



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

Judge Ernest J.M. Walter, Chairman

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Peter Dobbie, QC
Brian Evans, QC
Allyson Jeffs

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Don Thomas and Ed Eggerer

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[Judge Walter in the chair]

The Chair: Good afternoon. Thank you for taking the time to come out and share your views with us today. I know I speak for all of us when I say that we're looking forward to hearing from you.

My name is Ernie Walter. I'm the chairman of the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission, and I'd like to introduce you to the other members of the commission here with me today: on my far right, Dr. Keith Archer of Banff; next to him, Peter Dobbie of Vegreville; on my immediate left, Allyson Jeffs of Edmonton; and next to Allyson, Brian Evans of Calgary.

Our task here. We have been directed by the legislation to make recommendations to the Legislative Assembly on the areas, boundaries, and names for 87 electoral divisions based on the latest census and population information. In other words, our job is to determine where to divide Alberta into 87 areas so each Albertan receives effective representation by a Member of the Legislative Assembly. Over the next few months we will seek community input through province-wide consultation before developing our recommendations. Through public hearings such as the one here today we want to hear from you and what you have to say about the representation you are receiving in your community.

In carrying out this work, we have to follow the provisions of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. It says that we are to make proposals to the Legislative Assembly regarding the areas, boundaries, and names of 87 electoral divisions. You will recognize that that means we are mandated to propose four additional electoral divisions in Alberta, which will come into effect at the next provincial general election. We are also reviewing the law and what the courts have said about electoral boundaries in the province of Alberta and in Canada, the work of previous commissions and committees which have studied boundaries in Alberta, and the population information that is available to us.

I want to give you a brief summary of the electoral boundaries law. As I've said, our function is to make proposals to the Legislative Assembly for 87 electoral divisions. We have a limited time to accomplish this task. We are required, after consideration of representations made at these public hearings, to submit an interim report to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly in February of 2010 that sets out the areas, boundaries, and names of the 87 proposed electoral divisions and reasons for the proposed boundaries. Following publication of the interim report a second round of public hearings will be held to receive input on the proposed 87 boundaries, and after consideration of the input the commission must submit a final report to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly by July of 2010. Then it's up to the Legislative Assembly by resolution to approve or to approve with alterations the proposals of the commission and to introduce a bill to establish new electoral divisions for Alberta in accordance with the resolution. This law would then come into force when proclaimed, before the holding of the next general election.

One way to ensure effective representation is by developing electoral divisions with similar populations, especially where population density is similar. The law directs us to use the populations set out in the most recent census of Alberta as provided by Statistics Canada, the 2006 census, but if the commission believes there is population information that is more recent than the federal census compiled by Statistics Canada, then the commission may use this data in conjunction with the census information, which is what we will be doing because we have considerable further census information, particularly from the larger urban centres.

Based on an update of our numbers from various sources, the population of Drumheller-Stettler is approximately 33,710. That puts the region about 17 per cent below the provincial average of 40,583. Elections Alberta is currently reviewing the 2009 census data, and those numbers will be considered by the commission once they are officially released.

I note that we are also required to add the population of First Nation reserves that were not included in the census, as provided by the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.

The commission is required, as I've said, to divide Alberta into 87 proposed electoral divisions by taking into account factors it considers appropriate, but it must and shall take into consideration the following:

- (a) the requirement for effective representation as guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms,
- (b) sparsity and density of population,
- (c) common community interests and community organizations, including those of Indian reserves and Metis settlements,
- (d) wherever possible, the existing community boundaries within the cities of Edmonton and Calgary,
- (e) . . . the existing municipal boundaries,
- (f) the number of municipalities and other local authorities,
- (g) geographical features, including existing road systems, and
- (h) the desirability of understandable and clear boundaries.

The population rule in the act states that a proposed electoral division must not be more than 25 per cent below or above the average population for all 87 electoral divisions. There is one exception to this. Up to four proposed electoral divisions may have a population that is as much as 50 per cent below the average population of the electoral divisions if three of the following five criteria are met:

- (a) the area . . . exceeds 20 000 square kilometres or the total surveyed area of the proposed electoral division exceeds 15 000 square kilometres;
- (b) the distance from the Legislature Building in Edmonton to the nearest boundary of the proposed electoral division by the most direct highway route is more than 150 kilometres;
- (c) there is no town in the proposed electoral division that has a population exceeding 8000 people;
- (d) the area of the proposed electoral division contains an Indian reserve or a Metis settlement;
- (e) the proposed electoral division has a portion of its boundary coterminous with a boundary of the Province of Alberta.

It says that for these purposes the municipality of Crowsnest Pass is not a town.

1:05

That's a very general overview of the legislation, but the Alberta Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada have also provided guidance. In rulings they have agreed that under the Charter the rights of Albertans include the right to vote; the right to have the political strength or value or force of the vote an elector casts not unduly diluted; the right to effective representation; the right to have the parity of the votes of others diluted, but not unduly, in order to gain effective representation or as a matter of practical necessity. These rulings as well as the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act must guide our decisions and, ultimately, the proposals that we will make to the Legislative Assembly.

Now that I've explained the law we are to be guided by, we want to receive important input, and that's your views. We believe that what we hear from you who will be affected by these boundary changes is critical to recommending a new electoral map that will ensure fair and effective representation for all Albertans.

We welcome all of you here today. For those of you who will not be speaking, you can make your views known in writing by mail, fax, or e-mail.

With that background information I'll now call on our staff for the first speaker. Each speaker is to have 10 minutes to present and then five minutes for questions and answers with the commission. The commission's public meetings are being recorded by *Alberta Hansard*, and the audio recordings will be posted to the commission website. Transcripts of these proceedings will also be available. If you have registered as a presenter or choose to participate in this afternoon's meetings, we ask that you identify yourself for the record prior to starting your presentation.

Ms Friesacher: Our first presenters are Mr. Merle Blair, chair of the advisory council of the Special Areas Board, and Mr. Jay Slemp, chair of the Special Areas Board.

Merle Blair, Chairman, Advisory Council

Jay Slemp, Chairman

Special Areas Board

Mr. Blair: Good afternoon, Judge Walter, commission members, and ladies and gentlemen. My name is Merle Blair, and I'm the chairman of the advisory council of the Special Areas Board. With me is Jay Slemp, the chairman of the Special Areas Board. Thanks for the opportunity to give our views on this important issue. I can't say that I envy you your job as you listen to people from all over Alberta thinking that their little part of Alberta is a very special place and important to them, but thank you for the job that you're doing.

As a background, special areas is a unique form of rural local government that serves a large geographical area in southern Alberta. The boundaries are marked in yellow on the map of the Drumheller-Stettler constituency. The major towns are Hanna, Oyen, and Consort.

We characterize ourselves as being rural remote. By that we mean that we are well outside the commuting distance of any major city, we're sparsely populated, and we've suffered from declining populations. The declining populations are a result of the continuing restructuring in the size of the farms in our area, the lack of opportunity for economic diversification. Having said that, we contribute significant natural resources such as agriculture, oil and gas, coal-fired power generation, and, more recently, wind power to the Alberta economy.

While most municipal maps show special areas 2, 3, and 4 as separate municipalities, they are in fact administered by one administration, being the Special Areas Board. The advisory council, which we sit on, is made up of elected representatives from all three special areas, and we give advice to the Special Areas Board and the Minister of Municipal Affairs on the special areas operations. We must consider all three special areas in our recommendations. We have common issues and participate in regional partnerships. As an example, special areas along with all of the towns and villages within our boundaries have a large number of regional agreements and partnerships, which include one seniors' housing foundation, regional water systems along highway 9 and highway 12, a regional waste commission serving all the communities in the special areas, regional economic development initiatives. We are all part of one regional municipal planning agency centre in Hanna. There are two large school divisions and one smaller separate school division. We have joint fire agreements, including regional training. In short, we operate as one unit, and we would strongly recommend to you that the special areas stay as one unit with one MLA.

Sparse population has implications when it comes to effective representation. Our MLA is faced with the issues of time and distance. If you look again at the map of the constituency, you can see that our current MLA has three constituency offices, located in

Drumheller, Stettler, and Hanna, each one being about an hour apart. That leaves a huge area to the east that our MLA has to get to on a regular basis if he's to have a good handle on the issues among the people.

You will also note that from Stettler to Oyen is about a two and a half hour drive and to the farthest point, at Empress, is a full three-hour drive, six hours return. By comparison, Hanna is a full three-hour drive from Edmonton. With no scheduled air service, our MLA is forced to do this by car. It requires a considerable commitment on his part to get out to community events that are so vital to good government and effective representation. I hesitate to think of the miles that he's putting on his vehicles, not to mention the added pressure it puts on his family in terms of time sacrificed to get the job done. This is a big difference from the constituencies that have much more concentrated populations.

We already have the largest constituency in the southern part of the province. In fact, when MLAs or cabinet members fly from Edmonton to Medicine Hat, they fly over the Drumheller-Stettler constituency for approximately two-thirds of their time. Our question to you is: how much bigger can you make it and still have effective representation?

Our constituency population density issue seems to be typical of all the constituencies along the eastern side of this province, where the population deviations from the proposed average are all in the negative. Fortunately, none of these deviations are more than the 25 per cent allowed. However, it does give us some concern as we know that some restructuring of rural constituencies may be required near the cities. While Drumheller-Stettler is within the 25 per cent, will we be caught in that boundary change as it ripples out from the corridor? What are our options? Or, more correctly, what are your options?

I would like to comment on three possible scenarios. Firstly, adding area to the south or to the north. Unfortunately, along this eastern corridor you have to take in a large area to get enough population to make a big difference in the total population of the constituency. We can see some small opportunities such as taking in the county of Paintearth. We have some regional partnerships with them along highway 12, and it is on the way from Stettler to Consort. However, adding this to our constituency only creates further problems for the next constituencies to the north as they are all below the proposed averages.

Two, adding area to the west. To take in more area to the west takes us across the Red Deer River, which is a major geographical feature. We have few, if any, common interests or community organizations. Doing this would add even more pressure on our MLA to get to even more events and meet with even more organizations.

Three, leave the boundaries the same. As we are still within the 25 per cent allowed, you could leave our boundary the same and make no change on the basis that it is already a large enough area. We are hopeful that with the addition of four new constituencies, there will be a minimal need for major adjustments in rural constituencies.

In conclusion, we would strongly recommend option 3, leaving the boundaries of the Drumheller-Stettler constituency the same, and if necessary in the future, consideration be given to using the special consideration clause.

We appreciate the opportunity you've given us to present our concerns and opinions, and either Jay or I would be pleased to try to answer any questions that you may have.

1:15

The Chair: Thank you very much. That was very good.

Keith, do you have any questions?

Dr. Archer: Well, thanks, Mr. Blair, for the presentation and for the attached maps as well. Yeah, I have a couple of questions. The first is just to clarify my understanding of the special areas that you're representing. In the yellow shaded part of the map that you've provided, it indicates the special areas, so far as I understand it, all of which are within the riding of Stettler-Drumheller.

Mr. Blair: That's correct.

Dr. Archer: Does that special areas designation include any area outside of the riding, or is it all within the riding?

Mr. Blair: It's all within the riding.

Dr. Archer: It's all within the riding. Okay. Thanks.

One of the scenarios that one could think about in terms of this constituency and some of the neighbouring constituencies – as you noted, there are a number of constituencies in this area that are below the provincial quotient – would be to look at including the town of Stettler and some of the county of Stettler in the Battle River-Wainwright constituency and then including Brooks with Drumheller in much of the constituency that's currently Drumheller-Stettler. What would be your reaction to that kind of proposal?

Mr. Blair: Leaving special areas alone, you mean, as a whole?

Dr. Archer: The special areas wouldn't change but what the special areas is grouped with. Instead of being grouped with a community farther to the north, it's now grouped with something a little bit geographically closer, to the southwest. Are there trading patterns that are of concern here?

Mr. Slemp: I think probably, you know, the south part as you go down to Pollockville and Cessford and those areas: those areas do utilize Brooks. You know, there is a trading pattern there. Jenner, which is across the river, that would kind of connect with Brooks. That irrigation area does make it a different dynamic there, but we don't have a lot of partnerships with those municipalities, say the county of Newell. We know them quite well, but we don't have a lot of partnerships with them. I think ambulance is probably the only one that we would have a partnership with. We tend to be much stronger up into Stettler, with water lines connecting from Stettler, Castor, Coronation, Consort. Those tend to be much stronger bonds, you know, in terms of hospital, in terms of water, in terms of regional partnerships. But Brooks is an area where it wouldn't be uncommon for us to know those folks and know them well.

Dr. Archer: Okay. Thank you. That's all I have.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you. Jay, could I get the spelling of your last name just for my notes?

Mr. Slemp: S-l-e-m-p.

Mr. Dobbie: Oh, I had it right. I just wanted to make sure. Thank you.

Again, I'd like to thank you both for taking the time to give us your thoughts. It is very helpful for us to know what's working in your constituency and what you might recommend.

One of my questions relates to future growth prospects. You've mentioned wind power as a new area of development. Are there any areas within the existing constituency that you see growing over the next eight to 10 years more than the average population?

Mr. Slemp: No.

Mr. Dobbie: Nothing within the special areas. It might keep its own numbers, or you might be suffering from a bit of depopulation there.

Mr. Slemp: The dynamic has been that we have had huge oil and gas development, and that has not translated into growth in population. That has translated into more people working from the farm, you know, and getting another job. In the special areas our population has continued to decline, but the towns and villages have stayed the same. We're outside that commuting distance.

What's happening in special areas is happening in agriculture all around the province, but it's massed around the corridor because you have people moving out on acreages and commuting back and forth to the city. Those areas have been continuing to grow through acreage development, through those developments. We're outside of that commuting distance, so our farm population is declining the same as theirs is, but there's nothing to replace it. We've done a lot of work on economic development, but we believe that if we can hold our own, that would be a major achievement.

Mr. Dobbie: So by default proportionally the population will be dropping.

Mr. Slemp: Yes.

Mr. Dobbie: A second question. You raised the issue of the special areas. I know you spent a great deal of time looking at your constituency, but have you moved up 30,000 feet and looked at the province? Do you have any comments to us on the number of special areas that we might be considering in this electoral boundaries review?

Mr. Slemp: I'm not sure I understand.

Mr. Dobbie: Well, we can have up to four constituencies.

Mr. Slemp: Oh, the special consideration.

Mr. Dobbie: Yes. "Special areas," I guess, is a local term.

Mr. Slemp: Yeah, a local term there.

The way I look at it is that if you look at the constituency map, this is already one of the larger ones. I think that if you look at it from an area point of view, if you go north – say, Battle River, and the one to the north that I think is Wainwright, in there – and if you put those together, they would be about the same size as we are. We've looked at that, saying, you know, there likely will be some restructuring – it's all negative along the east – if not this time, the next time if our population continues to decline, unless something big happens. So we see all of those in the negative.

I guess I look at it and say that eventually where there are six along there now, there might be five. So how do you split that up? Our contention is that you have the huge one at Medicine Hat. You have a huge one right next to it. Probably the next move is to have a huge one north of us. We are just concerned about how big you can get, how much area we can ask that guy to cover. It's just a tremendous amount of travel, a tremendous amount for him coming from Edmonton.

Our concern is that if there's going to be some restructuring, maybe it should go to the north as opposed to affecting us. We could take in the county of Paintearth. That's right on the way. However you put these things together, it's always better to

amalgamate so that on their way back from Edmonton they can stop in at that place and have that meeting. That's very important, I think, to our MLAs, that when you add something, you add it on the way to where they're going. Like, you're going to Brooks. If you take us south into Brooks and take these other ones north, you know, I'm not sure that that works towards that objective.

That's my 30,000 point of view. That's probably not the opinion of the board, but it's certainly what I see happening.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you again, both of you, for the work you've done.

The Chair: Brian.

Mr. Evans: Thanks, Chairman. Thanks very much, gentlemen. It's not lost on us what an incredibly large area this is to represent and a very sparse population in the special areas. Just looking at the provincial map, there don't appear to be too many logical add-ons that would not have an impact on existing constituencies other than, as Keith Archer mentioned, Brooks, but I wonder whether Cypress-Medicine Hat might be thinking the same thing, that they could add Brooks onto theirs and be closer to the quotient. Have you had any discussions with any of the surrounding constituencies, sharing your comments with them or getting any other input?

Mr. Slemp: I haven't.

Mr. Evans: I would suggest that if you could do that – and, of course, who do you talk to? I appreciate that's an issue as well. If you could have some other discussions, it would likely be helpful to us in the second round because we will be coming out with our draft report, and there'll be another set of public hearings after that. We really do want to get some suggestions that do make sense on the ripple effect, so we would encourage you to try to talk to your neighbours and see what you might be able to come up with. Again, if you can identify any growth areas outside of your constituency boundaries right now that would have some community interest, that would be quite helpful as well to us.

Mr. Slemp: Yeah. I think the biggest growth area we see is probably Buffalo Lake in the county of Stettler. There are more subdivisions in the county of Stettler at Buffalo Lake than there are lots in Stettler. So we see that as an area. They're servicing it with water. It seems to be a real growing area. So we see that as a constituency of an area of some growth. Then, of course, Drumheller, here, in terms of oil and gas is a centre. Then the rest of us are likely to try and hold our own.

1:25

Mr. Evans: Hanna and Oyen: they're not likely to grow.

Mr. Slemp: No. They're just holding their own. I've been there 35 years, and I think their population has varied, you know, by 10 or a hundred. It's a very, very small change, very, very stable populations.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Well, thank you very much. It's a tough problem, and as you say, every area in the province is special in its own way, shape, or form, but the special areas are a legislated special place in Alberta. Thank you.

The Chair: Allyson.

Ms Jeffs: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for the presentation and the map. That's very, very helpful. I just have a couple of questions. You've got some population data on your map, and if I'm reading this correctly, you're looking at a total population for the constituency of 33,195. I'm just wondering how recent your data is. It's a little lower than what we have. I think we had 33,700. Is that particularly recent data from the various counties?

Mr. Slemp: Yeah. I think we tried to reconcile it with the municipal census data. Like, some of the towns and villages have redone their census information, so we'd used Municipal Affairs data, which would have, you know, maybe last year's census information for some of the larger towns.

Ms Jeffs: Okay. So that would be that official population list from Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Slemp: I'm pretty sure that's the number that we used. We knew there were some differences, but we couldn't really figure out where they were.

Ms Jeffs: All right. That's helpful. Thank you.

I got the distances from Edmonton, and I realize, obviously, that that's important because that's the MLAs going back and forth there. What's your distance to Calgary?

Mr. Slemp: From Hanna?

Ms Jeffs: From Hanna.

Mr. Slemp: Hanna is about a two-hour drive.

Ms Jeffs: It's about two. It's been a while since I drove that from Calgary.

Mr. Evans: If there's no fog. I've driven there for hockey, and it's a lot longer if there's fog.

Mr. Slemp: Yeah. Two hundred kilometres.

Ms Jeffs: Okay. So about 200 K.

Mr. Slemp: Two hundred to Red Deer, 200 to Calgary, and about 300 to Edmonton.

Ms Jeffs: I'm just going to go back over something which you were talking about to make sure I'm understanding you correctly. You mentioned it's a problem in this area with the constituencies which have some declining population. Did I understand correctly that you see in future boundary distributions that maybe instead of having, like you said, six constituencies up that sort of eastern corridor, maybe things would go down to five. I'm just wondering if that's been, you know, talked about much with the other areas and stuff.

Mr. Slemp: No, it hasn't. But, I mean, you know that you're going to have to make adjustments in every one of those. Every one of those is going to have to either connect east and west. They may not connect north and south, but they have to connect somewhere else. The population growth is in the middle, and we're out on the end. Saskatchewan is on the other side, so you can't go that way, and to the north and the south are all negative numbers.

Is there going to be an adjustment? Yeah, there's going to have to be some adjustment there somewhere. They can't continue on.

But then our question is: just how big can you make them? Can you continue to make them bigger? Last time we took in Stettler. You know, we got some more population there. Not much else changed. We just took in the county of Stettler. So it seems like you're connecting east and west, because you don't go very far to get a large number of people. But everybody along the eastern corridor is going to get adjusted at some point in time. You can't avoid it unless things change significantly. It's such a big area.

Ms Jeffs: So do I understand correctly, then, that Stettler was brought in during the last boundary commission change?

Mr. Slemp: Uh-huh.

Ms Jeffs: Okay. As you heard from Keith Archer, we're talking about that. Maybe migrating to Battle River-Wainwright and then moving the southern boundary here is one of the scenarios that has been discussed at previous meetings.

Mr. Slemp: Yeah. That worked pretty good because it was on the way. You know, you could kind of pick it up on the way, and you can kind of get it on the way to Consort. That one actually worked out quite good. We probably made the same presentation last time: don't make the change. But, you know, in coming back to it, that actually worked pretty good, and we're finding we have quite a few more partnerships with Stettler, not necessarily because it's in the constituency but because of water, because of regional partnerships. There's a lot of stuff happening between Castor, Coronation, Consort, and Stettler. Those are growing partnerships.

Ms Jeffs: Okay. Those are my questions. Thank you very much.

The Chair: As we look at these boundaries and we look at the east and moving west, if we were to look at Battle River taking in the town of Stettler and some distance a little bit south and then Drumheller-Stettler looking, possibly, at Brooks, that would very likely put in a division that would have room for growth and would have the population to justify the special areas staying as they are.

Mr. Slemp: So that would be the county of Newell?

The Chair: Yes. We have to look at this not just as if it were for tomorrow. We have to look at it for the day after, and we'd like these boundaries to accommodate for some time.

Mr. Slemp: Yeah. Definitely the city of Brooks is growing. I mean, you'll get a population centre there, and the irrigation does have – you don't go far to get a lot of population. That's for sure.

The Chair: That would keep your special areas intact.

Mr. Slemp: I'd have to give it some thought. Yeah, I'll definitely give that some thought. That's good. It's nice to know kind of what you're thinking, and then that helps us give you some feedback based on what might happen. We'd just take that under advisement. We'll go back to our council and talk to our people.

The Chair: Well, we don't know what boundaries we're going to suggest.

Mr. Slemp: No, but you can kind of see, you know, whether that would work, and then we can give you a comment back on that even before the 13th. We have an opportunity to do that in writing, and I think that we would be glad to do that.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Merle and Jay. That's been very helpful for our commission, and we look forward to receiving any further comments you'd have. If you want to sit around for a couple of minutes, we have other people here and you might be interested in what they have to say.

Mr. Blair: Thanks.

Mr. Slemp: Thank you.

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

The Chair: Good afternoon. For the record could I get you both to identify yourselves so that *Hansard* can record it?

Don Thomas and Ed Eggerer

Mr. Eggerer: Thank you very much. My name is Ed Eggerer. Don and I do not represent any particular group. We are here as, I guess, citizens of Airdrie. For background purposes I have been a federal returning officer for 32 years. This was originally my area at one time, within the old Bow River riding. Of course, when we're talking about large ridings, you're not only looking from Drumheller all the way down to Fort Macleod, but that's a different matter and a different time and federal versus provincial. I have been a resident of Airdrie for 30 years. My background is essentially real estate development.

Mr. Thomas: I'm Don Thomas. I was the returning officer for the last provincial election, RO 43, eight years retired school principal, high school most of that time, and have worked with Ed on federal elections as well.

1:35

The Chair: Well, we'd be delighted to hear what both of you have to say.

Mr. Eggerer: Hon. Judge Walter and commission members, as you probably know, when you look at one particular area, somehow you can't avoid looking at other areas. In this case our original look-see at electoral boundaries was the Airdrie-Chestermere electoral district. Having looked at that caused us to go probably much deeper than we'd originally intended to.

Having said that, our submission is based on fair representation within the context of facilitating ease of voting. In particular, the consideration of traffic patterns, recreation choices, normal trade, and community interests should lead to better representation. By increasing the ease of voting, voter turnout should be enhanced. As you know – and I'm not telling you anything you don't know – voter participation has dropped over a number of different elections to an almost abysmal less than 60 per cent and even less in some of the by-elections, I think. Sometimes when we look at that in terms of how voters come out to vote, I think boundaries also need to be looked at in the same light. Ease of voting is very important.

We looked at the Airdrie-Chestermere area, ED 43, and we almost came full circle on that one. When we started, our original intention was to look at a very large electoral district in terms of population. How do we divide that one particularly? We thought of the easiest way at that time: well, let's divide it down highway 2 and create an east and west electoral district. I was glad to hear you say in your introduction that you're wide open and that you have not yet placed those four seats that you have to play with, that they're still fair play and can be put anywhere in the province. We, of course, looked at

the opportunity of saying that we would like to create a new electoral district that was called Airdrie-West.

Having gone further than that, we decided to meet with other interest groups, service clubs, and I think we just recently met with the town of Chestermere. Their interests seemed to be that we weren't going to include Chestermere again in our electoral district, that we were going to create east and west. But having said that, we're going to come right back to it and include them at a later point.

Anyway, we have Airdrie-Chestermere that at this point in time is over by 16,000 residents. Again, the desirable number is 37,820; we're well over that population range. Banff-Cochrane is close to that desirable number. Foothills-Rocky View is 2,500 people under that particular number. Then Highwood – I'm sure you may have already met with the folks down there – is 4,000 over that particular number of 37,820. It seemed like we needed to take into consideration all four of those electoral districts in order to try to accomplish what we were going to accomplish with regard to Airdrie east and west. We also have maps that will show you that the proposed electoral districts make sense from a geographic point of view.

I'll go right back to Airdrie-Chestermere. Airdrie-Chestermere again would be called electoral district 43; that wouldn't change. It would take in the east part of Airdrie and down to Chestermere – you have some maps there, I think, if you want to follow the maps as well – taking in again some of the rural communities of Irricana and Beiseker. Don will walk you through some population numbers and statistics as to why we think that these would be very viable. The new electoral district would be west of Airdrie. Again, as you know – and I'm not telling you anything that you probably don't know in terms of population numbers – Airdrie is growing at a significant rate. In the last couple of years we've experienced growth anywhere from 7 to 11 per cent. Just going back to the east side again, there are two new residential developments. Of course, from a growth point of view the town of Chestermere is growing at a tremendous rate. There are large acreage areas between Airdrie and Chestermere that are also growing at great rates.

Getting back to the new electoral district which is called Airdrie-West, that would essentially take in west Airdrie and down to the boundaries of the city of Calgary. To the north we would take in the community of Crossfield. To the west there is a very distinct physical barrier by way of a coulee; that would take in the west part. It seems like the people who are on the west side have more of a tendency to leave and do business with Cochrane versus the other ones who would more naturally trade with the city of Airdrie.

ED 53, which is now Foothills-Rocky View, would become Cochrane-Bearspaw-Springbank. I think that those folks have a lot in common. Again, tremendous growth in the areas of Cochrane, Bearspaw, and Springbank. They've had growth, and there is no reason why that growth wouldn't continue. They share common interests and recreation and all kinds of similar issues.

ED 45, Banff-Cochrane, would become Banff-Canmore. I think Dr. Archer may have some idea of where those particular areas are. I think the common interests between Banff and Canmore are much more than Banff and Cochrane, for instance. This would be the smallest of the five electoral districts, but I think it would be very well received. You would also have the opportunity to take the Eden Valley reserve, which is sitting way down in Highwood somewhere but in fact is part of the Stoney reserve. That would also reduce the population in Highwood.

Highwood is also a growing electoral district, and we thought that the boundary should probably stay relatively the same. I think you as a commission can obviously tinker with the peripheral areas of the boundaries. We would essentially leave it alone.

At this stage I think I would ask Don to support some of those thoughts statistically and by way of populations. Again, I'm appreciative of the fact that you've said that you're not bound by the 2006 figures because we think our statistics are much more recent. I think that we've not only used those statistics but also used some of them in projecting future growth.

Mr. Thomas: If I could have you move to appendix 1 for a moment, please. You'll see that just at the end of the report, and there are five appendices after. Appendix 1 just lists all of the constituencies in Alberta and the populations that are listed for those constituencies. This is so that mathematically we can justify the addition of a new constituency at that point in time.

1:45

You'll notice that appendix 1 lists all of the constituencies in five major areas. We've got Calgary city, Edmonton city, Edmonton suburban, Calgary suburban, and all of the others. I apologize for that. We probably could've classified more, but our major interest was in the suburban and urban areas because that's what we're talking about with this. That's certainly not to deny the validity of all of those other constituencies. It's just part of our thing there.

Notice, if you will, on page 1 of appendix 1 that Edmonton has, I think, eight constituencies that are over 40,000. At the same time we have Calgary with 12. The average size is significantly different if you look over to the right side as well. Suburban-wise, the same kind of thing on page 2: you'll notice that Calgary suburban constituencies are around 3,692 above the average constituency size elsewhere. Edmonton suburban are around 1,500.

If you'll look now to appendix 2 – just continue moving the pages over – I first did a calculation of growth from 2006 to 2008 in both Edmonton and Calgary, just of interest so that when we get to projections and we talk about what will happen in the future, we have some sort of reference. I'm not trying to suggest that that's going to be a consistent growth pattern. In fact, I referred to a study by Randy Clarke of Alberta Education a couple of years ago where, in fact, he suggested it would be somewhat consistent between the two major urban centres.

But I would have you note that halfway down you see 2006 and 2008 constituency comparisons in both Edmonton and Calgary. Edmonton has 18 seats with an average of 40,576 residents. Calgary at that same time would end up having 23 seats, but the average is 42,948. If you move to 2008, you see an even more dramatic difference in terms of those things. My reference points for the 2008 populations were the official Alberta municipal lists that just came out.

Down below, at the very bottom there you'll see the city, and I've taken the population and I've taken the average seat size and then calculated the effect of adding a seat to Edmonton, for example. So 752,412: adding a seat, the average number of residents ends up being 39,601. But what you notice is this: the figures converge when you have Edmonton with none added and Calgary with two added. We actually then see that the resident population of those constituencies now start to get the same.

In other words, what I'm saying is that Calgary has been underrepresented by two seats. There is Edmonton-Whitemud that is a very large constituency, but possibly by changing some of the ED boundaries within Edmonton, that could end up coming out so that we can get the average close to the same. Thesis: before we start looking at anything else, of the four seats that will be added two should be added, in my opinion, to Calgary, and then we start to work on the rest.

If you look over to the second page of that appendix, you'll see

that the suburban areas are looked at. In doing that, I'm suggesting again that figures converge best, in my opinion, when we have Edmonton adding one constituency, or ED, whereas Calgary and suburban metropolitan area would add three. That is the justification for the fact of adding a constituency to the suburban Calgary area, and that's where we would be looking at creating the new ED that, in fact, Ed has talked about, splitting Airdrie into Airdrie-West and Airdrie-Chestermere, which would be the east side in terms of where we're going with that.

So to try to justify the rep-by-pop kind of idea, what we're trying to fight here to some extent is that there's sort of a perception by people that: "Well, okay, Edmonton and Calgary are both growing. We'll just add two to each." Well, the mathematics seem possibly to indicate that that might not be a very good way to make sure of the rep by pop. You, gentlemen and lady, know this already, of course, but that was the basic premise to begin with.

The redesigned seats you can see are listed in appendix 3 as well, so the boundaries are shown, but the maps show it much better, as Ed has referred to.

Lastly, if you will in fact look to the last appendix, appendix 5, you can see a table of projected growth. Now, please note the population 2008-09: I'm not going to tell you that I can guarantee the accuracy of those figures. What I did was look to try to estimate what the things were by looking at previous maps of the constituency and trying to take an average of 400 to 450 voters per polling division, you know what I mean by that, so that you normally can start to estimate some populations. However, you know that that can lead to inaccuracy as well. So you'll forgive some of the possibility of growth, but you probably have access to people who can verify some of those figures.

What I refer to you too is that we've done it for the next two elections, as Judge Walter suggested previously, looking for longer term and trying to do that kind of thing. You can see the population 2012 and 2016 as they are listed, and you'll notice that ED 43, at the very end, got three scenarios that end up over the limit and of concern. So it was an attempt to try to see what impact this would end up having long term because your work, as important as it will be, may end up having to be revised again in 10 years' time.

Mr. Eggerer: I think I want to really take you back. In our consultations with other groups it sort of was brought out to us that there are already preconceived notions in terms of where the four new seats were going. I think we forgot Fort McMurray. That's an area that obviously needs concentration as well, or at least your particular thoughts in terms of how you would deal with that growing area. Our thoughts were, of course, that based on population statistics, the seats should go in a fashion similar to this, I guess: two in the city of Calgary only because of two very large electoral districts that need to be divided there as well, a new electoral district created by the growth of the city of Airdrie and surrounding area, and probably consideration for the Fort McMurray one as well. But as I said to you, we chatted with a number of other folks, "Well, it's already been decided that Calgary is going to get two, and Edmonton is going to get two." I appeal to your wisdom in terms of how that is going to be done. We certainly look forward to your interim report that's going to come out.

The Chair: Just let me stop you there. When you say that it's already been determined, we're the ones that determine it.

Mr. Eggerer: Okay. Good. I'm glad that you've reiterated that.

The Chair: Let me tell you that nobody outside is determining this. We are. I want to make that really clear.

Mr. Eggerer: Thank you.

The Chair: If there's any doubt in your mind, I'll erase it right now.

Mr. Eggerer: I'm glad that you've done that. Yeah. Okay.

The Chair: Okay. Could we have a few questions, then?

Mr. Eggerer: Oh, absolutely.

Ms Jeffs: All right. Just briefly, really more of a comment on your numbers. It sounds like you're using figures from the 2008 municipal data and estimates. Just for your information, there's been an update since the householder information went out with the average riding size. We are looking at 2009 data and evaluating that and the use of that, which we're permitted to do by the statute, and I think that for our average riding size now we're looking at 40,583, if that helps. Beyond that, I thought I heard you say you were estimating based on poll division numbers. Am I correct?

1:55

Mr. Thomas: Amongst other ways. That's one of the places, however, that would lead to quite a bit of inaccuracy. I'm really pleased that you're using, as a comment, the updated data because Airdrie, where we're from, was already past . . .

Mr. Eggerer: . . . the data that we're providing here.

Ms Jeffs: When we were in Calgary, we had some representations as well concerning Airdrie-Chestermere. You know, because there's so much growth in both Airdrie and Chestermere, one of the scenarios that was discussed was to not keep them together, to look at it. I think we sought some feedback on that with respect to having a constituency of Airdrie and having Chestermere join with some other neighbouring communities. I'd be interested in hearing what you think of that. That was certainly something that had come up at a previous hearing.

Mr. Eggerer: We've had discussions with the mayor and one of the councillors as well as the CAO of Chestermere. To be frank with you, our original thought was that perhaps Chestermere can be part of Strathmore. I mean, for years you've had Strathmore-Brooks, and there was always a problem in trying to represent that particular electoral district. As you know, for many years the MLA came from Brooks and somehow forgot Strathmore. I don't know if Strathmore has made representation to you, but they should have.

Our feedback from Chestermere was that they would rather flow with the growth of Airdrie than Strathmore. Other than hockey there was not much in common between Strathmore and Chestermere. We did talk to the MLA. Again, he also kind of thought that he would continue to want to have Chestermere as part of his riding. So we've had input, and those are our thoughts.

Creating an east-west Airdrie originally was without Chestermere, but after some consultation with folks in that particular area, they thought that they would work better, trade better. Chestermere is part of the Rocky View school division, and the school division office is in Airdrie. So there is common interest between those two areas.

Mr. Thomas: If I could add one more thing, the basic principle that we guided most of our thoughts on was always work, live, recreate, you know, the traffic and trading patterns that Ed mentioned at the beginning. We did consider and had done, in fact, a lot of work

prior to that time redrawing maps. But you come back to principles, and when we come back to that, it seemed like maybe that was not going to work as well. So that's where we came from.

Ms Jeffs: Okay. Thank you.

Dr. Archer: Well, Mr. Eggerer and Mr. Thomas, let me first really commend you for the tremendous amount of work that you both put into this report. It's really clear that you've done a lot of background research and given a lot of thought to the presentation. I'd like to commend both of you. Thanks very much for that.

I guess one of the first principles that has come up in some of our discussions is: when people are proposing changes to some of the boundaries, what's the driver? Is the driver in this instance the growth that's taking place in Airdrie? Then how do you accommodate that growth within some reconfigured constituency? Or is there some other driver? My sense from listening to your presentation is that it's probably the Airdrie growth that lies at the heart of the reconfigured maps. It's very clear, using 2009 data, that the current population of Airdrie-Chestermere is one of the largest in the province, so there has to be some change there. Your solution to that problem of what to do with the growth in Airdrie, as I understand it, is in a sense to keep Airdrie aligned with Chestermere but to take a lot of the Airdrie population and shift it into a western constituency. That then has a bit of a cascading effect.

I wonder if I could suggest a different solution to that problem and get your reaction to it. A different solution to the problem that Airdrie-Chestermere currently is very large and can't be sustained under the legislation is to think of Airdrie as a stand-alone constituency. Using the data that we're looking at, 2009, Airdrie actually comes pretty close to the provincial average. I think it's around 38,000 and some constituents. So I think there's an argument to be made, certainly on its face, of saying: why not just have a separate riding in Airdrie? That will have a less dramatic impact as you go west because you're not shifting a lot of the Airdrie population into, I guess, what would now be the Banff-Cochrane riding and leading to the creation of a new riding there. It would also likely involve some shifting of some constituencies southeast as well as you try to make up for taking away from the Chestermere part of the constituency the Airdrie population. Again, I wonder if I could just invite you to comment on that approach as opposed to your own approach.

Mr. Eggerer: Well, coincidentally, we thought of that. That was one of our considerations. There's no question that we could stay within the boundaries of Airdrie. But I think we looked to the future a little bit. When you take a look at west Airdrie, there are seven new subdivisions growing at the rate of 7 to 11 per cent. I guess if we're looking at a window of 10 years for the next redistribution to occur, again, it probably wouldn't work for an MLA to represent an electoral district and a half – okay? – in other words, population wise. So again there wouldn't be fair representation. I think we did that strictly looking at future growth.

East Airdrie, again, has two large subdivisions that are not just conceived but actually in progress. All of those subdivisions that you have are working right now. They're not conceived; they're not on somebody's drawing board. They're working. They're growing as we speak. So we looked at the opportunity to simply say that we're looking down the road.

I think that when you take a look – I've lived in Airdrie for 30 years, so I've seen some of that growth. It's hard to say to someone who lives two miles outside either one of the borders going north, south, east, or west: you no longer belong to Airdrie. I mean, I send my kids there. I shop there. I gas up my car there. I do all those

things in Airdrie, but I'm now in the electoral district – if it stays Banff-Cochrane, I don't belong there. Okay?

When we conceived Airdrie-West we did go to a natural boundary, the coulee out there, that would take in that west population, take in Crossfield, that would be at the tail end of someone's electoral district.

Let me speak as an old returning officer. You folks create boundaries, but what you don't do is sit there during an election and find that you've got electors sitting at this far end of the electoral district that call you all kinds of names because they're part of this electoral district, and they have no idea why they're there other than someone putting them inside those boundaries. We have very large populations just outside the city of Airdrie that would somehow be disconnected. There are large acreage areas outside of Airdrie, and for me to tell them or you to tell them that they no longer belong to Airdrie I think would be a travesty. I mean, it just shouldn't happen. They should still be part of Airdrie.

Mr. Thomas: Yeah. In fact, I would have put it to you that there is at least one other major driver that you start with first, and that is that ED 53 is not a together electoral district in my opinion. The Banff-Canmore people travel by Cochrane, but they don't get there very often. And the Cochrane people are associated with Calgary or with Bearspaw and Springbank much more than they would be elsewhere. Like I said, our basic principle was that we would look at similar intertraffic patterns, trading, and recreation, and it's focused somewhat differently. There's a whole different kind of bias about that.

2:05

You take the two major cities. It was mentioned by Judge Walter earlier about the fact that those seem to be natural areas where we want to go. For some of the other smaller cities where you've actually got service areas, where you've got acreages or other people, as Ed suggests, they think they're Airdrie people. They're into Airdrie for their mail. Well, a few people do it electronically. But you know what I'm saying. They go there for groceries, they go there for their cars, they go there for their kid's hockey, and they go there for, you know, their daughter's baseball. So that was sort of the driving principle behind it.

Mr. Eggerer: It's almost contradictory. I know that with the city of Calgary you want to keep the electoral districts inside those boundaries, whereas we break the mould when we come to Airdrie. We don't want to keep them inside that boundary. I think you need to take the areas just immediately outside of those areas for all the very reasons that we mentioned: schools and mail and groceries and God knows what else. For those reasons I think you need to include rural areas just outside of the city of Airdrie boundaries.

Dr. Archer: All right. Well, I appreciate those arguments. It's certainly one of the points of principle that we've had a number of discussions about; that is, do you try to keep the smaller communities together in a single electoral district, or is it better to link them as much as possible with the surrounding communities to ensure that there's part of the urbanized area linked with its economic community in the periphery? I think that you both have provided a very thoughtful response on that.

Mr. Thomas: Could I add one other thing? I would just have you take a look. Airdrie's growth last year was 11 per cent. We're not going to try to suggest that that's going to continue at that, although I have seen a growth study that was done a number of years ago

where, you know, it was going to be 100,000 people by 2020. But if you look at even close to 7 per cent growth like on appendix 5, you end up with some very, very large figures very quickly. So that's part of what's scary. An 11 per cent growth, I don't know if that can be sustained, but Airdrie, as Ed mentioned, is growing very fast. It's the highway 2 corridor, whatever else you want to put it to. We don't have all the explanations or the reasons, but the figures are tough to reconcile. There's concern long term.

Dr. Archer: Right. Thank you. I certainly recognize as well the argument that you're making about Banff-Canmore, which is, as I understand it, a community of interest position. Thank you.

Mr. Dobbie: Again, thank you for the great work you've done. Allyson gave you our updated quotient, and you probably want to see the numbers we're working with for Edmonton and Calgary as well. The most recent number we have for Edmonton is 782,439. For Calgary it's 1,065,155. You've probably got this on a spreadsheet. You can likely crunch the numbers again, and you probably will. So just to give you our numbers: Calgary, 1,065,155.

Mr. Thomas: It's 1,065,155. And Edmonton was . . .

Mr. Dobbie: Edmonton is 782,439, and the rest of the province is 1,672,614. So 3,520,208. Those are the numbers we're working with, which may at the margin help your Edmonton-Calgary analysis a little bit. It'll change the ranges. I wanted to give you those numbers because I suspect we'll hear back from you when we have our initial report out.

In terms of principles – and I'm probably jumping on a topic that Mr. Evans will raise – we've heard really striking contradictions in approach in these hearings. For example, we have heard from MLAs representing inner-city ridings who have passionately argued that it is a much more intense and higher workload riding when you're dealing with essentially a higher needs population than you are in a suburban, more homogeneous population. So my first question is: if you've thought about that at all, would you agree with the proposal that it may be possible to have a higher number of constituents in a more homogeneous suburban riding than you could have in an inner-city urban riding? Do you accept that proposition?

Mr. Eggerer: Well, again, I'm going to speak as a returning officer. I don't want to pretend to be an MLA at all. I think that sometimes distance is just as much a handicap as population. You can only serve your electorate in so many different ways, and sometimes, as we heard in the previous presentation, it takes two and three hours to drive to some of those areas to represent your electorate.

Mr. Dobbie: My contrast would be Airdrie or west Airdrie versus inner-city Edmonton or inner-city Calgary. That's what we were hearing, apart from the geographic challenge of the large rural ridings. The suburban demands on an MLA, we're being asked to hear, are less, in fact, than for an inner-city MLA dealing with new immigrants, people with social problems. Have you thought about that at all? If not, I have one other question.

Mr. Thomas: You can't be married so far to the representational population principle that you don't start to see arguments that make good sense. There have to be limits. The 25 per cent variance is part of that whole thing.

The problem is that that seems to work well until you come to an issue that divides, and there always will be despite the fact you have some common interests. Some legislation or a potential bill favours

those from Africa versus those from the Caribbean or something else, and then it divides that group that you're trying to serve in terms of ESL.

Personally I don't have an answer for it, but I believe very strongly that the four special seats or constituencies are a good plan. In the same kind of way if you had a special consideration for an inner-city that was experiencing consistent and long-term kinds of problems, maybe you do that again. But as a general principle, for the most part, I think you have to have proof of that prior to the fact that you're going to make a special exception for it.

Mr. Eggerer: Can I add this comment. One of the folks that we talked to – and this was a mayor – sort of said: "Look. We don't necessarily want to share our MLA with another community approximately the same size as us. Why? Because we all have our hand out for the same things." So sometimes when you put two communities that have similar needs, where is the interest of that MLA going to lie? Maybe the one that I alluded to before, Strathmore-Brooks: you know, if I live in Brooks, my interests probably lie more in Brooks to make sure that that community gets serviced better than some other community. So I don't know, but it is similar to what you're saying, I guess.

Mr. Dobbie: Okay. Thank you. You'd raised the issue of the special districts, and I appreciate the feedback on that. That was my next question. Thanks.

The Chair: Brian.

Mr. Evans: Thanks, Mr. Chairman, and thanks very much, gentlemen. A very significant amount of work and very helpful to us to have the issues that you've considered. I have three questions, and I wonder if you could just make some comments on them.

Looking at your maps, if we were to embrace east Airdrie and west Airdrie, or Airdrie-West and Airdrie-Chestermere, you can tell that those constituencies are vastly different in size, vastly different in size. You heard the presentation as well from Drumheller-Stettler, so magnify that difficulty in trying to effectively represent your constituents if you're the MLA for that area. Did the two of you consider that quite considerable difference in size, and if you did, how did you reconcile it?

2:15

Mr. Eggerer: Strictly, I think, rep by pop, population figures, trading patterns, those things that we mentioned before.

Mr. Thomas: Yeah. To give you an idea, we've got Irricana. I'm probably exaggerating a little, but I don't think I'm far off. Irricana people trade in Airdrie.

Mr. Evans: Makes sense.

Mr. Thomas: Beiseker, not so much. But you end up: are we going to segregate them off, or where are we going to put them? As Ed mentioned, we took the MD boundaries and sort of kept them together. At least they've got representation at the local level as well as at the provincial level.

Mr. Eggerer: School division boundaries and municipal boundaries.

Mr. Thomas: Does that answer your question?

Mr. Evans: Well, it does, but, again, you know, it's just how much

importance should we be placing on size relative to the voter parity issue? As both of you have suggested, we do have the legislated ability to have a variance, and that's something that we want to keep in mind but not overly dilute any citizen of the province because of that.

Before I get into my other two questions, I'm curious: what would be the trading area for Beiseker? Wouldn't they go to Airdrie?

Mr. Thomas: They will go to Crossfield.

Mr. Evans: Oh, they go to Crossfield.

Mr. Thomas: And you'll notice that Crossfield is on the west Airdrie side. They will go straight down the road.

Mr. Evans: Even with McArthur Fine Furniture now going into Airdrie?

Mr. Eggerer: Maybe that'll draw them. I don't know.

Mr. Evans: You never know.

As well, central to your presentation is what would happen with Cochrane. I'd be curious about whether you've talked to the mayor and council in Cochrane, and if you haven't – with the nodding of the heads, I take it that you haven't – might I suggest that it would be a good idea to hear from Cochrane. I used to represent that area, Banff-Cochrane. Quite frankly, there are a number of Canmorites who have moved to Cochrane and some people from Banff as well just because of price differential, and they do feel a commonality, I think, because the Trans-Canada highway makes it very easy back and forth and the Bow River going east to west as well. So, you know, I hope we'll hear something from Cochrane about what their views are about this.

Thirdly, the population that you'd suggest for Banff-Canmore would be considerably under the quotient.

Mr. Eggerer: Right.

Mr. Evans: I see that you are anticipating 3, 4, and 7 per cent increases, but that would really be quite considerably below. Did you feel in your consideration that that is just kind of the best scenario overall, so you have to deal with that at this point?

Mr. Eggerer: Well, that was part of our old Wild Rose federal electoral district. You know, I've had Banff-Canmore since 1980 under the old Bow River electoral district. There were never any warm, fuzzy feelings. Canmore used to go on their own; they used to do their own thing. I mean, if you're looking at warm, fuzzy feelings, there probably never were any warm, fuzzy feelings between Canmore and Banff, okay? I mean, it seems like the Banff gate was: I'm a Banffite, and the other guys are living in Canmore.

Mr. Evans: Up to 10, 15 years ago. You're right.

Mr. Eggerer: Right. So those feelings probably are never – but if you really want to know the truth, I don't think there is a really good area that you would either exclude from or include in Banff-Canmore. I guess we just simply thought that this was an appropri-

ate place to draw a line, which I'm sure you're going to find you're going to have to do at some future point as well. So, no, there is no really solid evidence or rationale to do that.

Mr. Thomas: Maybe I could add. You're aware that there were some difficulties and some confusion last election. The town of Cochrane has grown, and because of that growth there are some difficulties within those two EDs, just, you know, with Foothills-Rocky View. Foothills-Rocky View, when it went much farther south into there, I think it presented a certain number of difficulties.

Yes, there are problems with the populations. I won't deny that. That's why I think we were looking around for other ways and thinking about Eden Valley and the south part of . . .

Mr. Eggerer: Eden Valley is actually part of the Stoney reserve.

Mr. Thomas: Right. So try to bring them in. At least they've got more common interests.

Mr. Evans: It's quite a distance if you take it down to Eden Valley.

Mr. Thomas: It is.

Mr. Eggerer: Well, they're on the same band list – okay? – so they should in fact be. They're on the same band list as Stoney.

Mr. Thomas: Yes. But you're very familiar with the difficulties in trying to get some of that kind of thing. I am aware of very few, but some people actually commute from Cochrane to Canmore to work because of the cost.

Mr. Evans: Absolutely.

Mr. Thomas: Canmore also has a much larger growth potential, you know, than sometimes is realized, even though I know the cost of real estate is astronomical.

Mr. Evans: The geography is restrictive as well.

Mr. Thomas: Right.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Those were my questions. Once again, thanks very much. Really helpful.

The Chair: Well, thank you both very much. We appreciate your contribution here. If there's anything further, we look forward to receiving it.

Mr. Eggerer: Thank you very much.

Mr. Thomas: Thank you.

The Chair: Are there any further presentations? Otherwise, we will be on our plane very shortly.

Thank you, all.

[The hearing adjourned at 2:22 p.m.]

