



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Drumheller

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

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9:22 a.m.

Wednesday, April 28, 2010

[Judge Walter in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning. My name is Ernie Walter, and I'm the chair of the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission. I'd like to introduce you to the other members of the commission. Here with me today are Dr. Keith Archer of Banff on my far right, next to him Peter Dobbie of Vegreville, then on my left Allyson Jeffs of Edmonton, and next to her Brian Evans of Calgary.

As you are aware, the five of us have spent the last eight months examining the electoral boundaries of our province, and I can tell you we've examined every square inch of the map of Alberta. I know I speak for all of us when I say that the commission has found it both very interesting and challenging to weigh the concerns and relevant factors put before it during the preparation of our interim report. I'm very pleased with the public feedback. We have received over 500 written submissions from across Alberta, and we have also across Alberta received many presentations at meetings such as this. We have the jurisdiction to – how does one say it? – propose the areas, boundaries, and names for 87 electoral divisions. In doing this, we've had to consider primarily what is going to give Albertans the most effective representation.

As you know, using the 2009 official population lists, Alberta's population is now 3,556,583; 52 per cent of those people live in Calgary and Edmonton. In 1995-96 the commission had an average quotient which is 10,100 less than what we're dealing with today. The average quotient today is 40,880.

We are directed by the legislation and the courts to divide the province into 87 electoral divisions with a population within 25 per cent of that provincial average in a way that will ensure effective representation for Albertans.

Of the four additional new seats – it's the first time in 26 years that new seats have been added – two are going to Calgary, one is going to Edmonton, and one is going to the rest of Alberta. The one that's going to the rest of Alberta had to go to Fort McMurray since it exceeded the population by 88 per cent.

Now, the commission had to consider a number of factors, starting with population, in coming to its recommendations in the interim report. The average population per electoral division from the quotient is from 4.3 per cent above in Calgary, 0.7 per cent above in Edmonton, and minus 2.8 per cent for the rest of Alberta. We have had to consider scarcity of population in certain areas, community interests, community boundaries, municipal boundaries, geographical features, understandable and clear boundaries, distance and area, inner-city urban issues, and many other things to come to the point where we're dealing with the most effective representation for Albertans.

We have had a tremendous amount of feedback, as I've said, on the interim report. Certainly, from the area Red Deer south and east we have had a lot of feedback, and there are going to be, I think, considerable changes made from what was outlined in the interim report. We've had a tremendous amount of input from the people in the county of Newell, Brooks, Strathmore, and other areas. We've certainly had written submissions so far from Drumheller and Stettler, and there seems to be a consistent pattern of what the changes should be. I know that it's been well laid out and very logical. I think that with the commission it's hitting a chord that says that we have to change certain things to make the most effective representation in this riding for Albertans. Having said that, we have to come out with an overall map that will for all Albertans give the most effective representation we can devise.

Now, our staff will call on our first speakers. Each speaker will

have 10 minutes to present and then 10 minutes for questions and answers from the commission. You ought not to be alarmed by the little bells that go off.

Ms Bertamini: There are no hooks behind them?

The Chair: There aren't.

I have to tell you that everything is being recorded by *Alberta Hansard*. You can go to the website and you can hear the audio and read, and it will be helpful if you want to go back and review anything.

Having said that, we will proceed with our first presenters.

9:30

Ms Friesacher: Our first presenters are Mr. Andrew Berdahl and Ms Karen Bertamini, councillors with the town of Drumheller.

The Chair: Having said that, for the purposes of *Hansard* we have to have you identify yourselves and who you are representing.

Ms Bertamini: Thank you. My name is Karen Ann Bertamini. I am a councillor with the town of Drumheller.

Mr. Berdahl: I am Andrew Berdahl. I am also a councillor with the town of Drumheller.

The Chair: Thank you. Please proceed.

Karen Ann Bertamini, Councillor

Andrew Berdahl, Councillor

Town of Drumheller

Ms Bertamini: Thank you very much for allowing us this opportunity today. Your opening remarks were very pleasant to hear. I recognize what a task you've had before you, and I can say on Andrew's and my behalf and our community's behalf that we do appreciate all the work and thought and effort that has gone into it and that neither one of us would want your job. Having said that, we do have some opinions, and they're not going to be new. Certainly, from your opening remarks we understand that you've probably heard what we're going to say here today, but we will be reinforcing those ideas to the commission.

In our area I guess I'm going to argue for status quo. We have already a very large constituency, that makes it harder to serve. Our MLA goes by rubber wheel. We don't have a commercial airport within this constituency that he can fly in and out of. He's on the road a lot. If he drives from one end to the other, it's a three-day visit. It takes him a day to travel, stop, maybe see a few, then his end, a day, and a day home. He's very rarely at home already. It limits the pool of prospective candidates, we believe, because of the vast area that this constituency already has.

It makes it exponentially more difficult to expand this constituency to the south for service. Drumheller has established itself as a regional hub. They decided to do this about 15 years ago, and in that time span they have built many partnerships to the west and to the north. We have regional planning with our partners. We have recycling and solid waste management with our partners. We also supply water. We have in-kind issues. They're more aligned in the hub that we have already established than going south. Agriculture and oil and gas are our primary industries. We don't have secondary manufacturing. It makes it easier for our MLA to represent us because we have strong partnerships that are already aligned in our current constituency and in our neighbours'.

I think that's about as far as I'm going to take it. Right now what

we'll do is we'll turn it over. I'll close my comments by saying that we are arguing for the status quo. We believe that population is certainly not the main criteria in the definition of this constituency, that consideration needs to be taken on how our representative gets around, the time it takes him to get around, what we have in common currently, and how the issues align within those municipalities within the constituency. We feel that's very important.

I'll turn it over to Andrew at this time.

Mr. Berdahl: Good morning. I should start by saying that I have great respect for the job that you're doing, and I appreciate that you're doing it. The periodic realignment of constituencies is natural and healthy, and I'm glad that there are people like yourselves who are ready to do it. Just having some limited experience with this process, I can appreciate what you may have gone through to cope with the complexity of the entire province, and I very cautiously offer some concerns in regard to what's being proposed.

I appreciate that it's the job of this commission to ensure effective representation. I think that is a beautiful principle and one that I expect, I intend to help you ensure. My issue, in general, right now is that the proposed constituency boundary actually threatens that principle.

Just for the sake of the record – and I'm sure that you're aware of the issues – and just, again, so that I'm sure you've heard it, when it comes to the proposed boundaries, it fails to meet the criteria of the guidelines within the commission's own handbook in several ways. In somewhat of an ascending order of importance, the new boundaries are neither clear, nor do they follow any sort of traditional understanding of boundaries, particularly in the southern area. I can imagine how the people of Newell might feel about the new proposal as well.

Most importantly, the new constituency boundaries don't answer some of the problems that we currently address when it comes to effective representation. Rather than making our constituency smaller or more manageable for a single MLA or a small staff of people to effectively represent, it essentially keeps the same square kilometrage, something approaching 20,000 square kilometres if not exceeding it, and it actually makes it farther away from our provincial capital.

I'm sure you're aware – and you've probably spoken to our MLAs – that we've been fortunate in terms of the representation we've had over the years. They are dedicated, and they are energetic. However, when it comes to representing this particular constituency, there are logistical concerns that interfere with effective representation. The status quo is something that, in my view, teeters on being ineffective, but at least it teeters in our favour. It tends to be effective because of the diligence of our MLAs, not because of the boundaries as they exist.

The proposal being made now actually makes the situation worse and, in my view, tips the scales in a negative way. I urge the commission to reconsider. Having spent some time talking to the people of Drumheller and the people in our region, we are aware of some of the complexities, and we do have suggestions for you should you be interested.

The Chair: And we are.

Mr. Berdahl: Good. That's nice to hear, too. It's not entirely wasted effort.

Ms Bertamini: Having gone through the maps and trying to come up with some suggestions certainly made us aware of what you've been through as a board for the last eight months.

Mr. Berdahl: I won't belabour the point. I appreciate you listening to what I've said. Perhaps, not having been through this process before, now would be the appropriate time for questions.

The Chair: Certainly. We should tell you that we have heard in other ridings that Drumheller-Stettler is a better fix than Brooks-Drumheller. We've heard that there are natural boundaries on the river to the south that really should be respected. We've heard of common interests and community interests that go east and west and not north and south, and I think what you're suggesting is that that's a proper way to look at it, in your instance.

9:40

Ms Bertamini: We certainly are reinforcing that. We are arguing for the status quo. We believe, as Andrew already said, it is large and just about unmanageable as it is, and to send our boundaries further south, we believe, is not a good solution. If we had to change, we think that Paintearth would be a mix, and we also think that Kneehill would be another solution since we share many partnerships with the Kneehill region already.

The Chair: All right. Keith, do you have any questions?

Dr. Archer: Yes, I do. Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thanks, councillors Bertamini and Berdahl. I appreciate your comments this morning.

I guess I'd push back a little bit on the notion that the proposed districts change the geography considerably within the constituency. You know, as I look at what was proposed from what currently exists, the proposal extends the boundary farther south to include Brooks – and Brooks has a population of about 11,500 or thereabouts – and eliminates Stettler from the constituency. It takes a little bit off the northwest, extends a little bit on the southwest, but Stettler's population of 5,800 in exchange for the Brooks population of 11,500 is a net addition of about 6,000 people in the riding. The net result of that was a constituency about 5 per cent above the provincial average in our interim report.

Just to give you a sense of what the commission was considering at the time that we were putting forward this recommendation, we've heard from a number of people that stability in constituencies is an important principle, and it's a particular challenge in some parts of Alberta to have relatively stable constituencies given the demographic changes that are taking place within Alberta. If you look back to as recently as the 1995-96 redistribution, the average constituency size was about 30,000, in '02-03 it became 35,000, and this year it's almost 41,000. We're having big changes in average constituency sizes even with the additional four districts within the province. You know, we've not done a lot of projection of population, but our anticipation is that there will be continued growth within Alberta.

What we are trying to do is that in instances in which there was not a lot of population growth, if we could adjust the constituencies to put them a little bit above the provincial average, that would result in a likelihood that they would be good not only in this round of redistricting but in the next round and possibly even farther still. Our solution, in this instance, of adding some population was intended to provide some stability and to do it without adding a lot of geography.

We've certainly heard loud and clear from the people in the county of Newell that it's problematic to make the trade-off that we were proposing in our interim report, that there's an integrated unit in the county of Newell that people wanted to see preserved in a single constituency.

The other recommendation that we got, not exclusively but preponderantly, was that to the extent that there was a good connec-

tion for the people in the county of Newell, they were suggesting that the county of Wheatland made more sense for them rather than to look up to Drumheller. I should note that some people actually proposed that to us as well, the county of Newell with a Drumheller connection and the badlands economic district idea.

When we go back to the drawing board with this, I suspect what we'll be looking at is to try to keep the county of Newell integrated. But if we went with the status quo here, we're going to run up against some population challenges both in this round and projecting into the future, I suspect, so the suggestion of looking at possible expansions into a couple of districts is very helpful.

Anyway, that's more of a commentary. I'd be happy to have you respond to that, but that was some of the thinking that went into our initial interim report.

Ms Bertamini: I guess our push-back there, to follow that up, would again be that you may not have added the square miles, but you certainly added distance when you went that further south away from the core, being our legislative building is in Edmonton. The distance, I think is – we're not arguing the addition of the size with Paintearth, but it makes more sense for us than to go further south.

Again, just the ties. The Canadian Badlands is an organization of 60 municipalities right across Alberta. It goes from, you know, highway 2 to Oyen and does the border. We have many ties within those communities already. That's one of the regional partnerships we as rural Alberta are trying to foster to see growth in our communities.

Again, if we're 5 per cent higher already with Brooks at a population of 11,000, what we're hoping to see within our communities in the future is growth because of initiatives like Canadian Badlands' that will see people coming into and really recognizing the value within rural Alberta. We're hoping as community leaders that we will see that growth, and we're working for that growth. If we're already being established as a constituency that's 5 per cent above your number, I would argue back that I'm hoping to bust through the roof on that.

Dr. Archer: Great. Thanks for that optimistic response.

Mr. Berdahl: If I might.

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Berdahl: I respect the mandate of the commission, and I appreciate that the quotient is an important target in your work. I would suggest that because it is an average, it's reasonable that if we are to do our job well, then about half of the constituencies in Alberta will be below the average. Given the human geography of this region – in other words, the sparsity of population within the special areas and Acadia Valley and even coming further west into the subsequent counties – in order to meet that quotient, the commission or the people involved in the decision would have to make a riding that was bigger than Belgium, that would exceed 20,000 square kilometres. I can't imagine that anybody would believe that would allow for effective representation, not by one single representative. In that sense, gentlemen, ma'am, I think it's realistic to prepare ourselves for the idea that this is a sparsely populated region and that the constituency will need to recognize that.

Dr. Archer: No more questions.

The Chair: Peter.

9:50

Mr. Dobbie: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thanks, councillors Berdahl and Bertamini. I certainly hear what you're saying. I guess we are bearers of good news today because we, one, have received the representations and, two, appear to be in a position to be able to really respond to a lot of them in central and southern Alberta.

Dr. Archer has explained a little bit of the thinking. Again, the interim report is an approach to trying to address growth, which tends to be along the highway 2 corridor, and proposes an option to try to make some smaller constituencies in that area. But we've certainly heard that the price being paid for capturing the highway 2 growth is dividing existing rural municipalities and really impairing the ability of MLAs to effectively represent those areas.

One of the things that we were not prepared to do in the interim report was presume in the case of Red Deer that people in Red Deer would be satisfied. It's a pretty quickly growing area. It's about 10,000 above what two constituencies would be, about 90,000 people. If we had simply presumed that we could create two Red Deer constituencies that were at 45,000 each in a very active, growing area without having had any feedback from Red Deer, we would fairly be called to task for making that assumption that Red Deer would be happy with it.

We were in Red Deer. We did hear from people within Red Deer, councillors, and also adjacent municipalities. We heard that, in fact, in Red Deer they would welcome us changing our interim proposal so that there were two Red Deer city only ridings. The effect of that is that it takes 10,000 people out of an adjacent constituency for Red Deer, which does start to create some ability to move from a bit of a north-west alignment in that area to the more traditional east-west. So we've got some options.

Just so you know, I have taken the Bleriot Ferry, camped at the landing. I've canoed on the Red Deer River every summer for the past 10 years. I bring the kids down to Drumheller. We drive through. We've been to Etzikom. We know this area well as a family.

One of the things that I think that in the interim report we didn't weigh heavily enough when we were looking at proposed solutions was the challenge of effective representation in a constituency like this that has what appear to be in excess of 50 municipalities. I mean, there are little towns everywhere. We've heard from many people throughout Alberta that the spreading of an MLA even thinner than is currently the case poses a real challenge to effective representation, that adding a large population to the south end of a constituency will divert the MLA's attention away from some other areas. We hear all of that.

Again, the benefit of having the two-stage report is to present some options. Certainly, in reading old reports, the traditional response to any Electoral Boundaries Commission is: "Our riding is fine. Don't change us. If you need to, change some of the other people." We can't simply accept that proposition and start from there. But in this area there is a very strong case, in my view, to be made for respecting the county as municipal boundaries. Certainly, I'm going to be working very hard with this commission to do what we can to really look at this constituency in its present form and see what we can do about largely keeping it the same way because I think your case is compelling and logical. We have some options here that are available to us now that weren't available to us in the first round because we didn't have as much information.

Thank you for your position. I think that we're going to be able to work hard to support it.

The Chair: Allyson.

Ms Jeffs: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much, councillors, for coming today. Just a couple of comments. One, on the quotient in the proposed riding, which has you about 5 per cent above, I'm glad to hear that you've got some, you know, forecasts that you are hoping to see some growth in the area. Remember that the average will increase as well, so you won't be looking at the same base average.

One of the challenges we face, particularly in the eastern part of the province, is plateauing or in some cases declining populations in communities relative to the provincial average. It has been a struggle for us, and I think it's going to be a struggle for future commissions as well.

In terms of the size, not at all to minimize the transportation issues, but I think that if you look north and see some of those ridings in the north of the province, you know, the comparisons are quite stark. The challenges here are not to be minimized, but I don't think you've got the issues that Dunvegan-Central Peace and Lesser Slave Lake have.

You also have heard from us that we are going to be doing quite a bit of adjusting in this area, partially driven by some adjustments we're going to be making in the Edmonton-Calgary corridor.

Now, you've talked about some specific recommendations. You talked about Paintearth making sense, too, if we need to add to this riding, and Kneehill county. I think we've looked at those populations before, but I don't have them in front of me. Do you know what kind of population that would be adding to the riding?

Mr. Berdahl: Just based on the estimates from the 2009 official population list, government of Alberta, Municipal Affairs, if I recall correctly, the county of Paintearth is in the order of about 4,000 people. Again, just off the top of my head, I understand that the county of Kneehill, including Trochu and Three Hills, would be in the order of about 10,000 to 11,000 people. I remember that because it was essentially the same population as the county of Stettler and the communities contained within.

Ms Jeffs: You should know, we have a recommendation as well that's come from some of the ridings in the centre of the province that would not see Three Hills added to this riding. We can certainly take a look at that and take that into consideration and your input.

Do you have any other specifics that you could offer to us?

Mr. Berdahl: Do you mean in regard to those potential recommendations or, at least, what we're discussing right at this moment?

Ms Jeffs: Well, in terms of recognizing the population issues, where there could be an additional draw of population. Are those the two main ones that you would see that would fit in terms of the communities of interest?

Ms Bertamini: We believe that those are the best options, certainly. One or the other would fit very well with us.

Ms Jeffs: Okay.

Mr. Berdahl: I might suggest, only on my own behalf, that when compared with the status quo, the only potential solution that offers a potential improvement would be the inclusion of Kneehill because it would essentially keep our population at about the status quo, which, I understand, was a bit problematic in terms of your overall objectives. It also brings us closer to the core, closer to our regional affiliations, and makes sense logistically and culturally.

Ms Jeffs: Okay. Thank you very much.
I have nothing further, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Brian.

Mr. Evans: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you both very much, councillors, for your presentation. We heard numerous presentations yesterday about the close bond between the county of Newell and the county of Wheatland and the logic of using the Red Deer River and the Bow River as boundaries. Of course, if we were to utilize that input – and it was compelling, quite frankly – then we would have the southern boundary of this constituency being the Red Deer River.

We as commissioners recognize that having the special areas within a constituency adds considerable distance and some very unique issues to the matrix of issues that the MLA has to deal with. If Paintearth were to be added and if we were to leave Stettler in the constituency, I believe that the numbers wouldn't be that much below the provincial average. We might be 5 per cent below, but certainly that is not an unrealistic number given the size of this constituency. If you look at the provincial map, it's certainly the largest proposed constituency in the southern part of the province, and there are great distances that have to be travelled.

In terms of your presentation there was reference to the fact that you do have some regional partnerships west of Drumheller. I wonder if you could just spend a little bit of time describing how far west and the nature of those partnerships.

10:00

The Chair: Before we go there, Brian, taking Brooks out and adding back Stettler leaves them just about 6 per cent under without more. If you added Paintearth, you would be way over.

Ms Bertamini: Drumheller supplies water to the Kneehill water commission. That commission is Carbon, Beiseker, Linden, Acme, and Irricana currently. Those are the communities that the water actually goes to. We have regional partnerships for recycling and solid waste with the same communities, and we have regional planning initiatives that go into those communities west also.

Mr. Evans: Traditionally, historically, the relationships would be in both a west-east and a north alignment. Would that be an accurate description?

Mr. Berdahl: That's my understanding.

Ms Bertamini: We have no partnerships that really go south.

Mr. Evans: As the chairman has indicated, we do spend a lot of time trying to work out the populations, but as you have indicated, it's quite true that population being right on the 40,880, which is the average quotient for Alberta, is not the only consideration, certainly. It starts the analysis, and variance from that is important in determining effective representation, but that's our primary concern, to ensure effective representation for each and every constituent in each and every one of the 87 electoral districts.

With that, I'll end my comments just to say that you've made a compelling case for effective representation in your area, and I hear you loud and clear that the status quo, in your opinion, meets that best for your constituents and for the MLA who is going to be representing your area.

Thank you.

Ms Bertamini: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you both very much for your presentation. It's been helpful. It's been reinforcing submissions that we've heard before in the last few days. It has been pretty clear, and I think it's pretty compelling.

Thank you.

Ms Bertamini: Thank you. We know that everybody thinks that they should have special considerations, but we're really hoping we're one of the two that are left that get it.

Thank you.

Mr. Berdahl: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Friesacher: Our next presenters are Mr. Merle Blair and Mr. Jay Slempp.

The Chair: Gentlemen, since we're on *Hansard*, we have to ask each of you to give your name and who you're representing so they can record it.

Mr. Blair: Merle Blair, chairman of the Special Areas Advisory Council.

Mr. Slempp: Jay Slempp, chair of the Special Areas Board.

The Chair: Thank you. Please proceed.

Merle Blair, Chairman, Special Areas Advisory Council
Jay Slempp, Chairman, Special Areas Board

Mr. Blair: Good morning, Judge Walter, commission members, ladies and gentlemen. Thanks for the opportunity to give our feedback on the proposed electoral boundaries. To start with, we recognize the difficulty of the task that the committee has undertaken. A task that involves people is more than a math exercise, and this is no exception.

We appreciated the opportunity to speak with the committee last October. At that time we had asked that the committee keep special areas 2, 3, and 4 in one electoral division. We had highlighted the importance of having one, focused voice representing our interests. We see that the current proposal achieved that recommendation for the special areas, and we thank you for that.

While the proposed boundary meets our objective to have all the special areas in one electoral division, it doesn't do that for the county of Newell nor the county of Stettler. As noted above, the math works, but the representation does not. In fact, we note that the county of Newell would be part of three electoral divisions. Brooks and area would be connected to a large area that doesn't have common services or interests. They would be severed from a portion of the area that has common regional interests and a well-established relationship. That area is served by the Eastern irrigation district, which is a major connection point for common interests.

In our opinion, splitting the county of Stettler into two electoral divisions is not a good idea either. Stettler is a major centre, and people living less than 24 kilometres from that centre would have little in common with the people in Brooks or Rolling Hills, some 150 to 200 kilometres south. The proposed boundary would add a considerable number of community boards and agencies as well as a lot of kilometres to travel in an already large electoral division. The area withdrawn from the county of Stettler would fail to offset this.

At the hearing last October the committee had asked us to

consider a change to the boundaries of our electoral division that would include the city of Brooks and the county of Newell. We were not in favour of that change, and we haven't changed our mind. The special areas have strong regional partnerships with the counties of Stettler and Paintearth with water, planning, emergency services, and recreation. The current boundary for the Drumheller-Stettler electoral division has a population that is 12.2 per cent under, well within the 25 per cent average allowed, and we would recommend that the boundary remain the same as it is now. If any change were to be made, we would favour taking in the county of Paintearth if that was a fit.

Thank you.

Mr. Slempp: That's it.

The Chair: That's it? All right. You're together on that. Brian.

Mr. Evans: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you both, gentlemen, for your presentation. It should be no surprise that we had very effective representation from the county of Newell and the county of Wheatland yesterday about the common sense of keeping those two counties together in one constituency. Speaking on behalf of the commission, I can't believe that we didn't hear that loud and clear. That, I think, will work itself out in terms of our final report.

In terms of the northern boundary, then, because, of course, the southern boundary is changed for this constituency to the north side of the Red Deer River, if we do go along with that recommendation for Strathmore-Brooks, can you just go into a little more detail about how far north you would propose that this constituency contain? You have said the county of Paintearth. You have indicated the county of Stettler. In terms of population, in terms of any surrounding areas that might feel that they should also be included, do you have any personal knowledge of that that you would share with the commission? That northern boundary is something we're going to have to spend some time on, and any input you could have to us would be much appreciated.

Mr. Slempp: I think we do have a lot of strong relationships with the county of Paintearth. You know, that is a natural kind of inclusion. You look from Stettler coming down highway 12: that MLA is already going out to Consort on that highway 12 line. We tend to have a pretty strong connection there. The folks from Consort and special area 4 have a pretty strong connection into Stettler. We would see them finding services there.

The special areas are pretty sparsely populated. In terms of government services, quite often we're served from outside. You know, we would be served from Stettler. We would be served from Drumheller and, in the extreme case, in Oyen, Medicine Hat, which is two hours away, which is kind of well outside the realm of what we'd be thinking about here. But, certainly, those would be the points of connection that we would have.

10:10

Mr. Evans: So following along highway 12 and using the concept that it is a connector as opposed to a divider, that would be a recommendation from both of you? Okay. I appreciate you're nodding that that is correct, just for the record.

Mr. Slempp: Yes, that's what we were thinking.

Mr. Evans: Okay. That's very helpful.

Those are all my questions, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, gentlemen.

Mr. Slemp: I have one question. You had mentioned dividing using the Red Deer River. A portion of the special areas does fall south of the river, special area 2. A portion of it in the Empress and Bindloss-Buffalo area does go south of the river. I guess along the lines of our first presentation, we would like to see that stay within this riding and with the special areas being still in one riding. So just as a comment there.

Mr. Evans: Thank you.

The Chair: Allyson.

Ms Jeffs: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll just follow up with that. How far south of the river are we talking about?

Mr. Slemp: The special area 2 boundary would take just a bit of the South Saskatchewan right over on the east side, so there's a little bit of the South Saskatchewan River there. It comes up and then goes along the north side of the British Block. Then it comes over to Iddesleigh.

Ms Jeffs: Is there a pointer you could use? Sorry.

Mr. Slemp: Yeah. Okay. This is the British Block going in here, so it goes across the north edge, goes over here. This is Jenner, Iddesleigh, and then it crosses not far, right in there, and comes across the river. So those areas are within our administration, and we would prefer to have them there: two large community pastures and not a large population. You're not changing the population significantly.

Ms Jeffs: No, but I think you mentioned the community of Iddesleigh. Is that correct?

Mr. Slemp: Iddesleigh, yeah. Iddesleigh is right there. That's just inside the special areas.

Ms Jeffs: Okay. That would probably be the main community that would be affected if that happens.

Mr. Slemp: Yeah. All two people.

Ms Jeffs: All right. Well, you know, we often get conflicting boundary recommendations, so we'll certainly take that under advisement.

I don't have any other questions, Mr. Chairman, but thank you, gentlemen, for coming and presenting today.

The Chair: Peter.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Blair and Mr. Slemp. Again, just so you understand, this process I find very helpful to help build a record that establishes from the public what the impact on effective representation is. It is difficult when we are appointed in July and get hearings in the fall for us to really understand throughout the province what the communities of interest truly are. We make a lot of assumptions, and it seems that by proposing an alternative, what we've done is had people really assess what works well within their constituencies. In some cases the changes we've proposed have been very welcome.

It is helpful for me to have some validation from you that the municipal boundaries in this area, the special areas, which I consider as a municipal boundary, are important and work well, notwithstand-

ing that there are some physical barriers within there. We don't hear that everywhere. So the model that I'm building in my mind is that it is very important for us to get as much feedback from each area of Alberta about their own area because you know it best. Hearing from people who are unaffiliated with political constituency organizations tends to, in my mind, bring more weight to the table than simply hearing from constituency organizations, which we tend to do in the cities because they're the ones that are most directly affected. Out here hearing from people who are managing or administering the areas themselves is quite helpful. Your presentation was short, concise, and very clear, so thank you.

Dr. Archer: Thanks, gentlemen. I have no questions.

The Chair: Well, thank you both very much. You've certainly reinforced what we're thinking. Thank you again.

Mr. Blair: Thank you.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Our next presenter is Mr. Stan Solberg.

Mr. Solberg: Mr. Chairman and members of the commission, I'm Stan Solberg, a private citizen.

The Chair: Thank you.

Stan Solberg

Mr. Solberg: My comments, I'm sure, for the most part will just be an echo of what you've already heard, with no special preference for either Paintearth or Kneehill, but in the event it was deemed necessary to add one, I think it would be equally acceptable, in my view. When I came this morning, I was not sure what I might hear from the preceding presentations, so I said that I would be available, I guess, or would make myself available to make comments.

The only other comment that I would like to offer and get a reaction on from you is: how is it that we seem to be the only province that has these hearings on such an irregular basis: based on elections rather than on the basis of a census? I would be eager to hear why we don't have it on a 10-year basis, as other areas do.

The Chair: I can tell you that we do have it, basically, on an eight-to 10-year basis. It's to be based on the latest Canadian census, but we also have the ability to call up the municipal census, as we did, which we were able to get in November of 2009. I think it's the first time that a commission has used figures that are that recent. It did change things substantially. If you went on the census from 2006, our average was over 37,000, the quotient per riding. When you added in the 2009 municipal census that had been accepted by Municipal Affairs, our quotient rose to 40,880. So we're working off very current numbers now.

We have, certainly, areas within this province which have grown way beyond the quotient. Fort McMurray, for instance, is 88 per cent above the quotient, and by law we couldn't leave it with one riding. We were compelled to create two ridings. That's just an example.

But it is a regular commission for drawing the boundaries of the ridings every eight to 10 years. The difference this time is that we had for the first time in 25 or 26 years four additional ridings, which we had to place somewhere in the province based on the best information we had.

10:20

Mr. Solberg: The addition of four MLAs was probably a reaction

to the cluster culture of the cities, which is quite different from the free-range culture, if you'll accept that expression, of areas such as ours.

This, in turn, really brings into question: what is effective representation? To try and make equal representation as opposed to equality of representation, you get into – I know it's peculiar semantics, but if you follow what I'm trying to say, there is quite a difference. I would hope that we're looking at equality of representation rather than equal representation. I know that that could cause quite a bit of debate, so I'll leave it with you, but I was curious about that.

I hope you won't measure the degree of dissatisfaction, I must say, with the proposed boundary changes by the representation in this room. It's pretty stormy out there. I know that there were a lot of people that were intending to be here and didn't make it.

I thank you for the hearing. I certainly don't envy you your job.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation. Does anyone have any questions?

Mr. Evans: No, I don't, sir.

Ms Jeffs: No.

Mr. Dobbie: No, sir.

The Chair: Well, thank you again very much. That's appreciated. Thank you for coming. I'm happy to see that people are getting rain. Hopefully, it'll go across the province.

Mr. Solberg: You're very welcome. Thank you.

The Chair: Now I have to take a short break for a press conference. It will only be 10 minutes, and then we will reconvene.

[The hearing adjourned from 10:22 a.m. to 10:42 a.m.]

Ms Friesacher: The next presenter is Mr. Andrew Cameron.

Andrew Cameron

Mr. Cameron: Good morning. I'm Andrew Cameron, here from Sedgewick. I'm representing myself as a rural voter; I'm not representing anyone else.

Some people talk of effective representation rather than just equal vote. I think it's time to consider this. I was glad to hear that you're considering it, and I just hope your idea of effective is the same as mine. That is why I came today to ask for you to consider this in your decisions.

I think there will always be need with the four largest electoral districts for the 50 per cent rule in Alberta, but I encourage the commission and future commissions to use the plus or minus 25 per cent allowance to keep rural constituencies as small as possible and practical.

Supreme Court of Canada Madam Justice McLachlin once indicated a need for effective representation rather than equal voting power. Not only do voters in large electoral districts have problems communicating with their MLA, but during the election campaign they have a problem even getting to meet or listen to the people who are running for election as his or her MLA, and large electoral districts will only make that worse. I again encourage the commission to use the minus 25 per cent allowance in most of the large constituencies to keep them as small as possible.

The electoral district of Battle River-Wainwright, which, of course

I live in, already has five counties, five school boards, 34 schools, and over 30 towns, villages, and hamlets. There are also very many hall boards, rec boards, et cetera, that often require contact with their MLA.

The south boundary of the suggested new Stettler-Wainwright would reach almost halfway across Alberta. Many rural areas also have poor or no Internet service. Regarding communication, a city MLA can cross their riding in 15 minutes if the traffic is normal.

I took a quick look at the dictionary meaning of the word "effective." It said: power to produce results. So I thought, then, power to pick who to vote for in an election, power to communicate with your MLA. Please think effective representation.

That's all I have to present.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Cameron. You're from Sedgewick?

Mr. Cameron: Right. That's in Vegreville-Wainwright.

The Chair: Oh, I'm very familiar with it. Tell me: were you getting some moisture?

Mr. Cameron: Not this morning.

The Chair: Not this morning.

Mr. Cameron: Most of it was in Stettler; they started getting some.

The Chair: Well, hopefully, this will move north because they certainly need it there.

Thank you very much for your presentation. You've obviously put a considerable amount of thought into it, and it does encompass thoughts and ideas that we as the commission certainly must consider and must take into account.

Now, Keith, do you have any questions?

Dr. Archer: I guess just a comment, Mr. Cameron. I appreciate you sharing that view. We've heard, of course, the diametrically opposed view, that effective representation is best achieved by keeping constituencies as close as possible to the provincial average. I think the approach that we've taken in our interim report is to find a middle ground between those positions.

Certainly, you'll see that a number of constituencies, where local circumstances warrant, have populations quite a bit below the provincial average. These without exception are in rural areas. But applying that standard in all of the rural areas would be inconsistent, I think, with historical trends in constituency equality in Canada overall and in Alberta.

Again, I appreciate you sharing your perspective on it.

The Chair: Peter.

Mr. Dobbie: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Cameron. You and I are beating on the same drum on that point. There is also a history within Alberta that seems to reflect the need for effective representation by allowing for some variation.

The real challenge, frankly, is balancing effective representation with our obligation under the legislation and the case law to have a real, principled basis if we're going to make a distinction. You know, there have to be a number of reasons. Certainly, your constituency is one that has so many of the factors that Madam Justice McLachlin talked about that would allow for deviation.

The peril, I think, that would be created if we simply agreed to

make all of the nonurban constituencies closer to 25 per cent below would be a real blow to effective representation if people felt that the system was unfair. By going through this process, by looking at individual ridings, by hearing from people like you who have a real connection to the constituency they're in, we can justify distinctions in some areas based upon what we've heard. So I'm very appreciative of having what you've said today on the record.

Thank you.

The Chair: Allyson.

Ms Jeffs: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much, Mr. Cameron for coming. Just a comment, really, on this issue of the special consideration ridings. We are permitted by statute to have up to four, yet I think in our interim proposal we have provided for two in the north of the province, where I think that if you look at the map, you'll agree that the distances are very, very great indeed. You know, I don't see the number of special constituencies rising above that in our final report, but we'll be certainly looking at the numbers.

I think the reason for that is that they are very special and that that needs to be used very sparingly because, certainly, an important element of effective representation from the position of the courts has been that relative voter parity, not absolute but relative voter parity, is a function in that. So I don't think we can take the position that we will go to the minus 25 per cent limit in all the rural constituencies. Actually, I think some of the growth out in some of the areas would not require that to have fairly manageable constituencies. I think you're in an area of the province that isn't growing as fast as others, so I think that's why you're feeling and seeing the growth in your constituency.

You're welcome to respond. Otherwise, I have nothing else, Mr. Chairman.

10:50

Mr. Cameron: Yeah. My response would be that the cities – you know, even if you had all rural ones, the city MLAs would outnumber the rural by quite a bit. So I don't think the cities should worry about the rural population running Alberta.

Ms Jeffs: All right. I have nothing further.

The Chair: Thank you.
Brian.

Mr. Evans: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much, Mr. Cameron. Just to give some credit to the legislators who did create the legislation that this commission is operating under, we are bound to take into consideration the requirement for effective representation as guaranteed under the Charter. Some of the other considerations that we must take into account that are relevant to the presentation that you've made are: sparsity and density of population; common community interests; the number of municipalities and other authorities, which, of course, are very large in a number of rural constituencies, including this constituency – and yesterday we were down in the Brooks area as well and the day before in the Little Bow constituency – geographical features; and, ultimately, the desirability of understandable and clear boundaries.

So your well-stated comments are certainly considerations that we are both bound by the legislation and bound by the representations that we've had to us to take into account, and we thank you for that.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Cameron. It's been

very helpful, what you've had to say to us, and we'll certainly take it into account.

I hope when you get back to Sedgewick that there's a nice, gentle rain and that you push it a little bit north, too.

Mr. Cameron: Thank you. What I'm most scared of is that when the next 10 years are up, the rural population will have hardly any representation.

The Chair: Well, it is a concern, Mr. Cameron. Thank you.

Now, our next presenter is at 11:10. We've got a few minutes, so we'll take a short adjournment and reconvene at 11:10.

[The hearing adjourned from 10:53 a.m. to 10:59 a.m.]

Ms Friesacher: The next presenters are Mr. Don Thomas and Mr. Ed Eggerer.

The Chair: Thank you. For the record, since we're on *Hansard*, would you be so kind as to give your names and who you're representing?

Mr. Thomas: Don Thomas. Ed Eggerer. We're independent.

The Chair: All right. Please proceed.

Don Thomas and Ed Eggerer

Mr. Thomas: Good morning. Thank you for the chance to talk to you about this. We've got a response to the proposed ED areas and boundaries that have come out from before. We presented earlier in the fall, and you may remember that time.

There is a lot of work in the interim report. There is much, obviously, to admire. I think there are some good things that have been done. We have some concerns and would like to outline those to you.

There are some concerns that this will not impact very well on efforts to bring greater voter turnout. We're also worried about the underrepresentation of Calgary and the surrounding areas around Calgary. I think that there are problems in terms of some projections that would lead to balloon electoral districts, and we don't think that sometimes the electors will be well served in some of those due to a variety of factors that just won't work very well.

I'd like to clarify those, some of the disturbing characteristics we found in them. It's difficult to imagine that when you've got an electoral district and you cut it off at one edge of a town, a major city, the electors who are just east, west, north, or south of that town get their mail in that town. They will not be well served. I don't think we're going to end up seeing the right kind of thing happen when that's where the boundary ends. In certain cases it'll lead to some difficulties. A principle that we talked about before was to live, work, and play, and we feel that that didn't always show up in terms of the kinds of boundaries that were drawn. There are certain ones we saw where those were difficult, and you see them listed.

But I'd like to address in particular the underrepresentation in Calgary and the surrounding areas. By calculations we were able to show last time that in order to, you know, get the populations for the electoral districts about the same in both Calgary and Edmonton, Calgary would need two before we start, just to try to catch up. The problem is that in the three options that you considered, that didn't show up so very well. There are discussions about that, but we're disappointed that that didn't show up as well. This consistent underrepresentation of Calgary shows up on pages 10 and 11 of your report.

I'm surprised that even in 1995 and the one done in 2002 there seems to be a persistent thing that would be perpetuated, and I'm not sure that that's a very good idea. I would like to think that we can look at projections. We know that there are growth areas, and we know that in particular where we're from, Airdrie, is one of those big areas. It's a large concern. That kind of growth has been sustained for some time.

I think there are some alternatives we have to take a look at, and for that, I guess, now I would turn it over to Ed.

Mr. Eggerer: Judge Walter and commission members, I'm sure you've heard the saying: you can please some of the people some of the time but not all the people all of the time. I don't know if you know who originally said that. I guess it was Abe Lincoln who said that. The quote actually is: you may deceive some of the people part of the time and part of the people all of the time but not all of the people all of the time. So I guess you can change that word: please, fool, or deceive.

Anyway, our previous submission to you centred around EDs west, north, and east of Calgary. After reading your draft, our concern and focus still has not changed. We are still advocating an east and west Airdrie, a Cochrane-Bearspaw-Springbank, and finally a Banff-Canmore ED. In light of the commission largely ignoring our previous recommendation, we will provide you with information and data that should be part of your final draft to the Speaker of the Legislature.

Because of our familiarity with that part of the province our concern is centred around those EDs. We think that there are some glaring deficiencies there. There is no consideration for the live, work, play principle most often used in electoral discussions and population data.

11:05

Let us suggest to the commission that the lines that you are drawing today will not be judged until the next election rolls around, and by that time you'll be long gone. Let me put it to you this way: after the commission leaves, the Chief Electoral Officer and, finally, the returning officers for the 87 electoral divisions will work with what you've created. Polling divisions will be drawn in each one of the EDs, and in each of the polling divisions polling sites will have to be found.

I'm a former returning officer. I've had probably 32 years of experience federally, and I often have sat in on different commission hearings during redistributions. Then, of course, lines, as I said, were drawn by you as commission members. Once we put those into play, I can already hear voters saying to me: you want me to vote where? Okay. They'll ask you each and every time: who created those lines? Obviously, the situation that often is encountered – and I'm not saying this is very prevalent, but it certainly is in some of the stuff we reviewed with your boundaries – is that you'll see a voter actually being able to see a polling station across the street, but he's going 20 miles the other way.

I guess that's really what you folks are doing in terms of when you draw these lines today. These boundary lines that you create will impact voter turnout, management of a fair and democratic election process, and manageable representation by a duly elected representative. I'm not telling you; I'm sure that you know what your tasks are here. But we think that these are tremendously important when you draw those lines.

Forty-seven is – I'm hoping I'm not confusing some of these numbers by using the old ED numbers versus the newer ones that you've created, but I think 47 in fact is a new number. For Mr. Thomas and myself it started with the ED of Airdrie. It seemed like a simple process. We divide Airdrie in two and provide them with

enough population on either side of highway 2 to create an Airdrie-East and an Airdrie-West, a new electoral district of Airdrie-Chestermere taking in the town of Chestermere. I think we communicated to you last time – and I'm sure you'll hear that from the representatives from Chestermere again as they follow us, I understand – that they wanted to remain with the city of Airdrie. They did not want to be with Strathmore, and I think that's the consideration you now have.

I know our simple thought will impact three or four other EDs in the immediate area, and we will deal with those in due course. Before I leave Airdrie, the only reason for advocating Airdrie-Chestermere and Airdrie-West is population. I somehow think that you did not take sufficient consideration of that in your deliberations as to how you drew some lines. We did talk about projections under failed or missed targets, but history will show that Airdrie's growth in the last 10 years is fact as well as 11 per cent growth during 2008-2009, and that's, as you know, a recession period, so that's kind of a tremendous growth during that time period.

Also not considered, I think, is the anticipated annexation of Airdrie's 70 quarters by the end of 2010. When you take in an additional 70 quarters during that time period, I think there are some dynamics that will change. Also, Airdrie is presently doing a census, that's just under way right now, and I'm sure you will find that the anticipated population for Airdrie is going to be close to 41,000. I know your base population right now is at 39,900, so I think you're way off your base population before you even get started.

The Chair: Excuse me. When you say the “base population” . . .

Mr. Eggerer: Well, I think that's your quotient that you quoted in your report.

The Chair: The quotient is 40,880.

Mr. Eggerer: Okay. But I think the population that you quote here in your report is 39,907.

The Chair: The average quotient is 40,880. Just make sure we're talking about the same thing. So you're suggesting Airdrie is slightly below that quotient.

Mr. Eggerer: What's your quotient right now?

The Chair: It's 40,880.

Mr. Eggerer: Yeah. As soon as the census is completed, it will be over this number.

The Chair: This is the 2009 population quotient that we were able to get from the cities and others that had filed with Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Thomas: Maybe I could add there a bit. I think the number that was the city of Airdrie proper was 38,091 as of June 2009. If you look at the way 47 is drawn, however, on the electoral map, you see it's slightly larger than the formal boundary of Airdrie. As a result, the number is going to be a little bit larger. The trouble is that right now Airdrie is at 41,000, and we haven't reached June yet. What I think Ed is saying is that we've already exceeded, and we haven't taken the environs.

The Chair: Yes. And if you were to do that across Alberta, you'd

find that in many situations. We could only use the most current numbers that were available, which is the numbers from the 2009 Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Thomas: Absolutely. And that's what I think Ed's point is, the projections.

Mr. Eggerer: We provide you with a couple of growth projections on the back of the presentation. We have some growth projections as it relates to other communities and the actual population figures from 1998 to 2009. My point in all of this is that, again, based on growth in Airdrie for the past 10 years and our projections for the next 10 years, your current boundary for ED 47 would contain a population of close to 70,000 people.

Foresight would indicate to you that you can correct this huge mistake of creating only one ED for Airdrie, and we respectfully submit our previous proposal to you, whereby you would create an Airdrie-West and an Airdrie-Chestermere ED for no other reason than the population base, that not only requires but deserves two representatives in the Legislature. Splitting the ED would not only alleviate this concern and the unbridled growth but might also serve to make the surrounding EDs more sensible.

I go on to cover Banff-Cochrane. That's the old 45 and your new 49. We feel that that ED needs to be changed. Actually, probably you have a very good expert on your panel. Mr. Evans represented that area for many years. I did that electoral district since 1980 federally, when it was the old Bow River riding. Now, of course, it's Wild Rose.

I could never see why Cochrane, at the bottom end of that riding, was part of Banff-Canmore, that particular riding. We essentially took that community out. Hopefully, we would create a riding which would be Cochrane-Bearspaw-Springbank. Then, of course, you created a new electoral district of Carstairs-Rocky View, and I think that's actually in front of you.

11:15

I don't know for the life of me why anybody would create that electoral riding. It's totally and absolutely not manageable, I guess, from a standpoint of trying to run an election in that riding. It would be almost impossible to represent the diversity of that particular riding. I don't know who your cartographers are and who your experts are in terms of putting that riding on a map, yet obviously someone started at one point and said: gee, I've got to get a certain population base inside those lines. We've now created a riding that's sort of a leftover of other ridings that you've created there.

Again, with our example there, in all the years where you would create boundary lines – you've got the communities of Carstairs and Didsbury up there – I don't know why you would create a boundary line on the east side of a town. Again, you would have a very good example of somebody saying to you: I just live east of Carstairs, but I can't vote in Carstairs. Now, you may not know this area as well as we do. I don't know what community hall you'd find, but probably the voter that's just sort of sitting outside here would probably have to go to Linden to vote, and Linden is sitting over here.

I don't know that in all my years – and I've worked with all kinds of cartographers and geographers – anybody would cut off a community on either end of that community, either side – east, north, west, or south – and would draw a line and change a boundary at that point. I mean, even the suggestion of going to highway 2 would be better than cutting it off at the end of a community.

What we're simply saying is that by going back to our east Airdrie and Chestermere ridings and Airdrie west and creating the riding of Cochrane-Springbank-Bearspaw down there as well as creating

Airdrie-East, Airdrie-West, you'd almost eliminate this riding. It serves no purpose. It has no use. It wouldn't be there anymore, so 55 would disappear.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, we can't support the commission's three general options simply because they are not data driven. If we're going to make our decisions on population data, you must also provide consideration for growth projections, and you must also be mindful of live, work, play, and common sense, which is presently lacking in the creation of some of these ridings immediately around north Calgary.

We concur with the commission that the boundaries for both Calgary and Edmonton should be respected and preserved. However, the commission should acknowledge that there are eight suburban EDs surrounding Edmonton and at the present time three around Calgary. Should a new ED be created, Calgary would then have four EDs surrounding its boundaries.

Having said that, we must now examine the population figures for Edmonton. Your chart on page 10 simply does not support an additional ED for the city of Edmonton. Hence, the commission must consider – and I use that strongly: it should consider – option 4. Option 4 would then look like this: two EDs in Calgary, one surrounding the city of Calgary, and one surrounding Fort McMurray. By getting these electoral boundaries correct, the commission has taken a leadership role in providing the ability to increase voter turnout and for fair and democratic elections while still maintaining the principle of representation by population.

The Chair: Thank you.

Brian.

Mr. Evans: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, gentlemen. You've obviously spent a huge amount of time on this matter, and it's very much appreciated. We have heard considerable input from the area between Red Deer and Calgary. If you will refer back to a presentation, I believe, by MLA Richard Marz, which has been embraced by a number of constituencies and a number of groups along that Red Deer-Calgary corridor, that's going to have an impact on the boundaries that we are looking at at this particular point in time. We have taken the input from communities and individuals in those communities the last three weeks of travelling the province. You know, we've heard considerably from the areas around Calgary and all the way to the U.S. border, the B.C. border, and the Saskatchewan border, so some of the comments that you have made are consistent with the representations that we've had.

One that we haven't had – and I'll speak, Mr. Eggerer, to the Banff-Cochrane comment that you made about removing Cochrane. We haven't had a town of Cochrane presentation to us saying: take Cochrane out of the Banff-Cochrane constituency. By your own data that would create a very small Banff-Cochrane constituency, and I take it that your quid pro quo on that is that Canmore is a growth area, and it may then raise the population of that new constituency closer to the average within the next little while.

Just from a practical point of view, Canmore's growth has really stagnated in the last couple of years. Who knows whether there's going to be a great increase there? That one is just a specific example that I wanted to bring up because you did refer to me, Mr. Eggerer, and my wonderful opportunity to serve in that constituency for two terms, for eight years. That's one example of how we really do have to scrunch down to very minute detail in creating these boundaries.

As I say, rather than try to respond to all of your recommendations, I'd just thank you for those recommendations. It will be part

of the very thorough analysis that we will do in the coming weeks in creating our final report, and where your recommendations are consistent with community recommendations, it'll have a stronger pull on us in terms of creating amendments to the boundaries that are in our interim report.

Thank you very much, and please feel free to make any comments.

Mr. Thomas: Lest you think that we would try to have one consistently small, the idea would be that Highwood, which is also an area of some growth, could end up contributing more or the Banff-Canmore area, you know. Certainly, you can't rob from Peter to pay Paul without noticing what's happening, so there would be some accommodation further south and that kind of thing.

Mr. Eggerer: You'll see that in our projections. We've given you those projections here for the communities that are immediately surrounding the changes that we're talking about. We do acknowledge that Banff-Canmore is smaller, and we do acknowledge that there may not be a tremendous amount of growth in Canmore and virtually none in Banff, but the uniqueness of that area would justify it being totally on its own. As you can see, the Cochrane-Bearspaw-Springbank area is a growth area, and I think our projection of 50,000 is probably small.

11:25

Mr. Evans: I wouldn't disagree with that.

Mr. Eggerer: It's very conservative; 2 and 3 and 4 per cent is probably very small. Again, that area troubles us only for the reason that when you take a look at that area only by way of the acreage around the Canmore area – I don't think I'm providing you with the right visual effects on this. But if you take a look at Cochrane itself, the area of Springbank-Bearspaw-Cochrane, a tremendous growth area, I think that area could stand alone simply because of that, and I don't think enough consideration was given to that.

Again, for Cochrane, with boundaries being provided at the edge of the east boundary of Cochrane, there are so many people that are in that Springbank-Bearspaw area that trade, work, live, recreate in Cochrane, and we're not taking that into consideration at all. A tremendous population.

Mr. Evans: Now, I'll just make one additional comment. The densities in the town of Cochrane will be quite significant. That's the town of Cochrane planning. Densities in Bearspaw and Springbank are a totally different matter. Rocky View has set two-acre minimum parcels, so the densities won't be as high. I can guarantee you that most of those folks in that area that you're proposing love to recreate and focus to the west into that Canmore-Banff area.

Mr. Eggerer: Yeah. No argument.

The Chair: Allyson.

Ms Jeffs: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, gentlemen. If I understand the bottom line on your proposal, you do not disagree with the majority of the commission's recommendations vis-à-vis the city of Calgary – you think the two additional ridings are adequate there – and you don't disagree with the riding around Fort McMurray. Where you seem to take issue is that you think Edmonton does not need a single riding and that we should be putting a suburban seat – I guess "suburban" is the wrong word – in an area in the outskirts of Calgary. If you've read the report, then you know that I think there's an argument for two seats in Edmon-

ton, and even though I don't expect to persuade you to that, I think the numbers are very, very clear that Edmonton should not be left at its current representation. I find that very, very difficult to sustain.

The other thing is that I'm not sure that there is any principled basis to split Airdrie and to make these two hybrid kinds of constituencies. It's certainly not something that has come to us as a recommendation. I think the issue of the outlying areas of Calgary can be dealt with without another constituency being added, so I'm going to push you back a little bit on that.

In the interest of time I won't belabour it too much, but I don't agree with your reasoning. Certainly, with respect to the city of Edmonton I don't think there's any basis for leaving Edmonton at 18 seats. I think we can resolve the other issues around the outskirts of Calgary elsewhere.

Mr. Eggerer: You have your proposed electoral district of Airdrie on your screen right now. I mean, surely you can't justify a community going to be at 70,000, you know, by the time your next redistribution comes along.

Ms Jeffs: Well, I'm not sure what your numbers are based on. You seem to think that the city of Airdrie is over now. I don't know where that data comes from because we have the most up-to-date civic census data. I mean, if that's a projection, projections are an issue, but we have the most up-to-date census data.

Mr. Eggerer: Here's a community that has grown, doubled in size in the last 10 years. Okay? If you take a look at our growth comparisons for 2006 and 2009, there is no comparison. It is, essentially, the fastest growing city in Canada. For east Airdrie-Chestermere you've got probably the fastest growing town in Canada with Chestermere. This is history; this is fact.

Ms Jeffs: Well, history, you know, has a way – I mean, there is no guarantee that that will be replicated in the next 10 years. You know, historically, Calgary's growth has outstripped Edmonton's, although I know that in the last year Edmonton actually grew more than Calgary did. That's probably not necessarily a long-term trend either. I think we are in a time when things are changing. I think the last 10 years may not be replicated. I mean, projections are a bit tricky. We have tried to use some of them, but I think the idea of actually splitting the community of Airdrie when it justifies its own seat – I'm not sure.

Mr. Eggerer: Yeah. You have 11 new subdivisions in Airdrie. As I say, in Airdrie during 2009, which was a recession year, it grew by 10 per cent, almost 11 per cent. You can't ignore those statistics.

Ms Jeffs: Well, with respect, I don't think we are. I don't know where, as I say, your numbers for the current Airdrie are coming from. As I said, we have the most current data.

Mr. Thomas: Preliminary data that hasn't actually been – you know, the city census is actually being done. We've got a bit of an inside word on where that's at.

Ms Jeffs: You don't have anything official.

Mr. Thomas: No. I noted your objection, the minority objection, in the document. It bothers me because if I look at page 11 of the document, after the 1995-96 commission there seemed to be some thought – I'm not going to assign it to whom – that the 4,000 voter difference per ED was okay in Calgary. You know, in 2002-03 the same thing happened. But what has happened since that time is that

there has been a proliferation of those EDs over 50,000 in Calgary, seven of them, I believe, and only one in Edmonton, and that we could resolve by redistribution within.

My problem is that in order for Calgary to just get to the same level of the present Edmonton EDs on average – and you can change the city things much easier than you can in rural areas – we would have to have two in Calgary.

Ms Jeffs: The recommendation of the commission is for two in Calgary.

Mr. Thomas: I agree.

Ms Jeffs: And I see that you don't disagree with that.

Mr. Thomas: But the difference is that if now you add one more to Edmonton – and I don't want to deprive Edmonton voters of the same chance.

Ms Jeffs: Well, I think Edmonton warrants at least one seat.

Mr. Thomas: Then Calgary would have to get three by that same logic.

Ms Jeffs: That argument has been made. That, of course, would involve some significant realignment in the rest of Alberta in order to do that.

Mr. Thomas: If we're going to be driven by data within the boundaries of the cities, data in terms of where we could split the EDs, it's much easier to do and justify than when you're in the rest of Alberta, where drawing that line is a much bigger issue and affects more people.

Ms Jeffs: I mean, you talk about a third seat for Calgary, yet that's not what you're recommending to us, so I think there's some basic inconsistency there. Actually, your issue seems to be that you want to add a seat outside the city of Calgary.

Mr. Thomas: That's correct. Our belief would be – and I think we referred to it one time before at a previous presentation – that we have now seen growth studies such as to suggest that when one of the major cities, Calgary or Edmonton, in the province of Alberta grows, 40 per cent of that growth will end up going to suburban areas.

Ms Jeffs: Well, I think those boundaries can be adjusted. I mean, we're dealing with a growth around the city of Calgary in the current proposal. Now, we've had some input on that, and there will be some changes, I would suspect, based on some of the input we've had. But there doesn't seem to be a disagreement that the growth in that area can be dealt with by a redistribution of the boundaries as they are.

In the interest of time, I don't have anything further, Mr. Chairman. I hear a bell going off.

11:35

The Chair: Peter.

Mr. Dobbie: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thanks, gentlemen. I'm going to cede my time to Dr. Archer in the hope that you are going to stay after lunch so that I can talk to you off-line about some of the issues. He's from the Banff-Calgary area, so I defer to him on this.

Mr. Eggerer: We'll be here.

Dr. Archer: Thanks, gentlemen, for the fairly complex proposal that you're bringing forward. As others have said, I appreciate all the work that went into this proposal. I would raise a couple of issues, some of which have been touched on previously.

On the issue of Airdrie in general, we have not tried to get into the complex challenge too much of projecting out what every community is going to look like five and 10 years from now. We have a general sense of growth patterns and are basing constituency sizes in part on those patterns but largely on current population, recognizing that two elections down the road there will be another boundaries commission. Rather than debating people about how big a community is going to be five years from now, we can certainly agree on what the data are today.

The data today indicate that Airdrie has a population that conforms pretty closely to our electoral quotient. We've heard lots of submissions from people indicating that where the numbers warrant, people within an urban area constitute a community of interest. Consequently, that, I think, justifies the position that the commission took in the interim report to create an urban constituency in Airdrie.

We've had some submissions from areas east of Calgary about keeping the counties of Newell and Wheatland together. If we adopt some of those recommendations, that will have very significant implications for the way in which we have proposed ridings to be constituted east of Calgary. That, of course, will have implications for what possibilities exist to us for Chestermere. That's an active discussion that we'll be going through.

On the issue of Banff-Cochrane we did receive some submissions for the interim report about a Rocky Mountains constituency and highlighted that issue in the interim report, and actually it didn't get much take-up subsequently. A little bit of commentary in some of the local newspapers but not a strong thrust. That, I think, would probably lead us to conclude that if this is an issue at some time in the future, it likely is not at that level of prominence today that would convince us that now is the time to create a constituency in the Rocky Mountains.

When we look at the population data, it's very problematic. The data on your projections I think are a little higher than I have because you've gone down to pick up some of the Eden Valley area in the Highwood riding. If you leave that out and focus largely on Banff and Canmore themselves, I'm looking at a population closer to 25,000 than the 28,000 that you are proposing. That would be a very problematic number, I think, for not only this commission but for subsequent commissions.

I certainly understand your position about the commonality of interests, but in some circumstances the numbers just require us to balance community of interest with the need to ensure that the population is sufficiently common across the province to provide the level of representational effectiveness that people have come to expect.

Again, those are more comments than specific questions to you.

Mr. Eggerer: I take that as a good comment. If it is the case that you want to leave Cochrane in the Banff-Canmore riding, then do not draw your boundary lines at the east boundary of Cochrane. I mean, give some consideration to the people that are just east of Cochrane. They go to Cochrane to work and play. Don't cut them off, looking for polling stations that may be miles away when you can see your polling station in Cochrane.

Dr. Archer: Yeah. Absolutely. That principle of work, live, and play I think is something that's useful to remind us of, so thanks for that.

Mr. Eggerer: Yeah. Just don't draw your line immediately on the eastern boundary of Cochrane.

Mr. Thomas: I would add one other comment, and that is that if there has been a focus on Airdrie, Chestermere, and Cochrane – and I think you can see that there is from where our presentation is at – it's been due to the fact that the growth patterns have been so significant as to warrant extra attention. Therefore, in your planning and in your deliberation to try to encourage and get a greater voter turnout, it has to end up being something where you consider what the future may look like.

I realize that there is risk there. Of course, there has to be. But after a period of time of sustained growth and sustained interest and sustained development, I think, from my opinion – and I'm not on the commission – that kind of consideration is warranted, and failure to do so will lead to the ballooning of EDs, that eight to 10 years from now will cause significant problems and, I think, some voter dissatisfaction that can't be handled as well. So I understand exactly what you're saying, and I know that it is, to some extent, that risk that we are asking you to consider. When you look at the projections, yes, they're only projections, and we have to go with data on the ground and the whites of eyes, but I also put it to you that there are undeniable feelings and chances of that kind of development and that kind of growth.

The Chair: Well, thank you both for your presentation. You've obviously done a great deal of work, and we'll certainly be considering it in our final decision.

We'll move on to our next presenters.

Ms Friesacher: The next presenters are Mayor Patricia Matthews and Councillor Patrick Bergen with the town of Chestermere.

The Chair: Good morning, and thank you for coming. Since *Hansard* is recording this, would you both please give your name and your position for the record?

Mrs. Matthews: Certainly. I'm Mayor Patricia Matthews with the town of Chestermere.

Mr. Bergen: I'm Councillor Patrick Bergen with the town of Chestermere.

The Chair: Thank you. Please proceed.

**Patricia Matthews, Mayor
Patrick Bergen, Councillor
Town of Chestermere**

Mrs. Matthews: Thank you, Your Honour and esteemed commission members. As you are aware, we have given a previous presentation along these lines, and we understand that your time is extremely valuable. We have similar points to bring forward this morning as we did in our last presentation, so we won't belabour those that we've gone over previously. We'll make our presentation brief so that you have opportunities to ask us questions and use our time efficiently that way.

First of all, we would like to say that the town of Chestermere fully supports the interim report that you've put forward. We understand the amount of time and effort and data that you all must have gone through. We do fully support the interim report. In our last presentation we presented to you the option of leaving Airdrie-Chestermere together, and we do fully understand that the commission felt that we would be far over our threshold with that. We also

understand that you may feel that Chestermere as an individual constituency is premature at this time.

So we have had a chance to take a look at the data that's been presented through your report, and we support what is out there as far as the Chestermere-Strathmore constituency.

The Chair: Could I just assist you in one respect there?

Mrs. Matthews: Absolutely.

11:45

The Chair: We have heard from Strathmore, from the county of Wheatland, from the county of Newell, from Brooks a very hard message that they want to stay within the Strathmore-Brooks riding. It's pretty clear. While they have nothing bad to say about Chestermere, they just don't think their interests are the same. We're also looking at Chestermere from what we've heard, and we're going to have to make some changes. I just give you that as a background.

Mrs. Matthews: Thank you, sir. We understand that there have been presentations from others and that there are different needs and wants of other communities. We in no way speak on their behalf and would find it presumptuous to think that we could.

What we wanted to bring forward today was our reiteration that we in no way wish to be paired with a city of Calgary riding. We made that, I hope, abundantly clear in our last presentation but would like to drive that point home again today and have provided you with some reasoning as to why. We also asked some of our residents about a week ago to bring forward some letters of support specifically to that point and since then have received dozens and dozens of letters of support, which you have in front of you and I'm sure will make for excellent bedtime reading. I can sum them up for you in a very clear sentence: please don't put us in with a city of Calgary riding.

The Chair: Can I assist you there?

Mrs. Matthews: Absolutely.

The Chair: You will not be in a city of Calgary riding.

Mrs. Matthews: Thank you. You have now made the top of our Christmas list, so I appreciate that.

The Chair: Thank you, and that's on the record.

Mrs. Matthews: Absolutely. Note to self, Patrick.

We understand that you're taking a look at Chestermere-Strathmore as a riding. We offer some observations along those lines and then would open ourselves up to any questions that you have for us in order to provide you with as much time as possible.

In front of you you do have a map that has provided some of the observations that we in the town of Chestermere have made and wanted to point out in case for some reason this may have missed the commission's attention, one of those being that the Western irrigation district, which is, of course, the district that provides irrigation to the farmers within our region, resides completely within the Wheatland county and Chestermere-Strathmore areas, with one exception up near Irricana. We're not suggesting you change those boundaries.

I think that you all have the map in front of you at this point.

The Chair: Yes. We got it with the first submission, the filed one.

Mrs. Matthews: Great. Thank you.

We also just wanted to point out that a logical boundary may be with Wheatland county. We understand that there is some concern from the county of Newell about being split up and so point out that if the Chestermere-Strathmore boundaries on the east side were aligned with the county of Wheatland, you would then have boundaries that matched with the Calgary Regional Partnership's Calgary metropolitan plan boundaries, understanding that the county of Wheatland is not currently in the Calgary Regional Partnership, but they have been previously, and we are anticipating and hoping that they will make their return in the near future. As I pointed out, the Western irrigation district boundaries are also aligned within that specific area, and the Wheatland county boundaries then would not be aligned with Newell within the Chestermere and Strathmore area.

We also just would like to bring to your attention that if those boundaries were shifted to align with the county of Wheatland boundary, then an MLA would be accessible to anyone within that area within a one-hour time frame, which makes from a resident's perspective easier access to your MLA and from an MLA perspective less travel time and easier access to residents.

From our end we would just like to point out that Chestermere has consulted with no other community or no other representative at this time except for our current MLA, Rob Anderson, and you've seen his submission. So we speak only on behalf of the town of Chestermere and, as I had mentioned, do not presume to speak on behalf of anyone else.

Thank you so much for your time, and we'd happily answer any questions you have.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much.

Dr. Archer: Thanks, Mayor and Councillor. Peter is probably hoping that I'll cede my time to him, but I wasn't thinking of doing that, so I'll just ask you a question or two.

This is a very dynamic process for us, looking at the constituencies in this area.

Mrs. Matthews: Yes. I bet it is.

Dr. Archer: One of the things that I think we'll be thinking about in our posthearing phase is: what happens to the constituencies that encircle Calgary if the county of Wheatland remains with the county of Newell? Obviously, Chestermere comes into play in that discussion. One configuration is if you think of a riding that looks a bit like a horseshoe that goes around the top of Calgary.

We had a representation – I think it was from the MD of Rocky View – that suggested that it was very important to keep a buffer zone between Airdrie and the city of Calgary on the north end. If we had a constituency that ran east to west, came down the east side past the city of Calgary limits to include Chestermere and across the top of Calgary but not including Calgary and then I'm not sure exactly where that would end on the west side – it wouldn't go as far as Cochrane, necessarily – but with a configuration of those dimensions, could you give us a response to how you would think that kind of constituency would enable the interests of your community to be represented?

Mrs. Matthews: Well, I'll make my comment, and then if Councillor Bergen has anything to add, I'll defer to him.

From a Chestermere standpoint we have excellent trading capacity and an excellent relationship, as you've heard previously, with the city of Airdrie. Beyond that we tend to get into a rivalry situation when it comes to sports teams and trading the closer you get to

Cochrane, more of an east-west kind of configuration. Without consulting more with my entire council, I would have to say that it would be an uncomfortable position to be in, to surround that much of Calgary and have us mostly on the east end while having consideration given on the west end. I think, if I recall the presentation from Rocky View, they were expecting to surround but not include the town of Cochrane in that presentation.

It's a possibility but certainly one that I think we would need to take more consideration into and see how that would lay out with our residents. As I said, there is a natural rivalry between east and west that occurs there.

The Chair: Could I just add something there, though?

Mrs. Matthews: Absolutely.

The Chair: You would be unique and the biggest community within that riding. As I recall, you didn't want to have other competing communities, and this would in fact achieve that.

Mrs. Matthews: Thank you.

Mr. Bergen: I guess the way I perceive it, very similar to Mayor Matthews, the issue brought forward by other communities is the mix of rural and urban communities. In the Chestermere-Strathmore area there are obviously the two larger urban centres that would assist the smaller communities and have relationships with them. If we shift the other direction, we end up with the same issue but, on the other end, a mix of rural and urban areas. You know, I've read a lot of the submissions from the area to the right on the map there, in the county of Newell, and they deal with similar issues that are dissimilar to the smaller urban centres. So, effectively, all we're doing is shifting the same issue from one side to the other.

It's a natural region for us. A lot of the small communities regularly have meetings with us, the likes of Langdon and Indus and those types of things, right? I'd be hard-pressed to know if I've ever really travelled the other area aside from recreationally. As I say, I see it as a shift.

Dr. Archer: Yeah. Thanks for those comments. That's all I have.

11:55

The Chair: Peter.

Mr. Dobbie: Thanks, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mayor and Councillor, for coming today and saying some nice things about our work. We haven't heard that consistently in our second round of hearings. We have been graded in some areas, and I think the comments have been that there's room for improvement.

We are in a fortunate position. One factor that you may not be aware of is that we heard in Red Deer a strong desire on behalf of the people within Red Deer, the MLAs, and also some councillors that they're okay with Red Deer having two constituencies that would be about 5,000 over the provincial average. That then allows a bunch of changes to occur to some of the proposed boundaries that we dealt with from Red Deer south and around Red Deer that tended to be more north-south than east-west. That will have a cascading effect.

It does strike me that there is a community of interest, perhaps, for communities who do not want to be part of Calgary who are adjacent to Calgary. Your city may be the largest trying to deal with that situation, but I would ask you to consider whether there is enough of a community of interest surrounding the north, east, and west of Calgary that maybe there is some merit in working together because

that's something that may give us an opportunity to also meet your other requests. As I recall, even having Strathmore with you was something that was not highly recommended by you because they were competitors.

Mrs. Matthews: Third on our list of things to happen.

Mr. Dobbie: Yeah. Third option.

Just on a specific question: your FCSS boundaries, if I could just refer to that. Is that dotted line to the east of Chestermere essentially along the county boundary?

Mrs. Matthews: The dotted line. Are you speaking of the red?

Mr. Dobbie: Yeah. The red dotted line that is north-south, a little bit east of highway 9: is that just the county boundary that you're drawing for FCSS funding purposes?

Mrs. Matthews: No. If you take a look, the FCSS line encompasses and surrounds the town of Chestermere, and then we do cross highway 9, but there's not a lot of service area within there. Primarily, that area is serviced south of highway 9, Dalroy and Lyalta specifically.

Mr. Dobbie: Okay. Again, we've also heard, as you may be aware, that the municipal district that is adjacent to Airdrie has a concern about being the tail on the Airdrie dog if there is a division of Airdrie. You heard the earlier presentations, and we do receive conflicting requests, and we are trying to do our balancing act. Again, it is helpful that you've taken the time to canvass the population.

For today's purposes, priority number one is: if there is a change, do not put us back in with Calgary. I understand that. The only thing is that if we give you everything you want, then people will think that you have us over a barrel, and it may be difficult for us to justify changes in other areas. So I don't think we can give you 100 per cent of what you're asking for, but the feedback is helpful.

Mrs. Matthews: You make that sound like a bad thing. I appreciate that.

The Chair: Allyson.

Ms Jeffs: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you very much, Mayor and Councillor, for coming. It's very much appreciated to have you here again because, as you know from the feedback we've had elsewhere, we've had some strong requests for some change.

I just want to talk a little bit more about that horseshoe. Is your main concern competing with communities on the west or having very different issues than communities on the west of Calgary? Not wanting to be part of Calgary is not a strong enough link?

Mrs. Matthews: I think we've beaten that not wanting to be part of Calgary horse pretty much to death at this point. I think the bigger concern is that we would like to continue to serve and be served by an MLA who has consistent direction from communities, and those on the east versus those on the west tend to have different requirements. Ours tend to be focused more on Chestermere-based priorities, obviously, and rural have a much larger component that they need to take into consideration, not that we're suggesting by any stretch of the imagination that rural should not be included.

We get along really well with our neighbours, and we get along

really well with the city of Calgary, I have to point out. We don't have an acrimonious relationship by any stretch of the imagination, but their priorities are theirs and our priorities are ours. We've found in trading and discussions and even political discussions that there tends to be a different focus on the west side versus on the east side. That's my perception.

Ms Jeffs: Is it more development? Can you just provide a few more specifics?

Mrs. Matthews: It is development, how that gets laid out. It's priorities as to what the long-term future looks like. You know, we look at a 10-, 20-, and 30-year outlook on how we're going to grow. As you're aware, we're one of the fastest growing towns in not only Alberta but in Canada. Even now our growth in the last year has been close to 9 per cent in what is otherwise a fairly flat growth market.

We have different trading requirements on the east because, of course, most of our goods move east as opposed to moving west. We have less of a tourist, mountain perspective and feel to our town. We have more of that prairie, water kind of feel.

Ms Jeffs: So driven quite a bit by the differences in geography there.

Mrs. Matthews: And economy.

Ms Jeffs: And economy.

I think we've heard loud and clear on the issue with Calgary. Then if the county of Newell was to be kept together in an electoral district, that would obviously affect the riding as proposed, so your preference would be for us to look at an alignment with Chestermere that would take in Wheatland county.

Mrs. Matthews: We feel you have done an awful lot of your homework. The commission has proposed Chestermere-Strathmore. You've done it, we believe, with good reasoning and with a lot of data. While it's not our first or second choice, it is our third, and hardly not our 10th or anything further down. We believe that if you've taken all of that into consideration, we offer our observation, not necessarily preference but observation, that aligning with the Wheatland county boundary does also align with more things that already exist within that community: the Calgary Regional Partnership boundaries, the Western irrigation district boundaries; they're closer to our FCSS boundaries. We have a very good relationship with Strathmore, too, so we are used to going back and forth between the two communities.

Honestly, it's a preference to go to Strathmore and to come to Chestermere than it is to go to Calgary.

Ms Jeffs: All right. Well, thank you. I don't have any other questions. Thank you again, both of you, for coming today.

Mrs. Matthews: Absolutely.

The Chair: Brian.

Mr. Evans: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mayor and Councillor. We did hear you last time, certainly, about the desire to stay out of the city of Calgary and not to have the Chestermere issues lost in a city agenda.

I would ask you to seriously consider as mayor and council what we're talking about in terms of this horseshoe. When I look at your own map, being quite familiar with this area and recognizing a very

strong representation that we had to keep Wheatland and Newell together – it was unanimous, and it was very persuasive – if we take that away as a possibility and we take away a possibility of moving directly west into the city of Calgary, then you look north and south. The further away you get from Chestermere, I would suggest, directly north or south, the more agricultural you get. You'll have the same kinds of comments that we heard yesterday from the county of Wheatland and from Strathmore-Brooks, who love you to death but don't feel a great deal of similarity of issues that you have in Chestermere.

Now, the horseshoe, in my respectful opinion, does include a significant amount of country residential. Those folks, albeit they don't have density issues like you have in Chestermere, do have community interests that are, I think, quite well aligned with the kinds of issues that you have in Chestermere. We're not talking about moving considerably west of the city of Calgary to get into a real agricultural area; we're talking a much narrower track that would include Springbank and Bears paw. Those folks, clearly, just like your residents, have a lot of focus in the city of Calgary but enjoy the environment outside of the city of Calgary and really do have an orientation to the mountain playground that we have.

12:05

I would suggest that your good citizens in Chestermere also have that, perhaps to a lesser degree, but I've spent a fair bit of time at Camp Chestermere, and it's a great view of the Rocky Mountains from Camp Chestermere. I mean, I've got to think that your citizens would think positively about an orientation that takes into account others who have similar impacts in and out of the city of Calgary, that have similar day-to-day realities that involve going into the city of Calgary and using it for services. The added benefit, that's already been spoken about by other members of the commission, is that Chestermere would be a real focal point for that constituency and a very significant voice for that constituency.

Again, I apologize if it sounds like I'm trying to beat you down to accept this as an alternative, but I would hope that you'd take those points into consideration when you do review the possibility with the other members of council.

Thank you very much. I'm happy to hear any comments you would have about that.

Mrs. Matthews: My only question to that, Mr. Evans, would be: have you taken into consideration the economic strides that are being taken by Chestermere to become sustainable versus the strides that are being taken by the neighbourhood specifically around Springbank to remain country residential? Do you not think that those conflict one another?

Mr. Evans: Well, country residential is different than urban densities; there is absolutely no doubt about that. But I don't think that that means that there has to be an all-or-nothing mentality. A recognition that in one area country residential and two-acre minimum parcels makes sense and in another area, that's already developed, that higher, urban-type densities are the norm and always will be: I don't think that's a message that creates an inherent conflict between those two areas. That's my own view.

Mrs. Matthews: How do you believe Balzac will fit into this?

Because I presume Balzac also is included in this. You're not planning to leave that with the city of Airdrie in the consideration?

Mr. Evans: Certainly, that was the position of the county of Rocky View, as you know, that that area, which is a substantial part of their economic development future, would always remain – and "always" was highlighted – outside the city of Calgary and wouldn't be an annexation target candidate for either the city of Calgary or the city of Airdrie. So there's another flavour for a constituency that would go around the city of Calgary, and I think that would be an interesting flavour to add to the mix.

Mrs. Matthews: Thank you.

Mr. Bergen: I guess I do feel a little bit stickhandled. Obviously, we've heard from everybody around Chestermere, and I guess coming last, maybe you do get that perspective.

Obviously, I appreciate the effort here. It's not an easy thing to try to understand because – you're correct – we're bounded on the bottom of the map there by Calgary. Airdrie is taken out, I think correctly, which leaves sort of two directions and maybe up north there. I would have to say that if we were to start with Chestermere and adjust everybody around that, it's pretty obvious that we do share more interests and concerns with the area out to just past Strathmore. So, in a sense, we are accommodating some of the other areas by looking at these other options.

A lot of the interest, I know from reading the letters, was to the county of Newell, you know, a large area. There is accommodation here in our suggestion for that. It's understandable. It is a different region, and I certainly do understand that.

You know, all I can say is that I wish you the best of luck figuring it out.

The Chair: Well, I want to stress that Brian should not replace me on the Christmas list.

Mr. Bergen: Okay. Fair enough. You have no worries.

The Chair: Well, thank you both so much. I'm very appreciative of your submissions and ideas. We have our evening reading here, so thank you again. We really will be considering what you've told us.

Mrs. Matthews: Thank you, Your Honour. We offer ourselves up for any questions that may come in the future – should you wish to contact us, please feel free to do so – or any points that you may feel need further discussion. We would hope that if there was more consideration to that horseshoe and there were questions surrounding it that you would feel free to contact us.

The Chair: Thank you. That's very good.

Mrs. Matthews: Thank you. Good luck with the rest of your hearings.

The Chair: We are adjourned.

[The hearing adjourned at 12:11 p.m.]

