



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Public Hearings

Virtual

Thursday, January 15, 2026  
5:30 p.m.

Transcript No. 37

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**

**Electoral Boundaries Commission**

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## **Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Virtual**

### **Public Participants**

Valerie Boese  
Robert Duiker  
Cameron Galisky, Councillor, Town of Penhold  
Thomas Kent  
Laurie Miller, Mayor, Town of Bowden  
Leah Nelson, Mayor, Village of Elnora  
Marc Slingerland  
Elizabeth Strange  
Laura Svab, Mayor, Town of Blackfalds



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[Justice Miller in the chair]

**The Chair:** Good evening, everyone, and welcome to the evening session of the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission public hearings.

We've got several speakers in the queue ready to present, but I want to give some background information to the public and to the group that is presenting. First of all, we're an independent commission established by the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. As you can see, our names are listed in front of us and they're also listed on the PowerPoint, and you can check out our biographies if you so wish on the website. We're tasked to work to reorganize the Alberta electoral boundaries as required by the legislation.

We have two main determining issues that force us to do this work. Number one is that the Legislative Assembly has been directed to expand from 87 members to 89; in other words, 89 electoral divisions for the next provincial election rather than the existing 87. As everyone knows, it's the voters that are located and reside in the electoral division that elect the MLAs, and that member then represents that electoral division in the Alberta Legislature.

While the seats have been increased from 87 to 89, another huge determining factor that drives our commission is the increase in population. Just to give you some context, the last Electoral Boundaries Commission report was in 2017, and that report was based on a population base for Alberta of just over 4 million people, 4,062,609 population. That report then took the 87 ridings and came up with an average, as you can see on the screen, of 46,697 persons per electoral division. Now, that is not the target. The average is not the target. Rather, we use the average to come up with a range to establish effective representation, and for the 2017 commission that range of population was from 35,000 up to as high as 58,000. As long as the population base in each riding is in that target range, then the legislation allows us to call that effective representation. That was 2017.

Now in 2026 the population of Alberta has increased by over 800,000 in the intervening years, and our population base of 4.8 million Albertans divided by 89 electoral divisions reaches an average of 54,929 per electoral division. Again, that average is not the target. The target is the population range per electoral division of minus 25 to plus 25, and in real numbers that's 41,197 to 68,661.

The historic practice in Canada for representation, the jurisprudence from various courts, including the Supreme Court of Canada, and the legislation all point us to the term "effective representation." Canada is not governed, as is the United States, on representation by population. One person, one vote is an American concept. It's not a Canadian concept. There's no jurisdiction in Canada that bases its representation exclusively on one person, one vote. Rather, we have the term "effective representation." That is a challenge. It's not a mathematical exercise, and this commission went to work shortly after its appointment to come up with some guidelines.

First of all, we agreed on a data source, and the data source for population was the 2021 latest decennial census for Canada, which was then updated and supplemented by the Office of Statistics and Information of the Alberta Treasury Board. So we've taken federal data, updated it by way of provincial measures, and we came up with the population standard for us to work on. You can read in our interim report – I believe it's on pages 15 to 17 – more information as to how we got to the population base that we did.

After determining that and agreeing upon that, we then reviewed hundreds of written submissions that were provided to the

commission as to how we should go about our work, and we conducted public hearings from late May and throughout June. We travelled across the province. We sat in Pincher Creek and we sat in Fort McMurray. We sat in Peace River, Grande Prairie, and we sat in Medicine Hat, and, of course, spent days in Calgary and Edmonton in the intervening time. So we heard from Albertans.

Taking that population base, the written submissions, and the public presentations we heard, we worked with the Elections Alberta staff, which assisted us greatly, and we came up with maps that resulted in our report. Our report then was finalized in late October and presented to the Speaker of the Legislature, and he almost immediately tabled that report and provided each of the members of the Legislature with a copy. It was then made public on our website.

In completing our report, we followed the legislative guidelines outlined in terms of population boundaries, communities of interest, natural borders, et cetera, et cetera, and we worked hard to come up with a map that had 89 ridings with understandable and clear boundaries. As I said, that report was tabled in the Legislature and made public in late October. Then we opened a portal on our website for public submissions. From November 3 to December 29 Albertans responded. We have over 1,100 written submissions, and I'm told that it is one of the most responded to reports in Alberta legislative history.

Now at this phase we open it up for a second round of public hearings. We are travelling the province, so to speak, for two weeks. January 12 we started in Calgary with two and a half days of hearings. We are now opening it up to the rest of the province through virtual hearings today and tomorrow, and next week we are sitting in Edmonton, hearing from people in Edmonton. We will conclude our public hearings next Wednesday hearing from members of the Legislature, and then we will immediately commence deliberations as a commission to come up with a final report.

Our final report is due in late March, and we will table that report. The Legislature then receives our report and is required to respond by enacting appropriate legislation to deal with the two new ridings and our proposed boundaries.

That gives you a bit of a background as to how we led up to our interim report and what we've done since then, and now this is an opportunity for us to hear from those individuals who have signed up to present this evening. Our first presenter is Mr. Thomas Kent. Are you present, Mr. Kent?

**Mr. Kent:** Yes, I am, Justice Miller.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you. Please identify where you live and what boundaries you wish to comment on.

**Mr. Kent:** First, can I just check – I sent in a PowerPoint. Is that available to you?

**The Chair:** I'll defer to Mr. Roth.

Do we have that queued up?

**Mr. Roth:** Yes.

5:40

**The Chair:** Okay. I think it's coming online, so you can commence your presentation, Mr. Kent.

**Mr. Kent:** All right. Thank you. I am a resident of Calgary-Elbow. I know that Mr. Clark, I believe, is a resident of Elbow as well, but I'm not sure how many other members of the panel are residents of Calgary.

**Mrs. Samson:** None.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark is representing Calgary.

**Mr. Kent:** I beg your pardon?

**The Chair:** Yeah. You're right. Mr. Clark resides in Calgary.

**Mr. Kent:** And the rest of you: how many of the rest of you are Calgarians versus living elsewhere in the province?

**The Chair:** Yeah. You can see our bios on the website. The four of us are spread out across the province.

**Mr. Kent:** All right. Well, the reason I'm asking, Justice Miller, is because – I mean, Greg, I don't know if you remember me. My wife and I moved to Calgary in 2012, got flooded in 2013. I became aware of Mr. Clark when he and others formed the Calgary river action committee. Then I believe I voted for Mr. Clark in 2015, and we met later and had a lunch.

Anyway, I'm very surprised at the proposal for Calgary-Confluence, and that's the first page on the PowerPoint, the two maps. I don't know whether Mr. Roth can zoom in a little bit for you. For those of you not from Calgary, I can't fathom a riding that somebody would dream up that would purport to cross both nature and man-made boundaries, completely in contradiction to one of your main criteria. Everything to the east of the Bow River and the Deerfoot Trail, which all of you have driven on, I'm sure, some of you many times, is a raised escarpment. The only ways across that, when you're looking at this proposed riding, are Memorial Drive – you can see that, I think, hopefully, on the drawing – and 17th Avenue SE. Then you have to go way down to the Glenmore Trail, basically.

The point is that I'm also a cyclist. I'm a road rider, but of course Calgary has the great bicycle paths all over the city, and I often ride over and up the valley to Nose Hill, Nose Creek, up the Nose Creek valley. I have learned a couple of ways to get across the Deerfoot. One of them, believe it or not, is that you actually go under the Deerfoot and you're literally underneath the steel girders – it's not even a real path, but you can get under it on your bike; it's not really a place of travel – and then there's one overpass that you can go on on 17th, with a bike lane that comes off it, or a ramp down onto the canal. If you ride along that, everything, you know, is industrial lands, et cetera.

This Calgary-Confluence – if you go down to Glenmore in the south, all that area to the north of Glenmore, which is wide open on the map, is industrial, commercial for the most part. The areas of population that have been taken from four or five other ridings are off in the corners, in the northwest, in the northeast, on the other side of all these boundaries I've been showing you or talking about.

The biggest poaching of territory is Calgary-Buffer. Your explanation on page 32 of your report says something about, you know, reducing the population of Calgary-Buffer as if it's overpopulated, but it's not. It's slightly under, even on your chart down on page 108.

More importantly, Calgary-Buffer currently takes in Ramsay and Inglewood, two districts. The people who live in those districts have to go down to 9th Avenue S.E., which is in Inglewood, for their retail, commercial. They can now go over into downtown east, which is part of Calgary-Buffer, where there's a Loblaws, Superstore, et cetera, and a bunch of high-rise condos which have been taken out of Buffer. Macleod Trail appears to be the boundary on the west for this Calgary-Confluence, but it actually slides over to 1st Street S.E., which is one block west of Macleod Trail when

you get up to 17th Avenue. I know the condominiums in that area, which ...

**The Chair:** Mr. Kent, we're on a bit of a time schedule, so I want you to really focus. You started off by saying the boundaries. What boundaries would you suggest we change relative to Calgary-Confluence?

**Mr. Kent:** I don't think you should make this riding at all.

**The Chair:** Oh. Okay.

**Mr. Kent:** This is a travesty. This is gerrymandering by Governor Gerry. I mean, I don't want to take things to a level that – but frankly I'd have to say that I'm just surprised that Mr. Clark would sign off on this riding. I have to almost wonder whether Mr. Clark has designs on this riding.

**The Chair:** Mr. Kent.

**Mr. Kent:** Yes.

**The Chair:** This is a unanimous report from five commissioners. Okay? Please don't single out one commissioner. Have you written anything in terms of suggestions for dealing with Calgary-Confluence?

**Mr. Kent:** Don't do it.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Kent:** Where you should be doing this in Calgary is in the southeast, southwest, all at the south end, where all kinds of developments have already been approved. Services are going in. Some of them are already being built. There's a major hospital down there, south campus. Even northwest Calgary, as you leave town and you go out past the Olympic Park and you're heading up onto the flats to head out of town, right near the boundary of Calgary. That whole area has got a whole new trunk of water mains and stuff that are sitting on the side that are being buried as we speak. I mean the areas that are approved for growth are not trying to take these little pieces of five different ridings in Calgary that have these major – you might as well call it Calgary-Deerfoot because basically you've just made a highway riding, which nobody crosses.

**Dr. Martin:** Okay. I think you made your point, but keep in mind that this proposal deals with the population. It's in the target range. So your recommendation is that we shouldn't put an extra riding in the downtown core and nearby area of Calgary; rather, it should go in other areas, Calgary south and maybe even northwest. Is that your point?

**Mr. Kent:** Yes, but this isn't Calgary core when you cross over the Deerfoot. That's not Calgary core. That's east.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Kent:** Nobody who lives in Buffer, in those areas I talked about, in Cliff Bungalow, which is practically in my riding: their life has nothing to do with anything on the other side of the Deerfoot and the Bow River. It's a major man-made and natural boundary. If you live in the city and you look at this riding, you just scratch your head and go: this makes no sense. It's got nothing to do with communities, services, or anything. The rest of my PowerPoint, if Aaron just clicks through it quickly, you'll see is all just: you're not meeting your own criteria. You're ignoring them.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Kent:** It detracts entirely from the credibility of your report, with all due respect.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you. We will have access to your PowerPoint.

I want to open it up for some dialogue. We're really time limited with the presenters, so Dr. Martin, any questions of Mr. Kent?

5:50

**Dr. Martin:** Well, yeah.

Thank you for the presentation. It's quite frontal, but you allude to a solution, and I want to press you further on that because if this is, in your terms, a no-go scenario, then do you have any more specificity about what a proper solution would be? Over and above, you did say you thought it would be best to go into the south, say. Do you have any more description you might offer around the solution?

**Mr. Kent:** Well, I thought that the hybrid type of riding that you talk about in your report clearly makes sense. You know, I totally respect the historical rural, urban, suburban, all these things. I understand them, but I also think there's merit in what I think is your conclusion that perhaps life would be less polarized if there were some more of these ridings. I think you say there are about 18 of them, if I remember correctly, in the report, so I don't see why you couldn't do some finessing all across the south of Calgary and maybe even coming up around by Tsuu T'ina where there's massive expansion going on there of a commercial basis, so I think there's a lot of residential to follow, and work that way.

I don't see, for instance, that Calgary-Buffalo is going to grow anymore. You know, I don't even think the parts that you're adding in on the other side of the Deerfoot and whatever to make Confluence are areas of tremendous growth because I think they're already built-out, single-family type areas. So I don't think there's a worry that Buffalo is suddenly going to go to 70,000 or 68,000 or whatever your upper limits were. I don't think Buffalo is going to change that much. There aren't a bunch of cranes in the sky anymore, and there aren't any on the horizon, pardon the pun.

I think the focus has to be south, but I did happen to notice this brand new big water thing going in on the north side of the highway just leaving Calgary recently, and I thought: oh, okay; well that's opening up all this land just to the northwest, so clearly somebody is going to be building in there.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Samson, any questions or comments?

**Mrs. Samson:** I do have a comment. First, I'd like to thank you for your presentation and taking time out to talk to us, but to me working with these maps, it was never cut and dried that we're taking, like, from the neighbour Elbow and moving it around; it was that Buffalo had a high population before we started.

You know, what I saw was this cascading effect of starting at the top, like with a community or an electoral division like Calgary-North East that was sitting at 85,000, and you just try and move those numbers around, move the boundaries around. That would decrease the population, and then it just starts cascading, if you get my effect. That's how Confluence came to be, because of the cascading effect. It wasn't just a single change of one electoral division. It was a series of a lot, practically the top of Calgary right

down to that area. So I agree with you that we can look at tweaking here or there, but this one was not simple by any means.

I will defer to my other colleagues to maybe give you more detail, but I was there and that's what I saw and that's what I agreed on.

**Mr. Kent:** Well, I appreciate your comment, but when you're done or whenever, there are only seven or eight slides on my PowerPoint and it's all big bullet points.

I mean, you'll see that the riding just makes no sense for all the reasons that you're supposed to be following. I'm sympathetic to the problem, but it just, to me, makes no sense at all. It's not going to be some place that I would want to be the MLA in the sense of feeling like: okay, I've got these communities of Calgary, and they're all sort of drawing from the same places that they do things or buy things. You know, it's just a mishmash of the big areas, open areas, and undeveloped areas in between, or the undevelopable areas because of the highway and the river and the mandatory green space back from the river and flooding and all that sort of stuff. I know you probably don't want to go back to the drawing board, but it's just not good.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Well, we know we have to go back to the drawing board in some cases.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

**Mr. Evans:** Yes.

Thank you for your submissions. You've made some good points with respect to Calgary-Confluence breaking all the rules of the legislation, and it certainly breaks a lot of them. What you've suggested in terms of putting, you know, that riding somewhere in the southeast, for example you mentioned the Tsuu T'ina Nation, and that's come up previously when we were having public hearings in Calgary earlier this week. What's your thought of moving that into a hybrid riding?

**Mr. Kent:** Moving Tsuu T'ina into a hybrid?

**Mr. Evans:** Right.

**Mr. Kent:** I mean, I don't have the benefit of the amount of information that you've had and everything, and believe me, this isn't my hobby.

**Mr. Evans:** Just the concept of the nation being part of a Calgary riding in terms of the growth that you've mentioned that's going to take place out there, because that's the case. Does that feel right? Does it seem like an odd fit?

**Mr. Kent:** As a Calgarian and, as I said, as a cyclist who's been all around all these paths, that seems to me to be a no-brainer to be an area that would be part of Fish Creek because, frankly, that's the way the land flows. You know, now I'm just thinking aloud. If you want to talk about reconciliation and respect for natural boundaries in the land and everything, I mean, it almost starts to write its own story.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. I'm glad I asked the question. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** No questions from me.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Kent. We are under some time limits, and let me say that you seem to be a rare Calgarian. You have no problem with hybrid

ridings. We hear a lot of negatives from Calgarians against hybrids. Anyways, thank you for your presentation. We will review your PowerPoint in detail and conjoin that with your oral presentation. Thank you for coming.

**Mr. Kent:** Thank you for your time. As they say in your business, Mr. Chair, hard cases make bad law. Good luck to you all.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, and please remain to hear the rest of the presentations. It's always helpful to hear what others say.

**Mr. Kent:** Yeah. No. I intend to.

**The Chair:** Now who's our next – I lost my sheet here.

**Mrs. Samson:** It's right here.

**The Chair:** Oh. Laura Svab.

**Ms Svab:** Hello.

**The Chair:** Hello. Good evening.

**Ms Svab:** Good evening. I sent my presentation in as well.

**The Chair:** Okay. We try to keep it to about six or eight minutes and then a few minutes for questions. Please proceed. Tell us where you're from and what ridings you're commenting on.

**Ms Svab:** My name is Laura Svab, and I'm the mayor of the town of Blackfalds. We appreciate your time this evening to hear our presentation. Then the next slide is just a picture of me with my phone number and e-mail address, if you guys need to connect with me later on. Then slide 3 is just the outline of my presentation, and then slide 4 is when we get into the presentation.

We are part of the Lacombe-Ponoka area right now, and we found that the benefits from being with Lacombe and Ponoka: our MLAs for our communities are the same, and we have existing collaborations with them. It ties in with both highway 2 and highway 2A corridors. The boundary of the population is less than the new proposed boundary, and the constituents are familiar with the riding, reducing confusion during elections. We feel that we should continue as a north-south boundary instead of an east-west boundary.

**6:00**

If you'd go to slide 5. We understand that this is the proposed boundary for our thriving community. The benefit that we see for this new proposed boundary is that we will share the same MLA with the city of Lacombe and parts of Lacombe county. It improves the population equity, supports the effective representation mandate, and meets legal requirements for electoral fairness, and we will have an MLA that is the same MLA for our Red Deer Catholic school divisions, which we've never had before, as well as our Wolf Creek public schools, which we still share right now. But we would welcome minor revisions to help focus our wants and needs in our political forum.

Some challenges that we see with this proposal are that it's a larger geographical area and it covers more distance, reducing accessibility. Right now for a constituent to see our MLA, it takes them a 10-minute drive to Lacombe. In the proposed boundary it could be up to 45 minutes if we have to drive to Rocky Mountain House, and then vice versa for the MLA. It'll take time for us to build a new relationship with the new MLA.

The population will be higher in the proposed new boundary than in the current one. Changing boundaries could split our existing economic or social networks, thereby reducing advocacy efficiency

between municipalities along highway 2 corridor. Adding more municipalities to the boundary, Bentley and Rocky Mountain House, may make it difficult to get the attention required for local issues, reducing local influence and accessibility. And the six electoral divisions in the western and central non-urban areas of the province will be consolidated into five, which is taking away one of our rural ridings from central Alberta.

We would like to propose some revisions that we would like the commission to strongly consider. I'm just checking to see if I need to switch up. Okay. The Blackfalds population is about 12,000. With a change in the boundary, we would like to suggest that Blackfalds' name be added to the boundary. We've never had our name in the boundary before, so it would be great for our constituents. We would like the commission to consider keeping the boundaries north and south and closer to our demographics and existing economic networks, rather than being spread out with communities with different demographics and challenges.

The town council for the town of Blackfalds wishes to express the following concerns regarding the proposed changes to the electoral boundaries affecting our community.

**Naming of the boundary.** Again, we would love to have Blackfalds in the name, as it's never been in the name before, and our population, again, is almost 12,000.

**Economic consideration.** The town would request to be aligned with other municipalities along the highway 2 corridor like Lacombe, Innisfail, or Sylvan Lake, and hopefully we would be able to include Joffre because they're only, like, a 10- or 15-minute drive and there are a couple of plants out there.

**Our increased geographical area.** The proposed boundary encompasses this significantly larger area, which will increase travel distance for the MLA, again, and this may reduce accessibility for residents and increase costs associated with the MLA to communities within our riding.

**Then on the next slide: loss of established relationships.** The town has built a strong working relationship with our current MLA. A boundary change would require time and effort to establish a new relationship, potentially delaying advocacy and collaboration on key issues.

**Impact on education representation.** Blackfalds is part of the Wolf Creek school division. Under the proposed changes, the town would no longer share the same MLA as the rest of the division, which could hinder co-ordinated advocacy for education-related matters, but we do welcome part of this change as we would have the MLA sharing with the Red Deer Catholic regional school division.

**Disruption of economic and social networks.** Again, adjusting boundaries may split existing economic and social networks along highway 2 and the 2A corridor. This fragmentation could reduce the efficiency of regional advocacy and collaboration between municipalities.

**Then reduction in electoral areas.** The reduction from six to five, again, would negatively impact the efficiency and effectiveness of representation as MLAs will be responsible for larger and more diverse constituencies.

Then on the next slide, in light of these concerns our council respectfully requests that the Electoral Boundaries Commission reconsider the proposed changes to ensure fair, effective, and accessible representation for the residents of Blackfalds and our surrounding communities. We understand that this is the proposed boundary for a thriving community. We would welcome minor revisions to help focus our wants and needs in the political forum. As I have mentioned in previous slides, we would request that the commission look at some revisions.

At this time I would welcome any questions.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Clark, can we start with you?

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mayor. That was a fantastic presentation. There's nothing we love more than folks bringing potential solutions to us.

**Ms Svab:** Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** We have lots of folks who will offer things they're concerned about, but bringing some concrete solutions and potential remedies I think is really impressive, so thank you.

You know, I guess one of the things we really are challenged with is the population shifts in Alberta. The significant influx of population that's landed largely in the major cities has really ended up with a lot of imbalance, but also I know Blackfalds has grown enormously. I knew it was over 10,000; didn't realize it was 12,000. That's really significant, so absolutely I think adding the name is a potential. I can't commit to that by any means, but it's certainly something that we could consider.

I guess I maybe just wanted to get a sense, in the proposed constituency between Blackfalds, Rocky Mountain House, kind of what the highways are like. I mean, I drive highway 11 on a pretty regular basis – cell coverage, things like that. I'd just ask you to reflect a little on the difference between that and what we see in the far north and what we heard earlier today, as we did the same session for folks from the far north, Peace River country and that Slave Lake area, where the drives will be five and six hours, and a lot of that will have no cell coverage at all. Maybe you can just tell me a bit about what the actual conditions are like in terms of highway access, cell coverage, and things.

**Ms Svab:** Well, I've only been out to Rocky Mountain House, probably in the last three years, maybe five times, but I'm pretty sure the cell coverage is fine, and they are expanding the highway out there. There will be a lot of construction as they do the divided highway. But, I don't know, we've never changed constituencies that far before. The thing our council had talked about most was the economic divide because, highway 2, we've always been along that corridor, and our relationships have been with our north and south communities.

**Mr. Clark:** Great. Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mr. Evans, any questions?

**Mr. Evans:** Yes. Can you tell me about the connectivity between Blackfalds and Red Deer, for example? In terms of a service hub, do Blackfalds residents go to Red Deer for their shopping?

**Ms Svab:** Yeah. They go to Red Deer and Lacombe because it's 10 minutes to either Red Deer or Lacombe, so everything is nice and close for us. But we also have shops and stuff that have opened up in Blackfalds, and we never had that before. So over the last four or five years we've actually grown with businesses as well as a lot of residential.

**Mr. Evans:** You've made a significant point about the boundary or the flow of the constituency being north-south rather than the way it is here, east-west, so can you explain why there is no east-west continuity there or flow?

**Ms Svab:** Well, most of our residents, if they don't work in town, they'll work either in Lacombe or Red Deer. Some may go out to Sylvan Lake, but most of our working residents do go to Red Deer or Lacombe. I don't feel like we have a lot of residents that would

travel to Rocky Mountain House at all. I don't know if that answers your question.

6:10

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah, it does. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Okay. Susan.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your presentation.

**Ms Svab:** You're welcome.

**Mrs. Samson:** I had been reading some of the written presentations and wondering in my own mind: the north-south connection that has been proposed by more than just yourself, that would go as far as Penhold and Innisfail, I didn't see that. I hadn't contemplated that. Can you just expand on that? I'm going to throw another question at you at the same time, and that is that Gull Lake is cut in half, the top of Gull Lake, which is Ponoka county. Is that an inclusion that you would support? Rather than split the lake, we go right to the north end of the lake and take in those county residents that are surrounding the water. Thank you. If you could answer those two.

**Ms Svab:** Yeah. I feel that keeping the lakes together would be great just because it's one community, and I feel like if you're shifting the lake and have it split, to me it doesn't make any sense. We have great partnerships with Penhold and Innisfail as well, and Penhold is probably, maybe 20 minutes from here, and Innisfail is maybe 30 minutes from here. I know that the previous mayor as well as myself, like, we do communicate with the mayors, if not every three months, more than we can.

So we can build those relationships and those ties. It won't be as strong as Lacombe, but Lacombe is only 10 minutes, and we've developed a trimunicipal party between Lacombe, Lacombe county, and Blackfalds. We're hoping to have more things happen between our three for now.

When I was talking to the Sylvan Lake mayor, she said that sometimes it's great to have more than one MLA around your riding. So if we had to go more south, at least we still would have the partnerships with our northern enjoined communities and still be able to share, like, two MLAs instead of one. We know that eventually we're going to have to split because we keep growing.

**The Chair:** Anything else?

**Mrs. Samson:** No. Thank you very much.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you very much for your presentation. I was particularly interested and sparked by your remarks about the population growth in Blackfalds and your expectations for continued prosperity. That's where I want to go. I want to ask you: what characterizes the economy of Blackfalds? Now, I put a canoe in the Red Deer River just out of Blackfalds when I was younger, but I mostly know Blackfalds as I drive by on highway 2. My impression of it is that it's a very important centre for agricultural supply services, but I don't know anything more about your economy. Perhaps you could expand upon that.

**Ms Svab:** Just west of the highway, Lacombe county has the business area there, but we split the tax revenue just because we have to run the water lines and the waste-water lines under the highway. That's more of our industrial area. Then, again, Lacombe county in the Burbank area is more industrial, and in our community itself where we have two grocery stores now, we keep getting restaurants and fast-food places or pizza places, so it's coming.

We're going to have to look at eventually adding more commercial land to Blackfalds. We have some, but we don't have anything for big box stores, and we're not really sure if a big box store would want to come to Blackfalds, just because we are 10 minutes away from Red Deer.

**Dr. Martin:** Well, you never can tell.

**Ms Svab:** Exactly.

**Dr. Martin:** Once you start to build a hub concept, it often becomes attractive to the warehouse, particularly next to the big highway.

If I might, I just want to press you further on your remark about the connection with Red Deer. You suggested that a very large portion of your populace work and perhaps play, but certainly work, in Red Deer. Is that the case? Has that always been the case, and do you expect it to continue?

**Ms Svab:** Yeah. It's always been the case, and I do expect it to continue.

I should mention, because it wasn't in the presentation, that we are about 38 per cent young population, so 38 per cent is 18 and under. That's our young population. We have a lot of places to play in our community, and we're very appreciative of all the new schools that we've gotten from the provincial government as well.

**Dr. Martin:** Well, thank you very much.

**Ms Svab:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you, Mayor Svab. Now, let me be direct and tell you that we can make no promises on naming, but I'm sure the symmetry of going alphabetical would be your preference, right?

**Ms Svab:** As long as our name is in the title, I'm fine with it, whatever it is.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, thank you so much.

**Ms Svab:** You're welcome.

I've talked to both of the MLAs, Johnson and Dreeshen, so I know where their plans kind of lie, too, so I appreciate being able to speak with them and understand where they want to go with this, too.

I thank you guys so much for your time.

**The Chair:** Okay. I think we'll be hearing from one for sure, if not both of them, tomorrow, later.

**Ms Svab:** Yeah. Perfect.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mayor Svab.

Our next presenter is Marc Slingerland.

**Mr. Slingerland:** Good evening.

**The Chair:** Good evening. Please identify yourself and where you're from and which electoral divisions you wish to comment on.

**Mr. Slingerland:** Yes. Hello. It's Marc Slingerland from Lethbridge. Some of my comments may apply more generally, but I'll be speaking particularly in relation to Lethbridge and the surrounding ridings.

**The Chair:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Slingerland:** Okay. Thank you to the members of the commission for the work that went into the initial report, the

opportunity to provide further responses. I wish you every success in sorting through the huge volume of correspondence that you have provoked. It's clear from your report that you have taken seriously your statutory duty to prioritize effective representation.

Overall, it seems to me that there are three basic impediments, categories of problems, to providing that effective representation across the province. First, in terms of urban ridings, density of population brings its own challenges. There's a greater density of communities, organizations, perspectives. That can be challenging to represent effectively.

Second, rural ridings. The expanse there of the territory is the challenge, the requirement for travel, the number of different jurisdictions and institutions to represent across a wide area.

And the third issue is between the two, the urban-rural divide, the idea that these two types of ridings are fundamentally different from one another, that their issues are different, and that the priorities of the citizens and the representatives of urban and rural ridings are at odds.

What I found interesting is that your interim report builds a very good case for the legitimacy of hybrid rural-urban ridings, but after throwing that door open, you've chosen not to walk through it and incorporate hybrid ridings in Lethbridge. My primary purpose in speaking to you this evening is to urge you to reconsider this. I believe that hybrid urban-rural ridings address all three of the major representation issues that I've identified.

First of all, the rural-urban divide. By definition, having a hybrid riding helps to bridge that. A representative of a hybrid riding must consider both rural and urban perspectives and seek solutions that are beneficial for both. Particularly in the Lethbridge area, this just makes so much sense. It's difficult to promote infrastructure development, economic development, agrifood corridors, any of the priority issues for rural areas of southern Alberta without considering the implications for Lethbridge as the commercial hub of the region, nor for Lethbridge without thinking about the population that comes to Lethbridge to work and access services.

**6:20**

Just one other example, specifically for First Nations populations. That's one of the communities of interest you need to consider. The on-reserve and urban Indigenous populations: there are differences, but there's a lot of commonality and a lot of people who move back and forth, and having a representative who has seized with both sides of that divide, I think, would be very beneficial. Representing a hybrid riding must necessarily bridge the rural-urban divide.

In terms of the rural ridings around Lethbridge, if some of the population in each of those ridings was urban, the rural component remaining would be smaller, meaning less travel time, opportunity for better connections with those who live there, and an enhanced ability to represent them effectively.

That leaves the urban challenge. One could argue that a hybrid riding dilutes the urban voice. I think that is something you've heard from certainly some of the written comments from Lethbridge. In fact, I think the opposite is true. As I've mentioned, success for the city includes success for its surroundings. That's expressed physically through hybrid ridings.

At least as importantly, the result of having three or four hybrid ridings in Lethbridge would be three or four MLAs who represent Lethbridge in the Legislature. We know that the provincial government sometimes struggles to remember that their third- or fourth-largest population centre is not along the QE II; it's way down south. That forgetfulness is exacerbated by having just two MLAs. That's the same number as Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat, both wonderful places but barely more than half the population of

Lethbridge. So having more voices to speak for Lethbridge would, I argue, increase, not decrease the strength and equity of our representation as Lethbridge.

I would say that hybrid ridings represent solutions to all the most vexing issues for effective representation across Alberta, and I would urge you to enact them in the new representation map for Lethbridge.

Now, I did that within my time, so one other small point. Should the result of the second report be two ridings in Lethbridge, the adjustment you made in your interim boundaries does not really make sense relative to the existing ones.

You're allowing for differential growth between Lethbridge-West compared to Lethbridge-East, and that makes sense. You have access to detailed population maps that I don't, so exactly where the line goes, you're better placed than I am to decide on that, but granted for the sake of argument that 13th Street is historically privileged as the dividing line between the two ridings, that should be maintained as far as possible. The interim report has kind of a bulge midway, which really seems arbitrary. Up in the north that leaves one little chunk of Legacy Ridge on let's call it the wrong side of the boundary. The further north you go, the less that dividing line makes sense. I would suggest probably straight up 13th and then down Scenic Drive across highway 3, pulling a little bit more of the north quadrant into Lethbridge-East would be a lot more logical way to help people remember which riding they're in.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to you again. I wish you all the best in sorting through it all and look forward to the final report.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mr. Slingerland, thank you for your presentation. You've touched on several issues that have vexed this commission, no question. Your skilful compliment about us opening the door but not walking through it certainly speaks to us.

Mr. Clark, any questions or comments to this presenter?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah.

Thank you very much. I'll concur with Justice Miller that this is one of the things we've wrestled with generally. Specifically as it relates to Lethbridge, I can say that we probably have had more feedback on this particular topic than any other. Now, I will say that feedback is running at about a 2 to 1 with the opposite view of yours, for what that's worth, but I think all these views are worth listening to.

I guess I'm just curious. How would you break down that sort of hybrid split in Lethbridge? How would you feel if a constituency was 80 per cent Lethbridge urban and 20 per cent rural, or vice versa, or 90 and 10? Do you feel like the people in the 10 or the 20 would feel like they are being effectively represented?

**Mr. Slingerland:** Yeah. Fair question. Thank you. It depends where. There are places where maybe even a 95 to 5, right? Like, there are little pockets of basically urban population that are sitting just outside of city boundaries that effectively are part of Lethbridge, right? The roads connect. The services aren't provided by the city, but everything they do comes in. So on the western border of the city; there are some of those on the east; on the south there are some; the industrial park in the north. There's a number of areas where there are just little slivers, so even if it was just that much, that would make sense.

For the rest, you know, whether you go with three or four hybrid ridings, there'll probably be a different proportion in each of urban and rural, and I would say that the percentage there doesn't matter as much as the logical linkages between them, right? Particularly the highway corridors would make sense. How much you happen

to take up in a particular quadrant in order to make the numbers work, likely the west would end up with – west Lethbridge has a bit less population now, so perhaps that ends up with a bit less of the urban side if the river is the logical boundary.

Sorry. That's kind of a wandering answer. I guess the short answer would be no. I don't think that there's a particular percentage that needs to be there in order to make a legitimate hybrid riding.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you.

If Justice Miller would permit me, I'd like to ask a second question.

**The Chair:** Sure.

**Mr. Clark:** All right. You said you're from Lethbridge? Do you live in Lethbridge proper?

**Mr. Slingerland:** I live in Lethbridge. I have my whole life, and I have worked outside of Lethbridge for my whole life.

**Mr. Clark:** So why Lethbridge? I love Lethbridge; I've been there many times. The wind occasionally, I was going to say, knocks me for a loop. It occasionally nearly blows me over.

**Mr. Slingerland:** Oh, well, I grew up in Lethbridge, so I fall over when the wind isn't blowing.

**Mr. Clark:** Why don't you live in Coaldale or Taber, you know? What's special and different about living in Lethbridge for you?

**Mr. Slingerland:** Yeah. Great. I didn't have a choice to begin with. I grew up in Lethbridge, but that was interesting. My dad ran a farm supply company, and most of my uncles are farmers. Already at the time I had lots of connections outside. And we've stayed. We appreciate the services, being close to the library, having paved trails, the lake. The amenities in the city are great. But Lethbridge is just small enough of a city that it doesn't feel too urban, and it's the perfect match for our temperament. I would say it's the best of both worlds. I think of myself in kind of a hybrid way, so the riding would reflect that very well.

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

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah. I've got a question in terms of mostly thinking of connectivity in the city. If you're looking at hybrid ridings on the west side, there's no connectivity to the southwest on the west side. You'd agree with that? Can you talk about the connectivity to the north on the west side? What would it connect to?

**Mr. Slingerland:** The north to the west side? Well, I mean, you've got highway 3 running out there, right? That goes straight through Coalhurst, Kipp, depending how far you go, like, Monarch, Nobleford. Nobleford is largely a Lethbridge periphery. If you want to stay on one side of the river, then you run the other way. You've got Picture Butte, Shaughnessy, Iron Springs. The Kainai reserve, obviously, is part of the urban-rural Indigenous population, would come on the west side. There are definitely some connections there.

**Mr. Evans:** Would those connections be to the west side, or would those connections be into, you know, east of the river in Lethbridge?

**Mr. Slingerland:** Well, highway 3 carries on through, of course, but more and more – probably the last time boundaries were being drawn, it would have been much less so. But as you point out, in terms of shifting the population a little bit and allowing for growth

on the west, there's quite a bit of commercial development. There's a new industrial park zone in the west as well, so more and more of the incoming traffic is coming to the west rather than just carrying on. There are things that are on the other side of the river, but I'm not sure that that's much different than the Lethbridge-West riding that currently exists.

6:30

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you. Those are my questions.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your time tonight and speaking with us. I wanted to share with you that we were actually in Lethbridge in person, and what we heard from the people who live there is that they wanted to maintain the status quo. To be fair, we did hear that right across the province. Lethbridge is an easy one to maintain the status quo because of the numbers and because of the deep history of two ridings. I can suggest to you that that isn't always going to be something that any commission can do in the future because Lethbridge is seeing growth, and that isn't always going to be nicely balanced like it is now. I think for my own self I struggled with: what do people tell me, and what works? Man, there was a lot of controversial stuff all around the province. I wanted to share that with you. That's not really a question. It's more, like, to let you know how things come to be, and I understand there are two sides to every story.

Thank you.

**Mr. Slingerland:** Thank you, Mrs. Samson. I appreciate that. I was unfortunately not able to make it to the in-person sessions, though I wanted to, last time around. Yeah. The status quo is attractive. There is a history here. I would argue that history is not determinative for effective representation, and I've tried to explain why I think a change would be an improvement.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you, and thank you for your presentation. It's spurring quite a lot of thought for me. I wanted to direct your attention and run perhaps a thought experiment with you about hybrids. My thinking is this, that rather like we have a lot of the common rhetoric divides, urban and rural – it's posited that there's a dichotomy, and I don't believe it for a moment because there's a whole spectrum of forms of life in between something sort of classically rural where they bail hay, say, and living in a condo and a skyscraper. There are lots of forms of life in between.

It seems to me plausible that a similar story could be told about hybrids also, that you have really big ones and you have relatively small ones that capture what ostensibly are bedroom communities to bigger towns. My thought experiment for you is: if you were doing a minimalist hybrid, would you be looking at, say, Coalhurst, at Coaldale but maybe not looking at Raymond? Would that be how you'd tackle it?

**Mr. Slingerland:** Yeah. I think so. That makes sense. The highway corridors are the connections, right? The distance is not so much as the crow flies but by way of travel pathway. Certainly, Coalhurst is close. There are certainly people who live in Coalhurst because they don't want to be part of Lethbridge, but there are plenty of them who make that commute every single day. Coaldale is functionally an extension of Lethbridge. That entire corridor is developed. There's not really a single mile there that doesn't have some kind of commercial or industrial property.

You know, Diamond City running up, Nobleford I mentioned already goes a bit further out. Then the next bigger set of communities like Fort Macleod doesn't feel as naturally connected to Lethbridge. Again, the Fort Macleod residents: Lethbridge is going to be their service centre – right? – out as far as Pincher Creek, for that matter as far as Fernie. The connection extends out quite a long ways, but indeed it weakens as you get further out.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Slingerland. You know, our Lethbridge round the first time around I think is seared in our memory because it was our first evening, and to some extent I don't think any of us knew what was coming. There were very strong – extremely strong – positions that Lethbridge has been like this since 1909 and why change it, et cetera, et cetera. Then at the end of that evening someone came up with this idea, and it got us thinking, certainly. But change for the sake of change is not a good thing. It's unnecessary in many cases. When you look at the city, it kind of hits the sweet spot. Each side is, you know, well in that target range. In my mind – I'm somewhat thinking out loud here – the only reason that we would move to that situation that you're proposing is if it prevents taking a riding out of the areas outside of the metropolitan areas of Calgary and Edmonton, so to preserve the loss of more rural ridings. We're very cognizant of that. That's a rambling preamble to my next comment.

The individual who presented late in the night – I know we sat till 10 o'clock in Lethbridge; that's memorable – he presented and said: "Look, you've got a model in southeastern Alberta. Medicine Hat is cut into two pieces, and it's mixing with smaller centres and agriculture. Why didn't you do the same with Lethbridge and cut it into four?" Then you had a very strong mix of MLAs that all represent and know both urban and rural issues. It's quite attractive symmetrywise. There's extremely virulent opposition to this idea. We've noticed a campaign, quite frankly, in that area. But what about walking before we run? What if we took half, for example, of Lethbridge-East and hived that off this round? Then the next time there's an electoral redistricting, the other half could be created into two hybrids. What are your thoughts on that?

**Mr. Slingerland:** Yeah. You're talking to me like I'm an expert on where the districts should go, and I guess I am thinking about it more high level, from a principle side. I don't have the maps and the population.

I would say that, if I may quibble a bit with your intro, you know, to preserve rural ridings elsewhere in the province, I think there's an argument to be made for some kind of hybrid in the south also to preserve the viability of the southern rural ridings. The surrounding areas south of Calgary don't quite seem to add up as neatly as the Lethbridge population does, as you said. The last time around this was already a problem, and from the interim to the final report in the last redistricting we ended up with Cardston-Siksika, which is this concave, very, very strange riding. Again, there's a difficult problem there of making all the pieces fit and add up properly.

Now your proposal has Livingstone-Macleod extending to include all of Lethbridge county, which – you want to talk about historical continuity? That isn't it. You do manage to tie back together the Cardston-Magrath-Raymond-Warner link that has been there historically, but there's not really a nice, neat division of the rurals around Lethbridge. I would posit that bringing in a hybrid model in this area would assist with representation of these rural areas irrespective of its impact on rural representation elsewhere.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Okay. Well, thank you. As you know, hybrids are a topic of some discussion leading up to our interim, and we've dealt with them in the interim, and we're hearing a lot about them this time around as well. Thank you very much.

If I could ask you one thing. I don't know if you've provided a written submission, but your comments about the boundaries if we do not change it, your criticism of the tinkering: please send that in so that we can fine-tune whatever we have to do, or we can look at that at least. Thank you very much. You've given us a lot to think about.

6:40

**Mr. Slingerland:** Wonderful. Thank you for the opportunity.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Please stay if you're able to hear the other presentations.

Our next one is Elizabeth Strange.

**Ms Strange:** Hello. Can you hear me?

**The Chair:** Good evening. Yes, we can hear you.

**Ms Strange:** Perfect. Am I good to start?

**The Chair:** Yeah. Please identify yourself and tell us what riding you live in and what ridings you wish to comment on.

**Ms Strange:** Okay. I'm Elizabeth Strange. I live in the Edmonton-Glenora riding, but I'll be commenting on the Medicine Hat ridings. I was born and raised in Medicine Hat and spent most of my life in Medicine Hat, so I feel quite passionately about the Medicine Hat riding despite living in Edmonton. I want to thank the commission for hosting these meetings and for listening to me a second time. I presented in Edmonton in the first round, but still again about Medicine Hat.

My concern is the same that many people from Medicine Hat have expressed, that the boundary simply does not work for the city. I expressed this concern in the first round, that cutting the city in half is not working. People are very confused about which riding they're in, and don't understand why: if you're in this neighbourhood, you're in the north; if you're in this neighbourhood, you're in the south. One is in Brooks; one is in Cypress. It just becomes very confusing. I understand the commission's report that the existing ridings for Cypress-Medicine Hat and Brooks-Medicine Hat are kind of right in the benchmark of where you want the numbers to be, but I think we need to be talking about more than just numbers. We need to be talking about people's actual experience of where they live, where they're working, like, what their connections are in the community.

The preferred solution, in my opinion, is for there to be a Medicine Hat riding, and I had previously proposed that, if needed, you cut off some of the neighbourhoods north of the river and have the Medicine Hat riding be mostly south of the river, and then everything surrounding, so Cypress county and Newell county and Brooks, be a rural riding. The other proposal would be for it to go back to the way it was before the last redraw, which was that it is the city of Medicine Hat but some of the neighbourhoods that are south of highway 1 are cut off and included in the rural.

If those are not acceptable solutions to the commission, then please, please, please make the boundary the river. It simply makes sense for it to be the river. If you have to cut the city in half, it should be the river. It makes no sense for it to be three blocks south of the river downtown and then the strange little triangle that exists around the hospital. That makes no sense. It is incredibly confusing for constituents.

Also, there's a little tiny community called Veinerville that is just east of Medicine Hat. On the map it's this weird little dip that happens in the boundary. Veinerville is a community of about 70 people. It is three streets. They only really go into Medicine Hat and they go into the Cypress side of the Medicine Hat boundaries, but for some reason they were included in Brooks. Veinerville should be included in Cypress-Medicine Hat, not Brooks-Medicine Hat.

That's all I will say. The only other thing I'll add is that I looked through the submissions from the first round, and overwhelmingly the opinion of people commenting on Medicine Hat is for it to be a Medicine Hat riding and a rural riding. However you need to divide the neighbourhoods to make that happen, that was the overwhelming opinion. The overwhelming opinion was also that if you need to divide it, let it be the river. Only one person in the first round said that the current boundaries are great, so for the commission to then propose, "Great; the current boundaries are great," is not reflecting what the feedback of the public is.

**The Chair:** Ms Strange, thank you. You're the first person that's mentioned Veinerville. That tells me you really know Medicine Hat.

Okay. Let me open it up to the panel. I'm going to start off with Dr. Martin. Any questions or comments?

**Dr. Martin:** I've not been to Medicine Hat very many times, but I myself, personally, find that little niggling in the old town rather confusing, but I blame that on geography and the historical circumstances of how the town grew up and the layout of the old town road grid.

**The Chair:** And the previous commission.

**Dr. Martin:** And the previous commission. It's a long-standing issue, isn't it? You know, it is confusing, I suppose. I'm not going to debate that. Although if you go to some of the really big towns, the lines, one could argue, can get equally confusing. It's about respecting and enhancing natural boundaries, I think, and so I think your point is well taken, that if we choose to look again at our interim solution, such as it is, for the Medicine Hat area, that we would again – because we did – debate amongst ourselves this whole business of drawing the line in the middle of the historic part of town rather than at the river, because that is, of course, the great natural boundary. So thank you for your presentation tonight.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark, any questions of this presenter?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you. I know it's maybe more just an observation than a question, and we must have done this earlier, but I'd forgotten. The population of Medicine Hat is 68,000. The population of Grande Prairie is 70,000, but Medicine Hat is split in two, as you say, straight down the middle. Well, maybe not exactly straight down the middle, as you say – shout-out to the good people of Veinerville – but Grande Prairie has a one urban and one hybrid constituency, so it's different approaches for the same set of circumstances.

Now, that said, there are other circumstances that surround the other – you know, there is, as we've discovered here, and the word we use all the time is "a cascading effect." You know, you knock one domino and a bunch of other things fall over, so it isn't quite that simple, I will fully acknowledge. I guess it has just prompted me to think again about that in terms of consistency.

You know, it is very much art, not science, in what we're doing here as well, but it's certainly given me something to think about, so thank you.

**Ms Strange:** Can I comment on that as well?

**Mr. Clark:** Please.

**Ms Strange:** Two things. I think you could solve Brooks-Medicine Hat and Cypress-Medicine Hat without having a knock-on effect of any other riding. Like, within those two ridings, just refigure the internal boundaries, if you will, and it wouldn't have a knock-on effect on the rest of the province. I think there's a solution that can be found just in that little corner of the province. You mentioned Grande Prairie. Sherwood Park is another example where you're proposing a boundary that's a slight difference for Sherwood Park, but it's still giving Sherwood Park their own riding, and then one that's a rural with some of the urban. That's just what Medicine Hat would like to see as well.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you.

Is your concern with Medicine Hat over a hybrid riding? Is that what you're concerned about?

**Ms Strange:** It is the concern of the hybrid riding, and Medicine Hat has long felt like the forgotten corner. I'm sure you will hear that phrase used about Medicine Hat often. When this first boundary was put in in the last commission and then with this report, it certainly feels like the opinions of Hatters are not being heard. It's like you start elsewhere, you start in the cities, and then the cascading effect is, "Well, I guess Medicine Hat gets what Medicine Hat gets, and we're not actually going to listen to the concerns expressed," and Medicine Hat continues to feel forgotten.

**Mr. Evans:** It's an interesting point about Grande Prairie. When you ask the mayor of Grande Prairie and the reeve of Grande Prairie county, they consider Grande Prairie to be two hybrid ridings, and when I look at it, it appears that that is the case albeit slightly. I'm just trying to nail down your concern as to – they say that that hybrid representation strengthens them, and we've heard the same thing from Medicine Hat today and in other presentations. But you're saying that that's not the case, that they are concerned about this hybrid riding concept.

6:50

**Ms Strange:** Well, certainly, to say that someone that lives in the neighbourhood of Kensington in Medicine Hat has the same concerns as someone who lives on a farm right near the Saskatchewan border: like, there's some overlap. But to say that someone who lives in Kensington doesn't have the same concerns as someone who lives in River Heights, that's only a few blocks away: like, that's what doesn't make sense.

**Mr. Evans:** Concerns would be different.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans, we've got to get going.

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your time tonight to spend with us. I guess I'm sort of stuck on the same idea. We've had so much input on hybrids. Can you comment on the representation you've had from your MLA in your hybrid riding of Medicine Hat plus the surrounding rural area?

**Ms Strange:** Right now I live in Edmonton-Glenora. But before I moved to Edmonton-Glenora, I lived in Cypress-Medicine Hat

when it was – south of highway 1 was Cypress. Like, that was the line. So Medicine Hat proper had a riding. Then I lived in the part that was included in Cypress-Medicine Hat, and I will say that I did not ever feel represented by my MLA.

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Ms Strange, I appreciate your presentation because you've given us alternatives. You've not just said: oh, what you've done is wrong; change it. You've given us alternatives.

Now, I recall specifically that you probably presented and others did, too. I'm somewhat familiar with the city. I know Mr. Evans and I looked into why we can't use the river as a border and boundary. We ended up concluding that it would be worse than the alternative that we proposed, which is basically the same as what the last commission proposed. I undertake to do this: seriously look at the river issue again. There's a reason why we didn't do it, and I can't remember what it is. That's the one thing.

Secondly, to go back – you've given us another option – and at least use the 1993 boundaries, which would've been the old Medicine Hat-Cypress riding. I don't know what the rationale for the Bielby commission was, as to why they proposed this. If we do that, we've got to unscramble some eggs that are very baked in, if I can say that.

Anyways, the Veinerville thing is just a forgotten little detail that we'll try to correct. Yeah. We cannot give any guarantees. But we appreciate your interest and your stick-to-itiveness on this and making us do some more homework as to why it is the way it is.

Thank you very much.

**Ms Strange:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. We're running short of time here. Sorry.

Our next presenter is Robert Duiker. We're a half hour late. Mr. Duiker, are you present?

**Mr. Duiker:** Yeah. Well, thank you for the opportunity to speak here. I'm from Rocky Mountain House or eight kilometres east of Rocky Mountain House. The caller Laura, two or three people before me: we agree that we don't want to be in the same riding.

I'll just go. I did e-mail just tonight a copy of the presentation. I'll be using it practically verbatim. As I understand it, the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission is using a 2024 mid-year provincial population – I think you spoke about that in the front matter of this meeting – a number of 4,888,723, making the average population of a constituency to be just below 55,000. And of course, you know, section 15(1) of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act allows for the division of population to range from 41,198 all the way up to 68,662. There is some provision for four outliers to be as low as 27,465. I guess to my purposes right now I'll assume that nothing in central Alberta is going to be among those four outliers.

I understand that the commission has had some tension between representation by population and effective representation. My experience with the previous Electoral Boundaries Commission was that rep by pop was its highest priority, with a goal to bring every electoral division as close to the mean as possible. The legislation act, however, doesn't really support this priority. The provisions of section 14 are there because there is an expectation for effective representation, and previous presenters have, I think, indicated that you are pursuing that quite well, so thank you for that.

It is my recommendation, which is supported by the act, that the commission ought to make use of the full range of possibilities available to it in terms of electoral division population in order to achieve the most effective representation possible. In the

presentation I made to the previous commission, I recommended a formula which took into account both land area and population. I'm not doing that tonight. Section 14 of the act includes other factors, which I'm sure you're aware of. My strong contention is that the legislation doesn't just invite you, but directs you to use the full range of constituency populations, all the way from 41,198 to 68,662, as necessary to achieve effective representation.

In my current riding, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, it's geographically large and I believe – although I don't know this for sure; I don't know its current population – it has a population within those parameters specified within the legislation. Therefore, the status quo is possible, and an argument can be made for exactly that. The current boundaries respect communities of interest like school division boundaries, municipal boundaries, geographic features, and transportation corridors better than the proposed boundaries for Lacombe-Rocky Mountain House.

Rocky Mountain House and Clearwater county get a particularly bad deal from the proposed new boundaries. The proposed boundaries disregard many communities of interest, including religious communities, school communities, and patterns of economic activity where the town of Rocky Mountain House is clearly the economic and social hub for Clearwater county. Provincially funded services like hospitals, schools, and social services are all housed in Rocky. Communities such as Nordegg, Caroline, O'Chiese First Nation, and Sunchild First Nation all maintain close ties with Rocky Mountain House. Our hearts and our wallets are tied to the west country and the Rocky Mountains. Please keep Clearwater county intact. Our identity is closely bound to the mountains and the foothills. That is who we are.

Wildfire management and search and rescue services also have a long history of shared responsibility and co-ordinated efforts all across Clearwater county to the Banff boundary. Policing for Clearwater county and the west country is based in Rocky Mountain House.

I work in a school in Rocky. The new boundaries create a new reality where every class in every school in our town will include students who live in three different electoral divisions. School jurisdictions are in almost constant communication with their political representatives. The proposed boundaries are disruptive. It can be argued that the school division boundaries may be better indicators of communities of interest than even county lines.

The act makes reference to means of transportation and geographic features. Highway 2 is a prominent geographical feature in our province. Connecting Rocky Mountain House to communities on the other side of highway 2 appears to be an attempt to create a community of interest where currently there is none, and this was also a point made by Laura, one of the previous participants.

7:00

For most rural citizens highway 2 is a wall that is seldom scaled. The agriculture is different. The tourism is different. The dependence on oil and gas is different. The recreation is different. Lacombe and Rocky may share rural roots, but we are in reality two very different rural cultures. Furthermore, creating an electoral division where highway 12 is the spine of the riding disregards that communities of interest tied to Rocky Mountain House flow along highways 11 and 22. Please consider building whatever riding you were going to build along either highway 11 or the highway 22 corridor or both.

In summary, please use the full range of population possibilities from 41,198 to consider the status quo with respect to the boundaries in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. Keep Clearwater county together. Recognize highways 11 and 22 as transportation corridors and geographic features that bind communities of interest better than

highway 12 does, and do not create electoral divisions that cross highway 2.

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

**Mr. Duiker:** Sorry for going past time.

**The Chair:** Well, just minimally.

Mr. Clark, any questions of this presenter?

**Mr. Clark:** No, thank you.

I do have a couple of points I'd like to make. Thank you for getting it in under the line there at the end. You've obviously prepared, and thank you very much for your thoughtful submission. You know, how we balance out the geography of rural Alberta, the unique challenges of representing rural communities, far northern communities as well is a big, big challenge for us. The fact that 800,000 or so people have moved into primarily the two big cities over the last eight years or so: there's a whole bunch of balls in the air that we're really trying to juggle.

Just for reference, one thing I've just looked up while you were speaking: in the 2017 report non-Calgary-Edmonton constituencies excluding the north were on average about 1.4 per cent above the mean, the average. We've shifted that down to 1.4 per cent below, so that's about a 2.8 per cent sort of difference in favour of the non two big cities. When you include the far north, that shift is 4.6 per cent more in favour of the remote areas. Now, those are just numbers. That's probably not going to make you, you know, satisfied. It's about much more. I think your core point is that this is not just a mathematical exercise. There's a question of effective representation, but I just wanted to put that out.

The one thing I wanted to pick up on that I thought was interesting is the differences between Lacombe and Rocky and why those are not communities that should be together in a constituency. Can you just tell me a little more about that?

**Mr. Duiker:** Sure. Because of my work I happen to have, you know, friends in Lacombe, but I don't know of anybody else that ever travels to Lacombe from Rocky. When we have something going on at the school where I work, the Lacombe people, like, we're used to driving a lot, and they're used to the highway 2 corridor where everything is kind of conveniently located, so Rocky seems farther from Lacombe than Lacombe is from Rocky. I think that is part of it, but I think the geography does shape us a lot. We are people who live outside. There are a million trails between Rocky and the Rocky Mountains, and we are on them all the time. It's a different people.

Our commonality is with people up and down the foothills. Our shared understanding of each other is throughout the foothills, you know, is along highway 22. I tried to intentionally, like, even though I favour the status quo and I certainly think that Clearwater county must stay together, allow some flexibility, if you want. A better hybrid choice would be Sylvan Lake than Lacombe. I still don't think that's ideal, but it's better than what you presented. Drayton Valley is in the same school division as us, so there is a community of interest that's actually shared if you went north and south. Wild Rose school division includes Breton and Drayton Valley and goes down and includes Caroline, Condor, Leslieville, and Nordegg for that matter. In terms of honouring the criteria that you are endeavouring to follow, like, I understand the difficulties that you face.

I don't know if this is even relevant, but I would say that our whole area has electoral boundary committee fatigue, particularly with respect to the federal electoral boundary commission, which kind of used Yellowhead to solve every problem all the way down

the highway 2 corridor and created a riding that, you know, extends all the way from Cache Creek all the way down to Springbank, including Banff. It's just a ridiculously large riding, but there a hybrid model would have helped us because the avoidance of hybrid just created this vast, crazy riding that should have been called Forestry Trunk Road because that's the only thing that binds it.

I guess I would like to see you take it easy on Rocky because we've been, you know, kicked around a little bit. Yeah.

**The Chair:** Okay. We're going to move to more questions, sir.

**Mr. Duiker:** Yeah. Go ahead. Sorry. I'll stop talking now.

**Mr. Evans:** This has come up a number of times from other presenters. It's about school districts and those boundaries. You said this, and I think I got it down, but I want you to explain this to the commission. You said: school district boundaries are possibly better indicators of communities of interest than county boundaries. Tell me about that.

**Mr. Duiker:** Yeah. I think schools are community hubs, and the schools do – like, you know, I was at an administrator meeting today of Wild Rose school division principals, and that meeting was in Drayton Valley. We communicate all the time. We share ideas, so our schools sort of become a little like each other. Our school communities start to mirror each other a little bit.

**Mr. Evans:** Mr. Duiker, your school boundaries, the school district that you're in: how do they run in relation to where we are with this proposed Lacombe-Rocky Mountain House electoral district?

**Mr. Duiker:** Yeah. You can see that, like, Rocky Mountain House itself is in Lacombe-Rocky Mountain House, but there are two of your proposed electoral divisions which are very, very close to Rocky Mountain House. One includes Caroline and another one includes Nordegg, and I have kids in my classes from both of those places. So there's that.

There's certainly a case that if a division is lobbying your MLA for new schools, you know, then I don't know if it's better to have three MLAs lobbying halfheartedly or one wholeheartedly, but I think the model that we have is working very well, and the legislation really kind of points to sort of these kind of communities being preserved. Yeah. Like, I throw out Drayton as a possibility because it just gives you one more thing you can consider. My preference is the status quo, actually, but I have a pretty good hunch that's not the way it's going.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your time tonight. I was of the impression that people along the highway 2 corridor in the area of Red Deer – and when I think about it, I'm thinking about Lacombe, Blackfalds, Red Deer, Penhold, and that area – use highway 11 and highway 12 to access the Rocky Mountains and come through Rocky Mountain House. We know that there is a twinning of the highway that's going to continue to occur that has ended just outside of Eckville and is going to continue from Eckville into Rocky Mountain House. Can you talk about the importance of that transportation corridor and what linkages to central Alberta that gives Rocky?

**Mr. Duiker:** Yeah. Like, I don't know if I'm the best person to actually sort of advertise for it. I do think better corridors are important. I mean, there is a lot of traffic that goes through Rocky. Personally I would favour a bypass around Rocky. It doesn't seem

that I'm in a majority there. On a summer day or on a holiday weekend it's extremely busy, that east-west corridor, so it makes a great deal of sense. I don't know if there's any eventual plan to twin it further to the west, but the traffic does at Rocky distribute to the north to Drayton Valley and to the west, so it does make some sense to continue on two-lane highways after Rocky both north and west. Yeah. It's a lot of tourist traffic that goes through and stops for gas. I guess that's helpful, but I don't know if there's going to be a new buildup of businesses along that highway because it's still a highway that goes from somewhere to nowhere in a way.

7:10

**Mrs. Samson:** Okay. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** I have no questions. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Duiker. You've compressed a lot into – I know I've been a little pushy on the timeline here because we haven't had dinner and we've got 10 more presenters. Thank you so much, and please remain and hear the presentations of the other members of the public if you can.

**Mr. Duiker:** If you want to eat, just turn your camera off and you can eat.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Our next presenter is Anna Hanson.

**Mr. Roth:** She's not here.

**The Chair:** Oh. She's not here. We're all good to skip the break and keep soldiering on? Okay.

Cameron Galisky.

Well, we've made up 10 minutes right there.

**Mr. Galisky:** Hello there, Justice and Commission. Thank you very much. You know, they do say if you're going up for trial ahead of the judge having lunch, your conviction rate is substantially higher, so I hope that doesn't apply tonight.

For a bit of background, I'm a fifth generation central Albertan, and I'm also a councillor for the town of Penhold. I've lived here since 2009.

In regard to the proposals I believe there is a very unique opportunity that has yet to be considered for the central Alberta region, and I found it very fascinating that there was a strong focus on communities of interest. Now, that being said, Blackfalds: the mayor illustrated earlier a remarkably good point of that community being centred mostly on the QE II corridor. Penhold is a remarkably similar story. I consider Blackfalds our twin community in many respects. There's been an exponential amount of growth in this region of the province, and particularly for the Innisfail-Sylvan Lake riding situated with Red Deer; in between there has been a great deal of growth.

With that being said, when I looked at historical data for our riding, notwithstanding the period for the 1940 to the 1971 elections where we were within the riding of Red Deer, there was this east-west access going from Innisfail out to the communities adjacent to highway 21 and the communities along highway 2A, which is particularly the hamlet of Springbrook within Red Deer county, the town of Penhold.

What I would like to suggest for the commission's consideration is that we end up incorporating the community of Blackfalds – I think that would be a remarkably good addition to the riding – and

transitioning it more towards that corridor basis with the communities along highway 2, highway 2A, and highway 21.

The communities of the highway 21 area are all very interlinked with concern to their agricultural backgrounds and demographics. They have very similar trajectories of growth and challenges, and that commonality of challenges and demographics is actually shared amongst all of the communities proposed within that map. Penhold, Innisfail, Delburne, Elnora, Pine Lake area, the community of Trochu and Blackfalds: we all have these commuter patterns and work patterns that flow in and out of the city of Red Deer. To put things in perspective, for example, my brother has his job commuting to Blackfalds every single day around the city of Red Deer. For another perspective, the community of Delburne has a doctor that practices both within the community of Delburne but also has a practice within the town of Blackfalds.

These communities have a blue-collar, bedroom-community oriented mindset with an agricultural mix in between as well. I think a riding with those proposed boundaries would actually align very well with those communities of interest, which I think is the key principle here, without significantly diminishing the population scales that make it a suitable riding. The community of Sylvan Lake would, of course, be shifted out of the riding, but I don't believe that's necessarily an unwelcome development for them either.

As it might have come across your ears as well, recently Sylvan Lake initiated the process of investigating becoming a city. Sylvan Lake's trajectory of growth is quite large and it's actually one of the most recent additions to our riding as it stands, which I believe was as of the 1979 or 1981 elections. Sylvan Lake has a strong tourism industry. Its demographics are significantly varying on account of the tourism industry and the investments within the community. The demographics and communities of interest are not as congruent to the population trends for the rest of the area and would be much more congruent with the proposed map.

Churchill said that brevity is the soul of wit, so I don't want to steal any more of your time, but I'm very interested in any particular questions you may have. I'm just reading my notes to see if there's anything else I'm missing. I think, you know, I would just echo, perhaps, that the east-west proposal for the riding north of us might not be as congruent to communities of interest, and Eckville, Caroline, Lacombe, and Sylvan Lake not bisecting the lake would be a pretty appropriate option as well.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Galisky. While I remember, tell me: what's the population of your proposed riding?

**Mr. Galisky:** The population, as I understand it, with some variation – for example, the previous census information from my town illustrates 3,500. We've done a municipal census illustrating it's 4,000. I suspect it's around 51,000, 52,000. If what the map itself has incorporated, it probably could be as high as 53,000, but it would be very difficult to say with absolute certainty. What I would say is that Blackfalds and Penhold have very exponential growth rates. Innisfail has a modest growth rate. Delburne and Elnora have modest growth as well, but you can reliably count upon, by the end of this cycle, that riding being very well within the target. As I know, the Supreme Court set out that there can be a roughly 10 per cent variance at the minimum, so that would be my rough educated guess.

**The Chair:** Actually, the Supreme Court said 25, I think. What would you name it?

**Mr. Galisky:** Well, you know, that's a great matter of contention. What I would suggest is perhaps Blackfalds-Delburne-Innisfail. I

would always selfishly love, as a councillor, to have my town's name in the riding, but I believe that is unnecessary at this juncture. I would leave it to the prerogative of the commission, however.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** Everybody leaves us with the difficult problems, right? Yeah. Thank you.

I'm very interested in this, and I'm glad that you had a PowerPoint presentation so that we will be able to review it at greater leisure as we deliberate further. I agree that communities of interest have to be a very prominent part of our deliberations, and you, like many submissions we have received in the last round, point out, first of all, the nature of the agricultural communities divided by highway 22 and so on and so forth.

To come back to one of the things you asserted, and that is your set of connections with Blackfalds. Perhaps you could say a little bit more about that. Is that part of your work as councillors, to discuss planning arrangements and the like?

**Mr. Galisky:** Thank you very much, Doctor. To put things in perspective, when we were all doing our municipal training at the start of this term, following the most recent election, we all did so in Blackfalds. They definitely are a matter of discussion. We mingle and mix at quite a great deal of events. We do collaborate quite frequently when the opportunity arises on account of the very similar demographic and economic profiles that our communities appreciate. We're both known as bedroom communities. It's very seldom you'll run into a resident of either my town or the town of Blackfalds that does not have a primary occupation within the city of Red Deer, so that commuting lifestyle, the distance is very comparable and the economic measures of growth are very similar, although my town is a smaller one by all means.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**Mr. Galisky:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

Good presentation. I wanted to ask you: how important do you think it is to have a look at the county boundaries? Right now Red Deer county is encompassed entirely within the new Sylvan Lake-Innisfail riding. How important is it to maintain that connection and continuity to the area?

7:20

**Mr. Galisky:** Well, I suppose from a matter of personal perspective, what I would say is that the opportunity to have representation from an additional perspective in the Assembly may not necessarily harm. What I would also say is that as a matter of fact, I believe to the best of my knowledge, going back to the 1971 election and until this proposal, Red Deer county has always had at least one or two MLAs representing it in the Assembly in some degree.

Now, I believe the current proposals, well, have their logic to them as well, and my map has its logic as well. It keeps the majority and the broad strokes of the county together, but I think it's an opportunity for it to be a force multiplier rather than a diminishment of the county's congruence. The boundary in the east has always been the boundary of Red Deer county. As for the west, there are opportunities with that, I would say. I don't believe it would be to their harm or detriment.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Evans.

**Mr. Evans:** Yeah.

Thank you very much for your presentation. What I'm interested in in terms of your proposal: where would Sylvan Lake go?

**Mr. Galisky:** Thank you for that good question. I think Sylvan Lake would be most appropriate being grouped into Lacombe, as it actually handily remedies some of the discussion points that Mr. Duiker raised with concern to representation for the Rocky Mountain House region. Sylvan Lake and Lacombe have very established commuter patterns. There are a lot of folks who go from Lacombe to relax at the beach at Sylvan Lake, and there are a lot of people who do their commercial business from the agriculture sector surrounding Sylvan Lake up in Lacombe as well as the Red Deer area.

I think with Sylvan Lake branching out towards the possibility of becoming a city, it opens a unique opportunity to create a hybrid riding in central Alberta that has very meaningful commonalities. There is a lot of intermixing with that community as well. But that would establish a stronger basis for that east-west axis proposed and would allow for more space to ensure effective communities of interest across the central Alberta region.

**Mr. Evans:** I don't know if you heard one of the presenters – it was the mayor of Blackfalds – this evening talking about the connectivity between Lacombe and Blackfalds. What do you say to that?

**Mr. Galisky:** Well, I would say that connectivity – there definitely would be those links with those communities. But as well what I would say is that Lacombe's circumstances are rather unique respective to Blackfalds. I believe that their challenges in terms of effective representation from a member would be somewhat different to that extent. Lacombe is more of an academic community with its college. It's very agricultural service based whereas with Penhold and the surrounding area of Red Deer county south of the city there in Blackfalds there is a very specific focus on commuter patterns for industrial activity and blue-collar work, which is less so in Lacombe. I believe it fits very strongly with Sylvan Lake compared to for that.

**Mr. Evans:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark, any questions?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you very much. First off, I assume Aaron has a copy of that slide deck so we can see it up close. I'm at a bit of a disadvantage here, being online, to see it up close. That is an interesting proposal. I wanted to ask you about your thoughts. Mrs. Samson asked about Red Deer county. What about Red Deer, the actual city? I mean, what if we created a hybrid constituency that had a piece of Red Deer city and combined that with Penhold and some surrounding areas?

**Mr. Galisky:** I suppose the challenge that one might find with that – it is a very interesting quandary, and I have given it some thought – would be that the corporate limits of the city of Red Deer are a very strong indicator of where the residential population presently exists. If you were to expand it towards Penhold to create hypothetically such a hybrid riding, it would create the dilemma of needing to splinter up all of central Alberta as a cascade. Immediately south of Red Deer's Gasoline Alley, which has residential growth now, 200 or 300 residents I could imagine are living in Liberty Landing area and acreages interspersed, but you would have to amalgamate a significant

amount of territory south down that corridor to make that hybrid riding hit the population targets.

Red Deer's growth right now kind of varies. There are periods where it has explosive growth and less so because of its role with the oil and gas industry, and I'm just not sure if in 10 years' time that would be within the targets in a meaningful manner, or it would diminish that opportunity for the smaller outlying communities, the county, and these towns to continue to have representation broadly reflecting their overall interests compared to the remarkably different ones of the city, I would say.

**Mr. Clark:** Can you just speak a little more to what you mean by the difference in interests between the city and those other communities?

**Mr. Galisky:** Certainly. For example, right now with the majority of the developments occurring in the county immediately adjacent to the city of Red Deer, it's a lot of light industry, logistics, and retail businesses that mostly service the city. The county is planning growth more on the outlying areas towards the north, which is very congruent with the population patterns north of the city and east of it. That's a lot of acreages, and for a lot of the annexation period proposals it's actually been going more west towards highway 11.

The interests of the area for the city and the rest of the area are a bit different, because we're trying to focus on improving affordability. We have younger demographics, we have less established economic demographics, but we also want to keep our ability to, well, have that meaningful rural connection. For example, if I was at my house right now, I could go out the back door and point towards the cattle farm just down the street from me. That's a remarkably different experience from those living in the Red Deer-South constituency.

**Mr. Clark:** That's very helpful. Thank you.

**Mr. Galisky:** My pleasure. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, commissioners, and thank you, Mr. Galisky, for your fine presentation and question-and-answer.

We're going to want to move on to the next presenter. We've got several to do yet this evening, but you may have all noticed that we've got some technical issues. In other words, Mr. Galisky has frozen. All video has frozen. So we're going to have to, I'm told, shut down the meeting and have everybody re-enter in about – what? – two minutes. Okay. So give us, let's say, four minutes, and we're going to shut it down and then re-enter.

[The hearing adjourned from 7:28 p.m. to 7:31 p.m.]

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you, everyone.

Our next presenter is Marle Roberts.

**Mrs. Samson:** Oh, no. He just said she's not here.

**The Chair:** Oh, she's not.

Valerie Boese.

**Ms Boese:** Good evening.

**The Chair:** Good evening.

**Ms Boese:** Thank you for having me. Mine is going to be very short and brief so you can all go for dinner hopefully.

I'm Valerie Boese, and I live in the Innisfail-Sylvan Lake constituency. Is it your intent to switch the name from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake to Sylvan Lake-Innisfail, or is that a typo?

**Mr. Evans:** Susan, you want to answer that?

**The Chair:** Okay. Why are you asking? Sorry. Let's get to it.

**Ms Boese:** Well, I was just wondering. Has there been any consideration done on the cost effect regarding the name change?

**The Chair:** Go ahead. Anybody can answer.

**Mrs. Samson:** We know that when there are name changes to constituencies or to electoral divisions that it affects constituency associations. Every party would have an association, and then everything attached to it, any marketing materials, letterhead, business cards: all of that would become void. When I look at the 89 ridings across the province, with all the changes proposed, that's going to happen to a lot of them, and whatever . . .

**Ms Boese:** Yeah, but it's . . .

**Mrs. Samson:** Go ahead. Sorry.

**Ms Boese:** Sorry. No. Like, it's the same constituents. It's just that the names are switched around. They're usually in an alphabetical order, and to switch them, the same two names but just switched around, is going to cost us a lot of money.

**The Chair:** Okay. Ma'am, I think I can maybe answer from where the commission is coming from. So existing right now, the riding is Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, right? We've not changed the boundaries materially at all, but we've changed the name to Sylvan Lake-Innisfail. Is that your concern?

**Ms Boese:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. It's basically a policy decision. Historically it's not been alphabetical. I think maybe historically it's been a bit of a mosaic or a mixed bag, but we've taken the policy that the larger municipality or centre shall go first. That is the reason for the name change, and it affects a small minority of electoral divisions. For example, it used to be Brooks-Medicine Hat and Cypress-Medicine Hat. We've changed it to Medicine Hat-Brooks and Medicine Hat-Cypress. So it's the predominant, larger centre. That name goes first. Does that make sense?

**Ms Boese:** Well, not financially, it doesn't because it's still the same two names, and it's going to cost thousands of dollars, taxpayer dollars, which we don't like spending. Taxpayers don't like spending our money foolishly if we don't have to, and it will cost thousands of dollars. Being on the constituency board, we have spent a lot of money on different things with our brand, right? So these kinds of decisions impact the taxpayer, and they're not taken very lightly.

**The Chair:** Could you maybe just flesh that out a little bit? Where is it costing taxpayers money, this name change?

**Ms Boese:** It's going to cost money. Our bank account has to get changed. Our cheques have to get changed. All of our branding that we've done has to get changed. Our pens, our notebooks, our banners, all that stuff will have to get changed, and it's going to cost a lot of money.

**The Chair:** That's for the constituency association, you mean?

**Ms Boese:** That's correct.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Okay. So it's not taxpayers' dollars necessarily.

**Ms Boese:** Well, it is donors' dollars.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Okay.

**Ms Boese:** I've been contacted by different people in our constituency, and they're quite concerned about that. Earlier I heard one of you saying the comment: change for the sake of change is unnecessary. I know you say it's because a larger town coming first for branding and whatever, but this will cost us a lot of money, and I don't see the point.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Any questions or dialogue from the commissioners? Come on. Help me out, commissioners.

**Dr. Martin:** Well, I'm sympathetic to this situation, having myself been in a similar situation with a federal riding. Yes, it does cost money, and reregistering the constituency association takes time as well. It plays havoc with marketing and messaging and so on and so forth, so I am sympathetic to it.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The other thing, if I'm not mistaken, is that once the new boundaries are established by the Legislature, even if we didn't change the name, if we kept it as Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, you would still have to have your reorganization meetings and all that process. You still have to go through it. But you're saying it's the cheques and the pens and that kind of thing that costs money. Okay.

**Ms Boese:** That's correct. The bank accounts. All of that, yes. Rebranding, more or less.

**The Chair:** Yeah. Okay. Well, this was our policy – actually, you're not the first. There is another complaint along those lines that we've received in writing. I don't think we can promise anything, but we'll take a look at it. That's the best we could do or the best we can say.

**Ms Boese:** Thank you. Your consideration in this matter would be greatly appreciated. Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** If you could actually give me an idea what the costs would be, or give us an idea what the proposal, like, what a bank would charge to change those cheques and that kind of stuff.

**Ms Boese:** Well, I can look into it to see and send in what I can come up with. I know that just for our constituents it's going to probably cost us around – I don't know – maybe \$5,000. I'd have to talk to the CFO to find out what it would cost to rebrand at the bank and all that. We don't like to spend any extra dollars if we don't have to.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, thank you.

**Ms Boese:** Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** Our next presenter: Michelle Goldsmith. No? Laurie Miller from Bowden.

**Ms Miller:** Yes. Hi. Good evening.

**The Chair:** Good evening.

**Ms Miller:** Sorry. I was just kind of a little distracted. I was thinking about you all getting out for supper.

**Dr. Martin:** We weren't. No, not us.

**The Chair:** Now that you mentioned it.

**Ms Miller:** You didn't need the reminder. Okay.

Good evening. Thanks for having me. Thank you for the work you're doing on behalf of Albertans as a province. My name is Laurie Miller. I'm proud to serve as the mayor of the town of Bowden, and as a relatively new – actually, let me rephrase that. As a brand new mayor and a person to municipal politics, I'm still learning how all of the pieces fit together and all about the provincial processes as well. But I do know my community and how our residents live day-to-day and how closely we are connected to our neighbours in Innisfail, Penhold, and central Alberta. I'm here today to speak about that strong and long-standing relationship and why Bowden and these communities clearly form a community of interest that should be recognized as you consider future electoral boundaries.

Bowden and Innisfail are closely linked geographically, economically, socially, and historically. The connection didn't happen by accident. It's developed over generations and continues today through shared infrastructure, shared services, and shared daily life. At the centre of that connection is highway 2. For us, it isn't a dividing line; it's a lifeline. It connects our communities and makes it possible for residents to move easily between them in just minutes.

7:40

Historically both Bowden and Innisfail grew alongside the railway in the late 19th century, and that expansion shaped settlement across central Alberta and established our towns as service centres for surrounding and agricultural areas. We grew together, supporting farmers, ranchers, and local businesses that relied on transportation networks to move goods and people. That shared agricultural foundation still influences our economies and our identities today. Transportation has always been central to our relationship, from the railway then to the highway now. Highway 2 enables our residents to shop, commute, attend appointments, and participate in community life across municipal boundaries.

In practical terms, Bowden, Innisfail, and Penhold function as part of the same regional system. Innisfail in particular serves as a key service hub for Bowden residents. People regularly travel there for medical clinics, pharmacies, dental care, senior services, shopping, and professional services. These are not occasional trips. They're part of our everyday life, and they reflect just how integrated our communities truly are.

Education and recreation also demonstrate this shared community of interest. Students from Bowden attend schools in Innisfail, and sometimes the other way around as well. Families participate together in regional sports leagues and arts programs, and our youth grow up playing on the same teams and attending the same events. These shared experiences create strong social bonds that don't stop at municipal borders.

From a governance and economic development perspective, our communities face many of the same opportunities and challenges. We share concerns around highway 2 transportation planning, regional growth, agricultural sustainability, and long-term economic resilience. Decisions affecting one community often have direct implications for the others, which reinforces the importance of shared representation.

I'd also like to speak a little bit to the broader issue of rural representation. Rural communities like Bowden rely heavily on provincial infrastructure and services, particularly the highways and transportation corridors simply because of distance and

geography. Effective representation for rural residents requires MLAs who really understand those realities and who can give them a strong voice at the provincial level. As Alberta continues to grow, especially in the major urban centres, there is a real concern in rural Alberta about losing that voice. Maintaining communities of interest within central Alberta helps ensure rural perspectives remain well represented and well understood.

Equally important are the personal connections between our residents. Families often have members that live in both Bowden and Innisfail. People attend the same churches, volunteer with the same organizations, and support the same causes. This shared regional identity is meaningful, and it matters when considering effective representation.

In closing, I respectfully urge the commission to recognize the importance of keeping Bowden connected with Innisfail, Penhold, and central Alberta within the same electoral boundary. Our communities clearly meet the definition of community of interest, and keeping them together would reflect how our residents actually live, work, and interact every day.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. On behalf of the town of Bowden I appreciate the opportunity to present our perspective.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms Miller.

**Ms Miller:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** If you could just stay for some questions.

Dr. Martin, any questions?

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

Mayor Miller, I wonder if you could speak a little bit about the economy and the particular industries that drive Bowden.

**Ms Miller:** Bowden is basically driven by our agricultural neighbours. We have a large part of our population that is working away because we don't have a huge economic structure within the community. We have about 22 per cent of our population aged 65 and older, so we rely on our neighbouring communities for so many services.

**Dr. Martin:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you for your time tonight. I appreciate it. You mentioned a strong connection between Bowden and Innisfail. I note that Penhold is in that linkage as well, but Penhold is off the highway. It's also a small community of 3,500. Is that a strong linkage to Bowden?

**Ms Miller:** The link goes mostly – with everybody travelling, we have a large percentage working in Red Deer as well, so there's travel with the 2A connection as well.

**Mrs. Samson:** Just one other thing. I just wanted to say that the map that we are proposing for the new electoral division called Sylvan Lake-Innisfail, because Sylvan Lake is the largest municipality in it, currently shows Bowden, Innisfail, Penhold all together with Sylvan Lake. That's what we're proposing, and you're endorsing that, are you?

**Ms Miller:** I am. Yes.

**Mrs. Samson:** Thank you.

**Mr. Evans:** I want to know: is there any connection with Bowden and Trochu? I want to know about how things move east and west

or if they move east and west, you know, from Bowden's perspective.

**Ms Miller:** You know, I really don't have an answer to that question. I know that I travel frequently to the Three Hills-Trochu area myself, but as a community as a whole, as I said, I'm still learning all the dynamics, and I don't have a proper answer for you. Sorry.

**Mr. Evans:** What about movement of people from Bowden to Olds, so going south instead of north on highway 2?

**Ms Miller:** That does happen, of course. With the retail availability in Olds there is quite a bit of travel that way. I believe, though, that most of the work – with our seniors the travel is mostly to the north for medical in Red Deer and through Innisfail.

**Mr. Evans:** I wrote down Red Deer, but then I thought it was Innisfail that you mentioned that they were going to for medical. It was Red Deer, correct?

**Ms Miller:** Well, specialists are usually in Red Deer, but a lot of the family doctor scenarios are in Innisfail, particularly for our . . .

**Mr. Evans:** Is there a family doctor in Bowden?

**Ms Miller:** There is no medical available in Bowden.

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

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark.

**Mr. Clark:** No. No questions for me, but thank you very much.

**The Chair:** I have a question. You've got a prison in Bowden, right?

**Ms Miller:** Just north of Bowden, yes, along the highway 2 corridor, 2A access.

**The Chair:** What percentage of your population of your town would be employed by the prison?

**Ms Miller:** I don't know what that is right now. I know in the past it was considerably higher. I worked there myself for 30 years, but a lot of my age group are retired, and I don't know the numbers right now.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, thank you very much, and thank you for the endorsement and the exposure in getting to know a little bit more of central Alberta. Appreciate it.

**Ms Miller:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Our next presenter, Leah Nelson.

**Ms Nelson:** Good evening.

**The Chair:** Oh, good evening.

**Ms Nelson:** I'm not going to turn on my video because the Internet in our area has proven that it freezes and knocks me off, if that's okay.

**The Chair:** Sure. No problem.

**Ms Nelson:** Thank you, Chair and commissioners. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Leah Nelson, and I'm honoured to be here on behalf of the village of Elnora and

our surrounding communities as part of your review of the Alberta provincial electoral boundaries. We appreciate the important work that you're doing. Electoral boundaries shape how effectively communities are represented and how well our voices are heard in Edmonton and how responsive – sorry; I wrote it down so I wouldn't miss anything – our provincial government can be to the realities on the ground. For rural Alberta especially thoughtful boundary design is essential.

7:50

I'm here today to speak in support of keeping our communities along highway 21 – specifically Trochu, Huxley, Elnora, Lousana, and Delburne – within the same provincial electoral boundary. These communities are not just close on the map; we are deeply connected in our daily lives, our institutions, and our challenges.

Elnora is a small but proud rural village, like many communities in Red Deer county and Kneehill county. Our identity is shaped by agricultural volunteerism and strong family ties. We rely on our neighbours, and we function as part of a regional network rather than isolated towns. One of our clearest examples of this interconnectedness is education. Families in Elnora are proud to send their children to the Elnora elementary school. It is a cornerstone of our community and a place where lifelong friendships begin.

When these students reach high school age, however, they do what every rural student has always done; they have to travel. Students from Elnora, Lousana, Huxley, and Pine Lake attend high schools in Delburne, Trochu, and Innisfail. These aren't arbitrary choices; they reflect long-standing transportation routes, school divisions, planning, extra curricular activities, and social networks. Our children play on the same sports teams, they attend the same graduation ceremonies, parents attend the same school council meetings and fundraising events, and these shared experiences knit our communities together in ways that matter deeply. When decisions are made at the provincial level about education funding, school transportation, or rural school viability, these decisions affect us collectively. We have one MLA, who understands the full picture of how these communities function together, and this leads to a stronger, more informed constituency.

The same is true when we look beyond the schools. Rural medicine is one of the most pressing issues in our region. Residents from Elnora-neighbouring communities rely on a shared network of clinics, hospitals, and emergency service. Access to doctors, nurses, paramedics, and lung care facilities is a challenge we all experience regardless of municipal boundaries. Senior care is another critical concern. Our aging population depends on services that often span multiple communities. Families are navigating wait-lists, transportation challenges, and limited options together. These are regional issues, not local ones.

Road infrastructure also connects us, quite literally. Highway 21 and the surrounding road network are vital corridors for our work, school, education, emergency service, and commerce. Maintenance, safety, and long-term planning for these roads affect all of our communities in similar ways.

Because our issues are shared, our representation should be shared as well. When rural communities are divided across multiple electoral boundaries, our voices become diluted. An MLA may be forced to represent areas with very different priorities or communities that do not naturally interact, and that can make it more difficult for rural concerns to compete for attention and resources. By keeping Trochu, Huxley, Elnora, Lousana, and Delburne within the same provincial boundary, you enable more effective representation. You give our MLA the opportunity to truly understand the region as a whole, to see patterns, advocate

consistently, and build long-term relationships with leaders, school boards, health providers, and residents. It's not about politics; it's about practicality. It's about recognizing how people actually live their lives.

We understand the population numbers and the legal requirements must guide your work, and we respect those constraints, but within them we ask that you consider the real-world connections that already exist along the highway 21 corridor. Within Delburne, Pine Lake, Trochu, Innisfail, and Bowden our recommendation is simple and sincere: keep these communities together so that one MLA can effectively represent our shared interests.

On behalf of the village of Elnora and in solidarity with our neighbouring communities, I thank you for listening, and I thank you for all the work you're doing on behalf of Albertans. We appreciate your time and consideration.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you, Ms Nelson. I'm not sure I understood at the beginning. Are you the mayor of the village of Elnora?

**Ms Nelson:** Yes, I am. Sorry. I think I forgot to tell you that when I started.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Now, I've got a clarification question. The proposed riding puts you in Sylvan Lake-Innisfail, which is predominantly east-west.

**Ms Nelson:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Trochu is not in there. What other communities along highway 21 do you want to stay with and are not in this new proposed Sylvan Lake-Innisfail riding?

**Ms Nelson:** None. My proposal was to have Trochu as an addition, just to go down that little bit. The reasoning is that we do work a lot with not only Trochu but the county of Kneehill. A lot of our people are employed in that area, including me. We go that direction quite often for senior care, for the – well, Three Hills isn't in it, but we go down that direction. Trochu is now in the process of putting in a new senior housing in which Elnora played a big part in advocating and supporting and fundraising.

**The Chair:** As I understand it, you want us to bring Trochu into this Sylvan Lake-Innisfail riding. Is that right?

**Ms Nelson:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Any other community?

**Ms Nelson:** No.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

**Ms Nelson:** Well, actually, I will say this. After listening to Laurie, it makes sense that Blackfalds would be in it because we do go back and forth quite a bit with Blackfalds as a municipality, as a village office, you know. It's shared all the way up and down.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Well, we'll start with Mr. Clark. Any questions of Ms Nelson?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah.

Thank you, Ms Nelson. I appreciate it. It's always great to have elected representatives who speak for or on behalf of, at least, a larger population. It is especially helpful for us, so thank you for that. I guess a couple of points.

You know, one of the challenges we have is that, if you've been listening, I'm sure you realize, we have to draw a line somewhere.

**Ms Nelson:** Yes.

**Mr. Clark:** It would be great, you know, I think, to – because you're right. There are connections between many different places, especially somewhere like Blackfalds, that has 12,000 people. While it might be nice to put everyone together plus Trochu, plus Blackfalds, you start to get a bit too big, so that's part of our struggle.

The other thing. About Trochu, interestingly, we chose to follow a county boundary quite deliberately, so Trochu being in a different county. I recognize that these boundaries, neither county boundaries nor provincial electoral boundaries, are – to borrow a saying from my colleague Mrs. Samson, it's not a brick wall. It's not that you can't go through it, or it's not the only definition. I guess I'm just curious about your thoughts on the importance of respecting a county boundary versus saying: well, that might be a different county, but we still are very integrated.

**Ms Nelson:** We are very integrated. Because we're on the very edge of the Red Deer county, we work great with Red Deer county. I can't say enough about that, but we do work with Kneehill county. Our RCMP comes from that direction. Our long-term senior care comes from that direction. Our hospital comes from that direction, and a lot of our people actually work in Kneehill county. I guess that's where I'm kind of arguing. Cameron brought up the interesting idea of maybe having Sylvan Lake go to the other and bringing Blackfalds in. I know you can't take a magic marker out there, but in our world that actually makes a lot of sense just with how we work within each other as communities.

**Mr. Clark:** All right. Thank you.

**Mr. Evans:** I'm interested in the highway 21 corridor, but you kind of lost me in terms of how you guys end up in Blackfalds because it seems like you'd be more inclined to be in Three Hills. Am I accurate there?

**Ms Nelson:** I guess I'm talking on the municipal level. We go back and forth with Blackfalds a lot. Like, we took our training there. When you go to all your different functions, that's kind of the group that you – I don't know. I'm kind of losing my words here. I find we go to Blackfalds a lot more on that level than Three Hills.

8:00

**Mr. Evans:** Okay. Thank you. I appreciate that. Thank you for answering my questions.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Samson.

**Mrs. Samson:** No questions. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Dr. Martin.

**Dr. Martin:** No question; just a comment.

Mayor Nelson, we have received many letters that focused our attention on the highway 21 corridor and the various towns and villages along it, so I'm very grateful to you for having rehearsed some of that and giving us a bit more gritty understanding of the day-to-day realities of life in your area. So thank you.

That's it.

**The Chair:** Okay. Yes. Thank you, Mayor Nelson.

**Ms Nelson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** I'm not sure, but we must have had six or seven mayors present today. We had a very good municipal turnout, so thank you so much.

I believe that is the last presenter that we have in the meeting room, so we'll adjourn the public hearings for today and reconvene tomorrow at 9:00 a.m.

[The hearing adjourned at 8:02 p.m.]









