



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

St. Paul

Thursday, June 5, 2025
9:06 a.m.

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Electoral Boundaries Commission

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Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – St. Paul

Public Participants

Josh Crick, Councillor, Municipal District of Bonnyville
Scott Cyr, MLA, Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul

9:06 a.m.

Thursday, June 5, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to our morning public hearing here in St. Paul on Thursday. We've seen a few hotels and hearings already this week. We're here in St. Paul.

I've been here, to St. Paul, about 15 years ago. I'm Justice Dallas Miller. I'm a trial judge in Medicine Hat. St. Paul is really easy to get to. We just drive to Taber and turn left for six hours on highway 36. It's really easy to get to for us in Lethbridge.

Welcome. I do have a presentation or a summary introduction, and I typically go through all the *Reader's Digest* version of all the commissioners' files. However, there was some disconcerting news this morning, as has already been alluded to. Rather than say anything negative about my colleague and fellow commissioner at the end of the table, I'll just let you go to the website and look at everybody's biographical details.

But, seriously, John Evans is from Lethbridge. He's a very experienced trial lawyer, and he does trials throughout the province but works out of his Lethbridge office. John has been recognized for his legal ability and given a King's Counsel award, and he also volunteers on the Alberta Judicial Nominating Committee.

Mr. Evans: And an Oilers fan.

The Chair: And an Oilers fan.

Mr. Evans: Just saying.

The Chair: To my immediate right is Susan Samson from Sylvan Lake. Those of us from Lethbridge consider Sylvan Lake very central Alberta. She has a tremendous amount of experience as a municipal politician, having served as councillor and mayor. Her volunteer efforts advocating for health care have been recognized by the award of the Queen Elizabeth II diamond jubilee medal.

To my immediate right is Dr. Julian Martin, retired historian. Do historians retire? Okay. He used to work at the University of Alberta. He's still a historian. He volunteers on many committees in the Sherwood Park area, where he lives, and serves on provincial tribunals such as the Surface Rights Board.

At the very end was our dear friend Greg Clark till we knew about his hockey proclivities. Greg is from Calgary, and he has the distinction of being the only former elected MLA on our commission, which is very valuable. He served a term representing Calgary-Elbow, and now he is the chairman of the Balancing Pool of Alberta and consults widely with various organizations in terms of board governance. He has an MBA and an Institute of Corporate Directors designation. We are your Electoral Boundaries Commission. We are tasked with coming up with a report – I'll talk to you about timelines here shortly – to deal with the redrawing of the electoral boundaries. One of the first tasks that we have, and it's a legislated task under our act, the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, is that we're moving from 87 electoral districts to 89. Just in terms of our timeline as a commission we were all appointed by the Speaker of the Legislature in late March. We met a couple of times in April as a commission, and then in May we started our public hearings, and we are going until June 23 across the province hearing submissions from various locations.

Once we complete our public hearings and based on the population data, the boundaries, the written submissions we've received on the website, public hearings, we will work on a report, and we are mandated to have what's known as an interim report filed with the Speaker of the Legislature by October 28. Now, that has come to be known as an interim report. Then it'll become

public. MLAs, members of the public will then have an opportunity to respond to our interim report. We will have further public hearings, and then by late March 2026 we submit a final report to the Speaker of the Legislature, and the Legislature then deals with it as it will.

Of course, you're aware that in Alberta there is one MLA per constituency, and voters in each constituency elect MLAs. I've shown you a graph, and I will talk about population a little bit more, but for historic purposes I want to reference the 2017 Electoral Boundaries Commission report. That commission based its report on a population of just over 4 million people. That was in 2017. This year we're basing this commission's report on a population of 4.88 million. How that works out in real life you can see here.

The 2017 Electoral Boundaries Commission had 87 ridings to redraw. They took the population of 4,062,609, came up with a mean average of 46,697 people per riding. That's not the target. The target is the range 25 below and 25 above, so you see that range from just approximately 35,000 to just over 58,000. That was 2017.

Our commission is using the figure 4,888,723 over 89 electoral districts. The mean average is 54,929, and the target range is therefore just over 41,000 to just under 69,000. That gives us flexibility but not as much flexibility as you would think. Of course, the growth and population growth in Alberta hasn't been spread evenly across the province, and it has concentrated largely in Calgary and Edmonton. Our task as a commission is to come up with a recommended list of 89 electoral districts that provide for effective representation. That is the term used in Canadian and Albertan electoral law to ensure that everyone is properly represented.

To do that, we will consider several factors, and these are factors right out of the legislation: the relative sparsity and density of population across the province, common community interests and organizations. We were really impressed with the submissions in Edmonton that focused to a great degree on community leagues, community associations within each riding within the city of Edmonton. We'll also be dealing with geographic factors in largely urban contexts. Geography helps us draw boundaries, but it does in the cities as well. Communication and transportation routes and lines across the province will also be used as factors in selecting boundaries. Our task as a commission is to come up with understandable and clear boundaries, and we're interested in hearing from people today as to how that might work in this area. And there is a final catch-all provision that we are allowed to take any other factors into consideration that we deem appropriate in designing the electoral district.

This is our public hearing in St. Paul. We want to hear from you. That's the existing map of Alberta showing 87 electoral divisions. In March of next year we'll have a brand new map that Albertans can look at and refer to.

For our presentations we have lots of time this morning. I'm going to call on Mr. Josh Crick to come forward and present first. Please identify yourself.

9:15

Mr. Crick: Hello.

The Chair: Good morning.

Mr. Crick: Good morning. Are you ready for me to go here?

The Chair: Yeah. Take your time.

Mr. Crick: Thank you for having me. They said that I had seven minutes, and then when I got here they said 90 minutes. I don't think I need anywhere near that much time.

The Chair: You'd be surprised how time goes and how we keep you busy.

Mr. Crick: Yeah. First of all, I appreciate the job you guys are doing. It sounds like a lot of work. My concerns are, I guess, some of the size of the boundaries of the constituencies. I live between Bonnyville and Cold Lake, so I'm in the Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul constituency. It's quite a large geographical area with a lot of different councils. In our riding we have the city of Cold Lake. We have the town of Bonnyville, the village of Glendon, the county of St. Paul, the town of St. Paul, the MD of Bonnyville. There's also, I think, the Fishing Lake settlement, a Métis settlement, and Cold Lake First Nations, Kehewin, Frog Lake, and Saddle Lake. That's a lot of councils and chiefs and councillors for the MLA to interact with.

The MD of Bonnyville alone is 13,000 square kilometres. I did a little bit of research last night on the computer. The city of Edmonton is just under 9,500 square kilometres, and there are about 20 MLAs in the city of Edmonton alone. You know, those MLAs have one council and mayor to work with. Often those MLAs in the city would have – there could even be two MLAs for one councillor in certain areas whereas I just outlined how many councils and mayors and reeves and bands and stuff that our MLAs have to work with rurally.

Then even just the driving requirements of the MLA. You talked about effective representation in your talk there. I can't imagine being an MLA trying to effectively represent this constituency just with the amount of counties and school boards, hospital boards, and combine that with the geographical area and the driving time to get from one side to the other. For me to come to St. Paul, you know, in my riding today was an hour and five minutes. I don't live on the far edge – and St. Paul is not on the far other edge of the riding – so it might be two hours across whereas, like, in the city you can probably ride a bicycle in less than half an hour across a riding, right?

I just think we really need to take it into account. I hope that you guys would. I know you're all listening carefully to everything that's being said. I really hope that you take into account, you know, the effective representation and how the size and the number of different counties and councils in this geographical area play into effective representation.

I think that's about all I really had to say. I told you it wasn't going to be long.

The Chair: Okay. Where do you reside, sir?

Mr. Crick: I'm three miles east of Ardmore, which is right in the middle between Bonnyville and Cold Lake.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Crick: Yes. I'm in the MD of Bonnyville, and I'm on council with the MD of Bonnyville.

The Chair: Can I ask where your trade route is? Where do you shop and that kind of stuff? Where do you go regularly?

Mr. Crick: To both Bonnyville and Cold Lake. I'm in Bonnyville every day, primarily because the MD has our administration office there. That's where I work. We go to church in Bonnyville. Cold Lake is 15 minutes one way. Bonnyville is 15 minutes the other way. You know, wherever; we go to either place.

The Chair: And St. Paul is an hour-plus.

Mr. Crick: Yes. St. Paul is only if I have to come.

The Chair: Okay. You see the boundaries. Are you suggesting we change or amend these boundaries, and if so, how?

Mr. Crick: I guess I'm not sure exactly how. I'd leave that up to the experts. You know, I'm aware that you're allowed the 25 per cent variance, right?

The Chair: Yeah.

Mr. Crick: I would encourage you guys to use that to try and shrink the geographical size a bit. I'm not sure how that would play out.

The only other thing I would mention, which is kind of contrary to everything else I've just said, is that there's a little area where St. Vincent comes in. It's part of the county of St. Paul. You know, I've just been talking to people that live in the area. I've heard that it's kind of really weird that people that live 10 minutes out of St. Paul here are in a different riding. I'm not sure where a guy would take to adjust the size, but looking at the map, there's Saddle Lake and then there's also Frog Lake and Fishing Lake, the settlements. Those could be possible ways to readjust the size and population a bit.

The Chair: Okay. Any other comments? Greg, questions?

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you for coming. You know, one of the real privileges of being part of this commission is the opportunity to travel the province, drive and get a sense of just what it's like.

Mr. Crick: Well, you're in one of the best areas.

Mr. Clark: I mean, you know, as you might have heard, I'm a tiny bit biased about my hometown. I do love it. Like, I do love this part of the province. It's just different.

Mr. Crick: Yeah.

Mr. Clark: We were down in Pincher Creek and Lethbridge last week: dry, flat, just its own kind of natural beauty in its own way. It's just different here, right? You kind of come up, and then it's lakes, rivers, trees. We're just so lucky to live in Alberta. It is really a privilege to be able to see it all. It also helps us get a sense of what it must be like for your MLA, for MLAs to travel these great distances to represent, so very empathetic and understanding of that.

You know, your point on sort of the square kilometres of the constituency compared to something like Edmonton or Calgary or any urban centre. I think the question is – and this is something we really grapple with. We've got a few kind of issues to balance, and one of them is that Alberta, unsurprisingly, has attracted a whole bunch of new people from outside the province. A lot of people come from Ontario and B.C. and all over the place, choosing to live in Alberta. Those people generally will arrive in Edmonton or Calgary. As a result, those cities are really significantly growing in terms of their overall population. We've got at least seven constituencies that are more than 25 per cent above, so we by law have to deal with that.

I guess that's the question I would ask you, any thoughts you have on how we kind of balance out. You know, those urban MLAs we heard last week have other issues to deal with. You've got constituencies with people who speak five or six or seven languages. You've got social serving needs. Your MLA will tell you that there are some issues that urban MLAs tend to have to deal with that you don't in rural and vice versa. Lots of issues in rural that you don't have to deal with in urban. Kind of a long question. I guess I'm curious just how you feel we should think about that, balancing those two challenges.

Mr. Crick: So you're referring to balancing the different challenges that the urban MLAs would face in the multiple languages?

Mr. Clark: It's really more just the population. The simple fact is that we've got a whole bunch of people who've moved to Edmonton and a whole bunch of people who've moved to Calgary, so the population – some of those are like 80,000 or 90,000 people in the current constituency. As you saw from the averages, we've got to get that down at least to under, like, mid-60s, right? There's a need to add some constituencies there, a little bit to work with, but I guess the question kind of generally to you is: what would you say to the urban person who says, "Well, wait a minute, we're underrepresented ourselves because we just have so many people"?

Mr. Crick: That's a good question. Yeah. I'll acknowledge that I live rurally, so I tend to think more rural. I would just think that those urban centres can have a slightly higher population per riding or constituency – I get the two terms mixed up – based on that they're geographically quite close together, right? Like, they're a lot smaller geographically whereas we are quite large geographically. I'm very well aware that the Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul constituency is not the largest rural constituency. There are some that are quite a bit larger, actually. That would be my answer, I think, just that they're like that.

Another bit of information, I guess, that just kind of popped into my mind was that 30 per cent of the province's oil royalties come out of the MD of Bonnyville, so economic impact can be something else to consider. You know, from my own perspective, I see a lot of the funds for the province coming out of this riding and, I would say, out of the one that Fort McMurray is in as well, and a lot of that money is going to the cities where, like you said, immigrants are coming in, people are continuing to be populating there. As a result, the money comes from here and goes there. Like, we don't have a single overpass in this riding, yet 30 per cent of our royalties come out of this riding. The money is going from here and being transferred and building overpasses. I realize that's maybe not necessarily an electoral boundary issue, but it's something to consider as well, where the economic impact is coming from in the province, too.

9:25

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

The Chair: Julian? Any questions?

Dr. Martin: Yeah. Well, thank you very much. I'm really quite taken by your remark about the oil and gas revenue. I didn't realize that it was such a significant part of the province's take. As a councillor on the MD you must be affected by the leases as well, so you get a portion of revenues coming to you from the oil and gas operators in the region?

Mr. Crick: Yes. The MD has a higher tax base than some counties, but it's definitely not enough for us to build overpasses without the provincial government.

Dr. Martin: No. I didn't realize you needed overpasses.

Mr. Crick: Well, you know, for example, highway 28: I don't know if you've travelled it.

Dr. Martin: Yeah.

Mr. Crick: If you have time this afternoon, I would encourage you to go for a ride to Cold Lake and just – you know, if you see

somebody driving straight on the highway, they might be drunk, though, because they're not swerving around all the holes. That's not a jab at our MLA. I know he's working on it.

Dr. Martin: Highway 28 produces the same effect near Redwater, too.

Seriously, my question was: how extensive a footprint do you reckon the oil and gas patch is here? Does it extend as far south as the river, the Saskatchewan?

Mr. Crick: I think it's spread out all over the whole constituency to a certain extent. The northern part up where the Cold Lake air weapons range is . . .

Dr. Martin: Yeah.

Mr. Crick: That would be where the majority of it is, but it comes, like, even where I live. I'm right between Bonnyville and Cold Lake, and those big black tanks that are out in the fields: you have to drive by 90 of them just to get to the highway from my place.

Mr. Evans: Did you say 90?

Mr. Crick: Ninety. Yeah.

Mr. Evans: That's incredible.

Mr. Crick: And I'm a mile and a quarter off the highway.

Mr. Evans: I love Alberta.

Mr. Crick: Yeah. But it's in the area, right? That being said, the question was asked to me: does the county get revenue from that? We do, but our roads also, you know . . .

Mr. Evans: Are beat up.

Mr. Crick: Beat up, right? We have road use agreements with industry, but there's still just all the extra traffic, and even the smaller industry rates, we have to use a lot of that money to maintain the road system.

Dr. Martin: Well, my sort of adjacent question is about new oil and gas related employment. Do you see a growth of that plus families? I mean, it's one thing to have guys come in to do construction like the case was 20-odd years ago, but are you now in a mode where it's just management and operations, or are you still growing the number of people working in oil and gas?

Mr. Crick: Yeah. When the oil price crashed in 2015, it kind of did go back. There was a bit of a recession in here, and it went back to more of a management thing, but lately, the last three years or so, it's been expanding quite a bit. They've been drilling new wells. Like, the 90 tanks that I referenced that I drive by, those are all new in the last three or four years.

Dr. Martin: Wow. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Crick: And there is a certain element of people coming in to work, absolutely, but somebody only comes so much to work before they bring their family, right? So we're seeing lots of people moving into the area, especially in the Cold Lake area.

The Chair: Susan, question?

Mrs. Samson: No. Good presentation, and I have to echo my colleague. I understand what you're saying when you talk about access to your MLA and access to the region and how difficult it is

because it's so large. How often would you as a councillor see your MLA?

Mr. Clark: Not counting today.

Mr. Crick: Not counting today.

I don't know the answer to that. I was going to use the term "poor representation," but I think our MLA does a fantastic job. I don't know how he even has enough time in a day to do all the work that he does.

Mrs. Samson: Right.

Mr. Crick: Yeah. He works hard. He gets around. But like I said, I don't know how he can do it. I have four kids at home, and I feel like my family would be aliens if I had that job. I don't know how he does it.

Sorry. That's not really an answer to your question as to how often I see him. Yeah. I think it'd be different for me as a county councillor seeing him because I'm going to different things like this or different events or functions.

Mrs. Samson: Right. You bang into him more than he's actually, you know, on official business coming to your county council or you're booking an appointment with his office.

Mr. Crick: Yeah. I think he showed up to two of our council meetings since he's been elected, and it may be more. He can correct me. He might keep track. Just showing up, that's good for him, right? He's got a lot of councils to go to plus the work of being an MLA.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

Mr. Evans: You can see on the map the reddish coloured areas. Those would be Métis settlements or Indian reservations. Can you tell me: what's your sense of the connection, you know, of those within this electoral district and amongst themselves; for example, Saddle Lake and Fishing Lake and Elizabeth and Kehewin?

Mr. Crick: Yeah. I'm not super familiar with Saddle Lake. The odd time I come to St. Paul for something if I have to, and I've never had to go to Saddle Lake for anything. I did work a little bit on the Frog Lake reserve, teaching a shop class out there until COVID happened. I don't think they all have convenience stores on-reserve. I think that they don't have the grocery stores and a lot of the amenities that we have in town, so the residents of the reserves and settlements do come into town all the time for everything. You see that here in St. Paul or Cold Lake, Bonnyville.

I'm not sure if that's answering your question.

Mr. Evans: I just want to know, like, you know, if you're aware how integrated they are with each other.

Mr. Crick: Yeah. I can't say that I'm really overly aware of that. No.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you. Appreciate your presentation and the information you provided.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Josh, you took up 15 minutes. I told you that the time goes fast.

Mr. Crick: My presentation was only one minute. It was questions for 14.

The Chair: Just a couple of clarifications. Are you employed by the county, or are you a county councillor?

Mr. Crick: County councillor.

The Chair: Okay. And you farm?

Mr. Crick: Well, I'm a carpenter by trade. I don't have a lot of time for doing construction work at the moment. My wife is a speech therapist, and she actually works on some of the reserves. She works at Frog Lake and Beaver Lake. She drives up to Lac La Biche every week, and she drives to Frog Lake every week.

The Chair: Okay. Have there been times for your county's duties or events or meetings where you reached out to your MLA to come and he couldn't come? Have you had situations like that because of his schedule conflict?

Mr. Crick: Events, yes. Like I said, he does a great job and he works hard. If we need something done, you know, then we can wait a couple weeks or wait until he's in the area.

The Chair: So if you're flexible, you can get him to events.

Mr. Crick: Yeah. But, you know, there are definitely lots of events I go to where the MLA is not there because he can't be in two places at one time, right? Canada Day, for example. He can't be in St. Paul and Bonnyville and Cold Lake, all three at the same time. He might make it to two or three in the same day if there are different times, but he can't be everywhere.

The Chair: Okay.

I just want to comment. I could be corrected by my historian here. The terminology the legislation uses is "electoral division." In popular parlance we talk about constituencies or ridings or electoral districts. My understanding is that the way we arrived at the word "riding" was that in Britain when Parliament was going, it took a day to ride a horse across a district, and that just became a riding. That's the terminology. Does that sound right?

9:35

Dr. Martin: That's true. It's Anglo-Saxon, actually, so the term has stuck around an awful long time.

Mr. Clark: How long would it take you to ride a horse across your riding?

Mr. Crick: Three days.

The Chair: We're going to ask the MLA that.

Okay. Well, thank you very much, Josh, and then if you can stay, please stay, because after the next presentation we may want to continue the conversation.

Mr. Crick: Okay. I will stay. Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you.

Okay. Mr. Cyr.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Justice Miller. I appreciate you taking the time and the entire commission. I'd like to read something into the record if that's fine.

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Cyr: And then we can go into your questions. It won't be long. It's not a half-an-hour diatribe, here.

Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I want to begin with expressing my sincere appreciation for the hard work you're doing to ensure fair and effective representation to all Albertans. Your task is not easy. I commend the care and professionalism with which you are approaching it.

On May 22 I submitted a formal proposal outlining recommended changes to the Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul constituency. I submitted this through both your website and e-mail to ensure that you received it in full, and I'd like to briefly speak to the reasoning behind it here today. Our constituency is significantly overpopulated. Based on the 2021 census data and excluding the on-reserve First Nations people, we're already exceeding the 25 per cent upper limit permitted under the Election Boundaries Commission Act. Factoring in the more recent growth of the incoming families related to the F-35 program and 4 Wing Cold Lake and the Cold Lake oil sands, the real-world serviced populations could be reaching up to 75,000 by the end of the decade. This effectively creates a serious challenge to representing this population effectively.

We're also the home of a large number of rotational oil and gas workers who use local infrastructure but aren't counted in the federal numbers. They are known as the shadow population. Municipal Affairs allows for shadow populations to be counted in local censuses, yet in reality it is invisible in the electoral redistributions. Nevertheless, it impacts schools, hospitals, roads, and my office daily.

To help restore balance, I'm proposing that the western boundary of Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul be realigned to follow the full legal boundaries of the MD of Bonnyville, the county of St. Paul, including ID 349. This proposal would transfer Saddle Lake Cree Nation into Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock and reintegrate the northwest corner of the county of St. Paul, resolving confusion that arose among voters during the last election.

I take no pleasure in recommending the removal of any part of my constituency – it is tough to come up with some balance here – particularly Saddle Lake, whose residents I deeply value. However, every Albertan deserves fair and effective representation. This adjustment would reduce the constituency's total population, based on the 2021 figures, to approximately 55,700. This would also bring it within the legal threshold for the time being and strengthen representation for all communities, including Saddle Lake.

We are a rural constituency. We are growing. Our economic future is strong, and our population is expanding. What we need now is an electoral boundary that reflects the growth and ensures every voice is fairly represented.

Thank you again for this opportunity to present before you today and for your continued service to the people of Alberta.

The Chair: Thank you. There are going to be some questions.

Aaron, can you just read the population figures? I can't read them.

Mr. Roth: Sure. For 2016 it's 53,809 and 2024, 53,763.

The Chair: Okay. Okay. So that's the figure. Your presentation had some different figures.

Mr. Cyr: Agreed.

The Chair: I think we should have a conversation about those figures.

Let me start on the far end. Mr. Evans, are you ready for questions?

At some point we've got to have a conversation about the population.

Mr. Cyr: Agreed. Which is where I had broken that down, Justice.

The Chair: Yeah.

Mr. Cyr: Where those numbers came from: on the third page of my presentation. Now, again, I accept that when it comes to these numbers, if the commission has got better numbers than I have got, then I will readjust my presentation, but this is based on the research my office has done.

The Chair: Okay. Well, on behalf of the commission I'm not saying that our numbers are better. I'm saying that we're relying on the 2021 census, which the act requires us to do. But the act also has some supplementary sections that say, roughly translated: update it as best as Alberta can. It does make reference to a province-wide census or municipal censuses. We haven't had that, as I understand it, but the Alberta Treasury Board, through its Office of Statistics and Information, does a tremendous amount of work of continually verifying numbers as they get them from the feds. To say that the feds do a census in '21 and don't do anything until '26 is not accurate. They do constant number crunching and verification.

In a very clumsy way I'm trying to explain how we get at our numbers, and I think that's something we need to have a more fulsome discussion on because yours are higher than ours.

Mr. Clark: I do have a question.

The Chair: Yeah. Go ahead.

Mr. Clark: I wonder, Mr. Cyr – and again, good to see you, and thank you for coming – if we look at this map, if the entirety of each of the listed jurisdictions is within Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul. Specifically, does all the county of St. Paul and all of the MD of Bonnyville fall in your constituency, or does that constituency boundary slice some of that off?

Mr. Cyr: If you refer to the map. Again, going back to my presentation here. It's, like, page – I don't know.

Mrs. Samson: Three?

Mr. Clark: The coloured areas?

Mr. Cyr: Well, the better one is the third-last page. We can go to it.

Mrs. Samson: Okay.

Mr. Cyr: You can see where it's confusing for people. That green part is the only part for the county of St. Paul that's not within my constituency. What I will say is that people that are in the county of St. Paul assume that because the name of my constituency is Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, suddenly they fit within my constituency. I'm expected to go to a lot of these municipalities like the Ashmonts, the Mallaigs, all that. They're asking: why is their MLA not present at their functions? Haying in the 30s would be one of the big ones. Again, I try to make it out to them to try to help out my neighbouring MLA as much as I possibly can, but there's confusion because of that.

It didn't add a lot of population to my constituency by adding this. I think it's 1,500. No. It's even less than that. When we're looking at this, it just makes sense that we would add the entirety of the county of St. Paul. The problem is that I'm already right at the top of the population maximum even with the way you guys are calculating. It sounds like 53,000.

Mr. Clark: The current average is 55,000.

Mr. Cyr: Yeah. We're already almost right at the top there.

Now, one of the things that I think needs to be recognized in all of this is that when we were – this is my second boundary commission that I've sat before. The first one was a difficult one. The reason was that with the collapse of the price of oil I had almost every one of my communities – at that time it was only Bonnyville-Cold Lake. In my two communities within the Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul – or Bonnyville-Cold Lake. Confusing. It was the Bonnyville-Cold Lake constituency before they added Elk Point, St. Paul, and Saddle Lake to my constituency after the redistribution.

9:45

Now, what happened was that we saw a collapse of my entire region for the oil and gas sector, which meant I had almost every third or fourth house up for sale in my constituency, which was unusual. What we had before in 2014: we were renting out couches for \$1,000 a month. The shadow population was obscene back then, which is why we were given – we went from one of the smallest constituencies, the minus 25, to the plus 25 when they did the redistribution with that.

Now we're not looking at a collapse in oil anymore. I will say that for my oil and gas industry, when it comes down to it, I think government policy has held us back, whether it's our current administration down in the United States that's causing some turmoil right now. Our federal government was also bringing in emission caps and different ways of curtailing our oil and gas production. What happens here is it looks like our Prime Minister has more of an appetite to work with us. Should that happen with Prime Minister Carney and should the President of the United States suddenly decide that he wants to see our oil – and he's been very supportive of the Keystone pipeline – then we're going to see a boom happen again up in my area like you haven't seen before. We're going to see a massive shadow population suddenly materialize, like we had in 2014. We have challenges that are unique to our area.

Now, when you add the F-35s, we're looking at more than a billion dollars, \$1.5 billion, into Cold Lake.

The Chair: Okay. Talk to us about that. I've heard reference to it, but we're curious to know a little bit more about the industry and how that impacts your riding.

Mr. Cyr: We're going to see at its height about a thousand construction workers coming in to work on that. They're looking at 2030 as when we're likely going to have a lot of construction done. They're ramping up this July, so it's starting. We just went out to the two big prime contractors, Bird and EllisDon. Those thousand workers are likely going to be brought in from eastern Canada for the large part because we don't have the capability to be able to build something this – we don't have the subtrades to be able to keep up with that work.

The Chair: What kinds of skills do these workers have? Engineers? The trades?

Mr. Cyr: Some of it is engineers, but a lot of it is cement, builders, you name it. All of the subtrades are going to be needed. What we're doing here with the F-35s is just remarkable. It's supposed to be seven to 10 years that they're working on the F-35s and getting that one up and going.

You put that as well as the growth in the oil sands. Prime Minister Carney is also looking at the pathways project. That's the carbon

capture. The carbon capture up in our area: we have a unique geology right under our seats here in St. Paul where they're going to be injecting the CO₂ should this move forward. We're actually the destination of where they're going to be potentially putting all the CO₂. That is about a \$16 billion to \$18 billion project from Fort McMurray all the way down to here.

You put that all together, and it's going to have rapid growth. I've been working with our ministers – health, education, postsecondary – saying: how can we get in front of this? It's coming. We know it's coming.

The Chair: As an old colleague used to say to me, there are two kinds of problems, good problems and bad problems. Looks like you've got some good problems coming.

Mr. Cyr: We have remarkable talent here and opportunity. The fact is that we're likely going to be one of the foremost air force bases in the world after the F-35 program gets to Cold Lake. We're one of two locations for the F-35s, and we're going to have the larger number of planes up in our constituency. The aerospace program actually is going to be taking off out of Cold Lake. We've got permission to start that program as well just because of the fact that we have so many trained military and former military to be able to bring in the drone technologies. We're looking at training pilots – you name it – up here.

We have so much to offer Alberta from our area. The problem is that I'm only one man, and trying to get to everywhere where I need to to advocate effectively is going to be difficult with everything that's happening.

Mr. Evans: Who's the MP?

Mr. Cyr: Sorry?

Mr. Evans: Who's the MP?

Mr. Cyr: I have two MPs. I have MP Stubbs and MP Goodridge, both good MPs.

The boundary is highway 55, north and south. That's pretty much where that is. I work closely with both of my MPs trying to deal with this, but recognizing that their electoral districts are significantly larger, I recognize that that's got to be a challenge for them as well. But, again, municipalities really are under the province's domain, if you will, so when there's a need for something specific – health care, education, supports for our justice system – that comes through the MLA really advocating on their behalf.

Mrs. Samson: I have a couple of questions. Yesterday when we were in Westlock and we were discussing with the MLA there some changes – I just want to clarify in my own mind. The electoral district of 49 is underpopulated. It's sitting at 46,782. If you remember, we're kind of working around 55,000 plus or minus 25 per cent. Would it be reasonable to suggest that the county of St. Paul, that's divided, move into Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock? Or because of the naming of the county, that it is the county of St. Paul, is it better off in your riding? Also, are the trade routes more aligned in your riding than they are, being in Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock? Did I explain that well enough?

Mr. Cyr: You did a very good job.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

Mr. Cyr: I have already sat with MLA van Dijken to discuss this. Recognizing that there's not a lot of population in the green section

that you saw there but there is more – here I am explaining about getting to everywhere.

Mrs. Samson: Yes.

Mr. Cyr: I'm not saying: please add more to my constituency. The problem that I've got is that in the end there's confusion that comes along with that. Now, again, when it comes to Saddle Lake, that's about 6,000 people. It's the second largest First Nation reserve in Alberta. That will, I guess, for maybe one of the concerns you're bringing forward, bring some population to MLA van Dijken's constituency and can help balance that out a little bit more. But, again, when you're looking at Saddle Lake, they do rely on a lot of their services from the town of St. Paul. There's no disputing that. The problem is that if we start using that criteria, then you should be including Lac La Biche, Two Hills to my constituency. Suddenly you're at 100,000 people. So where do you draw that line? I don't have a good answer there.

I will say, though, that when it comes to the former boundaries commission, they were only focused on population.

Mrs. Samson: That's correct.

Mr. Cyr: I sat with them in both meetings, before and after, and I was saying that you were making Bonnyville-Cold Lake something that was an anomaly when you're looking at rural because we have such a high-concentrated population when it comes to my constituency. At that time they had only added Elk Point and St. Paul. They had left the Saddle Lake reserve off the first initial drawing, so I went and sat with them and said: look, you've added 50 per cent more land to Bonnyville-Cold Lake – which is, again, my former constituency – and I would say that you've added another 50 per cent or 60 per cent more population to the constituency. Then what happened is that after their redistribution they added Saddle Lake, so that threw it right over the top.

9:55

Again, I love all of my constituency. I'm not suggesting that I would want to lose any of them because I've become attached to every community. But, again, we need to be looking at: is this adequate? Is an MLA able to adequately represent this? I definitely get to everywhere. One of the first things I had done was open offices inside of – like, we only had one office. It was in Bonnyville. I opened up a Cold Lake office, an Elk Point office, and a St. Paul office. I travel to where the people are; they're not travelling to where I am. But you can see that means that I'm in my car a lot, and that's fine. I signed up for the job, and I accept that mileage is part of my mandate.

Mrs. Samson: I just want to explore the Saddle Lake question a bit more. When I look at the neighbouring riding of 49 again, because it was just yesterday – again, that's the Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock. I was thinking of Saddle Lake, and we've been talking prior to this consultation about communities of interest that come together, like communities. I use the reference of transportation, and I agree with you. You know, that in itself is not enough. It's the whole package we're looking at.

You have significant other Indigenous, Métis areas in your riding. Is that of concern that we would pull Saddle Lake out? Like, this part I don't know. I don't have experience. Are there cultural functions? Is there that kind of thing? I'm stumbling around here.

The Chair: What does the leadership of Saddle Lake say?

Mrs. Samson: Yeah.

Mr. Cyr: Well, again, when it comes to the leadership of Saddle Lake, I think that for the most part they consider them to be federal.

Mrs. Samson: Federal. Thank you.

Mr. Cyr: When it comes to Saddle Lake, they're more concerned with the MPs than they are with the MLAs.

Mrs. Samson: Good to know.

Mr. Cyr: That doesn't mean that when the council does a request – and, again, I send out regular requests to sit with the council. But what they're really after is ensuring that they have opportunities to be able to get into postsecondary. We have Blue Quills, and I'm very thankful for that. That one there is a remarkable source for them, and that's just outside of St. Paul. They've got a lot of their own schools right on the First Nation there as well. There are some schools that they bus out to in St. Paul as well.

But when it comes down to it, I would say that our First Nations, again, when it comes to how connected our region – I guess we'll step back. One of the things I had the blessing of was having the Premier come up to my constituency. She's got a vision for rural of a hub-and-spoke model where you've got your hubs and you kind of feed in for services into the different major centres, if you will. We don't have a hub in our area; we've got a cluster, if you will. It's all clustered throughout, so a hub-and-spoke model isn't going to work very well unless you make St. Paul the hub, which means that you cut most of my constituency out of that.

I would say that when you look at our region, we're a lakeland region, and we're integrated in all of the northeast out of necessity. We have people going down to Two Hills for health care. We've got Lac La Biche, where we do dialysis – like, you name it. When you move that entire region, we're well over 100,000 people, and I don't know how you – it's like having a city that's spread out. Usually you would break that into two and have two MLAs to be able to service that. The question is: where do you draw that line? It's going to affect each side of, say, Red Deer. If we look at Red Deer – we'll use them as a good example – you're going to have some in Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South using each other's health care or justice or education.

That's the same thing here. We're integrated. Our AHS works remarkably well. I've got five school divisions in my constituency. Like, you name it. We've got lots happening here, and they all work well together. They have to. We have no choice.

Mrs. Samson: Just one small point. Thank you for those explanations. I understand that in your submission to us you're asking for the weapons area to be included in the boundary, and I'm just not clear on that. I think it already is in the boundary.

Mr. Cyr: It is.

Mrs. Samson: Okay.

Mr. Cyr: I just want to highlight that, I mean, the only real access to the air weapons range is through the south side of the air weapons range. This was controversial before because they want to keep lumping the air weapons range with other areas.

Mrs. Samson: Oh. I get it. Yeah.

Mr. Cyr: I haven't heard any of the other proposals. But if there are other proposals suggesting that the air weapons range should be moved away from Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, that would be probably very impactful for our area.

Mrs. Samson: Good. I'm glad you clarified that because it's a natural fit. I support that opinion of yours.

Mr. Cyr: Right. It was the right decision the boundaries commission made in the first – 10 years ago. I wholeheartedly agreed with that decision. Again, there are some things that I disagreed with the prior commission on, but in this case they got it right.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for answering and for the clarification.

The Chair: Before I move to Dr. Martin, where do you live in the riding, sir?

Mr. Cyr: I live in Cold Lake.

The Chair: Julian.

Dr. Martin: Thank you, especially for your submission, which I read with great interest. It was good to have another copy that is clean. The other one is all marked up now. What I marked up were several things that we've already touched on today, really. One is about the shadow population and its, as you might put it, impact without taxation. They use services but aren't really connected to the payment of them, which is a burden. Secondly, you rightly have expectations of economic growth and consequent population from oil and gas revival, new techniques associated with it, especially, as you say, with the carbon capture initiative.

Then, of course, the air base. I think the F-35s will succeed, finally. You've already been doing a fair bit of preplanning around that, I take it. But they are going to come.

I'm interested in these sort of growth stories because anyone could talk about how things might kind of grow in the future, but it's most persuasive for us if it's imminent and tangible. I think you persuaded me that that is the case with the projects you've spoken of vis-à-vis population. You're growing in two directions. That is to say that you're growing with people who will come and pay taxes and live in houses and use the shops, and you are growing yet again with a shadow population, which is awkward.

I wanted to touch as well on where the oil and gas zone is. Mr. Crick suggested that it is in the centre of the north part of the current riding. Is that correct?

Mr. Cyr: It depends on what type of oil you're talking about. We've got your heavy oil, which is in the north, which is where you need to use . . .

Dr. Martin: SAGD.

Mr. Cyr: SAGD is typically steam agitated. It's usually the route to go there. But we also have the cold flow as you move south, where they just pump it slowly out of the ground because it's able to flow. Then you've got conventional further down by the St. Paul and Elk Point areas. So the further you get from the north, the lighter the crude gets, if you will. A lot of the conventional stuff has probably been tapped into.

10:05

Dr. Martin: It's mature.

Mr. Cyr: Mature. Thank you. That's a very good way of putting it. Whereas our heavy oil: we've got 50 or 100 years of oil ready to be taken out of there, so there's a lot of opportunity for still getting some real heavy oil out of the ground. As we continue to look at our technology, we're finding better and better ways of getting that oil out of the ground and environmentally sensitive. Some of our pads

– we've got Imperial that has a pad that's got a 70 per cent reduction in emissions. They're doing everything they can to bring their emissions down, and they're doing a very good job of it.

Dr. Martin: I don't want to – well, yes, I do want to interrupt. You're explaining what we both agreed is the case, and your submission does a good job of that. As I say, I'm persuaded that you have growth, and for any number of reasons that is sustainable.

I want to ask a rather different question, and that is with respect to the Métis settlements. Now, you suggested that Saddle Lake, for example, orientates itself mostly towards its federal relationships. What about the Métis settlements?

Mr. Cyr: Well, we've got Elizabeth settlement and Fishing Lake settlement in my constituency. I will say that when it comes to them trying to find that balance, because it is under provincial jurisdiction, it's an awkward one that our settlements have got. They own the structure on the property, but they don't actually own the land that the property is on.

The Chair: It's Crown land?

Mr. Cyr: Well, I think it's . . .

Mr. Evans: Métis settlement land is a creature of its own. A creature of its own. Individuals can't own it.

Mr. Cyr: A lot of it comes down to that they just want services. One of the opportunities that we saw was the opening of the scope with our nurse practitioners. That was quite remarkable for our First Nations and Métis settlements. It is difficult to get doctors up north. That is just a fact. They all seem to want to congregate in the larger metropolitan centres, Edmonton and Calgary, and I get it. I welcome any doctor no matter where they're at. We have a shortage of them.

But the nurse practitioners I think are the best way of delivering care for the northeast. In this case they're asking for nurse practitioners to be put in, like in the clinic spaces inside my settlements, and that's a good ask. Why wouldn't we want to explore that? Now, don't get me wrong. If I've got a doctor that is willing to go into my settlements, that would be ideal as well, but in the end that's one thing that we need to be very on top of. I am working closely with Health to see where we can get this happening. That's a blossoming new field, these clinics for nurse practitioners, trying to get them to grow up here.

I will say that when it comes down to it, they're just asking for a level of service on settlements. Having us look at their schools – we'll use Fishing Lake and Elizabeth settlement – a lot of them bus their children to Cold Lake just because they're trying to get into that school system. Now, the Northland school division is doing a fabulous job, but they're limited in resources, and I've been advocating on their behalf just to try to make sure that Northland is heard, because really the Northland school division – you think I'm big? My God, the amount of area the Northland school division covers is something that's mind blowing.

So the answer is: different challenges. But you're not wrong. My settlements do need more of my time. They all need my time, but we have more influence over our settlements than we would over our First Nations.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Cyr: Hopefully that answers your questions.

Dr. Martin: It's very helpful.

The Chair: Greg?

Mr. Clark: Evans.

The Chair: Oh, go ahead.

Mr. Evans: You skipped me.

The Chair: Oh, sorry.

Mr. Evans: I got usurped by a Flames fan, but that's okay.

Mr. Clark: It happens.

Mrs. Samson: Here we go.

Mr. Evans: I want to know your opinion on the connectivity between St. Paul and Two Hills, comparing that to St. Paul and Bonnyville, and then comparing that moving west from St. Paul.

Mr. Cyr: Again, I would say that our entire northeast region is connected. St. Paul: something that I didn't know from my first – just to give you a little bit of history about myself because it's relevant here, I was elected from 2015 to 2019, and then I decided to step back from politics in 2019, threw my hat back into the ring way back in 2023 and was successful there. So I've got a gap here, if you will, of a term. Now, my first term was in Bonnyville-Cold Lake. We didn't have St. Paul in it. Since I've started my second term, what I didn't realize is that St. Paul is the centre of almost all the northeast services for everything. Your RCMP. You name it. It's centred out of St. Paul.

Mr. Evans: It's the judicial centre for King's Bench.

Mr. Cyr: The whole works. Everything.

And that has opened up a remarkable access to services that I didn't have before. Again, it's not that I couldn't have phoned them up, but you're very cautious on dealing another MLA's constituency. Once I found out how connected St. Paul was – I didn't think that there were any real connections between Bonnyville, Cold Lake, and St. Paul, but when you turn St. Paul into the hub for the northeast, suddenly it's all interconnected in ways that you couldn't have anticipated, which is what's happened here. That's why . . .

Mr. Evans: That's governmental connections and services, but I want to – and I agree with that. It puzzles me because I don't know that there's the community connection in the same way. Would you agree with that?

Mr. Cyr: I would say that is an argument that I had made to the first boundaries commission, that I didn't see those connections as strong as what they were making that out to be.

Mrs. Samson: Can you expand on that?

Mr. Evans: The community interest aspect that the legislation now allows us to look at: that's what I'm really interested in. That's what I'd like to drill down.

Mr. Cyr: At that time they were only about population.

Mr. Evans: Right.

Mr. Cyr: There was no other consideration. When I had talked about the connectivity and all this stuff, they weren't interested in any of this discussion, and when I brought it up, one of the commission members said: do you know what Skype is? That's a

strange thing, what I was saying, that it'd be difficult to get through to all of my areas.

What I will say, though, is that when it comes to our areas with St. Paul, I say that you've got a cluster here of Two Hills, St. Paul, Saddle Lake, Kehewin, likely even Elk Point. It would be one cluster. Then you've got the Bonnyville, Cold Lake, and maybe Lac La Biche cluster, if you will, but Lac La Biche goes either way to Bonnyville, Cold Lake, or to St. Paul. Again, trying to treat them as if they're independent of each other would be a mistake because we're all interconnected, everything.

Like, mental health is driven – and government services matter. Like, we can't discount. Just because you don't drive to Walmart in Cold Lake from St. Paul, you're still driving to Cold Lake for, say, the doctor that you're trying to see, or vice versa. It could be the Cold Lake residents that are driving to St. Paul for specialists here. We do have the mental health that is being driven out of St. Paul, so there are certain areas that are centres of excellence, if you will, and that's something that I take pride in.

It's good to see that my region is working so well together. Is it perfect? The answer is no. I'm working on that, and I continue to work on that, but in the end, the government services, I think, are integral to show how important it is that we're tied together, and separating that is problematic.

10:15

Mr. Evans: Let me ask you one more question about your projected growth. Regardless of whether you say our numbers are right or your numbers are right, it doesn't – like, what I'm more interested in is the trend. I think we can agree that it certainly looks like it's going to trend up. What I want to know is, in your opinion, because you're boots on the ground, how quickly is it going to trend up, and what kind of increase are we going to be looking at over that time? Why that's important is because another commission is not going to be looking at this electoral boundary for another 8 to 9 years. So between now and then, if I knew that your population was going to double, my suggestion as one of the commissioners would be that we would do something drastically different than what we're talking about right now with this particular electoral district. Does that make sense? I'm not saying that's the case, but it's illustrative of the principles.

Mr. Cyr: What I saw from the first boundary commission – and I'm not here to take right hooks at another boundary commission, but they wanted to get rid of a constituency in rural so they could add it to one of the metropolitan areas. At that time we had Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, an awkward . . .

Mr. Evans: That's a weird one.

Mr. Cyr: It was. They just completely annihilated that constituency and then stuck all of the neighbouring areas into the surrounding constituencies. They got rid of their constituency.

If you're asking, "should there be another constituency in the northeast?" I would say likely this is something that may be needed to be explored. But I can tell you that as the MLA for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul I take pride in all of my communities, and I will fight for every one of them, and I will continue to do that. It is difficult for me to say that I would like to – maybe we need to start making some decisions, because right now, with shadow populations, I'm anticipating that we could end up with my constituency being up close to 100,000. By 2030, by the projections that we're able to see, we're probably going to be anywhere from 72,000 to 77,000 in actual population.

Mr. Evans: My thinking is more in line with, rather than – you don't have to make another constituency. You could make this constituency a constituency of 15,000, too, right? So a very small constituency in numbers, knowing that it's going to increase in size based on population growth, so that whether it's in five years or nine years, when you come to review again, you're spot on with that thinking that it should be exactly on parity with other constituencies in the population. Does that make sense?

Mr. Cyr: We were. Bonnyville-Cold Lake, my former constituency, was one of the four small ones because everybody understood that we were the ones that were growing.

Now, when the first boundary commission went through this, we had a collapse of my entire region just because of the oil and gas, right? At that time we had seen almost all military funding collapse underneath the federal Liberal government. You put the two together, and I had a real hardship. I had people crying in my office weekly about losing their homes. It was awful, what was going on for our area. Having said that, we've moved past that, and we're seeing some real light and we're seeing a lot of the same things we were seeing in 2014 before the collapse. If the collapse hadn't happened in 2015, I have no doubt that I could have justified to the prior boundary commission that making changes the way they had was going to oversize this constituency, but the first boundary commission was saying that I was going to shrink. That was their projection based on it. We were going to see . . .

The Chair: When you say the first boundary commission, you mean the first report of the '16-17?

Mr. Cyr: Yes.

The Chair: Yeah. Okay.

Mr. Cyr: They actually had us as a declining constituency, which, based on the information at that second, was correct. But they weren't looking at – they were more or less thinking that oil would be stuck in the ground, the military base would never see any growth ever again. I had a hard time jumping to that conclusion. Again, history has shown that they've been wrong, but, again, we don't know how this is going to work out perfectly. I've got estimate projections, but whether they work out or not is a different story.

Mr. Evans: One last question, I promise. Tell me about your thinking in terms of the spillover of this population growth that we're talking about here in this electoral division. How much is going to spill over into Lac La Biche?

Mr. Cyr: The way this works is that Cold Lake clearly is going to be the epicenter of growth in my constituency just because it's the bedroom community where everybody wants to live. Every part of my constituency is beautiful in its own way, but I will say that Cold Lake is focused on the recreation, if you will, of residents, so people are attracted to there.

Now, we're already seeing Cold Lake pull the alarm bells saying that they have to start subsidizing building right now – that's how worried they are – because we're going to start seeing our rents go to the point where there's no affordable housing left in Cold Lake. What happens is that it's already starting to fill up in Cold Lake. It spills out to Bonnyville. Once Bonnyville is full, then it spills out to St. Paul, Elk Point, Glendon, and then back to Lac La Biche. Right now we haven't seen Bonnyville starting to fill up yet, but I can tell you that I'm already hearing that – what used to be in 2014,

to give an example, people were buying houses sight unseen in Cold Lake. Like it was so crazy back then.

Mr. Evans: What about Bonnyville? Same thing?

Mr. Cyr: Bonnyville was in the same boat, and we were starting to see subdivisions.

Mr. Evans: What about Lac La Biche?

Mr. Cyr: Lac La Biche, again, I'm not as familiar because it wasn't my constituency, but I do know that there are some impacts.

One of the things that I think that should be mentioned here that we haven't touched on yet is that we have some sizeable camps up here.

Mr. Evans: Shadow populations.

Mr. Cyr: Well, those camps that feed into the oil and gas industry, right?

Mr. Evans: Are they on the base?

Mr. Cyr: Well, there's going to be a camp on the base, for sure, but for the most part people, when they're here for anywhere from 7 to 10 years, are going to want to move their family here, so it'll be a temporary thing. We're talking Cenovus – like, the oil and gas industry have camps. Now, I know that right now there's a press to find out what the balance for these camps are. If they're emptying our municipalities out, that is not helpful for Albertans. Plus, they're living in jurisdictions outside of Alberta for the most part, which means they're not taxpaying Albertans. So they're using our services while they're here, but they're not paying any taxes. That is problematic. Then again, I'm not here to take shots at the rest of Canada. I want them to succeed, but I also need to make sure our municipalities are able to grow at a reasonable path as well.

One of the things that I know that Minister Jean, the minister of energy, is saying is that we need to revisit how we're bringing these camps in. These camps were brought in in 2014 out of necessity. Okay. Let's find balance. Let's give our municipalities the ability to grow responsibly, and, still, if the oil companies need camp workers, then we can work through that as well, but there's a real balancing act that I'm hoping that we can do better than we did in 2014 coming up here.

The Chair: Julian, did you have anything to ask?

Dr. Martin: I'm fine. I mean, I'm glad you brought up the shadow population issue yet again. I won't belabour it, but it's obviously a significant feature in any discussion about planning in your zone.

Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Just really quickly, and again, Mr. Cyr, there's just tremendous value in having you here, and your local knowledge and context are incredibly helpful.

I did just want to ask you: you had mentioned that you had a number of constituency offices. One of the things that's come up in past conversations and pretty much every past boundaries commission report I could find: hey, perhaps we should have some more budget for rural MLAs, not as an "or," not as the only way to deal with it, but as another layer, you know, acknowledging the scale. The simple reality of geography in Alberta is that you're going to have large rural constituencies, no matter what. Is there a need – would it be helpful to have more budget so that you could open more satellite offices, hire more staff, and perhaps better serve your constituents?

10:25

Mr. Cyr: I will say that I'm stretched right to the max of my budget every year. We're negotiating some large increases to the staff at our constituency offices because, again, it's outside of my ability to be able to budget their increases. They deserve it. They're hard working.

But the answer here is that you can't hand us 50,000 or 60,000 people to manage in such a large geographic area and not give us the ability to be able to address that. If they can't see me personally – and that's the one thing that I guess the first boundary commission didn't recognize. They thought rural was the same thing as big metropolitan Edmonton and Calgary. In metropolitan Calgary and Edmonton it's likely that a phone call or a Skype, if you will, is probably what they're looking for, but in rural it's not the case. A farmer literally wants me to come and see the culvert on his property that's not draining right.

That's not a real problem that our – and I'm not suggesting they don't have their own challenges; not at all. The one thing you brought up that hadn't occurred to me was the many languages that they're dealing with, the language barriers that come with our big metropolitans. I'm saying different challenges.

But for ours we've got – I don't know – 30 or 35 different councils that I'm dealing with. Like, that's your summer villages, your Métis settlements, your First Nations, and my municipalities, plus you've got the five school boards, you've got hospitals, each one of my constituents in every one of my major centres. I've got Portage College. Like, when you put all of that, our brothers and sisters that are MLAs in Edmonton and Calgary probably have a fraction of that that they're trying to deal with. I'm, again, not saying that they don't have challenges, but when it comes to rural I would suggest that it's a different dynamic that needs to be recognized.

So to answer you, I think that we need to revisit how we fund it. That was a recommendation that came out of the first boundary commission. If we're going to be giving them larger constituencies to deal with, larger populations, then we should be reviewing what the rural constituencies are getting. That never happened, and that's not within your mandate. You can recommend it, but in the end if this is something that you see, it would sure be nice to see what it is that the commission would see as fair.

I would say that when it comes down to it, I have two staff. They're going nonstop getting to events everywhere, and people seem to be feeling as if they're represented, like what Councillor Crick was saying. Again, for me, I try to get to all of my councils semi-annually, so twice a year, which is kind of lining up with what Josh was saying. Same thing with my school boards; same thing with my hospital administrators; my RCMP officers. I think you forget about them too. I go and sit with my staff sergeants at the offices, hearing what their concerns are. I sit with the prosecutor's office to see what resources that I can help advocate for on their behalf. Not influencing casework; that is not what I am suggesting. What I'm saying is that there are unique challenges to our area.

When you put all that into perspective, money definitely would help, but I'm sure that's an ask for every MLA, whether they're in Edmonton or Calgary or rural.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Cyr. I've got a couple of questions and maybe an assignment.

Mr. Cyr: Sure.

The Chair: Just out of curiosity, the carbon capture project for St. Paul: is that similar to what Saskatchewan has been doing for some time in the Estevan area?

Mr. Cyr: Yeah, we've got carbon capture in Alberta. What that is is a saline solution. They put the carbon dioxide into it, they push it down a pipeline, and then inject it into the ground. Very safe; I know that some people are concerned. There are some fallacies out there that if there's a breach in the pipeline, it's going to kill everybody in a 100-kilometre radius. That is not the case with this. Don't get me wrong. I wouldn't want to put my face over a pipeline break, but I am saying that it's very safe and effective.

The Chair: But that's not started yet?

Mr. Cyr: So Minister Jean has been very clear that we're ready with our TIER program. We've been waiting for our federal partners to get in line, which is why I'm saying that with former Prime Minister Trudeau it didn't seem like he had an interest in carbon capture, but our current Prime Minister is showing interest. So suddenly this went from a back burner to probably one of the forefront.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Cyr: Again, our government is trying to work with Prime Minister Carney in every way possible.

The Chair: Well, let me maybe just describe – of course, you're a rural riding with some very unique "challenges" which lead to growth – okay? – which many other ridings don't have. I would ask you to come up with a bit more information because what you told us – it came out a little bit in your written presentation, but I think we're just somewhat taken aback by all the growth industries and the projects and things like that. If you could come up with something to send us in terms of the economic potential of the growth patterns in a little bit more concrete way, that would be helpful for us to chew on. That's the one thing.

Secondly, you've done great work in your presentation, but I'd just like to get the numbers explained a little bit. Compare to the numbers you have, and look at the numbers that we're using, and maybe have your people take a second look at it. I'm not saying yours are wrong and ours are right. I'm just saying, you know, every census is wrong the minute it's published, so we just need to kind of square that circle a bit. Obviously, your staff has already worked on it.

Mr. Cyr: I don't know what your breakdown is.

The Chair: Well, the numbers, the breakdown I can't give you here.

Mr. Cyr: Because if I can compare . . .

The Chair: Apples to apples.

Mr. Cyr: Right now, we actually went municipality by municipality. Right now you're giving me a month and saying mine is not right. You can see where that's awkward.

The Chair: We can get granular on our number, right? Yeah. So we can get that. Just because it's somewhat of a significant difference, we need to make sure we're talking the same language.

Mrs. Samson: I just want to add to your comments, if you don't mind, that we are bound by these numbers. It is because the census is right across Canada, and we're not going to mix up different numbers, so unless something was glaringly incorrect, that is the number for this riding.

Mr. Cyr: Again, if there is something that we've double-counted inside my numbers, like, you've got to remember I've got an MD and a county that's huge. Maybe some of the St. Paul got in there. If I could take a look at where you're at and look at ours, and then what happens is if there's an error on my side, I could send a correction in, for sure.

The Chair: We'll delegate to Aaron the work from Elections Alberta staff, but keep in mind Elections Alberta is very busy right now. I think we just need to have a little exchange of information. So, yeah, we'll do what we can to get something to you, and then you can respond.

Dr. Martin: Can I add to that? The census that we're relying on: our date is July 1, 2024, because the act allows us to supplement the federal census numbers by any other reliable form of census that can be distributed across all the electoral districts. So we've done that, and we've come up with a stable and reliable figure, and so we've chosen July 2024. Now, obviously population has grown since then, but is it stable and reliable as a figure? Because people come and go, people are born and die. A census is never empirical. It's always an estimate, so what we're talking about here is about a significant variation across the numbers.

Now, you will be able to find in Elections Alberta online and other sources from our provincial government the municipal census for each year. I don't know for the life of me what day in that year they choose, but you can see ways to approximate the figures to the ones that you yourself have collected, and they would be on that basis. I'd say that was your preliminary research when you're trying to look at your population base.

10:35

Mr. Cyr: Thank you. Again, once I get your figures and how you calculated them, I could compare it to ours to see if, let's say, for instance, a First Nation was counted twice or overlooked.

Dr. Martin: Or not.

Mr. Cyr: Yeah.

Then what happens is that we can send it in along with the request of the economic potential for our area.

Dr. Martin: Yeah.

Mr. Cyr: Then, again, if there's an error on my side, I apologize to the commission.

The Chair: No, I don't mean to say that you're wrong.

Mr. Cyr: No, and I'm not suggesting that you are. I'm just saying that if there is an inconsistency, you have my apologies. I'm not here to misinform; I'm just trying to make sure that I'm communicating it correctly, and if it's not correct, I just want it correct for the record.

Dr. Martin: You know, don't apologize. If you and your staff chose to include figures from July 1, 2024, until today, that would be perfectly reasonable, but we're not allowed to listen.

Mr. Cyr: Well, my understanding is that when we did the calculation, it was on the 2021 census as well.

The Chair: That's totally fine.

Mr. Cyr: So if anything, your numbers should be higher than my numbers, not lower.

The Chair: Yeah, we'll look into it. That's an interesting question.

Mr. Cyr: I will dig into where the inconsistency is, and, again, I have faith in the good men and women that are building your numbers.

The Chair: I'm going to allow you to sign off here. We've billed you enough. If we accepted your suggestion in terms of cutting off the southwest corner of your district, the name would still be satisfactory. One of our jobs – we always forget – is that we have to name the electoral districts. Please say that the name is fine.

Mr. Cyr: The name will be fine. Actually, the first boundary commission hadn't asked that question, and I actually had to move an amendment.

The Chair: Oh, you were one of the five or six ridings that had to be moved.

Mr. Cyr: Well, it was just to rename. Yeah. Because Bonnyville – Cold Lake-St. Paul was the original. This is a self-inflicted wound, the name. It's a really long name, Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, but what I will say is that the name is sufficient.

The Chair: Well, we appreciate all presenters, but we are particularly gratified to have members of the Legislature come and talk to us and give us their thoughts and recommendations because you travel this electoral district. You know and you beat the pavement, so we are very grateful. Thank you for your presentation and your written material. As a result, the good student gets more work.

Mr. Cyr: Is there somewhere specific that I would send the response to?

The Chair: Aaron will take your card.

Mr. Cyr: I've already got Aaron's . . .

The Chair: Yeah, he works 36 hours a day, so don't worry.

Mr. Cyr: I know. He was actually. When we were in session there, he was one of our table officers. God bless him. While we were sitting there while the opposition was filibustering, he got to hear it all.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you.

The Chair: By the way, yesterday we were in Westlock, and it was kind of gratifying when your colleague presented, and then had, you know, a few other presenters. But former minister Hoffman came and sat in to the hearing, so it was kind of nice to see them talk in a very collegial way and have a little bit of dialogue after, and I was thinking after that we maybe should compel some urban MLAs to come in the country to present and compel rural MLAs to go to the city to present. They have a little bit of crosspollination.

Mr. Cyr: I'll present at all of them if they wanted. Again, what I will say – and this is where our sympathies are with our big urban, if you will – is that I can't fully understand what the challenges in Edmonton are because I don't live in Edmonton, and the same thing with Calgary and even Medicine Hat. I can't understand the challenges over in Lethbridge, but I can maybe give a perspective of the northeast.

The Chair: Yeah. You've done a very good job of that. Thank you.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

The Chair: We're not leaving right away, either, if anybody wants to talk.

[The commission deliberated]

[The hearing adjourned at 11:18 a.m.]

