the east and from Vauxhall and Hays in the north to Coutts on the American border. Since 1886 mail operations in Lethbridge have been split between the rural and urban services. The differences between these two zones require two different service models for two distinct different types of communities.

The small populations, geographic distances, underdeveloped infrastructure, and low population density of rural Alberta versus the dense populations, concentrated services and infrastructure, and higher economic activities of the urban areas always require a different approach. Generally our rural communities tend to have older populations with higher levels of poverty, poorer health, which is exacerbated by difficult access to health care and aging infrastructure and sometimes cover very large geographic areas that may be experiencing long-term population decline. For example, in the county of Forty Mile the population has declined by 25 per cent since 1980.

9:20

In my view, Alberta MLAs representing the rural areas have big challenges facing them in the 21st century: climate change, water allocation, abandoned oil wells, surface rights issues, to name just a few. But in addition to these challenges, there are also opportunities. For example, there is now more affordable housing and land prices, better access to recreational spaces and parks, faster

Internet and Wi-Fi, and a certain amount of disillusionment with big-city living that makes moving to a small town or village a more attractive option than it once was.

We know that rural municipalities have much different land-use servicing, infrastructure, and development issues than urban communities. In my view, we need Alberta MLAs well versed on the issues facing farmers and ranchers and small rural communities. It's my view that the interjurisdictional responsibilities of MLAs should not be made more complex by adding one more level of government to their already complex set of duties; for example, adding a city council on top of a county government and various town and village councils. Therefore, I would ask that your commission maintain fair electoral boundaries that firmly delineate between the rural and urban areas.

Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much.

Questions. Mr. Evans, we'll start at that end, if you have any, and then move across.

Mr. Evans: In terms of the changing demographics between the urban and the rural, what are you thinking about in terms of a solution for that in the electoral boundaries? Have you given some thought to that?

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: Well, in light of what you've said about effective representation, the solution may be to expand areas where the population has declined, for example in Cypress county. I mentioned the decline in population in the county of Forty Mile. That may be one of the areas where the rural population has declined. But in other areas we're seeing an increase in the rural population. For example, close to us here, Nanton and Claresholm both just had three years of record real estate activity. In Drumheller, another area that I'm familiar with, the population of East Coulee, a small community just east of Drumheller, has increased. And it's funny; it's largely led by artists.

Artists are a bit of a canary in a coal mine. In the cities for decades they've been moving into areas where there were low rents and low occupancy and generally turned those areas into trendy areas, and then the prices go up, and they have to move on to somewhere else. Well, now we're seeing artists, musicians moving to communities like East Coulee or Vulcan because you can get a house for \$25,000. Affordable housing and affordable land are in the rural communities. As the high costs drive out many lower income people, including artists, from the cities, they are moving to the rural towns. Small towns and villages are benefiting from that now. So, yeah, in East Coulee there's a thriving artist colony out there.

Mr. Evans: So in the past we were more restricted according to the legislation in dividing up electoral boundaries based on municipal boundaries.

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: Yeah.

Mr. Evans: With the amendment to the legislation, we're not hampered. I'll characterize it that way. I apologize in advance for a reference to the legislation, but it's sort of a, you know . . .

The Chair: Occupational hazard.

Mr. Evans: It's an occupational hazard. Yeah. But I think it's very helpful in how we think about it, you know, solving these problems.

In addition to the just straight, you know, population perspective of the electoral boundaries, in section 14 of the legislation it gives us – and Justice Miller addressed these earlier in his introduction, but I think it's helpful for us to think about them – sparsity or

density and rate of growth, communities of interest, geographic features, obviously, the availability of means of communication, desirability of understandable and clear boundaries, and then other factors. The other factors, I think, are very helpful for us if we think about those because it gives us as a commission more discretion to take in community values. I think those are what's most important here.

In terms of thinking about solving the problem, if we look at, like, for example, Livingstone-Macleod and we imagine, we think about the centre there, so we think about Fort Macleod, and we think about it in terms of a spoke, like wagon wheels or – today it's really apropos – we think about a Model T wheel, because there are all those . . .

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: I saw them.

Mr. Evans: . . . antique cars out there, what I think is that those at the very hub have a very common community interest. As you extend out, especially as we see what's going on in terms of people moving out of the centres to have sort of a more rural lifestyle yet have a very urban mentality, if you were to draw circles, there'd be a commonality of community interest. At a point when you get very, very, very rural, there's also a commonality in terms of their thinking and the people that are living out there. Their livelihood is dependent on cattle or grain or a combination.

If we think about it in that respect, then what we're really actually doing is extending out, and it's not so much just a rural and urban. It's much more of a community and the community interest factor, and we can label that whatever we want.

Have you thought about it in that respect?

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: Yeah. Common cultural values, for example.

Mr. Evans: Right. Yeah.

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: That has changed in southern Alberta in the last 50 years. The village of Burdett, where my grandfather moved to, 50 years ago was certainly a dying community. Not much left in the way of buildings. The elevators have been knocked down, and around them the size of the farms has increased by perhaps a factor of as much as 10. So rather than having a rural fabric that was comprised of farms that were average size of a section at most, now 10,000 acres is not unusual, and the farmers there no longer are working the land themselves. They are bringing in agricultural workers.

9:30

Many of those workers have come from Mexico. The Mexican Mennonite phenomenon: landless agriculture workers, what Europe would call them. I stopped in Burdett last year and the school yard was full, which is interesting. Where were all these kids coming from? I went there, and they were all speaking German. The reason that the school was so popular is that they had set up an English as a second language program. That is a completely new culture.

We're also seeing much more immigration and new immigrants from South Asia. There's a substantial Sikh community, for example, in my hometown of Taber. Culture is changing. It's moving right under our feet. An area that you could have at one time said was pretty homogeneous culturally is much more diverse now and with a population that is increasing. New housing being built; a rural school filled again.

I see that as very hopeful. As I said before, I dream of the day when these small villages are repopulated again. My one

grandfather homesteaded near Etzikom, and at one time there were 400 people in Etzikom and a hotel and all that. Now the current population down there is about 30, on a good day, in the county of Forty Mile.

Things are moving out in the country. There are changes occurring. Where are they leading? I think they're leading to better services, better infrastructure, and hopefully effective representation. But my point is that to take advantage of these opportunities, it's important that the MLAs are able to concentrate on rural issues – agriculture is going to be facing some huge challenges this century – and not be distracted by the many issues and challenges and opportunities in the urban areas. In my management career we had people assigned to certain areas because they were good at what they did. There was a clear delineation between duties, and that was done in order to make the most efficient use of their time.

It must be difficult for a rural MLA. I'm thinking northern Alberta, like Slave Lake and those areas, where an MLA has got to cover really vast districts, you know, an area the size of France in northern Alberta. That's difficult. But when you see them having to deal with both, along with the major urban areas like Calgary – like, the newest city, I think, in Alberta is Airdrie. Airdrie has just exploded in the last 20 years. It's gone from a town to a city. The changes are occurring not just in the cities but outside them as well.

The Chair: We've got to get rolling here. Are there any questions?

Mrs. Samson: Yes. First off, I want to thank you for coming out today. An excellent, interesting presentation, which I thoroughly enjoyed, and I learned a lot. One question specifically for Livingstone-Macleod. It is the riding that I'm interested in because I'm sitting in it. Is there anything specific about it that if you could tweak it, you would, or you would change or you wouldn't?

Can I just say this, too? When I look at it, I think: man, we've got 89 to look at; this one fits really nice. It's got a population of 53,180 as of 2024. It fits within the plus and minus 25 per cent variance. I kind of like that. I think chaos reigns when change comes in, but there always is room for change, and that's my question to you, sir.

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: Yeah. I happen to think Livingstone-Macleod is pretty good as it is. When these boundaries change in Lethbridge, for example, there is this division between Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West, and it's funny the way the boundary has been drawn, especially in north Lethbridge. They have people showing up at polls all the time, at the wrong poll. They think they live in Lethbridge-West and they actually live in Lethbridge-East and vice versa. So with respect to Livingstone-Macleod I would say that it's not broken; don't try and fix it, okay?

The Chair: Thank you.

Dr. Martin: Thank you, sir. Again, I echo my colleague's remarks about your presentation – there's much to dig into – and I'll be very pleased to read the *Hansard* transcription to instantly know why they're here. Because you say so many interesting things so quickly that I can't fully take notes.

I have one frivolous question – I think it's frivolous – and one more philosophical if I might. First, why is it called Livingstone? Isn't that the name given to a range of the foothills?

Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: Livingstone Range is what we see out here to the west of Talbot.

Dr. Martin: Okay.

My more substantive question is about your remarks characterizing the public issues, political issues, economic issues that face rural communities and the need for someone who has experience in those problems and their dynamics. Now, we often in our line of work hear about the rural communities from the point of view of the scheduling problems of the MLA. "Oh, I've got to go and see 17 different council meetings this year, and I'm gonna be putting on 90,000 miles on my brand new truck." So you get a glimpse of the scale, the geography, and the number of decision-makers that need to be in the loop, as it were.

But what you've presented here is quite a different point of view on the difficulties associated with rural management. You spoke about the possibilities for – well, you've got affordable land, to be sure, but scaling up is a huge problem anywhere at any time. In this respect, to add new infrastructure, not just the capital but the scarcity of scale becomes an issue in rural communities, I believe, so you need expertise in the county governments as well. Do you feel that there is an issue to be addressed there if your community is going to grow in stable population?

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: I do, and I feel that the representation for that area should come from those communities and should be drawn from the expertise of the people who perhaps have an agricultural background or a background in village or town government or as a county reeve. Those kinds of candidates would be, in my view, best qualified to deal with what I think will be very, very complicated issues in this century. So I believe that there should be a marked delineation between rural and urban ridings.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: I'll be brief. You've anticipated my last question, perhaps in this specific context. Again, I just want to echo my colleagues and thank you so much for a really thoughtful presentation. An excellent way to start us off, so thank you so much.

9:40

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: You're welcome.

By the way, I've met you before. You were campaigning on 34th Avenue just off 14th Street. I was standing on a lawn with a friend of mine who happens to be in a wheelchair, and we had a lovely conversation. That was a few years ago, but I remember it quite well.

Mr. Clark: Thank you. One of the great joys of doing that kind of work is meeting people. One of the great disadvantages is that a lot more people know me than I happen to remember. Anyway, thank you. I do appreciate it.

Dr. Martin: Be grateful. Nobody admits to seeing me.

Mr. Clark: Yeah.

Maybe it just really is building on some of the previous questions by calling your point, and that just maybe specifically is: if we were to, say, create constituencies that would bite off a piece of Lethbridge and make it mixed with rural, how would that land with folks in this community or a similar community?

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: Well, I don't think it would land very well. I think that it would confuse the voters. I think it would water down the effectiveness of the MLA that had to deal with that issue. You know, you don't have to drive very far outside Lethbridge or any other community to find different lifestyles involved. People are

involved in different kind of work. Yeah. I think it would be a step backwards.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, sir. Your presentation was not only very good. I sit in Lethbridge. I sit in Medicine Hat. I go to Calgary. So you covered the southwestern L, the southern part of the province, very well. Anybody who mentions Manyberries and Burdett: you know that they are cognizant of Alberta geography.

Question: did you present to the last Electoral Boundaries Commission?

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: I did not. No.

The Chair: Okay.

Now, let me ask you a very specific question. Your city cousin may say to you: “Craig, you know, it’s one person, one vote. You guys in the rural have way too much clout. We’ve got to even this out.” What do you say to that?

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: I’ve heard that before. I’ve heard remarks in the last couple of elections that a rural vote is worth more than an urban vote, that some of the ridings have such a small population that a voter there: their vote may be worth double. You know, we live in such a big country that we have to make adjustments for the geography; a gigantic place that we live in. If we were in northern Alberta – we’re trying to capture enough territories to make 40,000, 50,000 – you end up with something the size of Germany. Now, you know . . .

The Chair: Yeah. Without the Autobahn.

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: Without the Autobahn.

It’s not practical, you know?

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much. Please stay because we may have some more conversation and dialogue. If I can get you to move out of that seat.

Monica? You’ve observed that we do not follow the seven-minute time restriction very closely.

Ms Zyla: Mine is very short, but it actually builds on Craig’s.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Zyla: I also echo: thank you very much for coming, especially for this being the beginning of your stomp around Alberta.

I’m Monica Zyla, living in Livingstone-Macleod, and I’m retired. I’m quite engaged in our electoral process, and I wrote a submission. I wanted to add my voice to your deliberation.

The Chair: Sorry. Did you submit a written submission?

Ms Zyla: I did.

The Chair: Okay. Very good.

Ms Zyla: Our riding is a riding comprised of towns, municipalities, and counties that have their own unique history. We are a large geographic riding, as has been mentioned. Many municipalities are retirement communities for the surrounding ranchers and farmers. Waterton and the Crowsnest Pass are unusual in this group because Waterton focuses mainly on tourism and environmental stewardship, and the Crowsnest Pass is historically a resource extraction hub that now caters to some tourism. It’s important to me that this process be fair, that it, too, draws on its own history of drawing a map that

reflects effective representation, respecting municipal boundaries and respecting like communities.

I’m disturbed a little bit by some of the change of wording in Bill 31 where it says that it’s not “shall” but “may” for municipal boundaries and like communities now. I appreciate what John had to say about giving you more flexibility, but because of the rural-urban discussion, to me, the municipal boundaries is a pretty important thing. The softening of that language makes me concerned as a rural person because the idea of being subsumed by Lethbridge is horrifying. Yeah. I hope that you’re able to appreciate the nuance in that language and how important it is to build the best in these large ridings with fewer people.

That’s about all I have to say. Thank you for your attention.

The Chair: Any questions?

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much for being here.

No, I don’t have any particular questions. Thank you.

Dr. Martin: I do. Well, we’re all using the phrase “effective representation.” You have alluded to it, as has Craig, at some length. I wondered if you would agree with Craig’s general line on effectiveness being a function of experience in the concerns and problems of the rural community. I take it, from Craig’s remarks, that an effective representative is one who understands agriculture, an emerging tourism sector, or small rural community dynamics. Now, would you agree that that is what you believe as constituting effectiveness?

Ms Zyla: Oh, yes, absolutely. The reason I think, though, is because in the last election, for instance, we had a couple of – well, we had many candidates, but the two that were percolated to the top were both from these areas and really appreciated the communities and some of the struggles, some of the challenges, some of the issues being here. Yes, I absolutely think that it’s important that they be local and understand the nuance all around them.

Dr. Martin: Okay.

Mrs. Samson: I have one comment to make as an illustration. I did read your written submission. You live in Bellevue, correct?

Ms Zyla: Yes.

Mrs. Samson: Yes. Good submission. I’ve been following the coal mining opening up again in the Crowsnest, and what I saw was a banding of smaller communities in Livingstone-Macleod that stood up, and that to me represented, in the work I do today, community interest, bonding together against something that’s extremely important. What I saw was the Livingstone-Macleod electoral district speaking with almost one voice and not that kind of support shown by the major cities like Lethbridge or Calgary, that will be ultimately affected. For that, I think it’s a real example of the strength in this riding and the continuity and the commonality and keeping it together. Would you agree with that?

Ms Zyla: Well, I think there are two distinct ones, actually, that are speaking in the coal extraction discussion.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah.

Ms Zyla: But I do agree that it has become a completely nonpartisan issue. It matters so much to us who live at the headwaters, considering people who live downstream, for the ranchers who get directly affected every single day to the young families who have moved to our communities because they are disillusioned with the larger

urban centres because they have little lungs that they're concerned about. So it has become an amazing discussion, and it has shown that the people of Livingstone-Macleod are incredibly aware of our responsibilities here.

9:50

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

Mr. Evans: No, I don't have any questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Good.

Mr. Clark: Sorry. Apologies. I did think of one. I guess I'm really interested as to living in rural communities – and I think one of the questions earlier alluded to this – getting around, putting a bunch of miles on your vehicle, and being in person. I don't think anyone would disagree that that is incredibly important. Having said that, we also live in a time where you have access to all sorts of communication tools, the old-fashioned telephone, Zoom call, those sorts of things. I guess I'm just curious how you would characterize effective representation in the context of being able to be in touch with your elected representative or their office, be it in person, be it online, you know, that sort of level of access. What is your experience, and what is your expectation, and how does that dynamic play out?

Ms Zyla: Yep. My experience and expectation are fairly similar. The elected MLAs that we've had in our riding in the time that I've lived here have made an effort to come to the communities and do the coffee klatch kind of thing. They also make sure that, because generally they're from one of the larger centres, they're sending out communication to let you know when they're coming, social functions, and that kind of thing. You know, generally my experience is that I use the old-fashioned way of e-mail oftentimes, and it's very, very effective.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

Ms Zyla: I feel heard.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much for your presentation and the conciseness of it, but I have a question. If I can extrapolate, a real theme of what you've said is that you do not want to be lumped in with Lethbridge. Okay. That's particularly important in this southwest corner, but do you acknowledge that we might have to be able to bring in – the terminology that's been used is “blended ridings” or “rurban ridings.” Do you acknowledge that maybe in some parts of the province we might have to do that?

Ms Zyla: Well, I'm glad that Craig got the, you know, question from urban people thing, that their vote doesn't count as much as my vote, for instance, because I think that's a really, really hard question to answer. And I recognize that this is an incredibly difficult job that you have because not only, as you say, are you looking at the 87 ridings, but you're looking at expanding to the 89. So that complicates your lives immeasurably, I'm sure.

It comes down to the quality of candidate, I guess, to some degree. But, also, as a rural person for a number of years it's been so frustrating to hear the focus on these urban issues. Health care, for instance, is incredibly different out here than it is in the city, and it would be so distressing to lose somebody who would champion the rural point of view for something as important as health care. I recognize that this is something that you're going need to be looking at, but boy, oh boy, the impact is real.

The Chair: You probably wouldn't be surprised to know that in the two big cities Lethbridge is considered rural.

Ms Zyla: I know; anything but Edmonton and Calgary. I know. It blows my mind.

The Chair: Yeah. Okay. Good.

Any other questions or dialogue that we want to continue with either presenter, actually?

Ms Zyla: Well, can I just speak to the spoke idea?

The Chair: Sure.

Ms Zyla: Thank you. I think that the observation about moving further and further out, the sort of values and the culture change as you get further and further away from that spoke, the idea, I guess, even though our communities are diversifying – even, you know, the Crowsnest Pass has become quite different in the 10 years that we've been living there in terms of ethnic makeup and age, the demographic. It's just fantastic.

Still, once you're in those rural places, you adopt that rural attitude partially because you have to. All of a sudden, as we've learned from one of our new neighbours who's just moved down from Calgary, gee, Home Depot is not around the corner anymore, something like that. You know, there is no Starbucks. You adopt the rural mindset fairly quickly, and it's important, I think, to recognize that as you get away from those spokes, so the further away you are from Lethbridge, the more rural you get.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Dr. Martin: I just had one general comment.

The Chair: Sure. Okay.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. And I could address both of you if I might. One thing that the two of you have done very effectively is to highlight the complexity of the phrase “effective representation.” If you are in Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche, what does effective representation mean? It's not really answered by mathematics of the number of voters or the number of population; it's answered in this whole sociological realm that the two of you have pointed out for us, and I thank you for it. It's not an easy one to answer – what constitutes effectiveness? – but it's one that we have to wrestle with because, quite apart from particular directions or suggestions in the act, it does talk about effective representation as if we knew what that meant, and we don't.

Thank you.

The Chair: I'd be curious to know your comments on the name. Are you happy with the name of the electoral district?

Ms Zyla: Love it.

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: Yeah. It's very good.

The Chair: Okay. So check that off as one thing we don't have to change.

Dr. Martin: Now I know what it means.

The Chair: Yeah.

Sorry. What was that?

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: Much more exciting than Lethbridge-East.

Dr. Martin: What would you say – I mean, this is frivolous. Indulge me. What would you say to Taber-Manyberries?

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: It's a long drive.

Dr. Martin: No. But as a name. I've often puzzled why it was Taber-Warner when Warner is just a real small place halfway between Taber, Lethbridge, and Milk River.

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: Warner didn't always used to be that small.

Dr. Martin: Oh, all right. Thank you.

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: There were 600, 700 people in Warner just after World War II. So perhaps that's the historical reason for that. Mind you, at the time in Manyberries there were probably 150 people at the end of World War II, and there are, I think, 12 now.

Dr. Martin: Right.

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: Manyberries is one of those names that has – well, look at a Guy Vanderhaeghe novel or something like that. Unfortunately, I had to close a post office in southern Alberta that had the lovely name of Purple Springs.

Dr. Martin: You closed it.

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: I'm afraid so, yes. I thought it was the most magical post office name perhaps in Alberta.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

Dr. Martin: Purple Springs: that's a wonderful name.

The Chair: I'm now going to start looking at properties a lot different. Follow the artists.

The Chair: Yeah.

We'll adjourn today's hearing, and if you really want to see us in action, come to Lethbridge tonight at 6:30.

[The hearing adjourned at 10 a.m.]

