



December 5th, 2025

Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission
#100 – 11510 Kingsway Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5G 2Y5

Provided via email: info@abebc.ca

To Whom It May Concern,

Re: Calgary-Okotoks (Map #24), Okotoks-Diamond Valley (Map #24B), High River-Vulcan (Map #65) – Existing Highwood Electoral Division

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed electoral division boundary changes as outlined in the Interim Electoral Division Boundary report for the Town of Okotoks, Town of Diamond Valley and a portion of Foothills County. As the undersigned Mayors and Reeve for these municipalities, we wish to outline, on behalf of our Council's, significant concern with the proposed changes to the existing Highwood Electoral Division.

While the Councils of our municipalities appreciate the analysis and background work that went into the Interim Report's recommendations, we would like to provide local knowledge and understanding of the region impacted by these electoral division changes. The report notes that "the Commission is proposing Calgary-Okotoks despite a lack of explicit advocacy, given the myriad considerations this Commission must balance" (Page 28, Commission Report). Given the impactful nature of the changes on our three municipalities, we are hopeful that our advocacy at this point in the process will result in a proposed electoral division that reflects the unique community connections, shared services, infrastructure and investment considerations of our region. This will not only benefit the residents of our communities and region as a whole, but result in overall improved cohesiveness, efficiencies and discussion between different levels of government that benefit the entire province of Alberta and the intergovernmental relationships that currently exist.

The existing Highwood riding encompasses the Town of Diamond Valley, portions of Foothills County and the Town of Okotoks. Together, our three municipalities have a



long, shared history of working together on major projects, ranging from provincial advocacy efforts on the necessity of major highway interchanges to regional infrastructure such as a waterline as well as on shared social programs, recreational services and facilities and community events.

The report notes:

"Accordingly, the Commission is recommending an additional 0.3 of a seat for Calgary: The Commission notes: "Calgary-Okotoks, consisting of the far southwest corner of Calgary, the Town of Okotoks, and the areas of Foothills County in between them. This enables the other four electoral divisions in the south of Calgary to have smaller populations and clearer borders. Unlike the three other hybrid electoral divisions involving Calgary and Edmonton that the Commission is proposing, we acknowledge that Calgary-Okotoks will be controversial based on feedback we received. We are presenting it to the public with humility and a desire for thoughtful feedback. The Commission is of the view that this map of Calgary:

- keeps communities of interest in common;
- has clear boundaries; and
- has reasonably equal population"

We wish to provide the Commission with further information from our local perspective on the report's proposed recommendations in the hopes of facilitating alterations to the proposed electoral divisions to address our concerns.

1. Communities of Interest in Common

While it may appear that south Calgary is relatively similar to areas such as a growing municipality like Okotoks, Diamond Valley or the "rurban" (as named in the report) areas of Foothills County, the reality is that there are generally far stronger connections between residents who fall just outside of those City boundaries and within the surrounding communities that may have a greater geographical distance between them, but other ways that they are integrated beyond simple spatial distance.

Communities are bound by a number of factors – catchment areas for recreational programs, school divisions, places of worship and the other non-defined boundaries that shape our day-to-day lives. A larger city like Calgary is more typically self-containing, offering most of these programs and institutions within itself and therefore allowing most Calgarians to live their day-to-day life without leaving city limits, if



desired. Individuals utilize services within Calgary boundaries and have less need to traverse between different municipalities for the variety of services and programs that fill their day-to-day life.

In smaller municipalities, while spatially the distances are greater, the connections between residents are no less and tied in these core areas of life - just across multiple municipalities. Students in Okotoks may attend schools in Foothills County, residents of Diamond Valley may utilize Okotoks recreational facilities, and Foothills County residents may attend seasonal events in Diamond Valley or Okotoks and vice versa. Key provincial highways connect these municipalities and are most frequently used by the various residents spread across the foothills region. From a servicing perspective, the daily services they rely on also do not have clear-cut boundaries but are intermunicipally connected. In comparison, most catchment areas for regional services typically end at the City of Calgary boundaries and thus, families and individuals are more integrated throughout our three municipalities than they would typically be with the City of Calgary.

A key driver of the recommendations in the report is the concept of ensuring "effective representation". It notes that effective representation is the key consideration in determining electoral divisions at a provincial level as compared to the one-person, one-vote approach that is common in other jurisdictions. When considering the role of the MLA, and as the report notes, the incredibly busy schedule they have managing the variety of events that their constituents expect them to attend, it is challenging to see how effective representation would be achieved by an MLA involved in not only two major urban centers (Calgary and Okotoks), but the extensive schedule of events and activities that the County would entail. Page 22 of the Commissions Interim Report speaks to noting rural Albertans "underscored that technology is not a substitute for having an MLA physically present at a community event, whether it be a summer barbeque, local rodeo, or high school graduation"

When you add these rural challenges in with the concerns of urban MLA's, there is a concern that representation will decline. Urban communities, such as the City of Calgary typically have increased diversity of various demographics that further increases the variety of events and community groups that an MLA will be expected to pay attention too. On Pages 22 and 23 of the report, the increase in multilingual requirements, variety of cultural events and other varied demographic impacts on an MLA's workload and total office budget for an urban community is described. Coupling this with the unique challenges of being a rural MLA and then adding in a growing community such as Okotoks will have an impact on the ability of the region to have an effective MLA.



2. Clear Boundaries

Calgary-Okotoks

From an infrastructure and servicing perspective, our municipalities work together on major infrastructure projects that require provincial advocacy and funding. As an example, Okotoks provides waste collection services to Diamond Valley as well as operates their outdoor swimming pool and provides assistance to Diamond Valley residents through the Okotoks Family Resource Center. Foothills County and Okotoks have collaborated on provincial advocacy for an interchange at 338th and Highway 2, obtained joint provincial grant funding to build a regional waterline and work together on fire and recreation services as well as jointly operating a regional fieldhouse within Foothills County. These projects benefit from building a relationship with an MLA who represents all of the municipalities pursuing these joint projects. Furthermore, these joint projects are in alignment with aspects of good governance, effective use of limited taxpayer funds and done in the spirit of intermunicipal collaboration as promoted by the provincial government.

It may be more challenging for all three municipalities to be successful at building a strong relationship with our MLA and advocating for future funding when a large portion of the riding is the City of Calgary, which has much less incentive to partner on major projects, given different financial realities and a population that is less integrated into the use of infrastructure to its south.

High River-Vulcan

In the proposed changes, the Town of Diamond Valley is relocated to the High River-Vulcan riding. The report goes on to note that "High River-Vulcan brings together rural parts of three neighbouring counties with many more common interests" (Page 34, Interim Commission Report). Our municipalities would respectfully disagree with this statement. This riding, with the exception of High River, is significantly more rural in nature than Diamond Valley. The report notes that growth rates are a consideration in bringing together electoral divisions and Diamond Valley's projected 2.5% growth rate exceeds much of the riding it is being relocated. As outlined earlier in this letter, the majority of its intermunicipal relationships also fall within the Okotoks and Foothills County areas that are part of the existing Highwood riding. From an advocacy, shared community connection and growth perspective, maintaining Diamond Valley in a riding



with the Town of Okotoks and the more northern portions of Foothills County makes sense in alignment with the effective representation criteria outlined in the Commission's report.

Reasonably Equal Population

A key consideration outlined in the Commission's report is the focus on ensuring balanced population distribution and analyzing the population growth rates of the various regions. When considering the proposed electoral division, the Calgary portion has approved plans in place for at least 60,000 people. With current growth rates, this will likely occur in the next ten years.

Diamond Valley is also contemplating continued growth as outlined in its Municipal Development Plan (MDP) and recent applications that have been brought forward to the Town. Foothills County identifies portions of the area within the electoral district as an area where growth is contemplated and which has seen significant growth in the past decades to date. Finally, the Town of Okotoks will likely see increased growth with the completion of a regional waterline with Foothills County in 2026 which will further accelerate the population of this riding. When looking at this holistically, it seems that adding in the City of Calgary to the overall riding will result in the Calgary-Okotoks riding (with portions of Foothills County) not remaining around the provincial averages of 54, 929 identified in the report. The City of Calgary portion alone will likely facilitate the need for its own electoral division at the time of the next Commission.

This brings into question the longevity of this proposal and the impacts that it may have on the ability to work long-term with an established electoral division office and MLA. The undersigned municipalities appreciate that while they are fast-growing municipalities onto themselves, the proportional growth rates are significantly smaller than a growth area within the City of Calgary. This provides more opportunity for a longer-term electoral division solution that encompasses these three municipalities.

Summary

In summary, our Council's appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed electoral division boundaries that do have an impact on our ability to advocate effectively for our residents in terms of securing provincial funding for major projects that positively impact their lives on a daily basis. Furthermore, we want to underscore our interests in providing a stronger understanding of this region and the interconnectedness of relationships that should play a role in devising electoral



boundaries that provide “effective representation” and the opportunity for our citizens concerns to be heard at the provincial level.

To further illustrate our perspective, we have provided an attached map that generally incorporates the areas that we feel would make the most sense for a provincial electoral division that meets the legal requirements outlined in Pages 6 and 7 of the Electoral Commission’s Interim Report.

Sincerely,

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