



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

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Electoral Boundaries Commission

Judge Ernest J.M. Walter, Chairman

Dr. Keith Archer
Peter Dobbie, QC
Brian Evans, QC
Allyson Jeffs

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Barry McFarland, MLA, Little Bow
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[Judge Walter in the chair]

The Chair: Barry, since we're on *Hansard*, if you could identify yourself and your role as the MLA.

Mr. McFarland: Thank you, Chairman, hon. Judge. I'm Barry McFarland. I'm the current sitting MLA for Little Bow, and I'm happy to be here tonight.
The floor is mine?

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. McFarland: Now, I gather you've received the page and a half that I submitted earlier.

The Chair: Yes.

**Barry McFarland, MLA
Little Bow**

Mr. McFarland: If it was all right with the commission, I just wanted an opportunity to have a little dialogue back and forth if there were any questions. There were a couple of points I had wanted to add to the brief that I had sent in earlier. One of them was that I made reference to our riding being among the 17 largest geographically. I have since determined that, in fact, with its current alignment, not the proposed, I believe it's now the seventh largest. I think it's rather unique because as you look at the map, except for a quarter mile along the river we currently circle the city of Lethbridge.

I don't know how you folks came in, if you drove or flew, but the airport is actually in our riding if you did fly in. Anything east of 43rd Street is industrial. One of the largest joint federal-provincial research stations, one of the best in Canada, actually, is just out in the riding as well as the provincial jail, not that that makes any difference because I don't think we have many voters in the jail today, but apparently that's going to change, too.

Anyway, as we proceed – and I keep looking at the map; I apologize for that – up in the very northwest corner, where we would under the commission's proposal cross highway 2 and go over to the old 2A up through and including Aldersyde, at that very northwest point you're now about 12 driving minutes from the city of Calgary boundary. I think that is one unique situation. I don't think there's another riding in the province that has two major cities almost door to door.

Our current riding on the south side of the Bow River out of Calgary is about a 25-kilometre stretch down the river. As you go out along the Bow River, one of the problems from a representative's point of view is that there are very few bridges crossing the Bow River: one at Carseland, one on Siksika, the very north of Milo, and then nothing at all till you get down . . .

The Chair: Barry, could I just say something? We have a pointer that you can use.

Mr. McFarland: Sure. High tech.

I had started out by talking about the closest point to Calgary, and this point here is 12 minutes. Down here we already circled the city of Lethbridge. My earlier point was that I don't know of any other riding where you've got two major cities and only one riding. The diversity, of course, would be the same as comparing Calgary to

Edmonton or Red Deer to Edmonton. It's very different because this whole area primarily is an agricultural community.

Now, the bridges that I talked about that really prevent any natural travel at all. There are no bridges from here till you get up to Carseland – Carseland is right there – and then over here at the Gleichen area and a ferry. Then nothing at all until you get down east of Hays except for one that crosses highway 36, which goes into the present county of Newell, right in here. Really, it sounds like four bridges is a lot, but that's many, many miles where there is virtually no economic travel back and forth with agriculture products.

As we tried to point out, in the riding here I think one of the things that I've noticed in my 18 years – and I'm not stretching the truth at all – I don't recall one person ever calling, writing, faxing, e-mailing me about one person, one vote. It has just not been an issue because people in our riding are very cognizant of the distance. On average there are only three health care facilities. None of them are acute care. None have operating rooms. They have to come into Lethbridge or go up to Calgary or out to Medicine Hat or across into Taber, in Brocyce Jacobs' riding. The average distance for health care is about 90 kilometres round trip. That will get you long-term care and some emergent care, where they stabilize you and determine if you're going up to Calgary or into Lethbridge. It's primarily ground ambulance. Very severe cases, of course, get STARS brought in.

Now, the old indices from a previous commission indicated that that riding along with at the time it was Cardston-Taber-Warner, and the last one was Hector Goudreau's riding of Dunvegan – our two are the hardest to represent according to the indices that were used by the previous commission for distance, number of elected community councils, all those kinds of things. I don't know what would happen under the new proposal because we would go from approximately 27 identifiable communities to almost 50. Those would be, again, up and across the river: Bassano, Cassils, Lathom, and the communities along this stretch south of the Trans-Canada but north of the Bow River. I'm not one bit afraid to represent anyone, but I have a strong suspicion that they will not really be warm at being moved out of what is their county centre right here or Strathmore and the county of Wheatland area because it's just going to parcel out a very small parcel of their county and put them in another jurisdiction altogether.

6:05

I believe the same can be said over here. The MD of Foothills primarily is centred around High River. Blackie years and years ago used to be in our riding, but the line was right here. Once you get into this area, as I had said before, you're at the very most half an hour from the outskirts of Calgary, and the people, I suspect, are going to have far more in common with High River, Calgary than they will with any of the other parts down here.

In a nutshell – and I know a lot of you are familiar with some of the ag issues down here, not that that makes life any easier – we have the south part of the riding, the south third, about below this line, that is what's called irrigation country. There are 13 irrigation districts in southern Alberta, and our riding has got three of them. That's where you have Feedlot Alley in Picture Butte. In the north part it's primarily cow-calf, grains and oil seeds, and specialty crops. As I said before, in excess of 80,000 kilometres is what I drive each year, and when my assistant tallied the number of community events that I had attended, there were 350 some-odd in one year. I didn't believe I could do it. That obviously means you're doing three and four in a day.

I always have a little bit of fun with the kids when I go to the

grade 6 classes because they want to know what an MLA does, so I outline, as I've done here, what the size of the riding is. A lot of them are unaware of that. I tell them how much travel, and of course the boys figure that you're flying in a jet somewhere. I say, "No, no, no. You have a truck." "Oh. What kind of a truck do you have?" So you tell them what kind of truck, and then there's booing from the Ford fans and yays from Chev fans.

Anyway, I get into the math. I say: "Now, from our riding at the very bottom end we're an hour from the American border. We're two hours from here nonstop at the speed limit to there, and we're only another three hours and 15 minutes to Edmonton." So I'll ask them: "If you were to drive what I do in a year, 80,000 kilometres, at the speed limit, 100 kilometres per hour, how many hours is that?" The kids work it out.

I say: "When you get older, you'll be parents, moms and dads. You'll probably have a job that you work about eight hours a day. How many days of work is that that I'm travelling?" It works out to 800 driving hours each year. They'll work it out. They'll say: "Well, that's a hundred days." I say: "Right. A hundred days out of 365 is what I do." Obviously, it's not done during the daytime. Most of it's done at night or after hours. They suddenly get an appreciation for how big the riding is. Now I say that if you have to try to communicate with all the elected people – councils, irrigation councils, school boards – it's more than just a few days to do that. I kind of leave it with them, and they soon get an appreciation.

That comes to my last point – and I'm sure you've heard it before – that whether it's effective or one on one, I still feel that perhaps there's a way to look at the number of ridings in the two largest urban centres. I often wondered, when we always worried about rural ridings having 15 per cent less than the average, why we didn't look at the other side of the equation and say: hmm, now what's the matter with the possibility of Edmonton and Calgary MLAs looking at 12 to 15 per cent over the average as opposed to always focusing on well, McFarland or Little Bow has minus 12 or minus 15 or minus 17? I think if a person could look at it from that point of view, it would make it much easier to realign some of the other boundaries as you went out from Calgary and Edmonton. But that's just my opinion.

I'll leave it at that, and if you have any questions. Thanks for your time.

The Chair: I'm sure there are some questions.

Brian.

Mr. Evans: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman, and thanks very much, Mr. McFarland. I am, I have to say, very, very impressed with just the logistics of driving around and representing Little Bow when I look carefully at this map, which I looked at when you and I were MLAs together. Your love of your constituency and your attitude about how difficult or challenging it is to represent it hasn't really changed from the first time that we met.

There are no major population centres within the bounds of your constituency. You know, Coaldale, Picture Butte. Vulcan, unless Mr. Spock is there, is not that well populated.

Mr. McFarland: He brought 2,500 in the other day.

Mr. Evans: Vauxhall. That makes it a real challenge because you do have to be all around your constituency just to make sure that you are adequately representing those folks who live in divergent areas.

We certainly have heard very, very strong representations from that Strathmore-Brooks area and county of Newell and county of

Wheatland about keeping them together and that whole issue about north and south of the river, so take some solace in that. We'll be leaving here tomorrow and spending an entire day in Brooks, so we will be getting some comments from them.

I guess that in terms of the issues in your constituency the question I would have is: have there been many changes in the makeup of your constituency since you became an MLA, or do you anticipate that there will be in the future? Again, we're planning for today, but we're also looking at the future.

When you say, you know, we should be looking at plus in some areas of the city, we have taken that into account, particularly in what we call the suburban-urban areas, where it's more of a homogeneous population. At the same time, we recognize that the inner city in the major centres has divergent issues and lots of demands on those MLAs' time. The further we get away from the major centres, we recognize that there are sparsity and distance issues just as you have mentioned in your eloquent presentation.

Again, the real question I have is: have there been many changes, are you anticipating many changes, and how do we deal with that whole issue of population, which is going to have an impact on Little Bow forevermore unless something really dramatic changes?

Mr. McFarland: The answer directly to your question is that in 1992 the riding makeup was Siksika nation, the county of Vulcan, the north half of the county of Lethbridge. That's the Oldman River that becomes a boundary and goes out to Medicine Hat. We didn't have this area south here, and there was a tiny, tiny little bit of what is now Livingstone-Macleod. That was in 1992. At that time we went to Blackie. I believe, if I recall, they'd more or less drawn a straight line down a road allowance.

In 1993 there were substantial changes, and we in the south underwent quite a few major changes. The last one affected, as I recall, northern Alberta. This time around it seems to be more central Alberta. Anyway, in 1993 we actually ended up going – my eyes are telling me that's Parkland, Stavely, Nanton, and Cayley – out in a funny part of the MD of Willow Creek right out to Chain Lakes. Following that realignment, then we got 10,000 added here and a number taken out of here. Siksika went up into Newell.

So there have been some substantive geographic changes, but it was more shifting populations around to try to get, you know, pretty close. As I recall, I think our last numbers were somewhere in the minus 8 per cent range.

6:15

Going forward, the largest growth is undoubtedly around Coaldale, Lethbridge, that area. If that were left in, I can only well guess, with Calgary being 12 minutes away, what's going to happen there in 10 years. It will probably need another change. As the chairman, with an ag background, is aware, farms are getting bigger. Ranches are getting bigger. They're getting more not transient but a different type of population coming in and working the farms. The large corporate farms are just getting bigger and bigger now. Corporate has a couple of different meanings, and I think you know what I'm talking about.

I don't see huge changes in this area populationwise myself. The small towns are seeing a small resurgence. There are a lot of people that come out now, believe it or not, to small towns around in here because they're an hour from Calgary. They'll buy property for a summer place, but that's not going to make or break a population base by any stretch. It's just more convenient, because of the good road network and ease of travel, to get out of the city and get some fresh air. They can buy a piece of property relatively cheap.

Does that answer that?

Mr. Evans: Yes, it does. Thanks very much. That's my only question, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Allyson.

Ms Jeffs: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you. It's nice to see you, Mr. McFarland.

Just more of a comment, really. You talked about the measure that the previous commission used in gauging the difficulty in representing certain ridings. I think that was called the matrix, and it isn't part of the commission report this time. There were some concerns that it might not be the best measure for that. Some of the factors that were looked at, you know, sort of counted things like distance more than once. There was a sense, certainly, when we talked to your urban MLA cousins that they may not spend as much time driving, but they do spend their time doing other things. It's hard to gauge the workload of an MLA, so that's not part of the report at this point.

You know, that of course doesn't preclude, I guess, something we've heard elsewhere as well, that maybe some of the MLAs in these larger constituencies should have more constituency resources to cover those areas. It certainly does appear that you have not just a geographically large but a logistically difficult riding. I don't know if that's a potential solution in your mind, to have some additional constituency resources that might assist with that.

Mr. McFarland: Actually, when I was first elected, we had our constituency office in Vulcan because we didn't have the 10,000 people in the Lethbridge proximity. We actually tracked the number of people that came in. At that time we had fax; we were just getting into computers. All this new technology has really changed, I dare say – I'm guessing – all across the province. I don't think there are probably as many walk-in constituents as there might have been in other years.

People asked when I first got elected, "Now, where are you going to put the constituency offices?" and I said, "Well, I'm going to go slow first" because the previous MLA had never had one at all. He had contact people in each community, and that was his mode of being in touch with people. I thought that if we went slow and looked at it and then saw a real need, we could always add an office, but it would always be much harder to establish one and then close it or not have adequate resources to staff it.

The long story short is that our riding office is right there. It's 60 miles, or 100 kilometres. It's not equidistant this way, but it's also close to where I live and where my constituency assistant lives. You know, we get more e-mails than we ever got before. The people that stop in are generally there at their request to have a meeting, and they don't mind travelling. I probably do a lot more getting to them than I do insisting they come into a constituency office. I'll try to set up meetings in other communities so that I can be there rather than making them drive.

Ms Jeffs: I appreciate that.

Just on the issue with the urban areas and adding some populations, quite a number of the urban ridings are a little above, not all of them. One of the things we've tried to do in some of the urban centres is allow for high-growth areas so that when there's another boundary commission in eight or 10 years, you're reducing the circumstances of having some of the city ridings being 30, 40, and 50 per cent above average. I think, you know, sort of setting a target of having those urban ridings above might be a problem for people in those urban ridings. I mean, legally we are bound to have voter

parity, and where we deviate from that, to have good reason for it. So that might be an issue as well.

Certainly, an agricultural area like this is not likely to be growing significantly in population other than in the areas that you've indicated, the one that's on that northeast.

Mr. McFarland: I'll just clarify one thing. When you get into the irrigation areas, because it's so diverse and they have so many different crops, it's manpower intensive. Those are the areas in irrigation where you're going to see value-added, different crops all together, processing, that kind of thing.

The one thing that I had noticed – and I'm not knocking the commission here – was that it didn't seem that there was too much consideration given for the 15 to 25 per cent variance, which is allowable, as I understood. I don't recall any reference made – I guess there was in the two special areas. Our riding, believe it or not, meets three and possibly four of the five criteria for that special exemption. It has a First Nations reserve. It's more than 300 kilometres from the capital. When you add those up – I'm not saying that we need special consideration. But at the very least, if I were to make a submission to you that I don't think there's a problem with leaving it status quo, it would be because the parameters allow for the 15 to 25 per cent variance.

Ms Jeffs: Well, yes. You're quite right. We are permitted by the statute to vary as much as plus or minus 25 per cent as our outside window, other than for the special consideration ridings, which can be as much as 50 per cent below. Other people we've heard from and, in fact, the courts have been clear that, you know, if we're going to vary that much, there needs to be a fairly significant justification for that. Even though we don't have an absolute voter parity consideration the way they do in the States, having more attention paid to the equal population and ridings, relative parity is still very, very important to the courts and to voters here in Canada and in Alberta. So I think that's really the issue. I mean, the 25 per cent is sort of an outside window either way.

Mr. McFarland: I just would go back to the comment I made in the paper here. I just wasn't clear – I'm sure you can tell me – were the numbers that were used on Siksika the latest '09 census numbers, or were they a previous number? The numbers that I thought for population on Siksika were 6,500 and some-odd.

Ms Jeffs: I think that rings a bell as being the number. We had as much up to date as we could, certainly updated from the previous census. I think we received additional information from provincial aboriginal affairs. It is difficult.

I thank you for that. I don't have anything further, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you.

Peter.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. McFarland. Just so I understand where you're suggesting the boundary be adjusted, it would run west and south of Bassano to the river? So follow highway 1 along the northern boundary.

6:25

Mr. McFarland: That's what you suggested.

Mr. Dobbie: No. If we were to accept your suggestion that we look at the Bow River and we exclude the area to the northeast of it, the reserve covers both sides of the river, and I would say that we would

not likely want to divide the reserve. So we would follow highway 1, and then at some point we would head south.

Mr. McFarland: If you look over here, Mr. Dobbie, this would be the county of Newell.

Mr. Dobbie: That's correct.

Mr. McFarland: When you get up into this area near Gleichen and Cluny, they're within the county of Wheatland boundary. I know, in talking to some of their municipal leaders – they've been bounced back and forth; Cluny and Gleichen were in ours, they were out of ours, and now they're back in with Strathmore-Brooks – that because they were integral to the county of Wheatland, they would prefer that they be left that way. You're right. Siksika would have to stay in its entirety within our riding.

Mr. Dobbie: Again, just in answer to my question: if I look at where Bassano is located, is that where the county divides, or does the county actually run along the edge of the reserve?

Mr. McFarland: No. The county of Newell runs up on the north side of the reserve. I can't say how far north it goes, but their county centre is here at Brooks. Once you get over I believe it would be in this area here, that's probably the county of Wheatland dividing line.

Mr. Dobbie: Would that be a natural place to start the division?

Mr. McFarland: I can't speak for them, but I would think so. I mean, I also was on a county council for 15 years. Coterminous boundaries mean a lot to municipal, school boards, hospitals.

Mr. Dobbie: Yeah, we've certainly heard that. One of the, I guess, thoughts we had put out for discussion was taking a look at using major highways as a boundary, as a discussion point. We have certainly heard a lot of feedback that that is not an appropriate boundary, certainly in this area. In looking at your constituency, I take it that the requirement for effective representation includes meeting with the town and hamlet councils throughout the constituency.

Mr. McFarland: Regularly.

Mr. Dobbie: On a regular basis?

Mr. McFarland: Yeah.

Mr. Dobbie: Well, you've made a strong case, in my view. Thank you very much.

Mr. McFarland: You're welcome. I would point out, Mr. Dobbie, if I could, that even if it came to fine stuff, when you talk about major highways – highway 2, the Canamex, right from High River up into Calgary, is that one – you've crossed over and gone west to old highway 2A. It's an old two-lane highway. I mean, it's dangerous crossing that thing at the best of times. If you absolutely had to extend the riding out there, I would really implore you not to go across there because it's just bad news trying to cross a four-lane highway, you know, uncontrolled, 120 kilometres an hour. It's dangerous.

Mr. Dobbie: Follow highway 2 if we have to stay in that area.

Mr. McFarland: If you have to.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you.

Mr. McFarland: Thanks again.

The Chair: Keith.

Dr. Archer: Yeah. Thanks, Mr. McFarland. Probably a couple of observations rather than questions. One of the challenges that I think all boundaries commissions confront is the differential growth that's taking place across the province. The implication almost inevitably is that some of the constituencies outside the big cities are going to grow geographically, and I think your comments are reflecting the implications of that for your constituents.

I would highlight that on page 9 of our interim report we provide information on the average constituency sizes over the last couple of redistributions. I think it's useful to refer to these just because it shows what a challenge we're all confronted with over relatively short periods of time. As recently as 1995-96 the average constituencies were about 30,000 people, and in the next redistribution it was about 36,000 people and today almost 41,000 people.

Even if a commission opted to hold the line at some point and say, "Well, you know, we're going to allow higher deviations from the average in a systematic way," that probably would forestall but wouldn't cure the problem that really is at the heart of what we're talking about, and that is that some parts of the province are growing more rapidly than others. It seems to be a trend that's not going away. I'm not referring to this to justify the specific recommendations that we're making but as a general explanation for the kind of thinking that the commission went through. I think these numbers certainly highlighted for some of us the stark nature of the issue that we're facing.

Now, on the specific recommendations that you are proposing, as I understand them, you're saying that the northeastern part of the constituency, particularly east and north of the Bow River, should be included in a different riding and that the area just on the far northwest should be included in a different riding as well. Do you have a sense of the population that we're talking about? I raise that because although there may be some room for moving small populations around, as I look at the population numbers in those ridings that are east of Little Bow, most of them tend to be pretty close to the average themselves, and rectifying what is perceived as a challenge in your constituency might complicate or exacerbate a perceived problem in another constituency.

Mr. McFarland: Dr. Archer, for this area in here I would just take a wild, fairly educated guess that it might be 1,500 people. I believe Bassano is around 1,100, give or take, and the others are hamlets. This area in here is part of the EID, and it's a lot of grassland and not a lot of population. This area over in here: I am not a hundred per cent sure if it's in the 700 to 800 range of numbers. When you get up close to here and the Sheep River, there are some very, very beautiful acreages and homes, and you don't even see them from the road. But I honestly don't know what the numbers are in there. If I were to make an estimate of the two combined, 2,000.

Dr. Archer: Okay. That's very helpful. We've received a fair bit of input already from residents of the county of Newell, and we'll probably hear some more about that tomorrow. If it makes sense to do some shuffling in that area, we'll certainly be mindful of it. I appreciate the comments you made about the transportation networks that run north and south in the constituency.

Mr. McFarland: As it stands today, this is the only main rail line from Lethbridge up to Calgary. Those of you that have a farm background will not find an elevator left or a rail line anywhere anymore. All the trucking is on commercial haulers now. They have to come down highway 36, go up 23 or go over and go up the Canamex through Macleod and that area. It's north-south traffic. For this area up in here, like I said, without any river crossings in this area they're almost forced to go somewhere else.

A last comment. If you're talking about futuristic expansion, I'm almost certain that in years to come, you'd probably end up having a 'urban' riding around this area because those two in Lethbridge currently are pretty much at your average. Lethbridge has steady growth. It's nothing like Calgary or Airdrie or any of those, but it's very steady.

6:35

Dr. Archer: Thanks so much for that. Just parenthetically, I should note that we had that issue this round with Red Deer because its population is now 90,000. In the interim report we recommended two Red Deer ridings that were entirely urban, right around the provincial average, and one that was mixed. It had about 10,000 or so Red Deer residents. Many people were telling us that it was premature to lop that part off into the surrounding area. At some point it probably makes sense to do that mixing, and I'm sure it becomes a conversation each time you put that under discussion.

That's all I have. Thanks.

Mr. McFarland: Take the time, when all of this is done, to make yourself available: Vauxhall has got the only high school baseball academy of its kind in Canada. It has kids from seven provinces and one from New Zealand. One of the kids has signed with the Philadelphia Phillies. These kids are not jocks; they are smart athletes. One wants to be a NASA astronaut, two want to be doctors, and 83 per cent of the school is on the honour roll. In a town of 800 that's pretty impressive. All of the parents in the community board these kids from all over. It's amazing. If you ever get a chance, come down.

The Chair: I will. Thank you, Mr. McFarland, for your submissions. We're certainly going to take them under consideration. Good seeing you again.

Mr. McFarland: Good to see you. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Friesacher: The next presenter is Mr. Neil Wilson, councillor, MD of Willow Creek.

The Chair: Since we're on *Hansard*, we'd ask you to give your name for *Hansard* and your position if you would.

Mr. Wilson: Neil Wilson. I am the councillor for ward 6 of the MD of Willow Creek.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Wilson: I will be speaking in consideration of the Livingstone-Macleod constituency.

The Chair: Okay. We have another presenter also from Willow Creek.

Mr. Wilson: It should say Cynthia Vizzutti, but she's not well today, and I'm here in her stead.

The Chair: All right. Please go ahead, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you. Do you have your copies?

The Chair: Yes.

Neil Wilson, Councillor

Municipal District of Willow Creek No. 26

Mr. Wilson: Well, lady and gentlemen of the commission, I'm glad to be here. I'll just read forthwith, and I'll ask for questions after.

The municipal district of Willow Creek No. 26 takes pride in the positive relationship we have with our MLA. This MD represents the larger portion of the Livingstone-Macleod constituency. Within our borders the MD has the towns of Nanton, Stavely, Claresholm, Granum, Fort Macleod, the hamlets of Parkland, Woodhouse, Moon River, and Orton. Those are within the MD boundaries. The total population for the MD and the towns is in excess of 15,000. The MD is experiencing growth and diversification in our agricultural, resource, and commercial sectors as well as subdivision development through the region, specifically around reservoir vicinities, and it's very onerous to deal with, actually, environmentally.

Our MLA is very cognizant of issues facing our community, including the above mentioned. To further add a town to the north that has a broad metro influence from Calgary would frustrate the effectiveness of our MLA to the detriment of the representation needed at the MD level. After reviewing the criteria set out by the electoral boundaries legislation, we question the commission's proposal that would include High River within the Livingstone-Macleod constituency. We refer to the following text of the *Revised Statutes of Alberta*, specifically chapter E-3, listed as current to June 4, 2009. In sections 14 and 15, where relevant considerations and statistical requirements are listed, we find the current constituency well within the parameters of the legislation guidelines.

In response to the guidelines of section 14(b) the MD of Ranchland, to the west of us, within the current constituency has a sparse but growing population.

Section 14(c). We share many services with our neighbouring MDs and the two First Nations reservations and have much in common regarding agriculture, water management, the environment, and the establishment of trade corridors.

Section 14(e) and (h). Throughout the constituency the urban and rural communities work well together. During times of emergency we depend upon our municipal neighbours to address fire, flood, and drought. Adding the town of High River, whose economic well-being is tied directly to the trade from the Calgary metropolitan area, would drastically affect the pro-agricultural approach that is a trademark of our relationship with our sitting MLA.

In response to section 15(1) the population of this constituency is approximately 36,000 to 37,000, and that is within the parameters of the 31,314 to 52,828 that is plus or minus 25 per cent of the provincial mean of 41,752, as calculated using StatsCan figures of 2009.

Section 15(2)(a). The area of Livingstone-Macleod is well within the parameters of 20,000 hectares. Indeed, the MD of Willow Creek itself is in excess of 486,000 hectares without including the MD of Ranchland, the MD of Pincher Creek, or the municipality of Crowsnest Pass. I might add that it's a chore getting around during campaign times.

Section 15(2)(b). The distance to the capital region from the northernmost town, Nanton, is 382 kilometres from town limit to city limit.

Section 15(2)(c). No towns exceed the 8,000 population stipulation.

Section 15(2)(d). Currently there are two First Nations within this constituency, those being the Piikani and the Blood reserves.

Section 15(2)(e). Livingstone-Macleod has approximately 175 kilometres of coterminous boundary with British Columbia.

In summary, the proposed boundary adjustment would include the Eden Valley reserve but exclude the Blood reserve, with which the MD has a long-standing relationship. The Eden Valley reserve is socially and economically tied to the Morley reserve, and to split Morley and Eden Valley into two jurisdictions would complicate their management processes. The proposed boundary would add the town of High River, with a population at or nearing 10,000, that is almost exclusively urban and is significantly influenced by the city of Calgary, which is advancing on the region at a breakneck pace.

We propose, if the Livingstone-Macleod boundaries need to be adjusted at all, that the north boundary follow highway 540 to Vulcan county and that the south boundary follow the Waterton River to the existing east-west boundaries. This would include the hamlet of Cayley in the constituency. This amendment would more than meet the criteria of the legislation and provide for a still larger yet manageable constituency for our MLA and our municipal neighbours. Even this adjustment makes Livingstone-Macleod massive in size and even more difficult for the MLA to address the concerns and wishes of his constituents.

I shall take questions.

Dr. Archer: Thanks, Mr. Wilson. I appreciate your presentation this evening. Some of your comments were consistent with a presentation we heard earlier today as well, so we may be repeating some of the comments that were made earlier.

One of the challenges we had when we were going through the process of proposing constituencies in this part of the province is that the Cardston-Taber-Warner constituency had a population which was pressing up pretty rapidly against the maximum allowable variation. One of the ways that we could resolve that situation was by including the Blood reserve within that constituency. That had the effect, of course, of taking it out of Livingstone-Macleod and, in doing that, putting Livingstone-Macleod in the same situation that Cardston-Taber-Warner was confronting.

6:45

One resolution of that challenge was to look for a relatively large population base that was not very far removed geographically from the constituency of what is Livingstone-Macleod. Obviously, High River became identified pretty quickly as an option for us. High River's population is about 11,500. If we were to remove that from the Livingstone-Macleod constituency or, for us, the High River-Crowsnest constituency, that would create two significant issues.

One is that it would have the effect of placing whichever constituency High River was in well above the provincial average and potentially, again depending upon which one it was put in, even more than 25 per cent above the provincial average, which we can't do by law. It would also have the effect of placing the High River-Crowsnest constituency at the lower possible limit. So by adding a relatively small geographical slice to the constituency, it enabled us to achieve a number of the objectives that we had in mind.

I guess there's not a question there, but it provides a bit of the context for the kind of domino effect that one move can have on a variety of constituencies.

Mr. Wilson: Might I make a comment on that?

Dr. Archer: Yes.

Mr. Wilson: If we included High River, I believe that would put us about 7 per cent above the average. If we exclude High River, we'd be about 4 or 5 per cent below the average, but if we include Cayley, that puts us at about 4 or 5 per cent below the average. So we would include Cayley – highway 540 is north of that – out towards Longview and then south, but we still recommend that we not include Eden Valley. We will still have the Piikani Nation at the south end of the constituency. What it does is it puts a pretty straight boundary there.

I think you will recognize that the diversity in this constituency must be taken into consideration. We have large environmental concerns; forestry; agriculture; mining; native reserves; wind power; coal, which is part of the mining; and a huge amount of pressure put on from the urban portions of our constituency and those further north on the recreation areas in the eastern slopes.

That is a bunch of work for an MLA to take care of. I think that to add the urban influence of High River is going to tax his time. These are the thoughts of our council. We know how hard it is at this point in time from the perspective of a municipal council to gain audience with our MLA when we come up with pressing issues within our municipality. I think highway 540 is a reasonable compromise. The Blood reserve then could go to the south. Cayley is growing. Nanton is growing. We are getting development around the Twin Valley, Pine Coulee, and Clear Lake areas. Those areas are growing. In driving through this constituency, I was amazed at the growth along the No. 2 corridor. Every time I drive down here, I'm always amazed at how many people are moving into this constituency.

Dr. Archer: I guess just a follow-up comment. Highway 540 would take out of the constituency High River and Longview, and you're suggesting Eden Valley as well. I didn't quite understand what you were saying was going to be added to the constituency.

Mr. Wilson: The hamlet of Cayley.

Dr. Archer: But Cayley is already in the proposed constituency.

Mr. Wilson: Is it?

Dr. Archer: We can certainly work through the numbers on that.

Mr. Wilson: Can you bring up the map? I thought the constituency went just north of Nanton at the Connemara road.

Dr. Archer: No. It's highway 22.

Mr. Wilson: The constituency today, I believe, goes just north of Nanton, crosses north of Nanton at the Connemara. Highway 540 is the next road allowance to the north of that.

Dr. Archer: I see. You're making reference to the current configuration.

Mr. Wilson: From the current to the proposed. What I'm saying is a compromise between the two, to move it to 540, which would include Cayley.

Dr. Archer: And retain the Blood reserve in this riding?

Mr. Wilson: Not necessarily. If the Blood reserve needs to be into the south, then we will retain the Piikani Nation, certainly.

Dr. Archer: I see what you're saying. I mean, we can certainly look at that. My sense is that once we run the numbers on that proposal, this one would be more than 25 per cent below the provincial average, and that would just be a real problem. Anyway, it's just an observation.

Mr. Wilson: We must be working on different math.

Dr. Archer: Well, because the proposed riding has just over 43,000 people and High River has 11,500, that takes you down to about 32,000. When you take Longview into account and Eden Valley – I don't have the numbers for those in front of me – I suspect we're probably talking about a couple of more thousand people, which would take us under 30,000. It would be one of the smallest constituencies in Alberta.

Mr. Wilson: Peoplewise, but managementwise it's huge. See, this is what we're getting at. We may not have a whole bunch of people in there, but we have a boatload of issues. We don't just have the residents there. In the summertime we've got 30,000 people from the urban centres there, too.

Dr. Archer: Right. I understand your position. I have no more questions. Thanks.

The Chair: Peter.

Mr. Dobbie: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Wilson, for your presentation tonight. The challenge within this constituency is that it's not only relatively large but does have a large number of communities that the MLA has to deal with.

I'm not sure if you were here earlier. Part of what we are obligated to do when we're making a determination about sizes of constituencies is that if we're going to deviate above or below the provincial average, there would have to be a good reason. Certainly, one of our principles is that we recognize that within a suburban constituency, where people are basically pretty much the same, living in single-family housing or condos, there's certainly less demand on an MLA's immediate time. We could certainly argue that those constituencies could be higher, and conversely we've made the determination that a number of constituencies can be significantly lower than the provincial average, or in the range of 5 to 15 per cent below.

The challenge with excluding High River and Longview. On the quick math, I mean, our numbers show that this constituency as proposed is about 43,000. If you knock off 13,000 – if you take out High River alone, it's takes it 21 per cent below the provincial average.

We hear a lot from people as well about the frustration they have with constantly changing electoral boundaries and the impact that has on voter turnout. One of the issues that we're considering within the cities is that where we are confident there will be growth above the average, we are recommending that some of those constituencies be below the provincial average for now: southern Calgary, northern Edmonton, maybe southwest Edmonton. One of the things that we look at in some of these constituencies is that it's going to have to change at some point. If you include a high-growth area – this is one theory – if you include something like High River, that is likely to grow a little faster than the rest of the area, that constituency is likely

going to grow enough that it won't be needing to be fundamentally changed the next time.

We are balancing today and about eight years out as well when we're going through this. Just so you understand, that is one of the challenges that we face.

6:55

One question I had about your presentation. Can you give me some examples of what the concerns would be if High River is added? You've said that it would drastically affect the pro-agricultural approach that's a trademark. I do know High River a little bit, and I do know it's an agricultural service centre. There are a number of dealerships there, and a fair bit of their actual commercial base is tied into supporting the ag industry in the area. I'm just wondering what specific concerns you could express.

Mr. Wilson: You have of course witnessed the development in rural lands around High River, Okotoks, and in that area, where there's a lot of fragmentation of agricultural land.

Mr. Dobbie: Yes.

Mr. Wilson: From the perspective of the MD of Willow Creek, which goes up to Nanton, we in the MD of Willow Creek choose to preserve agricultural land and keep to a minimum the type of development that's up there. Now, if we have pressure on our MLA to move that type of development further south in the constituency, it will not bode well with the current land-use policies and bylaws of the MD of Willow Creek nor with the people that are living within that constituency. We have a tough enough time right now trying to keep hold of our agricultural land as it is as families grow. The major concern is to keep the rural character, if you will, of the MD of Willow Creek. It comes from the perspective of the MD of Willow Creek.

Mr. Dobbie: Okay. Thank you. That helps to clarify it.

The Chair: I couldn't help noticing your last comment. Certainly, an old friend of mine, who's now gone, Wallace Daley, would have echoed those thoughts.

Allyson.

Ms. Jeffs: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much for coming this evening, Mr. Wilson. I don't really have a question. I won't go over again some of the comments that the other commission members have made regarding the population issue.

I have to say that when we looked at this with respect to the inclusion of High River, it does seem to be on a good artery north-south through the constituency and on the way if your MLA is driving to and from the constituency. It's interesting to me because I'm not sure that Calgary would view High River as being part of their urban catchment area. Maybe they would now; I haven't lived in Calgary for a while. You know, I appreciate the perspective, but I just don't know how we're going to be able to get around the population issue.

With this area the reality seems to be that some of these constituencies will be growing, and unfortunately it's very difficult to see another option that would work in terms of the population. We can certainly look at your suggestion, but as has been already stated, it makes it difficult if it's dropping close to or below that 25 per cent below the provincial average. Is the concern also with High River that the forecast, from Willow Creek's perspective, is that this will be a bedroom community of Calgary?

Mr. Wilson: It already is. Portions of Nanton are.

Ms Jeffs: Portions of Nanton?

Mr. Wilson: Yes. Can I comment on that?

Ms Jeffs: Absolutely. Please do.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you. The Calgary metropolitan plan includes High River, and Nanton is a signatory as well. They will be sharing services, quite likely water in the future, definitely transit. It'll have to come. We in the MD of Willow Creek, save Nanton, don't have an awful lot to do with that. Our mindset, if you will – and you can call us archaic. I can live with that.

Ms Jeffs: I wouldn't do that.

Mr. Wilson: We understand wind power. We understand rural industrialization. We understand the growth along the No. 2 corridor. We are trying to hold it back so that it is developed sensibly. Some of the best land, agricultural potential land, is east of highway 2 and the No. 2 corridor. There may be some development areas west of that that could be used because it is marginal land or whatever. Everybody wants to live there. Everybody likes to be in the foothills. Everybody wants to have a look out their window and see mountains. There's huge pressure in that area. I don't see that including a metro-influenced town, soon to be city, soon to have its tentacles into the north end of our MD, is going to help curb the overdevelopment of our foothills area.

Ms Jeffs: Well, I certainly hear that. We struggle in the Edmonton area, where I live, over the loss of agricultural land to development, certainly in the outlying areas, so I'm encouraged to hear that the MD is trying to preserve that. But it does sound like change is coming to your doorstep.

Mr. Wilson: It is. The land-use framework will force us to actually be more aggressive in the preservation of our lands. We're sure of it.

Ms Jeffs: I'm not sure how drawing the provincial boundary affects that because it does sound like that is a very pressing and real issue regardless of where that boundary goes. You mentioned pressure on the MLA from a larger, you know, more urban area, but a lot of these are sort of municipal and community planning issues.

Mr. Wilson: They are, but where does he get his votes?

Ms Jeffs: Fair comment. Anyway, thank you for that.
I don't have anything further, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you very much, Ms Jeffs.

The Chair: Brian.

Mr. Evans: Thanks, Mr. Chairman, and thanks very much, Mr. Wilson. Just a couple of specific questions. This morning we heard from one presenter who said that if you were going to need to add population in the north end of the current Livingstone-Macleod constituency, it would be preferable, instead of High River, to think about Turner Valley and/or Black Diamond and that Longview area. To me, there's not an awful lot of difference between the demographics of those areas, particularly not Turner Valley and Black

Diamond and High River, other than just that the population of High River is larger. The demographics wouldn't be dramatically different than, say, Okotoks or Nanton, for that matter. Do you have any comments on that?

Mr. Wilson: Well, I think that if you were to line up urban with urban, Black Diamond, Turner Valley or Twin Valley or Black Valley or Diamond Valley or whatever you want to call it nowadays, I know that in dealing with their MD, it's a different kettle. They're dealt with differently. The development within Black Diamond isn't as aggressive as it is in High River or Turner Valley. They're struggling. They're struggling communities, actually. You know, they're just out far enough that it's difficult yet to commute. High River is a breeze. When we get that hospital at the south end of Calgary, you watch that No. 2 corridor blow wide open. You're going to have an MLA sitting in High River just for High River.

Mr. Evans: The Foothills MD office is still in High River, is it?

Mr. Wilson: The Foothills office? Yes.

Mr. Evans: Yeah, I thought so.

The other question is: just looking down the No. 2 highway, it would seem to me that there would be some joint municipal initiatives that would involve Nanton, Stavelly, Claresholm, and High River, but I don't know that to be the case. Have you seen any examples of that?

7:05

Mr. Wilson: No. We have very little to do with the municipality of High River. We have an ICSP, if you will, and IMPs with Nanton. For instance, Nanton, Claresholm, Fort Macleod each got a brand new fire truck, and the MD contributed towards that, so our emergency services are shared.

The trade pattern, however, from Nanton is usually north. The trade patterns south of that go south. The trade patterns from Stavelly, for instance, go to Claresholm. Claresholm goes to Lethbridge. There are more and more people, because of the size of Calgary and the intricacies of getting to where you need to be in Calgary, choosing to go to Lethbridge to shop instead of going to Calgary. It's a half-hour longer, but it is a half-hour shorter when you get there. The amenities at this point in time at Okotoks are extensive enough that people will go to Okotoks or High River to shop because there's quite a bit there as well.

But the trade patterns, I think, from Nanton basically are north; from there south they're south. The MD itself has very little to do with High River. We look over the fence an awful lot and shake our heads at the development, and that's about as much as we get involved. Our CAOs visit, but that's about it.

Mr. Evans: Your point about that rapid expansion south from Calgary in reference to the possibility of a hospital in the south end of Calgary: I don't disagree with you that there will be population demands. That land, though, tends to be pretty expensive all the way down that corridor south of Calgary. In fact, very expensive, right?

Mr. Wilson: It hasn't stopped it so far.

Mr. Evans: But it is a natural constraint on growth if someone were to be inclined to buy because of proximity to a hospital.

Mr. Wilson: The lots in Nanton are \$80,000 for a cheap one. The lots in Granum are \$75,000, and the taxes are higher in Granum than

they are in Nanton. So I would suggest that it doesn't matter along that No. 2 corridor. If you want to buy land, you'd better get your wallet out. I don't think that the money thing is the issue. It's proximity. It's being handily in sight of services. The city of Calgary is talking about no development at this point in time, services included, with the metropolitan plan. We're cognizant of that at the north end. It is all geared toward development from Nanton north in that metropolitan plan. We at the MD of Willow Creek look up that road and look over the fence there, and we're not real happy about having to compromise the agricultural integrity of our communities with any type of influence that might bear down on us from even our MLA. Our MLA is sympathetic. He was once the reeve of the MD, so he understands the dynamics of the MD. But the next MLA: who's to say?

Mr. Evans: Well, thank you very much for your presentation. It doesn't make our job any easier . . .

Mr. Wilson: I hope not.

Mr. Evans: . . . but you've made it very clear in your presentation and have very useful information.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Wilson, for coming, and we'll certainly be looking at what you've told us.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Friesacher: The next presenter is Mr. George Groeneveld, MLA, Highwood.

The Chair: Mr. Groeneveld, since we're being recorded by *Hansard*, we just ask you for the record to give your name and position, and then we can go.

Mr. Groeneveld: Well, thank you very much. It's certainly a pleasure to be here. I'm George Groeneveld, the MLA for Highwood and a farmer in the Highwood constituency, by the way.

The Chair: Go ahead.

George Groeneveld, MLA Highwood

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you for your time this evening. I'm not going to make a long presentation to you people because I think you've seen a big portion of it already. Strathmore-Brooks, Highwood, Little Bow, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, and Livingstone-Macleod made a bit of a joint presentation. Of course, our preferences probably were to not change a whole lot around the city of Calgary, particularly when we took out Ted Morton's area, Foothills-Rocky View. Of course, the changes were made, I guess. So I think we had a pretty good presentation sent to you people already that we thought made some sense, I guess, anyway.

Now I'm not going to dwell on that a whole lot because the other people – and I see Mr. McFarland from Little Bow in the room, so obviously he's had a discussion with you already. Of course, from Highwood myself, Highwood kind of ended up to be chopped up a little differently, I guess, to put it bluntly, than from what we were previously. The big issue, probably, that jumps out at us is the way High River was kind of carved out of the map. I can probably

understand what a lot of the logic was there, and I'm sure at that point we were dealing pretty much with the average that we'd kind of like to adhere reasonably close to, but there's no doubt that it caused a lot of angst in Highwood. Interestingly enough, the name Highwood comes from the Highwood River, no doubt, and there's no Highwood River left in Highwood constituency anymore, but I don't think that was probably a deciding factor.

Anyway, I guess we were a little bit concerned, maybe, in Highwood. It certainly separated the regional trade area. That was probably the number one issue that jumped out at us very quickly. If you look at the map now, what was Highwood before will be a part of Little Bow and the one further south, High River-Crowsnest, it's now going to be called. Of course, it makes a change to the west of us, where we now take in Foothills-Rocky View. It is topographically probably very different from a lot of where we're at now other than, I guess, right at this present time we have Longview in our area. Interestingly enough, we don't have Black Diamond and Turner Valley, and obviously the previous time, I think, it was probably the issue of trying to get the balance with the numbers. So that certainly concerns us.

Some of the changes made were kind of slight, but all of a sudden we moved off municipal boundaries, which is kind of concerning, particularly to the MD of Foothills. They were small enough changes that didn't involve a very large part of the population, so it maybe defies a little logic in that respect.

Certainly, understand that we would like – it's the five of us put together – to stay pretty close to where we were before, and that's because it worked fairly well the way we had it before. I would understand that that would numerically put us a little bit higher than probably you people would like to see.

I'd like to explain a little bit about Highwood. It's a pretty small geographical area compared to many of the other areas, so I only have four municipal divisions in there. I have High River, Okotoks, MD of Foothills, and Longview, which of course is only about 300 people. Also, when you take in the size of some of the other rural constituencies, they have probably anywhere from five to 10 to even 20 ag societies. I only have three in my area. It's a relatively easy area to serve considering the population because we don't cover a very large area.

7:15

The other issue probably is the Foothills school division, and of course I have the letters here of support for not changing much as well. It concerns them because of how it spreads the other into the Little Bow area and, indeed, a little farther south into High River-Crowsnest. So they certainly have a concern with that.

If I could make a suggestion while we're here, I think probably it would help the balance a little bit farther south – and I've talked this over just a little bit with Mr. Berger – if we wanted to move that line on the north up to highway 540, which would put Cayley into the south area, but I don't think the division of trade areas is quite as severe there. That's kind of the dividing line, I suspect, between High River and Nanton. Doing that would exclude that portion of the population, but I guess if we drew that line straight out, it would also put Eden Valley in the south area. Now, that's not a large population. Of course, we all know that the native reserves are a federal responsibility, but I wish they were a little more than they are because we certainly have to spend some time out there as well.

I think that's probably it. I'd just as soon field some of the questions that you people might have and see where we could go with this.

The Chair: Brian.

Mr. Evans: Well, thanks, Mr. Chairman, and thanks, Mr. Groeneveld. As I believe you've heard because you've been here, and of course I know you've been paying attention to some of the other presentations that have been made to us, it really is difficult around the major centres, both Edmonton and Calgary, particularly if we are to honour, if you will, the requests of both of those cities to recognize their municipal boundaries and to not have any 'rurban' constituencies. Inevitably we have large growth areas close to those major centres, and the further away we get from those major centres, we have larger geographic areas and sparser populations.

What we have attempted to do as much as possible is keep the variances, other than our special areas, within 10 per cent either positive or negative. While we recognized that High River certainly did have a lot of connection north, we also saw that there was a very good roadway connecting High River and the rest of Livingstone-Macleod, and we recognized that the population of High River was very significant. If we were to go back, as you had suggested, to more or less the boundaries of Highwood that were there before, that would, in our view, with the review that we have done – and we have spent considerable time at this – really require major, significant changes to what we have proposed, and almost inevitably you find you have either too high a population or too low a population in one area or the other.

I'm not trying to defend so much what we're trying to do as I am just trying to be sure it's on record about the number of issues we face in trying to recognize the law that we operate under, recognize the interpretations of the courts and the Supreme Court of Canada, and, quite frankly, the representations that we've had in written presentations and in oral presentations at the public hearings from people both in urban centres and in rural centres.

Everyone wants to ensure that as a citizen they are given and granted and allowed effective representation, and every representative wants to be sure that the demands on that representative's time don't constrain that from happening. The courts have said, you know, that our principle is one person, one vote unless you have good reason for varying from that. That's really been a controlling factor for us in trying to determine any kind of a significant variance from that median of 40,880: are there compelling circumstances that justify us in allowing a larger variance? Again, it's really helpful when we get specific suggestions that recognize the domino effect as well of making any specific changes to any particular constituency boundary.

I apologize for the rambling oratory there. It's really not a question; it's more just trying to be sure that you understand some of the realities that the commission is facing. Certainly, I'd be more than delighted to hear any comments that you might have about that.

Mr. Groeneveld: Well, yeah. Thank you for that. I probably have to hearken back now to where the five constituencies went together and tried to come up with a plan that would work. It certainly would be pretty hard for me to come back here and argue, you know, for staying the same or saving High River in our area particularly because the population thing would totally destroy us in that case.

You're absolutely right. In my case the high-growth populations around the city are good, and they're bad. As you know, I have Heritage Pointe in my area, which is quite a little population glob all of its own. Now, you have to consider – and I guess it's probably not part of your mandate to consider this – that it's a new community. It's a fairly affluent community. I have hardly any people ever come in and see me from Heritage Pointe because they don't seem to have a whole heck of a lot of problems. Hence, my argument for the small area that I do have: it's relatively easy to serve; I don't have to travel very far. I know I'm kind of sounding like a broken

record here. I don't know if Mr. McFarland is behind me yet, but he can drive for three hours or two and a half hours in his own constituency. I can't do that unless I go round and round.

I just would like to point out that with the five – I would understand that you'd almost have to accept that to accept some of my arguments from my own constituency. I think it just made quite a lot of sense what we had put together, what we proposed surrounding the city.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Allyson.

Ms Jeffs: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you very much, Mr. Groeneveld. It's good to see you coming out this evening to speak with us. Thank you for the package. I guess it's a bit daunting to see the communities that are all, obviously, very concerned about some of the changes that have been made.

You know, when you talk about your riding being relatively compact and small, it's one of those rurals that's on the near edge of a city, so there is more population there. A lot of our consideration with the divisions that we've made was not so much driven by Highwood, although we did need to acknowledge the increasing population there and the likelihood that that population would grow, but also that some of your neighbours are not as blessed with population. We were trying to provide some parity among the constituencies in that area, which, I think, as Mr. Evans said, is a concern for us.

7:25

It's not really a question, just more of a comment. You haven't made our job any easier, not that we were looking for that, but that is a problem for us. I don't know if you have any specific suggestions. I think that going back to the status quo is going to be very difficult in that area because it may work for Highwood, but it may create problems in terms of voter parity in the neighbouring constituencies. I don't know if you have any reply to that.

Mr. Groeneveld: Well, with all due respect, we did try to put ourselves in your chair when we put the five constituencies together. You're absolutely right, and of course I can't ignore the big elephant in my room, which is Okotoks. Now, I'm not so sure that putting a growth cap on is going to work, but so far they're trying to do that. You know, just on that – because I heard the presenter before me mention this, too – the Calgary metropolitan plan is a real red herring in my area with the municipalities of Foothills and Rocky View not being on side with that. If we fragment those two municipalities, it causes us a bit of a problem as well.

Ms Jeffs: Just following up on that, you mentioned that there was fragmentation of those boundaries that wouldn't involve moving a lot of population in or out.

Mr. Groeneveld: Yeah. The one in particular would be the one that we're putting into Little Bow, which was in Little Bow a few years back, which is the Blackie-Aldersyde area in the MD of Foothills. That's a pretty small portion of the population, and believe it or not, that's where most of my complaints came from, because they had been there. Not that they had any problem with the MLA; it's just that he was a long, long way away, and it wasn't natural to go south to go to the MLA office whereas High River is the trade town.

Ms Jeffs: All right. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I have nothing further.

The Chair: Peter.

Mr. Dobbie: Thanks, Mr. Chairman, and thanks, Mr. Groeneveld. It's helpful to get your input on this. I suppose we created the challenge for your constituency when we took a look at Cardston-Taber-Warner and had to come up with an interim proposal that tried to address the relatively low population numbers down there. By moving the 6,500 people from the Blood reserve into Cardston-Taber-Warner, that took them out of the adjacent riding, which then made us look a little further north.

I suppose one approach that we could look at is: how do we justify keeping that Cardston-Taber-Warner constituency significantly below the provincial average? It may be that we can come up with enough of a justification to do that. We are certainly travelling throughout the province, really hearing almost two solitudes in terms of the approach to take on the allocation of electoral divisions. There seem to be some people who have no time for consideration of what we would look at as factors affecting effective representation and saying that, clearly, we have to look at geography, numbers of municipalities to deal with. There is a strong argument out there by people who, frankly, are not affected by geography that we should only look at population.

It certainly is a real and a significant factor that we have to look at, and we do have to be very careful in coming up with reasonable, supported distinctions when we take a constituency far below the average. In the southern part of Alberta what has driven a bunch of these changes is starting in the centre south. I'm mindful of what you said, and it is helpful that the five electoral districts have gotten together and thought through the proposed changes. It will really require a decision on our part on whether we can go back and take a look at that reserve and move it because then it does free up population within the adjacent constituency to the north.

Mr. Groeneveld: Yes. No doubt. When you talk about Cardston-Taber-Warner, you know, the geographic area just kind of overwhelms someone like me that has a small geographic area. I think my stars that I don't have to try to serve an area like that. I'd sooner serve more people.

Mr. Dobbie: Well, it is helpful to get that type of comment on the record from a sitting MLA, so I do appreciate your willingness for the support to move some constituencies with natural ease of representation above the provincial average. If we do that, it does give us room to have other ones below it.

Mr. Groeneveld: Good.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you.

The Chair: Keith.

Dr. Archer: Yeah. Thanks, Mr. Groeneveld. One of the issues that came up in a couple of the presentations as we're looking at these districts is the question: if High River doesn't necessarily fit well in the High River-Crowsnest constituency – and that's an argument we've heard, of course – do Black Diamond and Turner Valley fit better within that constituency?

I'd like to just run an idea past you. High River has a population just over 11,000.

Mr. Groeneveld: Yes.

Dr. Archer: Black Diamond and Turner Valley each are about

2,000. So there's 4,000 people. So it's not a very even switch between the two. High River-Crowsnest: we had it at about 44,000. If we made that change, it could possibly take what's now Livingstone-Macleod, our High River-Crowsnest, to around 37,000, about 10 per cent below the average, and would have a Highwood riding that included both High River and Okotoks but didn't go all that far west because that part is attached to Livingstone-Macleod in some reconfigured way. Is that an idea that you would encourage us to pursue? Or would you find that the connections between Black Diamond and Turner Valley, on the one hand, and the southern reaches of Livingstone-Macleod are too diverse anyway that you would run into the same argument that we're running into with respect to High River?

Mr. Groeneveld: That's an interesting thought. Black Diamond and Turner Valley, of course, were carved out of our constituency. Last time we went around, we put them in Foothills-Rocky View. I guess they would really kind of feel like the orphaned sister if we did that and put them in the one farther south.

To be honest with you, a good portion of the new constituency to the south, I guess, would fit the demographics a little better: you know, the foothills and very little farm area, mostly a ranching area when we think agriculturally. I guess it's something we could consider, particularly if we moved the south boundary up to highway 540, so then we wouldn't leave a little strip in there, you know, that was kind of orphaned by itself. It might be something we might want to consider.

Dr. Archer: I don't mean to put you on the spot. It was just a suggestion, but I wanted to know if you were going to jump up and down and say, "That's a wild idea," or whether it's something that might invite some more thought.

Mr. Groeneveld: Well, you know, from what the constituency is right now, then it would take one more municipality out of that, which would be Longview, of course, but it's a very small one. I'm guessing that down the road it may become a village anyway, because that's what most of those very small towns are doing at this particular point. I guess if I had my druthers on it, yeah, I would sooner see High River stay in the particular area, the tight area that it is in, and shave that side off. That certainly would be a better possibility, I would think. Probably Longview, Black Diamond, and Turner Valley would have a little different opinion of that, I suspect.

7:35

Dr. Archer: You know, the fact that they are split in our proposal – Longview in one; Black Diamond and Turner Valley in the other – makes me think that there could be an argument on their part to align them.

Mr. Groeneveld: Well, interestingly enough, on our regional joint water and waste water they're trying to put something together right now because, yes, that's the natural alignment for them.

Dr. Archer: And a good highway in that area, too.

Mr. Groeneveld: Yes, there is.

Dr. Archer: Thanks so much.

No further questions.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Groeneveld. My brother Tom said that I should listen to you.

Mr. Groeneveld: I wanted to bring him along, but he said no. He didn't think that was a good idea.

Could I ask one question? I suspect you're not supposed to look down the road, but it's very interesting when I see that Airdrie will have a seat probably, a constituency. Probably at the next election I suspect Okotoks could well fall into that category as well. That wouldn't be as severe probably, but that really would cause a major change for the next commission to come up with the proper numbers because of the fact that we'd probably be pulling 35,000 people out of one spot all of a sudden. So I'm quite happy to keep them where they're at.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much for coming, and we'll certainly take into account what you've told us.

Mr. Groeneveld: I will tell Tom that you're not nearly as mean as he thought.

Ms Friesacher: The next presenter is Mr. Evan Berger, MLA, Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Berger: Good evening, panel.

The Chair: Mr. Berger, since we are being recorded by *Hansard*, we have to ask you to give your name and your position so we can start.

Mr. Berger: Sure. My name is Evan Berger, and I am the MLA for Livingstone-Macleod.

The Chair: Thank you.

**Evan Berger, MLA
Livingstone-Macleod**

Mr. Berger: Thank you for the opportunity to address you this evening. I would have dressed better, but I was out on a tour all day within the constituency, and it's work clothes.

To get started, it's the contention of the residents of Livingstone-Macleod that I've spoken to that there is really not a lot of need to alter the boundaries from the current formation. Under the current criteria it is well within the allowable tolerances consistent with the act, section 15(1): "The population of a proposed electoral division must not be more than 25% above nor more than 25% below the average population of all the proposed electoral divisions."

The parameters as stated in the Electoral Boundaries Commission report of February 2010 have not been applied, in their mind, to the redrawing of the boundaries which were included in the interim report. Currently the constituency is at minus 11 per cent. The redrawing of the line to exclude the Blood reservation and include the area up into and including High River would put the constituency at plus 7.38 per cent. This inclusion, although expedient and simple, ignores at least four of the five subsections of section 15, those being specifically: the area exceeds 20,000 square kilometres or 15,000 square miles; the distance from the nearest boundary to the Legislature is more than 150 kilometres. Livingstone-Macleod's nearest boundary is 2.5 times that distance. No town within the constituency with a population over 8,000; once again, Livingstone-Macleod's biggest town would have to be multiplied by two to get over 8,000. Within the current boundary there is a First Nations reserve; I submit that right now there is not one but two First Nation reserves within

Livingstone-Macleod, and it works very well. The electoral division has a portion of its boundary coterminous with a boundary of the province of Alberta; there is a minimum of 80 miles of the western boundary of Livingstone-Macleod which is already also the province of Alberta boundary.

If any electoral division matches three of the five previous sections, it meets the prerequisite to allow for consideration of up to four electoral divisions to have populations as much as 50 per cent below the provincial average. That being the case, this constituency already meets four of the five sections needed to accept a population base with a 50 per cent variance from the provincial average. That being said, it obviously meets the conditions set out for a 25 per cent allowable variance.

The current boundaries make for a very large constituency as it is 90 miles north to south and 60 miles east to west, including two separate aboriginal reservations. It is currently congruent with municipal boundaries, reservation boundaries, and the provincial boundary on the west side. Although it includes 12 urban municipalities, three rural municipalities, and two reservations, it does reflect the common travel patterns and common rural issues and lifestyles. Conversely, it is one of the most diverse constituencies already in terms of geography, industries, employment, and demographics.

There is no need for redrawing the boundary by including the area up to and including High River and excluding the Blood reservation. The size would then be at over plus 7 per cent, but it cuts the MD of Foothills in half, ignoring the need to be contiguous with municipal boundaries. This also ignores the rapid population growth in the High River-Nanton area. With the current growth rate the proposed constituency population could easily reach plus 15 to 20 per cent by 2016.

It makes more sense to keep the current boundaries on the east and south, possibly moving the northern line to include Cayley and all that at the highway 540 line.

I thank you for your indulgence in listening to me tonight and open up to any questions.

The Chair: Thank you.

Dr. Archer: Thanks, Mr. Berger. Appreciate your coming tonight and making your presentation to us. Your proposal is consistent with other proposals that we've heard today. We've been through some of the discussion, and there may be some repetition, but perhaps I'll start by providing a little bit of the context for the decision that is reflected in our interim report.

One of the challenges that we faced was that the constituency of Cardston-Taber-Warner had a population that was beginning to run pretty close to the maximum allowable deviation below the average. To address that, we looked at putting the Blood reserve into that constituency. Once that was taken out of what is currently Livingstone-Macleod, we were looking at that problem transferring itself west, as it were. Our solution was to expand it fairly modestly geographically but significantly in terms of the demographics of the population by including High River, a town with a population of about 11,500.

Most of the comments that we've heard in this constituency reflect on that fact of placing High River within the constituency, and most of the comments have been challenging the wisdom of doing that. If we're looking for alternatives – and the alternative of the status quo probably works better for Livingstone-Macleod than it does for Cardston-Taber-Warner. Because we're charged with the whole shebang, it's important for us to make sure that the solution in one area doesn't result in our violating the legislation in another.

The question I put to Mr. Groeneveld refers to a suggestion that someone had made earlier today, and that is: continue to move the northern boundary of Livingstone-Macleod north but keep it on the west side and possibly include Black Diamond and Turner Valley. I'm not sure how far north it would go. I know the northern boundary of Highwood at the moment is highway 22X, so it would include Millarville, presumably, as well. If you go up that far, you're probably talking about 5,000 people, perhaps, and transferring High River to the Highwood constituency with Okotoks, making that a fairly compact constituency but at least potentially keeping a more consistent character to what is currently Livingstone-Macleod. What would be your reaction to that kind of thinking on the part of the commission?

7:45

Mr. Berger: That is something I hadn't considered. It's interesting. I think the commonality of issues that you identify is probably there. One of the major concerns is probably that you're up to about 140, 150 miles in length and you've added a portion of one more rural municipality and two more, for sure, urban. The difficulty comes there in that every urban municipality has a different interest and a different issue all the time. So you're balancing 14 urban at that point and four rural municipalities and three aboriginal reserves, which is all manageable, but you're spread very thin. I have to admit that right now I'm spread very thin because an issue in Pincher Creek is not the same issue as in Claresholm or Nanton or Fort Macleod. Every community has something that they consider their top issue.

On the flip side of that, on the rural side of the picture there is a lot more commonality to that than the other inclusion that had been mentioned in the interim report. The issue is still there that the travel patterns of the populations from Turner Valley, Black Diamond would still be that when they drive out to the highway, they're going to turn left and head towards Calgary or Okotoks or High River, for that matter, and not south. There are more common issues than there are probably within the population of High River, although that population in the rural area moving up to High River has probably more in common with Livingstone-Macleod's boundary as it is at this point.

Now, that being said, I would qualify that you would be adding that and leaving the Blood reservation in there. One thing that you do find as an MLA is that there is a fair bit of commonality between the issues of the reservations, which are able to not piggyback so much as when you do start to learn what's coming down the pike for one, it's probably happening at the Blood as it is at the Piikani nation. It gives you the ability to maybe put things together and deal with it more efficiently and call them in as a group because they are within the same grand chief area, they're the same treaty area and everything, as well as is the Eden Valley reserve.

There are some big benefits to being able to find some common things, and municipal boundaries as rural municipalities really do tie a lot of commonality within their districts. You know, you look at that, and the towns within aren't all asking for the same thing. Let's just go on the issue of fire rescue services and those type of things. They will be common to the rural municipality as a common partner for every urban within that rural jurisdiction. Even at that, you may, say in the MD of Willow Creek, deal with five different towns with a fire rescue department, but at least there's one common denominator. As you split those out and have more and more, the issues just multiply exponentially.

It's something I hadn't thought of. I'm not averse to it but just trying to say some of the other issues that may come out of that.

Dr. Archer: Right. Actually, I really appreciate the nuanced answer

because it's really not a yes or no kind of question, is it? It's really balancing a set of challenges and trying to understand where the appropriate point is. Thanks very much.

That's all I have.

The Chair: Peter.

Mr. Dobbie: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thanks, Mr. Berger. I suspect every day you're on the road driving around.

We've heard from a previous presenter that one of the communities of interest, which is an aspect that the Supreme Court has allowed an electoral boundaries commission to consider in making deviations from the standard, is dealing with growth pressure by expanding municipalities. The proposition put to us was effectively that an MLA might be neutered in terms of taking a stand on that if he's representing both High River and the municipalities who might be opposed to encroachment on agricultural land. To me that is an important issue to consider when I'm starting to weigh communities of interest.

One other factor that I believe could be put in the same basket would be water rights. At this stage – I think in today's *Calgary Herald* it talked about the ability of Okotoks to negotiate further diversion of water or further extraction of water. I can see how there might be a community of interest within a municipality, Okotoks and/or High River, that is completely at odds with those of neighbouring rural constituencies.

The more I look at the option of dealing with your constituency, the more I'm inclined to see a bunch of commonality of interest along, I guess, the fringes away from the more urban populations and the stronger argument I think I can make when we're sitting around the table that we should give consideration to a change. It does mean stretching this constituency a long way north-south. We are trying to gain effectiveness under one category, and we may be mitigating the effectiveness to the same extent or more under another, so it is very difficult for us to balance those factors. Again, I think that your openness to the concept will help us in our discussions.

I didn't see anything in your report directly. I see it's titled Livingstone/Macleod Constituency. We've heard some strong comments that the Macleod name should remain in that constituency, and we're certainly well aware of that. We've asked a few people that if we were to accept the proposition – the Macleod name has such historical significance, and it's also a town – if we leave that in, is the Livingstone name an important enough identifier that we should consider leaving the entire constituency with the existing name, or is it less important? I'd like you to address the naming issue if you could.

Mr. Berger: Actually, that's a good question. I think in our discussions of voter turnout and different things like that a name is very important. You may be in Livingstone-Macleod. You may be in, say, Highwood, and then your boundary has been redrawn, and you may be in Livingstone-Macleod. But that does stay consistent for everyone else who is in Livingstone-Macleod. They know where their polling stations are approximately. They know which constituency they're in if they're within those municipal boundaries. That's where municipal boundaries seem to be a real important issue, in my mind. If someone calls up and wonders what constituency they're in, you need not ask any further than which MD are you in or which county are you in and – bang – you know where you're at.

I think that doesn't address the name as much as the issue going back to identification of which constituency. I think the continuance

of that probably is very important for voter recognition, recognition all the way around. The issues of Livingstone-Macleod are probably the same somewhat, even with additional, than to say: “Okay. Now we go by a different name. That was important at that time in Livingstone-Macleod, but now we’re High River-Crowsnest.” Does that mean anything? It’s just one of those issues that may be pragmatic. I say: if it’s not broke, don’t fix it. Even if you have to move the boundary a little bit, you still have that name recognition, and everyone knows where they are from and which constituency they’re in.

A long rambling answer, but those are my thoughts on that.

Mr. Dobbie: Thank you.

The Chair: Allyson.

Ms. Jeffs: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much, Mr. Berger, for coming this evening. I don’t really have any questions. I can reassure you that we had quite a strong presentation from Dave Coutts while we were in Edmonton regarding the issue with the name and the historical factors with the Macleod name and with the reasons for bringing Livingstone in. So thank you for that as well.

7:55

Just one point of clarification. In your submission you were talking about some of the factors for a special consideration riding. The statute only permits four of those, so those issues tend to come into consideration for a special consideration riding where you have one that’s fallen below that 25 per cent and is drifting to between 25 and 50 per cent below the provincial average. I think the proposal at this point is to have two of them, both in the north of the province.

That was my only comment. I don’t have anything else, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

The Chair: Brian.

Mr. Evans: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks very much, Mr. Berger, for your presentation, and thank you for trying to address this suggestion that’s just come to you now about Turner Valley and Black Diamond. We all appreciate here that it’s really not totally fair for us to expect you to be able to dissect that issue at this particular point in time.

You know, looking at the maps here – and I’m trying to put myself in the position of you representing Livingstone-Macleod today and what’s being proposed. If you were to keep High River in this new alignment of Livingstone-Macleod, whatever it’s going to be called, you are in a direct line south from Calgary. If you’re driving, which most likely you’re always doing, you’re coming down from Edmonton on highway 2, you go through Calgary on the Deerfoot, and you continue heading south on the number 2. You virtually are within spitting distance of High River; you know, it’s just across the roadway, really. Then you continue down into the more traditional areas – Nanton and Stavely and Claresholm – and down south in your constituency.

Putting myself in your boots and thinking about leaving Calgary, going down probably to Okotoks and then across on highway 7 over to Black Diamond and Turner Valley and then maybe going down to Longview and then having to go across over at the 540 and then getting back onto the number 2, going back down to the balance of your constituency, at least logistically, to me it seems like it would be an added burden to have that area, which is somewhat isolated

from everything else that you represent, going over in that area as opposed to continuing essentially on a straight line, going straight down from Calgary into your constituency.

I don’t know whether that helps or hinders your analysis, but would you have any comments on that analysis?

Mr. Berger: That is something that I’d thought of at the back of the room when I was listening to that come up in Mr. Groeneveld’s presentation. That had crossed my mind. I guess I was weighing it more along the lines, beyond my self-interest of travel pattern, of the commonality of interest of the areas and industry issues as the common issues there, residential, all of those ranching and agriculture issues. That was probably more in my alignment of thinking. But you make an excellent point there. It is viable to be going straight down that highway as the other.

I guess one of the points that I did miss, too, when you’re talking about enlarging these constituencies: everyone feels they need their face time with their MLA at one point or another. For some communities that may be a three-hour meeting here and there type of thing. But there’s one thing that’s common throughout Alberta. There’s a summer parade pretty much in every urban town, and right now I’m doing probably between seven and 10 parades. I look at that and go: add two more if you add another two towns or one more with another town plus all of the other events that come up that you need to be at, to be a part of, whether it’s a fundraiser or any of these other things. You really start to think: well, I have to be there, but I can’t be everywhere at once. So the division of your time, which doesn’t exactly get to what you’re saying, but the extra miles do because, as you mentioned, I spend a good part of my life on the road right now. It’s a big part of it.

I never took an average, but you’d have to average over a week in the constituency. Today we’ve done a tour of the south end of the constituency, and we’ve probably had four hours in meetings and six hours of driving time since we started this morning. That’s back and forth because, you know, sometimes you cross the same area twice. But when you look at enlarging that much, even if I’m at one end and going back to High River, you throw on there another 20 minutes of travel time one way and 20 back, well, by the time the end of the week comes along, you’ve thrown on another two hours for a couple of trips into High River for this or that. It would be similar but a little more going up to Black Diamond and Turner Valley, but there is the commonality of issues.

I guess one of the other things that really kind of hits you as a rural MLA, especially representing the Crowsnest Pass – it works out to one municipality now, but there again there are four or five parades because everybody is still a town in their own minds there.

Another issue that comes up: if houses could vote, you’d have no problem with my riding because the population of the Crowsnest Pass goes down by 35 per cent on Sunday afternoon and goes back up on Friday afternoon. We have those residents only for the weekend, with the empty houses that are there. But they are residents in a constituency, in one of the urbans around, and they still demand services in that town, which makes that town demand time of its MLA. You know, we need this, that, and the other thing because we need all these services. We have the people here; we just don’t have them here full-time. Understanding your plight in your deliberations, that doesn’t help your deliberations any, but it is one of the issues I face as a rural MLA looking for population to balance off what your job is.

As well, there are some differences in the populations as calculated on the reserves. I don’t know where the exact population lies with the two of them, but my numbers are always higher when I

speaking with them than what we have in our records or the numbers that I think you've been probably dealing with. Those are some of the difficulties, whether that, too, is kind of a transient population that is staying in urban areas part of the time and back at home on the reserve for part of the time. How that works, I'm not sure.

Those are two things that have a fairly large effect on the population of Livingstone-Macleod now. If it just filled back the houses that are sitting there that are being used as cottages, we'd be well above it. That isn't directly answering that question but just another point that I'd like to have on the record.

Mr. Evans: Those are both good points. For the First Nations population we always base our numbers on the official population counts. That's the only number that we can really deal with, and we try to get the most current that we possibly can.

On the bigger issue, quite clearly, what this commission wants to ensure is that we are not robbing any constituent in Alberta of the

ability to have effective representation by his or her elected representative. That's the huge challenge that we face. Your input is helpful to us in making those kinds of decisions.

Thank you very much for being here.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Berger. We've certainly gotten a number of messages here today, and we'll have to take them into consideration. Hopefully, we'll come up with the right decision in the end result. Thank you.

Mr. Berger: Thank you very much.

The Chair: I understand we have no further presenters at this point. We'll be off to Brooks tomorrow.

Thank you all. We're adjourned.

[The hearing adjourned at 8:04 p.m.]

