

1:02 p.m.

Monday, May 27, 1991

[Deputy Chairman: Mr. Schumacher]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Members of the committee and ladies and gentlemen, we'll call the meeting to order and welcome all the viewers of ABC Cable 10 who may be watching our proceedings this afternoon and evening. We are very thankful to Cable 10 for covering these hearings. The hearings are the attempt of the Alberta government to involve as many Albertans as possible in developing a position for the government of Alberta in weeks and months ahead in the possible restructuring of our country.

This is one-half of the Alberta Special Select Committee on Constitutional Reform. We're called committee B. Committee A is presently holding hearings in the city of Lloydminster. During this week we hope to cover a large part of the province of Alberta. Although we haven't made a decision as to whether or not these hearings will continue at a later date in the summer, it depends on the requests of Albertans for the opportunity to be heard.

Before proceeding with our first witness, I'd like to introduce the members of the committee. On my right is the Hon. Nancy Betkowski, the MLA for Edmonton-Glenora. On her right is Stockwell Day, the MLA for Red Deer-North, and on his right is our host for the day, the MLA for Fort McMurray, the Hon. Norm Weiss, who we are very happy to have with us.

MR. WEISS: Thank you. If I'm your host, I hope you don't send me the bill.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Well, we'll try to be careful about that. We'll try to economize anyway.

On his right is the MLA for Calgary-Buffalo, Mr. Sheldon Chumir, and on his right is John McInnis, the MLA for Edmonton-Jasper Place. Across from John is the newest member of the Legislative Assembly, Barrie Chivers, the MLA for Edmonton-Strathcona, and on his right is Pearl Calahasen, the MLA for Lesser Slave Lake. On my left is the Hon. Dennis Anderson, the MLA for Calgary-Currie. My name is Stan Schumacher, and I represent the Drumheller constituency.

As I mentioned earlier, we're very happy to have ABC Cable 10 broadcasting these hearings live. Just a reminder that the public is cordially invited to attend. We do have some scheduled presenters, but there is room in all our proceedings for unscheduled presenters at the end of the scheduled people. So if anybody has anything they feel they can contribute to the developing of a better Canada, we'd be very happy to see them.

With that I'd invite Pastor Ian Cotton to come to the table for the purpose of making the first presentation here in Fort McMurray. Welcome, Pastor Cotton.

MR. COTTON: Thank you. I have a question. How come we've got some honourables and some nonhonourable people around here?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Well, we've got two members of the cabinet, and any member of the cabinet carries the . . .

MS BETKOWSKI: It doesn't mean this person is dishonourable.

MR. ANDERSON: Although we wonder at times.

MR. DAY: Now that we're through that clarification . . .

MR. COTTON: Thank you anyhow. I do know Stockwell, and I appreciate the invitation and the opportunity to make this presentation to you. I have typed out a copy for you, which I'll leave with you. I don't know who to leave it with.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. McDonough will pick it up.

MR. COTTON: I will read this submission through to you, if I may. That way I get my thoughts over very crystal clear.

In response to Alberta in a New Canada, which you're well acquainted with - this has been widely distributed - I would like to address two points, firstly aboriginal rights and, secondly, the freedom of conscience and religion. My primary emphasis, though, is on the freedom of conscience and religion.

As an immigrant to Canada from England and now a Canadian citizen, I am thankful for the privileges this country and this province have afforded me and my family. I feel it is necessary for our aboriginal peoples to be treated with the same dignity, respect, and equality under the Constitution that is shown to all other Canadians. I believe in a united Canada, including the province of Quebec, and I feel that certain powers can be delegated to the provinces and to the aboriginal peoples provided all are treated equally and fairly. Similarly, I believe that all Canadians from east to west should be treated fairly and equally under the Charter of Rights. This being so, the provinces should have no authority to pass legislation contrary to our Charter of Rights; i.e., the notwithstanding clause of section 33 must be repealed or, failing its repeal, section 2(a) concerning freedom of conscience and religion must be exempted from any notwithstanding clauses.

The use of the notwithstanding clause by the Quebec provincial government in 1988 as a means to prevent the use of English on public signs illustrates clearly why section 33 should be rescinded as soon as possible. Minority rights must have protection in law so they are not subject to the ever-changing political whims of government. Section 33 of the Charter allows governments of the day legal opportunity to deprive Canadians of their language rights and religious freedoms that they have enjoyed for over 200 years. History clearly shows that minority religions and languages, as evidenced in Quebec, will be vulnerable to a complete deprivation of liberty by a simple majority vote of a provincial Legislature under section 33. This section must be rescinded.

Our court system seems to be working very well now that we have the Charter in place to give a firm, impartial foundation of law uninfluenced by shifting public opinion. The Charter is designed to protect us all against a possible tyranny of the majority. As a pastor serving the people of Canada, I want to assure the government that it has its place in God's order; however, government has no right to place controls upon conscience. This is God's realm, not government's, and should ever be held inviolable by our Charter and laws. Since God takes no pleasure in forced allegiance and grants freedom of will to all, our government should follow God's example in the matter of conscience and worship. Freedom of religion should ensure that governments have no authority to enforce any particular religious practice or belief. Thus the Charter does not need section 33, which allows provincial governments to impose a sectarian religious will on unwilling citizens. When it comes to conscience and the practice of religion, God's will, not man's, must ever reign supreme.

In closing, I would repeat that worship is an act of conscience and must never be controlled by law, nor should laws be passed to coerce individuals against their will in acts of worship. Freedom of religion and its practise thereof must be protected by our Charter of Rights in accord with section 2(a). In view of the above, it is my firm conviction that section 33 must be repealed for the good of all Canadians. Failing its repeal, then section 2(a) must be exempted from any notwithstanding clauses.

Thank you. That completes my presentation.

MR. McINNIS: Mr. Chairman and Pastor Cotton, I take it implicit in your presentation you feel the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is an effective way to protect the human rights and civil liberties of Canadians, that you endorse having the Charter within our Constitution.

MR. COTTON: Oh, yes, very much, very definitely, with that one exception.

1:12

MR. McINNIS: You didn't indicate it, but I take it your preference would be for the elimination of section 33, the notwithstanding clause, as opposed to simply exempting the one section.

MR. COTTON: That's exactly it. Section 33 must be repealed, or failing its repeal, then section 2(a) concerning freedom of conscience and religion must be exempted from any notwithstanding clauses. So my preference is that section 33 be terminated completely.

MR. McINNIS: It's clear to me. Just one other question. Are there any rights and freedoms that you think should be protected in the Charter in addition to those that may be in there already?

MR. COTTON: No, I think the Charter has done a very good job in protecting all our basic freedoms. The notwithstanding clause is my irritant, if you like, about it. I'm sure that's true of many other people.

MR. McINNIS: Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Anderson.

MR. ANDERSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Pastor Cotton, I'm sure we all, regardless of which party we're from on this committee, would agree with the protection of rights and with the fact that no province or, for that matter, federal government or other person should have the ability to take away any of those fundamental rights that are outlined either in the Individual's Rights Protection Act in Alberta or in the federal Charter of Rights. What I would like to explore with you is how that best can be done. You seemed – and please feel free to correct me if I'm wrong – to equate God's will being interpreted best by the courts as opposed to by elected representatives of the people. I'm wondering if you could expand on that at all, given some of the experiences, for example, that took place in the States where for quite a number of years the Supreme Court, under their particular rights that were attributed to the court, interpreted the rights of the community as being superior to the rights of the minority. For example, the busing issue in the States: people at the back of the bus versus the front. There is a school of thought that says that people that take the longest to come up to date, if you will, in terms of ensuring and guaranteeing rights

are those who aren't forced to change through elections but rather are there without any checks from the population. Could you expand on that?

MR. COTTON: That is exactly my concern, "forced to change." That is why I feel the Charter of Rights must ensure without any compromise that each individual has freedom of conscience and freedom of worship. Thus if you want to worship on Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday or whatever day it happens to be, the government has no right to say you've got to worship on Wednesday or whatever day. So that is my concern, and I think this needs to be enshrined within our Charter. Then politicians, present company excepted, I assume, will not change at the whim of their thoughts as they're elected people. This is what comes out clearly within the Charter of Rights as it was handed out to us several years ago.

MR. ANDERSON: And you have no concern that the court could interpret the section differently than you might intend it to be interpreted and therefore have, without any recourse to the population, the right to detail that in a different way; in other words, to say that the freedom to worship means to do it on a certain day, as in the States for a long period of time – they did change – they said the right to association was the right of the whites to not have to associate with the blacks on buses.

MR. COTTON: But that wasn't enshrined in their Charter of Rights. That was a local law, as such, as I understand it.

MR. ANDERSON: No, it wasn't.

MR. COTTON: In that case, I would differ from that.

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah. It was in their Charter of Rights and it was their federal Supreme Court that made that . . .

MR. COTTON: I believe in equality and fairness. I'm basing this on section 2(a), which says under Fundamental Freedoms:

2. Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:

(a) freedom of conscience and religion.

Therefore, it's my presentation that governments, whether federal, provincial, city, have no right to tell me or any other individual, "You must do thus and so." Section 2(b) says "freedom of thought" – obviously, you cannot control freedom of thought – "belief, opinion and expression." Again expression can be forced by fear, and I feel this should be protected. So my fundamental concern here is conscience and religion, because our conscience gives us the ability to express our beliefs. My main emphasis is that freedom of religion and expression and practice thereof not be constrained by any provincial, federal, or even city law.

MR. ANDERSON: Thank you. I think we'd all agree that it shouldn't be curtailed. Whether that can be done by having others not able to curtail it but the Supreme Court able to interpret it is the question. But I certainly agree with the premise.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Ms Calahasen.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to pursue the avenue you brought out in terms of the aboriginal peoples. When you said that there should be equality or, at

least, aboriginal people should have the same dignity and respect as all other Canadians, I wondered what your views are relative to the powers that may be accorded the aboriginal people. Should it all be comprehensive kinds of claims that aboriginal people in the Northwest Territories as well as the Yukon have? Or should there be specific kinds of issue-oriented claims that they should be dealing with in aboriginal issues?

MR. COTTON: That's getting into politics, which I don't particularly want to get into. I'm speaking as a pastor here and also as an immigrant to Canada, but it does seem to me that our aboriginal peoples have not been treated fairly. The treaty rights have not been followed through. Obviously, certain things within the treaty had been allowed for and governments have not followed through on this: land and that sort of thing. What I said in my presentation here is that I feel certain powers can be delegated to the provinces and to the aboriginal peoples provided that all are treated equally and fairly and then followed from east to west, that there's one Charter which guarantees rights for all Canadians from east to west.

MS CALAHASEN: Are you saying, then, the aboriginal people have got to be treated like all Canadians, not on a sort of specific basis?

MR. COTTON: I think if we're going to consider that the province of Quebec has certain powers and rights, similarly we should allow our aboriginal peoples to have their own rights and powers which perhaps are unique to them and not common to the rest of Canadians.

MS CALAHASEN: Should they then be recognized as founding peoples also, like the French as well as the English?

MR. COTTON: Very much so.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Betkowski.

MS BETKOWSKI: Mine is on the same theme, with respect to the aboriginal peoples. When you say they should be given recognition of their special part of Canada, that might not be equal to other Canadians.

MR. COTTON: That I also realize.

MS BETKOWSKI: I guess that's where we all struggle. Should there be exceptional powers, for example, on some of their treaty rights? That includes certain hunting rights, but that's not equal to other Canadians in the same way. I wonder what your thoughts are on that.

MR. COTTON: Again, with the aboriginal peoples, I think if their hunting is a traditional way of life and they live on this, then they should have these sorts of rights. But for them to go commercially hunting and selling to the general population, that's a different matter. I think survival is one thing, but commerce is a different matter on that.

MS BETKOWSKI: So as opposed to being equal, there may be an equity here; there may be an ability to achieve.

MR. COTTON: Unfortunately, yes. This is why I said in my other paragraph here that certain powers can be delegated to the provinces and to the aboriginal people. These powers are obviously going to be different, but there should be an equality across Canada on this.

MS BETKOWSKI: Thank you very much.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Chumir.

1:22

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you. I might say that I would tend to side with you as opposed to Mr. Anderson with respect to your interpretation as to whether it was the politicians or the courts that were responsible for John Crow in the United States, but this is not the place for . . . [interjection] Jim Crow. John Crow. Bill Crow. Harry Crow. Velcro. Anyway, this is not the place to get into that debate.

I did want to ask you whether there were certain types of difficulties you had in mind, either historically – because we have had some examples of historical problems re freedom of religion in this country. Is there anything in particular that you have in mind, problems you are experiencing that lead you to be so concerned about this particular protection in the Charter?

MR. COTTON: Yes. As a Seventh Day Adventist, obviously I worship on Saturday and not Sunday. Thus when Sunday legislation comes in, it imposes upon me and upon other Seventh Day Adventists certain rules. Certain freedoms are taken away from me. For example, in Red Deer – and Stockwell and I were on opposite sides of the fence at that time, but we agreed that fundamental religions are important. Also, it mentions in our Charter of Rights the freedom to believe or not to believe, the freedom to act or not to act. Thus if I want to go shopping on Sunday, I should have that right, because to me my worship day is Sabbath. Sabbath being unique perhaps to Seventh Day Adventists, being from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday, that affects the whole week.

My wife, for example, for the nine months we've been here has tried to get a job. Just today she had an invite to go and do some temporary work for the next two weeks. She was refused three jobs because they want her to work on Saturday. Well, we didn't know that when we applied. I can respect businesses saying, "We want you to work on Saturday." If that's true, then we don't apply for the job. If the insistence is that you've got to work Saturday or Friday from sunset to the time we quit and we know that, then my wife would not apply for the job. If it's not advertised or if it's a condition of employment, then I think that's a different matter. You're all well acquainted with the Sunday legislation that went through and with the battles that have been in Lethbridge and Red Deer. Therefore, my concern here is for freedom of conscience and religion. After all, I might be an atheist and my religion might be the almighty dollar, and I would work seven days a week because I'm serving that God. This guarantees me the right to do that, whereas legislation which says, "Hey, you can only shop six days of the week but the Sunday you've got to close down" is a different matter.

Now, I realize we have a unique stand on this and the rest of Christendom doesn't agree with it. Fine. That also is guaranteed in here for the Mohammedans. They keep Friday, and that also should be respected. So the freedom of religion and conscience is very important. I was asked by a pastor here in town, in fact the president of the ministerial association, just

recently, "What if the government passed legislation to close everything on Saturday?" I told him that I would fight that just as vigorously as if they said close it on a Sunday or Friday or Monday.

So it's my conviction, my firm, settled conviction, that the Charter as spelled out in here, excluding that notwithstanding clause, gives to every individual their freedom of conscience and their freedom to practise their religion as their conscience dictates. You'll find that in my presentation here.

MR. CHUMIR: Would you also then be supportive, for example, of a religious claim by members of the Sikh faith to be able to qualify for a job, say, with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police on the basis of the religious mandate to wear a turban? Would that be analogous?

MR. COTTON: Yes and no. As I explained, my wife would not apply for a job if she realized it included Saturday work. We believe if the condition is that you work Saturdays, there is no point in applying for it and there's no point in making a stink about it, because that obviously is spelled out. With the Sikh religion, I think we have a wonderful tradition in the RCMP. Their uniform stands for a lot. I realize it is a very difficult decision about their turbans, also the children going to school with their little daggers or whatever they're called. I think that's a very difficult one that has to be respected. From my perspective, if I knew something would conflict with my beliefs, I would not even apply for it in the first place. So let me just stand on the fence with that one, if I may.

MR. CHUMIR: I'd like to change directions a little bit. I've been very interested in what I see as the main philosophical issue facing the country at this point in time, and that is whether we decentralize and transfer exclusive jurisdiction over many more powers to the provinces – for example, exclusive jurisdiction over medicare and social services – or alternatively, whether we feel it's very important to maintain a strong central government with power to establish minimum standards re medicare, social services, and other areas. Do you have a view with respect to what the most appropriate direction is for this country?

MR. COTTON: Let me speak as an individual and not as a pastor at this point. From my perspective, and I speak only as an individual here, the federal government has its role, as does the provincial government. The federal government I think has every right to set minimum standards of education, of health, but the provincial government I think should have the ability to change, upgrade or, in some cases, adjust. For example, these private health clinics. I am in favour of private health clinics. Coming from England and seeing the delay that happens in many medical instances, I think our private health care as established at the moment can only be beneficial to us in the long run. It's going to save us a lot of costs in the health field, in hospital care. I think if there are private individuals, you're going to have far more entrepreneurial skills coming in and therefore a better health care for the whole province. Again, let me repeat that that's my personal view. That is not the church view, so on that point I'm not speaking as a pastor.

MR. CHIVERS: Pastor Cotton, I'd just like to pursue a little bit further the questions with respect to employment and the relationship with freedom of religion and freedom of conscience. I want to start by pointing out that our law already has this

concept called reasonable accommodation, which might be part of the way out of your dilemma.

MR. COTTON: Yes, indeed, and we've appreciated that as well.

MR. CHIVERS: You support that kind of concept in terms of an employer's obligation to make reasonable accommodation on account of religion?

MR. COTTON: Yes.

MR. CHIVERS: I also want to speak with you about your position on bilingualism and the Official Languages Act. You didn't mention that in your brief, but it's an area that's being addressed by many of the presenters to this task force. I'm wondering what your views are with respect to, firstly, the founding peoples issue. I think you've already indicated to Ms Calahasen that you would support some sort of special status for aboriginal people.

MR. COTTON: Yes.

MR. CHIVERS: I'm wondering what that means to you in terms of language rights.

MR. COTTON: We are immigrants to Canada. English is my only tongue. I took French for just one year. Obviously I wasn't considered skilled enough to carry on, so I was dismissed from French at that point, at the age of 13. I struggled through Greek for four semesters in my degree, so I at least have an understanding of languages. I think the native people should have the right that their official language be their native tongue. For example, the Inuit should have that right to say this is our official language, just as the French people should have that and just as the English-speaking people should have that. I think it is wrong – and again I speak as a person, not as a church – that bilingualism be forced on people who are not willing to go along with it.

I pastored in a church that 10 years ago was exclusively German speaking – no, more than that; 15, 20 years ago they were exclusively German speaking. Six years ago when I got there, they were almost exclusively English-speaking. You went to visit them in their homes or you saw them speaking anywhere, they'd be speaking in German to each other, but the moment I came along, out of courtesy they would change to English so I could understand the conversation.

1:32

I think federal bilingualism has its place. I think it has its place where there are sufficient numbers of people who would qualify for or would need the services. But in places such as Red Deer, since I spent the last five years there – I only met two French-speaking people in the whole time I was there. Now, I don't know what it's like in different parts of the country, in different parts of the province even, but from my own perspective I'm quite happy to be served in English. I do all my communication with English. I see French and I struggle with the words. I don't understand French. I think that also the majority of the world speaks English. English for sure is the lingua franca, to use a French phrase, of the whole world at the moment. Therefore, if people are forced to take French and exclusively French, then their position in the world is going to be lost, and I think this is where Quebec is going to lose out in

the long run. If everything has to be done in French and they are no longer able to communicate in English to the rest of the world market, then there might well be a problem there in the long term.

My only personal perspective is that I'm quite happy in English. I have nobody in my family who speaks French. In my church I have two people who speak French, many people who speak Chinese, and one person who speaks Yugoslavian. We minister to the people of Canada, and therefore from the church perspective obviously Quebec is part of our church. We minister to people in Quebec, and I would not like to deny them their rights to speak French to their heart's content.

MR. CHIVERS: I'd just like to pursue that a bit further. You indicated some support for the principle of where numbers warrant the delivery of services in one or other of the official languages, and I think you also included aboriginal languages in that. You realize, of course, that the federal law, the Official Languages Act – that's essentially what it does require. There's some judicial support for that sort of proposition where numbers warrant, for example, in the delivery of educational services and also of course in other types of federal services. So by and large, you would support the present situation then?

MR. COTTON: Yes. My next-door neighbour's daughter is in a French-immersion school, and she's reveling in it. She's an honour student. I think that's important. Her mother tongue was French, so they're maintaining the culture in that. But I think we perhaps have gone too far overboard on this.

MR. CHIVERS: It's kind of interesting. There are presently over 2 and a quarter million Canadian students enrolled in French language immersion programs in Canada.

MR. COTTON: That's 10 percent of the population.

MR. CHIVERS: So it's a fairly significant number of people that are involved in that dimension. Of course, there are other second language programs as well that involve another 2 and a half million people. So a fair number of Canadians.

MR. COTTON: And I should repeat that our church ministers to people in French and English. I am not bilingual by any stretch of the imagination.

MR. CHIVERS: The other point I wanted to question you about. I tend to agree with your views with respect to section 33, the notwithstanding clause. My concern, of course, is that the present system permits a checkerboard type of effect in terms of certain provinces enacting different laws under the notwithstanding clause. I was wondering if that's part of your concern as well: having a uniform position across the country with respect to basic rights and freedoms?

MR. COTTON: Yes, it is. The notwithstanding clause apparently has to be re-enacted every five years, but the problem with this is that – and this is the explanation on the right-hand side here. It says:

Under the agreement that broke the constitutional deadlock, both Parliament and provincial legislatures will retain a limited power to pass laws that may conflict with parts of the Charter of Rights concerning fundamental freedoms, legal rights and equality rights. My concern is that it should be enshrined within our Constitution that no government body, whether it be local, city, provin-

cial, or even the government of Canada in its federal role, has the right ever to deny a person's right to worship, and that section 2(a) should be exempted from any of these notwithstanding clauses. That protects all Canadians, then, in their role of worship and their beliefs.

MR. CHIVERS: Finally, with respect to aboriginal rights, if I understood you correctly, you were suggesting some sort of delegated arrangement with respect to aboriginal rights. Is that on a model of self-government, some sort of concept of self-government to aboriginal peoples, or is it more on a municipal government sort of model?

MR. COTTON: I would have no problem in delegating the aboriginal peoples having certain rights enshrined within the Charter so that it's uniform across Canada for the aboriginal peoples.

MR. CHIVERS: Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Day.

MR. DAY: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Pastor Cotton, it's always nice to see a former constituent doing well in another part of the province. I was just telling your new MLA here, Mr. Weiss, that he's fortunate to have a good community-minded individual like yourself up here, and we'll do what we can to try and drag you back to Red Deer.

MR. COTTON: Thank you.

MR. DAY: Section 33 is interesting in terms of the notwithstanding clause, and you're talking about your concern about religious freedoms. It's also interesting that the preamble, of course, of the Charter says that "Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law." As I'm hearing your concern, you feel that could be negated by the notwithstanding clause having power over section 2(a), which is "freedom of conscience and religion."

MR. COTTON: That's exactly my concern.

MR. DAY: Then am I assuming correctly – would you have a problem or feel a notwithstanding clause might have some merit in the areas of the sections 7 to 15 as long as 2(a) was exempted? Seven to 15, as you're probably aware, deal with search or seizure, detention, imprisonment, arrest, that type of thing.

MR. COTTON: Yes, I have no problem with that. Even under section 2 there, the fundamental freedoms: "freedom of peaceful assembly" I think should be understood as peaceful, but when you get an assembly which isn't peaceful, then I think the notwithstanding clause, if it had to be retained, could cover that section. But certainly sections 2(a) and (b) under here, (a) particularly, cannot be compromised in any manner. Therefore, if the notwithstanding clause has to remain in there, it's my belief that section 2(a) should be specifically excluded from the notwithstanding clause of section 33.

MR. DAY: Thanks for that clarification.

And the whole area of self-government in terms of aboriginal rights: do you feel it's important that self-government be defined before either provincial or federal governments move in that direction, or would you as a citizen of Canada be comfort-

able with self-government just being a term that isn't clearly defined before moving that way?

MR. COTTON: I think when it comes to politics and law, the more exactly things are defined, the better it is for everybody. I think with the matter of self-government for our aboriginal peoples it would be well for that to be defined before any laws were passed. It would stop any ambiguity of interpretation then.

MR. DAY: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Weiss, would you like to participate?

MR. WEISS: Mr. Chairman, if I may just take the opportunity to clarify my role. I'm here as an observer and would like to say thank you to the members of the committee, welcome to the city of Fort McMurray and the Fort McMurray constituency, and at the same time thank those who are making presentations and those who have come to listen and participate. I appreciate very much their involvement, and would encourage the viewing audience of ABC Cable TV to come out this evening and, if necessary, present a verbal brief. It isn't required to be in writing; it isn't required to be a formal presentation. To those who wish to have input, I would encourage them to come out in the latter part of the session.

Once again I would just like to say thanks, Mr. Chairman. I hope it goes well. I appreciate all the colleagues who have taken the time to come within their busy schedules. While we recess for the week, it means you're not home with your families and being able to spend the time that you would like as well. I think it's a very important issue, and it faces us all. I wish you well in your deliberations.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

The Chair would have one question before finishing, if Pastor Cotton doesn't mind. You mentioned that you did immigrate from the United Kingdom to come to Canada. Just for our information, or at least mine, do you feel that your liberties are a lot greater and expanded here in Canada than they were in the United Kingdom?

MR. COTTON: Probably about the same. I have never had conflict with the law; I've never been on the receiving end, so I really can't answer that from that perspective. It seems we have the Charter of Rights here now, and this has been a matter of public discussion. Going through this, this is what has prompted my concern that this notwithstanding clause can be used in a very wrong manner. For example, the usage of the language rights in Quebec and the stopping of the usage of English signs: to me that's wrong.

I'm also concerned, therefore, about freedom of religion and freedom of conscience and worship in general. It should not be legislated; you cannot legislate time and one's relationship with God. That's why I think section 2(a) was such a wonderful addition to this, but if it's negated by the inclusion of or being subject to section 33, then we ruin what is a very good Charter, and having this Charter gives the courts a very exact guideline to stay within.

1:42

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: What I was wondering about: I assume that you were a Seventh-Day Adventist in the United Kingdom.

MR. COTTON: No.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Oh, you weren't.

MR. COTTON: I became a Seventh-Day Adventist in Calgary in 1968.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I see. Are there Seventh-Day Adventists in the United Kingdom?

MR. COTTON: Yes.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Do they suffer, or are they in danger of being deprived of any of their religious rights and liberties there that you know of?

MR. COTTON: Yes. There have been occasions where people have been fired from their jobs because they will not work on Friday evening after sunset, for example. So, yes, that has happened there, and it has also been a concern to us here in North America, in the whole of North America.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: So the same difficulties obtain in the United Kingdom as the United States, as Canada?

MR. COTTON: Yes, but I think with this Charter, then all people are protected from coercion.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Well, except that with this Charter and with the Bill of Rights in the United States that's been there for almost 200 years, you still have those difficulties.

MR. COTTON: Yes.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: So I personally don't see how one can argue that these written-down rights really expand the rights people had in a society like the United Kingdom.

MR. COTTON: If you take the example we've had in Red Deer, the city wanted to close everything down on Sunday, all the shopping and everything. But again certain exceptions were allowed, gasoline stations and hotels and so on and so forth. It's inconsistent. Therefore, if a law has to be passed, it has to be consistent. I think the Charter of Rights gives protection to all citizens, including Seventh-Day Adventists and including those who are nonbelievers.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Pastor Cotton.

MR. CHIVERS: Mr. Chairman, I was just a bit concerned about an impression that Pastor Cotton may have left as a result of some questions from Mr. Day. I just want it to be clear. As I understood your response to Mr. Day's question, your primary concern was in terms of making sure freedom of religion and conscience was beyond the ambit of the notwithstanding clause.

MR. COTTON: Right.

MR. CHIVERS: You sort of accepted his proposition that perhaps the notwithstanding clause could apply to sections 7 to 14 of the Charter. I wanted to be sure that that is indeed your position, because this section 7, for example, provides

the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.

Of course, if the notwithstanding clause were to apply to that section of the Charter, it could mean that you'd have the same sort of checkerboard effect across the country.

MR. COTTON: Unfortunately.

MR. CHIVERS: The other sections there: for example, section 14. We'll just start with the beginning and the end of that portion of the Charter.

A party or witness in any proceedings who does not understand or speak the language in which the proceedings are conducted or who is deaf has the right to the assistance of an interpreter.

Again, if the notwithstanding clause reached to those sections of the Charter, you could have exactly the same problem. Would you not feel more comfortable with having the notwithstanding clause eliminated from the Charter altogether so it wouldn't apply to any?

MR. COTTON: Yes, indeed. My concluding point and second to last paragraph here: worship is an act of conscience and must never be controlled by law, nor should laws be passed to coerce individuals against their will; freedom of religion and its practise thereof must be protected by our Charter of Rights in accord with section 2(a), and in view of the above it is my firm conviction that section 33 must be repealed for the good of all Canadians.

So my view is that section 33 needs to be totally erased from the record, from the Charter, and from anything else you can lay your hands on.

MR. CHIVERS: Right. I just wanted to be clear on that. Thanks.

MR. COTTON: Thank you for that clarification.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Anderson would like to have further clarification.

MR. ANDERSON: Pastor Cotton, you've got us into an interesting conversation on this one. I guess one thing that confuses me is that you talk about those rights being beyond the law and should be beyond the law, yet you're talking about the fundamental law of Canada. You're talking about the Charter of Rights, which is, if anything, a law interpreted by nine people appointed by a government. I don't hear any of us disagreeing with the protection of rights as we understand them or as we would normally interpret those words. The purpose of the notwithstanding clause originally – and I can speak to this a little having been involved in the committee just prior to the conclusion of the 1982 accord – was so that interpretation made by nine people would not in fact circumvent what was originally intended in the law itself. On the section you're most concerned with, I'm not familiar with any attempt to do that or any misinterpretations that are there; I am on other sections where a particular court has ruled in such a way as to put at question the original intent and, therefore, the notwithstanding clause

could arguably be used to in fact protect what the people wanted originally.

I guess that's the problem we're getting at, and as we get back and forth there are of course different opinions as to whether nine appointed judges can do that more easily than people responding to the needs of the moment.

MR. COTTON: But I think perhaps that's most clearly illustrated by the Quebec government. The Charter of Rights as interpreted by the Supreme Court said that English signs were allowed, and instantly the provincial government says, "Ah, notwithstanding the Charter of Rights, you can't use English." Therefore, I think that was a wrong usage of the notwithstanding clause. As I understand from the history, the notwithstanding clause was not intended to be used in such a manner. There have been many examples given in court rulings that I've read over the years. I think there have been three usages of the notwithstanding clause, and all three were not really understood to be in that context, or at least to be used with the notwithstanding clause. Unfortunately, the provincial governments said, "Hey, this is what we want." What I'm saying is that the Charter of Rights protects minorities from any possible coercion. That was my concern.

MR. ANDERSON: Yes. I appreciate your interpretation on that, and I would have the same concern about Quebec's use of the notwithstanding clause though not a question about their right to use it. However, you know, there was a case in Ontario where they took the section of the Act – I can't recall the specific item in the Charter of Rights – which deals with freedom of assembly, and it was interpreted by the court to mean that there could not be a law which stopped essential services from striking in a strike situation. We could argue whether that's right or wrong, but I know that the original intention having been there when it was drafted was not for it to extend that far. In that case the Supreme Court didn't uphold it and there wasn't a need for anybody to talk about a notwithstanding clause, but those kinds of items are, I think, one of the reasons why. I give that for information: why the notwithstanding clauses are there as an out.

I hear what you're saying, and I appreciate that we would like to not have an out if the words were clear enough that we all knew exactly what they meant. Unfortunately, I'm not sure that's the case.

MR. COTTON: Unfortunately, politicians have a very difficult job. You have to represent your constituents. You have to represent the law and live within the confines as expressed within the Charter, and it's not an easy task for you to be in any leadership role today. As a pastor I know that, and I can well assume that it gets far more complicated as you get nearer to the rows of power.

So I appreciate your time that you're giving and investing in coming up here. I want to thank you for listening, and I leave it with you. Thank you so much.

1:52

MR. ANDERSON: Thank you very much.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Pastor Cotton.

Has Dawson Reid arrived? No. Then the committee will invite Ron Charlet of The Royal Canadian Legion to the table. Welcome.

MR. CHARLET: Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today, and hopefully I haven't prepared too long a presentation. However, it is somewhat longer than the last one. I understand you have a copy of a draft that was sent by our provincial commander, Comrade Pete Morrison, and I will be covering some of that in my presentation as well.

Canada is at a really critical point in her short history, perhaps the most critical. We have weathered many storms and achieved much in our years of Confederation, but all our successes may come to nothing if we fail now to find some means of remaining one nation. The Royal Canadian Legion is one of Canada's oldest, most respected national organizations and from the very beginning we have been pro-Canada, pro-unity. In fact, among the Legion's purposes as laid out in its Act to incorporate is a commitment to foster loyalty among the public and educate in the principles of patriotism, duty, and unstinted public service. With that as its guideline The Royal Canadian Legion has steadfastly remained committed to the principle that Canada must remain a united country.

Having said that, the Legion is fully aware that the current political climate in Canada will not permit a status quo approach to the unity challenge. We must be prepared to accept change if we are to remain one nation. But change must be balanced. The current tendency to give precedence to individuals' rights over those of the majority is particularly disturbing because it implies that individual needs must be met regardless of the implications for the greater community. This situation extends to federal/provincial negotiations. We have already seen many instances where, as is invariably the case, efforts to accommodate everyone inevitably satisfy no one. All parties must be prepared to compromise.

Why one Canada? Of the questions being asked about Canada's future, the most valid is the simplest. Why should the country remain united? There are many reasons, but perhaps one of the most compelling is the need to demonstrate maturity as a nation at a time in history when much of the world is either in transition or in turmoil. As one nation Canada has gradually earned a position of prominence in the world. Our effectiveness as a middle power is a direct result of our rich economy and our well-established traditions of fairness, democracy, and responsiveness to the needs of other members of the international community. The respect Canada commands internationally allows access to the world's inner councils where we enjoy considerable influence in shaping the world, influence, some might say, which is greatly disproportionate to Canada's relatively small population.

Were Canada to develop an overly decentralized structure or split and become two or more political entities, none would command a fraction of the respect or influence Canadians currently take for granted as citizens of one nation. Canada's effectiveness at the international conference tables on trade, commerce, finance, defence, and the environment would be merely that of its parts not of the whole. From a strategic point of view Canada occupies a significant geographic position, situated as it is between the United States and the Soviet Union but with strong and growing links with Asia and Europe. A united Canada is able to conduct credible negotiations with these world giants and in the process gain benefits which favour all Canadians. A divided Canada would be totally at the mercy of the major players on the international scene who would undoubtedly take every opportunity to exploit each of the separate parts of a former Canada for their own self-interest.

If Quebec leaves Confederation, other provinces or groups of provinces might too easily follow. Some suggest as many as five

countries could evolve. What influence could a collection of minor states hope to wield in negotiations, for example, concerning an arrangement such as free trade with the United States and Mexico? From the external point of view it is certainly in the best interests of all Canadians to remain united and strong, for only in that way can we continue to compete effectively in the international arena and enjoy the influence, prestige, and wealth we have gradually earned during nearly 125 years of nationhood.

What of international considerations? Quite simply, one Canada properly governed could be virtually self-sufficient. We are one of the most resource-rich nations on earth, with almost limitless potential. One united Canada has the capability to achieve that potential through mutual support and combined productivity, but this will never be accomplished as a divided nation. There would also be a compelling need to consider the impact a disintegrated Canada would have on the delivery of bilingual services to those areas such as eastern and northern Ontario, New Brunswick, and parts of Manitoba. How would these areas fare in an overwhelmingly English environment? By the same token, what would be the effects on any one cultural minority, in this case Quebec, of life among 300 million English-speaking North Americans without benefit of the protection currently enjoyed in a united Canada?

The possibility that one province's separation may prompt others to follow suit must also be acknowledged as a possible consequence of separation. Rather than two sovereign nations separation might very well lead to as many as five or six individual states, any or all of which might ultimately submit to the strong pull of the United States.

Our current political structure is certainly flawed. There is duplication, often triplication throughout the bureaucracy. Many politicians are regarded in a negative light and perceived to be motivated primarily by self-interest and partisan considerations, but Canada has achieved greatness because Canadians have always managed to work together. The ability of Canadians to arrive at constructive compromises has created a tradition of success in overwhelming obstacles. To give up now just because solutions to problems do not come easy would be to admit the most shameful defeat. Clearly, Canadian unity must prevail for the good of all.

The Legion's position on Canadian unity. Nowhere has the Legion's commitment to unity been more clearly stated than in the resolution passed at the 33rd biannual dominion convention in Vancouver in 1990. Convention delegates from all provinces and territories soundly resolved to marshal all necessary resources to maintain Canada as a complete entity and to exert maximum Legion influence to ensure better understanding between people of the legitimate needs of one another so that finally and soon all Canadians will decide to continue to enjoy the benefits of a united Canada.

The current problem extends beyond the relationship between any one province and the federal government. With this in mind and with the full understanding that changes will be needed if we are to achieve the goal of continuing unity, The Royal Canadian Legion supports the following.

First and foremost, Canada as a strong, united, democratic nation.

Guarantees of individual freedom and minority rights with the understanding that those rights and freedoms are conditional upon the acceptance of the obligations and responsibilities which must accompany the rights granted all citizens of a free, democratic, and sovereign nation.

Two official languages, French and English, at the federal level.

The need for elected federal and provincial officials to establish the necessary political framework for the continued existence of Canada as a united nation.

A simplified amending process for the Constitution which will permit those constitutional changes acceptable to the majority of Canadians that are necessary to maintain Canada as a strong, united, and democratic nation.

The Legion remains committed to one united Canada, and its members will exert their influence at every level of Canadian society in a concerted effort to promote unity and remind Canadians everywhere of the valuable legacy we are so close to losing. As in all matters, the Legion will take a nonpartisan approach to the unity challenge.

Given the current political reality in Canada, the Legion believes that the nation needs a new Constitution. That Constitution should include provisions for a central government with full power over specific areas, some of which should include external affairs; national defence and territorial security, including control of the national economic zone, the 200-mile limit; international trade; monetary policy; transportation; economic equalization; and customs and excise. The following areas would be managed on a power-sharing basis by the provinces and the federal government: health and welfare, immigration, and environmental issues. Provincial areas of responsibility could include such areas as education, employment, fisheries and natural resources, and agriculture.

2-02

The new Constitution should contain a workable amending formula which does not grant unilateral veto powers to any one signatory. All powers granted to one province should be available to all if they want them. A new blueprint for Canada could also address traditional weaknesses. For example, provision could be made for national bilingual education, and senate reform could finally become a reality. But action is needed now. The federal government must immediately take constructive action to bring about a meaningful, realistic, intergovernmental dialogue on the unity issue. An essential first step would be the public release of a clear, unadorned statement on the probable consequences of separation. Such a statement must address judicial, economic, international, monetary, and environmental issues. It must also make clear the fact that separation would involve no inequitable generosity to those provinces which choose to leave Confederation.

At the same time the federal government must establish a high-level committee on Canadian unity to work with the provinces, especially those which have not yet developed their ideas on the future shape of Canada. But contributions from all provinces would be welcome. This body must work to achieve consensus on a constitutional proposal to serve as the framework for Canada's future as one nation. Having outlined the consequences of separation and developed a proposal for constitutional reform, the government must then conduct a national referendum on Canadian unity. The outcome of the referendum would provide the mandate for all future federal government actions on the issue of Canadian unity. All this must be done soon so that the implications of separation are clear to all factions before any decision on Canada's future is taken.

Until recently, only one province has set its unity agenda, and the rest of the country has reacted. Many Canadians have never considered what it would mean to be simply a citizen of Ontario, prairie Canada, maritime Canada, British Columbia, or the First

Nation. By the same token, no effort has been made to explain what life would be like in a sovereign Quebec, a Quebec with no transfer payments, no access to Canadian economic assistance, no military means of ensuring the maintenance of sovereignty, no credible voice in the international arena, and no effective protection from the insistent pressures of the United States. The attitude of all Canadians might change dramatically were they to face the true implications of life in a separated and disintegrated Canada. A divided Canada would find its international voice muted or silenced on subjects of vital future interest. Cultural distinctions and traditional values would quickly be eroded. In this regard Canadians would do well to consider the history of the Balkans, India/Pakistan, and Bangladesh, as well as much of Africa before embracing the notion that separatism is a positive, progressive option.

The current threat to Canadian unity is real and imminent. It is up to Canadians everywhere to take a stand for Canada and to work towards a goal of one Canada. By being united ourselves and stating our position loudly and frequently, perhaps we can convince our political leaders that there can be no future course but Canadian unity.

In addition, I have just one little comment. Recently I was at a district rally, and Comrade Pete Morrison was there. He said, you know, it's a shame that back when he was in the war and they were overseas very endearingly they used terms such as "stubble jumper", "frog", "herring choker", and it was a real term of endearment and now it's not.

Thank you very much.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Ron. Nancy?

MS BETKOWSKI: Well, thank you for the very strong statement of Canadian unity by the Royal Canadian Legion. I think it's very masterfully presented and very well done.

I have two questions. The first is with respect to calling for a simplified amending process in the Constitution. One of the things we've heard is, really, both sides of this issue, but people who don't argue for a simplified process argue for a difficult one in order that it can't be too easy to amend the Constitution. I just wondered why you had argued for the simplified.

MR. CHARLET: As with too many things, the bureaucracy, the red tape if you will, gets too extensive and doesn't allow us to make positive, pro-choice decisions.

MS BETKOWSKI: Okay. The second question I have is: we've had quite a lot of discussion before the committee on improved models, democratic models, if you like; in other words, ways in which Canadians could participate more directly in issues that we perhaps were content 20 years ago to leave to governments. You mention your support for Senate reform, and that may be one model we can use to balance minority versus majority, as you point out in your brief. Are there other mechanisms that you think might be institutionalized in Canada in order to give Canadians a stronger sense that they're actually involved in the process more?

MR. CHARLET: I believe that on major issues – the free trade issue, the GST – referendums may very well work. There have been a number of people I've talked to – friends and family across the country – that have felt that their elected officials voted according to the party and not according to their con-

situents, and that caused them a lot of concern, and it causes me concern as well.

MS BETKOWSKI: Okay, so that begs the questions then: if there were an issue important enough to call a referendum and the majority of Canada – let's, for the sake of argument, assume that might be in the central part of Canada – were to vote one way, and the provinces, for example, Alberta or British Columbia would vote another way, isn't that creating the tyranny of the majority that we've talked about?

MR. CHARLET: Yes, I believe 60 percent of the population lives in Ontario and Quebec, and yes, that does cause a lot of concern. I'm not sure what the answer is to that. I don't like the idea. I'm originally from Ontario, but I don't like the idea of a small portion of the country having that much say. I'm not sure what the answer is to that, but there's got to be a better solution.

MS BETKOWSKI: Well, if you have any ideas, we're certainly struggling with it, too, to try and enhance the democratic model. Thank you very much; excellent presentation.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Barrie.

MR. CHIVERS: Yes. Thanks for your brief, Mr. Charlet. It's really encouraging seeing an organization like the Canadian Legion expressing the viewpoints you've expressed here today.

It seems to me that your concern about balancing the individual and the collective rights comes down to just exactly that: the task is one of balancing competing interests, because there are legitimate interests to be balanced, and we may not always strike the same balance at different points in history. One of the things that you've indicated some support for is this concept of a Canadian mosaic. I gather from your comments that you support the linguistic duality of Canada but at the same time the multicultural multiplicity, if I can put it that way. You have to balance those interests.

I take it, then, that you feel the present situation with respect to official languages is working relatively satisfactorily?

MR. CHARLET: At a federal level, yes.

MR. CHIVERS: At a federal level. And, of course, you appreciate that where bilingualism is at the present time is at a federal level, except for the province of New Brunswick.

I'm wondering. You'd expressed some concerns about party discipline and party politics influencing decisions, the lack of freedom to vote in accordance with conscience. This is something we've heard from many, many presenters with regard to concerns about it. It struck me over the weekend that one of the ways of focusing the dilemma is perhaps to look at municipal government. I'm sure that coming from Fort McMurray you have some experience with a municipal system where there isn't party discipline. Do you share the concerns I have with respect to that model of government; that, in fact, at that level people are able to vote according to their conscience, and what you end up with is no predictability since you don't know which way any particular individual is going to come down on any issue that might arise? Is that also a problem?

2:12

MR. CHARLET: As a Canadian citizen, not as a Legion representative, I have a concern in Fort McMurray itself that

right now our councillors are not from a particular area; they don't have a riding as they do in Edmonton, that type of idea. So if I don't have a person representing me specifically, I have to contact every individual, whereas with an MLA, an MP, or if you're in a city where the aldermen or councillors have a particular riding, then you can approach that individual. If there's an area that feels strongly one way on a particular issue, then my belief is that the person representing them should be voting that way regardless, sometimes, of personal beliefs or of party politics.

MR. CHIVERS: I understand that. The difficulty, of course, to give a current example, is that each of the people that come before this committee express what they feel to be the viewpoints of a group they represent, and in many cases they believe those viewpoints represent Albertans generally. Now, we as politicians have to choose between these competing claims to representing the majority viewpoint, and the difficulty is: how do we go about doing that? How do we make that kind of decision? If I viewed my role as being a representative who was committed and exclusively required to represent the views of the majority of my constituents, how do I go about knowing what those viewpoints are, what the majority viewpoint is?

MR. CHARLET: Well, hopefully, either they would be contacting you or you would have a way of contacting them, and you would be able to understand where they're coming from or know what their viewpoints are through contact.

MR. CHIVERS: Some sort of direct democracy type of model, which would mean that they would be able to communicate with me in a fashion that would give me their, in a sense, instructions on the basis of majority support?

MR. CHARLET: I believe that deals, you know, more with major issues. I think there's a lot of, maybe, day-to-day things that you would deal with whether they come under party politics or whatever. That is understandable, and you know, it's a sort of given. There are issues that are of major concern, and I believe that when they come up, the people do let you know. If they don't, then it's their own fault, I guess you could say in a way, but they're also going to be mad at you. You're in a catch-22 situation; there's no doubt.

MR. CHIVERS: What I'm finding in my short time is that while many of my constituents will consider something to be a major issue, others will consider it to be relatively unimportant. So it's a very difficult process unless we have some sort of direct democracy model, and that seems very difficult in our tradition and given the geographic and population constraints. It seems very difficult to institute a direct democracy model, and I gather from your comments that you wouldn't want us to have a referendum on every issue, although on the Constitution you did indicate you feel that's something we should have a . . .

MR. CHARLET: No, I don't agree that we would go to referendum on every issue, because we would be having a vote every day, sort of, you know . . .

MR. CHIVERS: Finally, you mentioned the Quebec situation and language rights, and I'm wondering what your feelings are with respect to aboriginal rights, aboriginal self-government, many of the issues that are facing aboriginal peoples today.

Does your organization or do you have any viewpoints in those areas?

MR. CHARLET: I guess I would prefer to speak as a private citizen as opposed to representing the Legion on that.

MR. CHIVERS: Certainly.

MR. CHARLET: There are a lot of issues surrounding aboriginal rights and self-government. Some that I've heard I am in support of. There are times when I've questioned myself as to how far you go on things, and I guess I'm not really sure. I agree that aboriginal people have or maybe should have more rights than certain immigrant groups; however, I'm originally from a small town in Ontario of 3,800 people. Out of that 3,800 people there were probably 10 different ethnic backgrounds, and they're all very strong within the community. So does the community say, "Well, we're going to have 10 official languages"? I'm not sure where you would, you know, want to draw the line on something like that.

MR. CHIVERS: I appreciate your difficulty. What I was wondering, though, is if you favour some sort of recognition of the special status of aboriginal peoples, a constitutional recognition of . . . For example, you've supported recognition of distinct status for Quebec to a certain extent, particularly with respect to language. What about aboriginal peoples and recognizing them on a constitutional level with some sort of distinct status?

MR. CHARLET: I guess at this point there is already some recognition in place, and I am in support of that. I agree totally with aboriginal peoples having the support and backing of government and helping. I guess I'm not sure how far . . .

MR. CHIVERS: You don't know how to draw the balance.

MR. CHARLET: That's right.

MR. CHIVERS: I appreciate your difficulties. I share them. Thanks very much for coming today.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Day, followed by Ms Calahasen.

MR. DAY: Thanks, Mr. Charlet, for representing both the Legion and also your personal view as you stated from time to time. I appreciate your taking the liberty to do that. I need clarification, if I can, on two official languages. You talk about supporting it at the federal level.

MR. CHARLET: Yes.

MR. DAY: Could you clarify that? Does that mean, for instance, the policy as is now enacted, the official policy on bilingualism, that in a province like Alberta where French would probably not even be in the top five in terms of languages used - I think it makes the top 10. But where a tiny minority speak French, are you saying, then, that somebody applying for a federal civil service job in Alberta would be required to be bilingual and that, for instance, the RCMP detachment in Sylvan Lake is required to answer the telephone, "Bonjour"? You are in full support not just of a concept of two official languages

but the way in which it is being enacted presently?

MR. CHARLET: I've personally - again, not as the Legion representative . . .

MR. DAY: I appreciate that.

MR. CHARLET: I have wondered on occasion, when I phone the Canada employment centre or the RCMP, why the French language, because here in Fort McMurray we have a fairly strong French community, probably more so than other parts of the province, but at the same time I don't know if it's that strong a community that would justify that. I mean, I could see the Cree language being used rather than French in this community because we have a very strong Cree population here as well. So again, I'm not sure which way to go. Because it is a federal office, the requirements at this point are that they use French because it's the federal language.

MR. DAY: I appreciate that that's murky. I wonder if you have a feeling as far as once it begins to be acted out; there is a difference between just saying two official languages. I appreciate the difference you've drawn or the presentation has drawn between federal powers and jurisdictions vis-à-vis provincial. What is your suggestion? You say there should be some that are federal, some that are strictly provincial, and then some that are shared. In the area where they're shared, what do you do when you come to a saw-off?

For instance, you mentioned that you feel immigration should be a shared jurisdiction, provincial and federal. Let's say a province, let's say Alberta wants to draw from the immigration pool because of certain technological advances and labour demands that are highly skilled, yet it's a shared area. The federal policy would be, "No, you can't draw significantly from that pool." Or let's say Alberta, being sufficiently advanced, says: "We want to think strictly in terms of social impact. We want to draw from the pool of immigrants that are not educated, that need a place to come to for opportunity." The feds say, "No, you have to take from the business immigrant pool." I'm just tossing some examples. What do you do in a shared jurisdiction when the two are like this? Who holds the hammer?

2:22

MR. CHARLET: Well, I don't know who holds or who should hold the hammer. There again I guess it goes back to the fact that if we're going to be able to work together and stay as a united country and hopefully nobody's holding a hammer, we will learn to compromise and work things out together as opposed to coming to loggerheads.

MR. DAY: So when you're saying "shared," you would present it that way, shared, and not define it, and leave it to negotiation if it came to those difficulties?

MR. CHARLET: I'm not sure . . .

MR. DAY: In your shared jurisdictions you're saying nobody has the final say. Work it out. Compromise. Negotiate.

MR. CHARLET: I would hope that could work, and it may not. Like the example you're saying, if you want a particular sector of immigrants, you could very easily come to a noncompromising position. However, hopefully you would be able to work it out.

MR. DAY: I appreciate your response to these. We're not trying to give you questions we know the answers to. We don't, so we're saying, "Help us."

MR. CHARLET: Okay.

MR. DAY: Thanks very much.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Pearl.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A few questions relative to I think some of the questions that have already been asked, but I'd like to sort of follow through on some of them.

You mentioned a referendum done nationally that has to do with the Constitution. I think any time you do a referendum it's really very difficult to be able to get the kind of answers you require or at least some sort of direction as to what should be happening. One of the most difficult things I think is always in the questioning. Who would then be responsible for writing the questions which would be needed for any kind of referendum on a constitutional basis?

Just to follow through on that maybe. Should the provinces then be involved in question writing, should it be the lawyers, should it be the Members of Parliament, or should it be a particular group with administrative capabilities who should do that? I'm not sure who would be responsible for writing the questions in order for us to be able to get the information we require to get the Constitution in terms of what we want.

MR. CHARLET: Personally I would like to see it worked out with representatives from the federal and provincial governments, possibly with some lawyers involved. I'm not sure. I think you have to have an even cross section, because if you don't have that cross section, you're going to be asking a question here that has absolutely no relevance because it's directed towards somebody in Quebec or on the east coast or vice versa. You have to have a cross section, I guess, mainly of the people in politics who are making some of the decisions.

MS CALAHASEN: So you'd say, then, it should be the elected representatives who are on that particular question writing situation should there be a referendum of any sort.

MR. CHARLET: Yes, I think the elected officials would be best, because if I know it's happening and I have something I think is a strong question that should be asked, then I would in turn write a letter to my MLA and say, "This is something I would like to see asked."

MS CALAHASEN: Okay. That's a very difficult one I think in terms of any time you want referenda. It's always very difficult to determine who's going to be the writer of the questions, and that's the most difficult end.

The other question I wanted to ask was on the aboriginal issue situation. Should the aboriginal people be recognized as founding peoples like the French and the English? I think I asked this before, not with you, but I would like to know what your view is.

MR. CHARLET: As a founding people?

MS CALAHASEN: As a third founding people. Like we say the French were the founding nation, and the English were a

founding nation. What about the aboriginal peoples? Should they be recognized as a founding nation as well as the other two that we have?

MR. CHARLET: Not having any real background in it, I would think they should have, yes. They were here.

MS CALAHASEN: Okay. I know it's a difficult question, and I think we're just trying to clarify some of our own views in terms of how we represent the different issues that we have to bring out.

The other question following on that is: if the aboriginal peoples are recognized as founding peoples or a founding nation, regarding national bilingualism, how do we include the native people's languages within the particular multilingualism, if you want to call it that, or how would you propose that could be done? I know you've discussed the bilingualism aspect in terms of French and English.

MR. CHARLET: Right. I think that's a really difficult situation to be in. My parents are originally from Belgium, and I had the opportunity to go over there and visit. It's a very small country, but it seems like every three or four miles you go is a completely different dialect, and it's very difficult to understand people 10 miles down the road. Unfortunately, I think a lot of the natives have the same, the different dialects or different languages, the Cree, the Chip. That causes some major problems that way. So if there could be a common ground found, I don't know. Maybe English or French is a common ground that can be worked with. Maybe there is a third language that could be considered. I don't know.

MS CALAHASEN: Regarding national bilingualism, the jurisdiction. I think it was addressed by one of my other colleagues in terms of who should determine what languages should be spoken nationally. Should it be the federal government who has sole jurisdiction, or should there be that shared responsibility in terms of which language should be recognized within the provinces, or how do you feel it should be done?

MR. CHARLET: In a provincial . . .

MS CALAHASEN: Provincial as well as the federal, in terms of even the way the languages are. I think they brought it out. In the west there's really not that much French. In the east there is a lot of French. Should it be done nationally in terms of saying everybody should speak French and English, and then people who are not French-speaking in the western end of the world should have to speak French or learn French in order for them to access jobs of that nature? Should that responsibility be on the federal scene, should it be on the provincial scene, or should it be a shared responsibility?

MR. CHARLET: I think I've basically stated that it would be shared in the fact that on a federal level the French and English are there and should be there as bilingualism. The provinces themselves could come up with their own . . .

MS CALAHASEN: Regional.

MR. CHARLET: Yes, basically.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: John, followed by Sheldon.

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Charlet. On the point of bilingualism: are you aware that the people in Quebec never really demanded the type of bilingualism that Stockwell Day's talking about? I don't think it was really important to people in Quebec that somebody in the Sylvan Lake RCMP detachment say "Bonjour" when they picked up the phone, that in fact that was done by some federal politicians from Quebec, as the coalition was at the time. They felt that was a way to deny the uniqueness and I suppose, even though the word's ambiguous, the nationality of people in Quebec.

I've been thinking a bit about the nation of Switzerland where they have not two but three official languages, but they tend to operate within each of the areas geographically. There's a French zone, a German zone, and an Italian zone. Now, thinking of our situation, do you think that's a model we might look at in terms of how we apply bilingualism in the future, rather than trying to extend French services everywhere across the country, to try and do a better job at it where there are French-speaking people, as in Quebec?

MR. CHARLET: I don't think there should be any concern from anyone as far as having a look at that as an option. I think all options at this point in time should be looked at and all our bases should be covered so to speak.

2:32

MR. McINNIS: Fair enough. If I could just switch ground a little bit, I'd like to ask about, I suppose, what makes us Canadian. It seems to me that in the last seven or eight years the federal government has wanted to move away from being involved in traditional areas of provincial jurisdiction such as education and, in particular, health care, a sort of dismantling of some of the national programs. Disentanglement, I think, is the term that's used. Do you feel - I'm just trying to extrapolate the Legion's position - that it might be better for us as a country in terms of identifying as Canadians if we had more national objectives or more, I suppose, programs that all of us as a country would attempt to get behind?

MR. CHARLET: I'm not sure I understand the question.

MR. McINNIS: Well, perhaps I can give you one example: the idea of, say, a national standard in education, or national goals, where we want to achieve certain things, say a certain percentage of high school graduation, a certain competence in science or in mathematics, and perhaps even a national achievement standard such as you would have to achieve in order to obtain a high school diploma.

MR. CHARLET: There are certain areas where I would think an overall goal would be a positive way of having some follow-up. Right now I have a foster son who just graduated on the weekend. He was looking at going to the University of Waterloo in Ontario, and before he can go there, he has to do his first year at Keyano because some of the grades that he has aren't, in their eyes, high enough, because Ontario has a grade 13. Now, I think Newfoundland has or used to have only as far as grade 11. Maybe whether it's to grade 11 or grade 13, there should be some sort of uniformity there for the good of the students who do want to go on to universities and colleges in some other province.

MR. McINNIS: If we had that uniformity and the ability to bring your qualifications from one province to another, do you think that would help us identify more as Canadians?

MR. CHARLET: It sure couldn't hurt.

MR. McINNIS: Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Sheldon.

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you. In light of your support of guarantees for individual freedom and minority rights, is it fair to say that you're by and large supportive of an entrenched Charter of Rights? I think you heard our discussion with Pastor Cotton with respect to the notwithstanding clause, the provision that allows provinces and indeed the federal government to override the Charter in certain instances as opposed to the alternative of leaving the courts have the final word. Do you have a personal instinct or position with respect to whether or not we should have that notwithstanding override?

MR. CHARLET: Not knowing it well enough, I wouldn't really want to comment.

MR. CHUMIR: Okay. I want to ask a wild-card type of question here. Aside from congratulating the Calgary Flames supporter, it makes me feel right at home. We had a suggestion from an individual in our Calgary hearings over the weekend that perhaps for the sake of administrative convenience we should amalgamate the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba into one large province. As a transplanted Albertan, I'm just wondering whether you have any instinctive feel as to how that would appeal to yourself and how it would appeal to other Albertans.

MR. CHARLET: Well, I've worked with a lot of people from a lot of different provinces. I've mentioned a couple of times here already that I'm originally from Ontario, but I'm an Albertan right now, and I kind of like it that way. I guess first and foremost I'm a Canadian, then I'm an Albertan, and I don't think I would want to see that change.

MR. CHUMIR: You've talked about a united Canada, and we've also heard some suggestions with respect to the division of powers which indicate you want to have a pretty strong federal government with a lot of muscle, with which I happen to agree. Quebec is arguing for a different type of Canada with most of the powers, significant powers, in the hands of the provincial government. How far, in general, should we go? This is a very difficult question, but I'd just like some kind of instinctive feel from you. How far do we go in the direction of accommodating Quebec in order to keep them in if we're faced with this tough position of decentralizing to an extent which would weaken Canada? Either it wouldn't be strong on one hand or we wouldn't be united on the other.

MR. CHARLET: Well, I think there has to be a lot of room for compromise. Unfortunately, I believe that at this point in time the Canadian public is to a certain degree misinformed about what's really happening. There are a lot of people in Quebec who think Albertans and western Canadians absolutely hate them, and there are a lot of people here who think Quebecers hate us. Unfortunately, that's been blown out of proportion by the media, and it's to a point where a lot of

people don't really know what people here or there feel. I just started this morning to attempt to put the wheels in motion to contact a Legion branch in some city in Quebec of approximately the same size as this one and try to work on an exchange program of possibly some of the political leaders and the city leaders as well as some students. Maybe we can learn that we're all pretty well the same people, and we're all Canadians. Hopefully we can pull together by doing something like that.

MR. CHUMIR: Great idea. Let me endorse that.
Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Dennis.

MR. ANDERSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ron, today we've pretty well asked you to solve all the problems of the country, so I'll continue with that since you seem to have a few of the solutions. Before getting to a couple of the more macroquestions, though, in dealing with the division of powers question - which Mr. Chumir and I seem to get into in most of these presentations - I heard you say, as well, that you believed in a strong federal government in certain areas, in terms of defence, in terms of the economy, and so on. I also heard the other side, though, in which I thought you felt there should be strong provincial powers to deal with those areas that the province should deal with as the government closer to the people. Is that an accurate description of your feelings? Is there that belief that there need to be strong provincial powers as well as some of those federal ties?

MR. CHARLET: Oh, yes. In order to have a strong whole, we have to have strong parts. The stronger the parts, the stronger the whole.

MR. ANDERSON: Do you see Canada as that, as the stronger parts making up that strong country? Or do you feel, as some do, that that can only happen if there is a central government which has more control over those individual entities?

MR. CHARLET: I guess it's where the divisions lie. The federal government has to be strong in its areas as well as the provincial government. If we can get the support and the co-operation of working together even province to province, let alone province to federal, we'll be better off.

MR. ANDERSON: So that's where you'd put the emphasis: on the co-operation between the provinces.

MR. CHARLET: Absolutely.

MR. ANDERSON: Thank you. In terms of having you solve some of the more major problems, are you pleased generally with the political system that we have - in other words, how we operate as a party system, the adversarial style of government, the British style - or should we be considering radical changes to how we govern ourselves as we look at the overall constitutional needs of the country?

MR. CHARLET: I think we can look at changes. I don't know if I would want to use the term "radical" changes. I think if you go that strong, then you're probably going to scare a lot of people more than anything else, and if you do that, it's not going to be beneficial either.

MR. ANDERSON: Anything offhand that you would advise us to look at as far as changes to the political structure go?

MR. CHARLET: No.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Day advises that he has a short supplemental.

2-42

MR. DAY: Just very briefly. I think Mr. Anderson may have clarified it, but I want to hear it for sure. Mr. Chumir being a lawyer has a natural, well-developed tendency to lead a witness. He casually tossed out there: so you believe like I do in a strong central government with lots of muscle. Correct me. I thought I heard you say some areas of federal jurisdiction, some of provincial, and some shared. Is that your . . .

MR. CHARLET: Yes.

MR. DAY: Okay, thanks. I just wanted to clarify that.

MR. CHUMIR: Did you agree with the strong federal government with lots of powers in certain areas?

MR. CHARLET: In certain areas they have to be strong, as do the provincial governments.

MR. McINNIS: Is muscle a federal or a provincial responsibility?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: If there are no further questions, thank you very much, Ron. We certainly appreciate the effort you've made to give us a very good presentation.

MR. CHARLET: Thank you very much.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Chair would advise that the mayor of the city of Fort McMurray has arrived, and we would like to recognize Her Worship Betty Collicott. Thank you very much for visiting us this afternoon. If you'd like to say something a little later?

We have an unscheduled presenter that we should call on now, and that is Frances Jean. Welcome. Nice to have you with us.

MRS. JEAN: I don't have a well-prepared brief.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You'll speak from the heart.

MRS. JEAN: That's right.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: That's good.

MRS. JEAN: I didn't think I should let this visit to our city go by without saying some of the things that I feel are important to myself as a Canadian. I'm not representing anybody except myself. We own a family business in Fort McMurray, and that's about all the background you need, I think, to judge what I have to say. I made a few notes.

I would like to see a united Canada: a union of provinces all with the same privileges, the same responsibilities, and the same conditions. I would like to see Quebec stay in Canada but not at the expense of the rest of the provinces. We should have

strict equality among all parts of the Confederation, whether Quebec, the native population, or new immigrants.

As for the French language question, this language should be respected and used in all areas where it is spoken in homes as a first language, but the government should stop spending so much money trying to infiltrate and enforce French into areas where English is basically the only language spoken. By taking emphasis off promoting the French language, we will cease to generate so much animosity amongst many Canadians, and as well we'll help reduce expenditures.

The debt of this country is very detrimental to all of us now, and it will become even more so in the future. Government should stop funding special-interest groups, including women's groups, cultural sections, and they should also stop subsidizing business interests.

Over the next decades immigration will probably increase dramatically. These immigrants should be welcomed to our country and should be willing to make a commitment to their new country. Let them retain their customs and cultures as they wish but not with government funding. Rather than the government encouraging pockets of different cultures within the country, let each retain what they wish. In the process of assimilation, the total culture of our country may change, and hopefully we'll pick up the best traits from many countries. Then we will have a truly Canadian culture, not a mishmash of many imported and sometimes irrelevant customs which we as taxpayers pay for.

For the protection of western and eastern provinces, we need the balance of a Senate such as the triple E Senate which is proposed, and I think this is very important to keep a united country.

Throughout my life I've been proud of our Canada. Now as I am getting towards the end of my life, I'm afraid for my country. It's not just the question of separation, but we're letting down our moral principles. As well, our country has a horrendous debt. Unless all of us, government, business, and individuals, conquer that debt and pursue the moral and ethical standards that built our great country, there is little hope for the country or for us, its people.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mrs. Jean. Dennis.

MR. ANDERSON: Yes, thank you. I think it was very well put and your points very well made. Just a bit of clarification. You mentioned doing away with subsidies on businesses and on cultural activity. Do you feel that should be an absolute? In other words, if there's a need to have shares in a tar sands plant in Fort McMurray, should the government not be involved in any way in that? Or if there is a cultural industry which can attract dollars and jobs to a given area, a tourist area in some part of Alberta, should we not be considering that?

MRS. JEAN: I was afraid you'd ask me that question. I think the government has got to look at it as a business proposal. If in the long run it is going to make money for the people of the area, for the taxpayers, then it certainly should be considered, but just to be putting money to subsidizing business, small business or big business, I think that's totally wrong.

MR. ANDERSON: Fair enough.

MR. CHUMIR: Mrs. Jean, one of your suggestions was that

immigrants should be able to retain their culture but not with government funding. One of the means by which groups from time to time request government assistance is with different ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious schools where they will be able to maintain their culture. Would that be something you think should be supported by public funding, or is that something that should again come within your general principle of individual groups looking after themselves with our funding going to the more traditional types of schooling?

MRS. JEAN: No, I don't think the taxpayers of Canada should fund that sort of thing. I do think that if they want that for their children, they should be prepared to pay for it.

MR. CHUMIR: Okay. One of the fundamental questions we've been dealing with and I've been asking all presenters relates to attitudes towards a strong central government versus decentralization. I'm wondering, in respect of issues like medicare and social services, whether you feel that there should be, as now, minimum federal standards for all Canadians across the country, or whether you think we should be looking at moving in a direction of the provinces taking over more and more of these powers, taking them away from the federal government? Do you have a general feeling with respect to divisions?

MRS. JEAN: I haven't considered that. No, I'm sorry, I don't really have an answer.

MR. CHUMIR: Could I ask maybe something? The previous speaker indicated that he considered himself to be Canadian first and Albertan second. Would that be your sense, or would you consider yourself an Albertan first and a Canadian second?

MRS. JEAN: Probably Canadian first but certainly very strongly Albertan. I am sorry to see the way we have been treated in subsidizing the rest of Canada moneywise over the years. I think we need to be a little bit stronger for ourselves so that we are treated as an equal partner with the rest of the provinces.

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you.

MR. DAY: You mentioned, Frances, some concern with how the policy on French language is enacted around the country. Am I interpreting, then, that you feel there should be provincial jurisdiction in some areas?

MRS. JEAN: Definitely. It's absolutely ridiculous that when I phone the RCMP or Canada employment, the girl answers "Bonjour." She doesn't speak a word more of French than I do. It's a ridiculous gesture. In an area where English is the first language, we should not be wasting our money by putting the education and everything else that we are doing in order to — even the amount of paperwork I get where it's partly English and partly French. You know, half of it's thrown away. It doesn't mean a thing to me. That's a total waste of taxpayers' money. The government should be trying to run like a business, and that certainly isn't businesslike.

2:52

MR. DAY: If I could just add that you mentioned that you're now near the end of your days. Well, unless you're expecting to get hit by a truck when you walk out of here, you don't look to me like you're anywhere near the end of your days.

MRS. JEAN: I feel like it some days. Maybe I'm just looking at retirement down the road.

MR. DAY: Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. McInnis.

MR. McINNIS: Thank you. Mrs. Jean, I was interested in your comments about subsidies of business operations – business interests, I think, was the term you used – from various levels of government. I wonder if you would agree with me that that tends to arise because you have politicians who are anxious to get economic projects under way and that they see it as kind of a quick and an easy way to make things happen just by providing a bunch of taxpayers' dollars to do it?

MRS. JEAN: It might be. We also see these subsidies often just before an election. One area where I personally think it's wrong is – not so much now that this funding has been taken out. In place they're putting in funding for education, which is probably important. But in the past in Fort McMurray, and I'm sure in many other Alberta cities, when people wanted to hire someone, they looked through a program to find some government subsidies so they could train that person. I know of many people who worked in an area for their training days and then were let go and somebody else was hired to be trained. When we need to hire somebody in our business, we hire them because we need them and can pay them ourselves rather than having government subsidize us.

MR. McINNIS: One of the other presenters at a hearing a few days ago suggested that aside from what's happening in the province of Quebec, which is admittedly different, some of the people who are pushing the hardest for more provincial powers are business interests who are seeking to negotiate for more subsidies and also on wage rates and labour issues. Do you have a perception along those lines or not?

MRS. JEAN: No, I'm sorry; I don't have a comment.

MR. McINNIS: Okay, thanks.

MR. CHIVERS: Mrs. Jean, many Canadians and many Albertans have been expressing concerns about environmental matters. Many of the people that have come before our committee in Calgary made representations with respect to those issues, and there was a feeling expressed that there should be some constitutional entrenchment of values protecting the environment. I'd just like to quote for you one of the suggestions: consistent with principles of sustainable development, each person in Canada has the right to clean air, pure water, productive soils, healthy fish and wildlife, and to the conservation of the unique, scenic, historic, recreational, esthetic, and economic values of these and Canada's other natural resources. Now, there's more to that proposal, but basically the idea was the constitutional entrenchment of a value to protect the environment based on a concept of sustainable development; that is, development that is compatible both with the need for jobs and the protection of the environment. Could you tell us what your feelings are with respect to that issue?

MRS. JEAN: I think it's very important, but I think you often see groups going overboard on certain issues. I think there has

to be a definite balance between the economy and the environmentalists.

MR. CHIVERS: Yeah, that was basically what this presenter was suggesting, and he used the term "sustainable development" in order to balance those competing interests between jobs and the economy and the environment. He was suggesting there should be a constitutional protection of that right, and what I was wondering is whether you agreed, not getting into the debate of how you draw that balance but whether you felt there should be some sort of constitutional protection in that area.

MRS. JEAN: Well, I'm not sure about the constitutional protection, but I think we have to use common sense when we're dealing with the environment like we do with everything. There's no sense in protecting something where there are no people or when that sort of thing could be used to provide jobs, to provide sources of income. As long as we don't waste our resources, I think we have to be very careful to maintain a balance. I think people have to come before the environment. People should be first.

MR. CHIVERS: Thank you.

MS CALAHASEN: I'm sort of holding my breath, but just one question. You said a strong Canada. I think there was a question relative to what we should be: Albertans first or Canadians first? You brought out the strong Canada and equality in terms of Quebec, the native people, and new immigrants. How would you clarify the equality basis, particularly with native peoples? When we're looking at native peoples not being presently in the equality situation, how would we bring them so they are equal in a Constitution? How would we involve them in the constitutional talks?

MRS. JEAN: Over the years a lot of wiser people than I haven't had that answer, but I think by treating everyone equally. It may not come in my generation and your generation, but everyone should be on an equal basis without special status for certain people. If we're all Canadians and we're all treated equally – I may be wrong – I would think then that we may achieve the proper balance we're looking for.

MS CALAHASEN: So in that sense the aboriginal rights would not be included for the aboriginal peoples?

MRS. JEAN: What aboriginal rights are you talking about?

MS CALAHASEN: Like the trapping issue, the fishing, the hunting, the educational component which they now have in a treaty.

MRS. JEAN: Well, those treaty rights are in law, are they not?

MS CALAHASEN: Yes.

MRS. JEAN: So that's not something that we're about to take away, I would say.

MS CALAHASEN: It's a tough one.

MRS. JEAN: It's a very, very difficult one. I've done a lot of searching of my own mind on it, and I'm not just sure how it can be dealt with. I do think that the sooner they get into the

mainstream of the rest of the country, whether they're immigrants, French-speaking or English-speaking people – and you see this with these people. The ones who have become modernized are in the mainstream of the rest of the community, and they are much more successful and much happier. Not to say that they shouldn't be trapping and hunting. You know, that's a wonderful life-style, but very, very few of them pursue it or are making a living at it right now. Most of the ones who are doing that are generally government funded.

MS CALAHASEN: So no entrenchment of aboriginal rights in that sense then?

MRS. JEAN: Are you talking about making a third nation?

MS CALAHASEN: I'm not sure. I'm just trying to find out what your views are in terms of should we have the entrenchment so that constitutional rights of aboriginal peoples are in, or should it be dealt with in another way? Should there be powers delegated to them in a different manner, and if so, in what kind of a manner would we do it? Those are the kinds of questions I'm trying to get some sort of a feeling on from people generally.

MRS. JEAN: I think you asked Ron about whether they should be as one of the founding nations. Yes, probably they should be considered as one of the founding nations because they were here and they were a founding nation, but then I think we all should be treated equally.

MS CALAHASEN: Okay. Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Weiss.

MR. WEISS: Well, thank you Mr. Chairman. I felt I must respond to an exchange that had occurred with Mr. McInnis and Mrs. Jean. But I would comment that it's unfortunate the members are not aware of the makeup of the individual people who make the presentations and briefs, because I'm sure Ms Calahasen would have found it very interesting to know that Mrs. Jean's background and family are very much involved with trapping, having been trappers for years and part of this community. So it's not that they don't speak from some background, and I can assure you of that.

I just wanted to comment, though, that the words were in relation to business investment and subsidy, and I'd like to refer to her that there is a vast difference. In a major investment I believe government has a role and can act as catalyst. This community is an exact example of that, as an area of resource, and with regards to the technology, it never would have been developed unless government played a role in the development that the private sector couldn't do alone. I want to indicate that, because Mrs. Jean did say clearly, and emphasized, a return to the taxpayer. I think that's the quantifier or the clarifying point that I make.

I believe as well and endorse that there is a difference between a subsidy and an investment portfolio in the area of royalties and taxation benefits that we derive. All of Alberta, not just Fort McMurray, enjoys a specific quality of life-style and way of life and reduced taxation. Even though we in the city of Fort McMurray complain of our taxation, it still would be much higher if it hadn't been for the result of the overall investments in Syncrude and Suncor. So I wanted to clarify that, because there may be some misinterpretation as to should government

be involved in the development of such areas as technology and resources.

Thanks very much for the opportunity.

3:02

MRS. JEAN: Thanks, Norm. You said that just the way I would have liked to have. Thank you.

MR. CHIVERS: Mr. Chairman, do we get to ask Mr. Weiss some questions?

MR. WEISS: Mine were comments as an observer.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Has that led to further supplementals? If not, Mrs. Jean, on behalf of the committee we'd like to express our appreciation for your very clearly expressed opinion on the future of our country.

MRS. JEAN: Thank you for listening.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Chair has received notice that there is somebody who'd like to ask the committee a question. [interjection] Yes, please do. [interjection] Well, either one. You're quite welcome at the table. We may as well be friendly here. I guess just for the purpose of the record we should ask for your identification.

MRS. JOHNSON: My name's Mary Johnson, and I come as a private citizen as well.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Well, thank you.

MRS. JOHNSON: I would like to respond to a question that's asked within the circulated document, Alberta in a New Canada. It's in reference to the issue under bilingualism. The question asks:

Should the Constitution clarify what it means by sufficient numbers to warrant public funding of minority language instruction, or should this be left to governments and the courts to address on a case by case basis?

I would just like to indicate that my experience with the impact of these unanswered questions would support that the Constitution qualify "sufficient numbers" or "where numbers warrant" prior to expenditure of public dollars.

I also feel that limited access to Francophone programs, which ties in with this issue, is a violation of an individual's rights. If we leave these statements unqualified, it allows for inequality in relation to educational allotments to occur at a time when many government agencies are having to be creative in relation to finding alternate ways of delivering services with decreased dollars. How can we leave this loophole open, where dollars can be expended on a child at two to three times a higher rate than my child would receive within the educational system? As Mr. Cotton indicated earlier, I think clearer clarification removes the ambiguity in relation to some of these issues. I think when we're talking equality, this is clearly an issue where we have to have an answer.

You indicated earlier that 10 percent of the population of children are in French immersion classes. I think I would like to ask back to you: why are they in French immersion classes? Is it because of future job opportunities, job security? Is it a message we're receiving from the federal government that in order to be eligible for certain job criteria, you must have two languages; that in order to move to Quebec or certain parts of

Ontario, you must be able to speak both languages? That's my question.

MR. CHIVERS: Do I get a chance to answer questions, Mr. Chairman?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. CHIVERS: I think the participation of Canadians in French language immersion courses far exceeds the availability of jobs in the public sector. In fact, I think the total number of French-speaking positions all across Canada, and that includes New Brunswick, where it's a constitutional requirement for bilingualism on the provincial level, is something like . . . John, do you remember the figures? Is it 60,000?

MR. McINNIS: Something like that.

MR. CHIVERS: Yeah. It's a very small number of individuals. So I think there's a much wider interest in French as a second language than simply on the basis that in some situations you require that to obtain a job.

MRS. JOHNSON: You don't think it has anything to do with the fact that because there are two official languages, if we acknowledge the other requests that are coming from Quebec as a province, throughout the rest of Canada we'll all eventually have to have French as a second language for job security?

MR. CHIVERS: That certainly hasn't been the trend since bilingualism was introduced in 1969, over 20 years.

MR. CHUMIR: Well, this is a related question re schooling. Mrs. Jean, as you may have heard, expressed the opinion that individual ethnic groups, cultural groups desiring their own form of schooling should pay for it themselves. This raises the issue of funding of private schools and things of that nature. I'm wondering whether you have a view on that.

MRS. JOHNSON: I support what Mrs. Jean has indicated: that if a culture specifically wants to preserve their culture, then they should have the funds to support that. I don't think necessarily a language itself is a culture. If Canada has indicated that its two official languages – not cultures, but its two official languages – are French and English, then should we have to incur the cost to a small number, or where significant numbers warrant, of students in relation to the cost?

MR. CHUMIR: I'm referring to something other than the French situation, because that is something that has historical arguments. I'm referring to other groups – ethnic groups, religions – wishing to have their own schools seeking public funding and saying: "We want to advance our culture and our heritage and our religion. Therefore, we should get public funding." What would your answer be to that?

MRS. JOHNSON: My answer would be no. I think we as Canadian citizens have to stop at some point and recognize that certainly there are difficult cultures and they have the right to live their cultures, but within their own cost containment.

MR. CHUMIR: Would that relate to religions as well?

MRS. JOHNSON: Yes, I would say so.

MS BETKOWSKI: Well, as a former Education minister I have to get into section 23 with you. I appreciate you raising the issue. The issue of defining "where numbers warrant" has been one that's caused a lot of interest and concern, frankly. I guess the other side of the issue is that if you define a single number, even if it's one, then you are compelled to do something as opposed to what I think is more workable under section 23, given that it exists at this moment, and that is the concept of a sliding scale. If you've got this many numbers, it warrants a classroom, and this many, it warrants a school or a separate facility.

When we talk about the issue of portability, and you've heard a little bit of the discussion here today about being able to move from province to province, do you think that you as an English parent, if for whatever circumstance you move to Quebec, should have the right to have your children educated in English there?

MRS. JOHNSON: First of all, I think I should probably clarify that both my children are in French immersion.

MS BETKOWSKI: That's okay. Good; I'm glad. They're part of the 30 percent, actually, in Alberta that are kids in French education.

MRS. JOHNSON: I think we have to look at not just the question of would I want them educated in English. I think I would look at the question of what is to their best interest given the population base, given the longevity of the time I was going to be within the district. If they were having English taught at home and I felt that their English base for education was sufficient and that my husband and I could continue to enhance and support it, then I would probably say that it is to their enhancement, their job opportunities, and their future to have the second language, to have the fluency and the competency in it. So I don't know which choice I would make at this time. I would have to look at the situation.

MS BETKOWSKI: But what it sounds like you're saying is that given the linguistic environment in which they exist, people should have the choice; more an issue of choice as opposed to something imposed.

MRS. JOHNSON: Definitely. Imposing I don't believe works. I think there should be the choice, but I don't think it should be at the expense of all taxpayers that small numbers are allowed to have educational opportunities at the rest of the taxpayers' expense when there are so many other issues in relation to education that need to be addressed first.

MS BETKOWSKI: Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: John.

3:12

MR. McINNIS: I should perhaps indicate that I have three children in French immersion as well, so there's a lot of it going around.

In Edmonton school systems we also have a Chinese school now; we have an Arab school; we have a Ukrainian school. I don't know if there's any other linguistic programs that are offered. Now, there's no explicit funding for that from the Education department or from the federal government that I'm aware of. It's the local school boards responding in the way they see best to the pressures that are on them. They get pressure

from the Ukrainian community, the Chinese community. There's also a Jewish school within the system as well. But in order to do that, they have to stretch the cloth somehow to make it fit, and it seems to me the way they've done that is to close some of the smaller schools and leave some neighbourhoods without schools in order to accommodate that. I've heard you and Mrs. Jean both indicate that we shouldn't be funding that kind of linguistic program at the taxpayers' expense, but this is unclear: you do support French immersion funding through the school system?

MRS. JOHNSON: I support it from the perspective that I feel I've been told by the federal government that I must learn French; therefore, if I'm told or if I have the perception that I'm being told that I must learn French, then they must provide me with the opportunity.

MR. McINNIS: That's interesting, because I don't have the perception that anybody's told me or my kids to learn French. I just found that in my lifetime the meetings, the places I've gone in my country where I felt handicapped by not being able to communicate as effectively as I would like to in French - I feel giving my kids that opportunity to be able to communicate effectively is sort of a gift to them. But I don't see that anybody's told me or anybody else that I've got to learn French.

MRS. JOHNSON: Then I guess that comes down to perceptions and where you've lived in the country and what you've been exposed to in relation to job opportunities. Certainly, yes, it is to everyone's advantage to have that second language, but my perception is that the government is promoting bilingualism.

MR. McINNIS: So if we fast-forward and let's just say for the sake of argument that Quebec separates from Canada, would you want to withdraw your kids from French immersion? Would you want that program terminated?

MRS. JOHNSON: I think if separation occurred, we would have to stop and wait to see what happened with the French population across our nation. Would they choose to polarize to the separated country, that being removing themselves to Quebec, therefore leaving the rest of Canada or what remains of Canada as not requiring French? Okay? I think we have to look at that issue as well.

No, I don't think I would discourage my children from continuing in French education. First of all, it's advantageous to have the languages. Secondly, who's to say that they won't have future encounters with Quebec for job opportunities, for education? I don't know. I would not take that opportunity away from them, but I think we'd have to wait and see what the rest of the nation would say. Do they want to continue expending dollars when Quebec has chosen to separate?

MR. McINNIS: Okay. Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Stockwell.

MR. DAY: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Mary, you've turned the tables on us. You said you've got a question for us, and you've put us all on the spot. That was a neat move. We had one respondent initially, being Mr. Chivers, and just so you don't feel that he is speaking for the whole committee, nor Mr. McInnis, I can assure you I have heard from parents who share the perception that you have voiced here. They feel that because of

the federal policy on bilingualism, their kids applying for a federal civil service job in Alberta would be at a distinct disadvantage were they not equipped in French. So though they might be opposed in principle to dollars favouring instruction in a person's language, of necessity they have indicated to me that they feel compelled to follow that. So I share that in answer to your question to us as a committee.

Keeping that in mind, then, because that is a federal policy, in general terms would you be a supporter of, for lack of a better term, a strong central government, as we've heard around the table here, with lots of muscle? Or would you favour a government setup where some jurisdiction is provincial, some federal, some negotiated?

MRS. JOHNSON: Personally, I would look at the scenario of a shared federal/provincial. We know that to operate autonomously does not always work. We have to have the opportunity to communicate as to needs and to pull our networks together when need be for the best of the country also.

MR. DAY: Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Barrie.

MR. CHIVERS: Mr. Chairman, I'll be very brief. I've just checked some notes with respect to the statistics on jobs in the federal civil service. Outside of Quebec and the capital region there are between 1 and 3 percent, depending on the region, of the jobs that are bilingual. That in real numbers amounts to 8,000 federal civil service jobs outside of Quebec and the capital region in Ottawa. So it isn't a large proportion of positions. Even the federal service are . . .

MRS. JOHNSON: Are you referring to jobs that are mandated for people to be bilingual?

MR. CHIVERS: Yes, that are required as bilingual positions.

MRS. JOHNSON: But then are you looking at the fallout of that issue as well?

MR. CHIVERS: I appreciate what you're saying: that people feel compelled, such as you're expressing, to educate their children in French because of that concern. But I'm saying in real terms . . .

MRS. JOHNSON: Well, I don't know if it's an issue of feeling compelled. I'm also talking real terms, because I'm from Ontario originally also, but I am now an Albertan and proud to say that. But I think you have to look at the fallout, okay, where people . . . It's not their perception; it's a reality that when they go for job applications, if they are not bilingual, then they are not even considered for the job opportunities. And that's not at a federal level; that's at a civil level, that's at a private business level, because these people in turn are having to serve the public, and the public within the Ottawa region, the Quebec region, come in and you don't know whether they're going to be speaking French or English.

MR. CHIVERS: In that area that's certainly true, but certainly not in Alberta.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you very, very much, Mary.

Would Her Worship Mayor Collicott be willing to join us at the table? Because if you are, you're more than welcome. Thank you.

MRS. COLLICOTT: Hon. members, I thank you for the opportunity to come, and I must apologize, Mr. Chairman, for being a little late. We had the FCSS review panel here, so I spent the morning with them touring around and showing them Fort McMurray. I guess I come before this committee today as a private individual as opposed to speaking on behalf of council or even attempting to speak on behalf of the 34,000 people in the city of Fort McMurray. I'm sure that all of us have different opinions.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Nevertheless, because of your position you have a wide contact with a great number of people and have a little sense of the feelings of the community.

MRS. COLLICOTT: I do. Yes. Those are the kind of thoughts that I want to share with you today. First of all, from a very personal perspective I would say to you all that I am most concerned about the direction that our country is taking, or perhaps a better description would be a lack of direction. Right now I think that as a Canadian I feel very confused. Right now as a Canadian my heart bleeds every time I hear a statement made that Quebec may well be separating from the rest of Canada or that the rest of Canada in fact wishes for Quebec to leave, certainly not the case for me as an individual.

It pains me a great deal when I hear my Quebec counterparts, my French-speaking Quebec counterparts particularly, tell me at meetings of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities or other municipal types of meetings that we in the west don't want them. How many times in the last 18 months I have myself, personally, told them that that's not true. It's certainly not true from my perspective, though there might be a few individuals that feel that way, and I try to diffuse that kind of a feeling that eastern or particularly Quebec people are not welcome to visit in the west or don't feel comfortable or whatever.

I guess looking at it from Fort McMurray's perspective, I would say that maybe we're very fortunate here as a community. We come from all over Canada. We come from all over the world. We're a relatively young, youthful population. Our average age is 27. Maybe we look at things a little differently. Maybe because of the fact that 33 and a third percent of our 34,000 people are under the age of 17, that means a whole lot of different things to us than it means to the other people. Maybe we also take a look at the precious resource of the seniors that we have in this community, since we only have 258 of them, and look at them as being our advisers and certainly our elders in terms of telling us how they feel about things. I guess like other leaders, yourselves included, all of us at council level, and certainly in municipal government, work very hard, diligently, and conscientiously to try to hear and try to understand what those people in our communities are telling us.

3:22

One of the things that I'd like to share with you today is an idea I have. It's not radical, although you might consider it radical; I don't know. I really believe that both a strong federal government and a decentralized government are not only possible but are desirable, and in fact we have parts of those systems already in place. I think what we need to do with parts of that system is to build on it to create an even better and stronger Canada as a whole. I think the concept of regionaliza-

tion, as we've sort of loosely been bantering the term around for a large number of years, probably flows naturally out of this concept that I have. But I believe that sufficient power and control can be delegated to the provincial and, even further, to the regional levels, which would allow the accommodation of both regional interests and priorities. I try not to look at this from a partisan political perspective. I try to look at it as a Canadian citizen sitting here, one individual looking at how my government works, whichever level that is. I find that often the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing, and sometimes the fingers on the left hand don't know what the left hand is doing. We have not only duplication of effort, but we have sometimes a lot of spinning of the wheels, and we have a lot of our precious and shrinking resources actually disappearing because we're not paying attention.

You know, modern corporate management theory – and I think we're all familiar with that, because most of us try to work towards our governments being actual corporations, businesses, that work – recognizes the need for grass-roots commitment, recognizes it for grass-roots involvement, for communication, and, lastly but not leastly, for empowerment. It's up to us to empower that grass-roots group if we're going to achieve the objectives of good government, and it really doesn't matter which level we're working at.

Responsibility and decision-making should in my opinion be kept at the lowest practical level, but this would also include adhering to the standards and objectives laid out by the top levels of that management. I look at our federal government, in terms of corporate terminology, as being the board of directors. They're the ones that would actually give the direction, the goals and objectives to the rest of the communities I guess is the best way to describe it. The Senate is where I really believe that this board of directors concept would emerge. The Senate would ideally consist of persons of unimpeachable integrity, and they would in fact be the guardians of the heart of Canada. They would be the ones that would show, in terms of objectives, what direction to go in.

In decentralizing this whole thing, while keeping the fact that a strong federal government is still possible and is still very much within reach, when we delegate down to the lowest practical level, these responsibilities and the accountabilities as well as the resources should go with the delegation. In other words, we can't keep pushing to that level without giving or giving up some of the resources that we would normally have. I'm coming from the perspective that the grass-roots level is what pays the taxes now. They're already voting at that level, and therefore that kind of responsibility already rests with the lowest possible level.

Some of the cases where you see strong federal government exist with regional components are such areas as the justice system – it works very well – where the standards are set at the federal level after extensive dialogue with the provinces and then passed down to the provinces and then eventually to the municipal portions wherever that is acceptable. In the judicial system the provinces are free to set additional standards and priorities to meet the individual needs of that particular area, but they first must adhere to the federal standard. That's a good example of how this strong federal government with regional priorities could also work. Health care is another one of those areas that seems to work fairly well, with provinces passing funds down to local hospital boards for administration, and then the hospital boards are free to set their own priorities and objectives as long as they are in compliance with both the federal and provincial standards.

Areas where I feel the federal standards should still exist are in some of the areas that I've just mentioned, medical care and justice, but I'd like to suggest to you that we add environmental protection in that category. I suggest to you that we add education, as with the transient nature of our Canadian population, movement from one province to another is a norm these days and not something that just occurs once in a while. Education to me means not only regular schooling but universities and colleges and trades and professions and job training of all kinds. Federally we should also have human and civil rights as part of theirs; perhaps some welfare, unemployment, and social programming directions, and transportation. Of course, national defence is the most natural one.

There are, however, so many opportunities to work together in a collaborative, co-operative way, and I think that's the message that I would give or I would certainly like to bring forward to you. As the power and responsibility in government is diffused downwards, I think you'll see the governmental hierarchies flatten that we know today as pyramid types of structures. I think with that flattening you'd find the productivity of the civil service improving, perhaps government spending being easier to control, and that the administrative power would not rest only with the bureaucrats in Ottawa.

This model or this suggestion that I make embodies a strong federal government whose visions, values, goals, and objectives are administered and to some extent tailored at the regional level and at the local level. I think there's some merit in looking at it from that perspective, because I believe that not only is Canada at a threshold but so are we as provinces and so are we as municipalities. We are, I think, certainly all in the same situation, where our resources are shrinking and our public is becoming very demanding. They're demanding not only responsibility; they're demanding accountability, and I think that's good. However, things as we knew them to be don't exist anymore, and I think what will happen here probably over the next 10 years or so is that you'll see a new Canada emerging, perhaps with even a new provincial structure that we at this point can only imagine or can only guess. But I think what you'll see is a stronger Canadian federation as a whole and perhaps even a stronger feeling of national pride than what exists today.

If I could just close by telling you that I am fully bilingual, but only in one official Canadian language; the second one, however, is not official.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mayor Collicott.

The first questioner the Chair's had notice of is Mr. McInnis.

3:32

MR. McINNIS: Thank you, Mayor Collicott. I think that's a very thorough approach to a problem that keeps coming up about how much centralization and how much decentralization. Some of us tend to think of this as either/or – you know, it either goes to the federal government or the provincial government or the municipalities – whereas in fact I think you've made the case that you can move both directions at the same time, and in so doing, you may do the job a lot better.

I was particularly interested in your comments about the environment, because that's something I'm involved in when I'm not doing this. I'm aware of the situation in Fort McMurray – and I know we're inviting a comment from the MLA here; so be it – where the provincial government has licensed pulp mills in Hinton, Whitecourt, Slave Lake, and now Athabasca, all of

which head towards Fort McMurray eventually on the Athabasca River. It seems to me that you wouldn't have that unless you had a strong central authority, in this case the provincial government, that's able to make those decisions and say, "Yeah, we're going to have one in Hinton, a couple in Whitecourt, one in Slave Lake, and one in Athabasca." The subject came up a little bit earlier about whether you could foresee putting this question of protecting the right of the downstream people somehow in the Constitution so that you don't have authorities that are able to waive environmental impact assessment requirements or perhaps even ignore them when they come down and perhaps a constitutional mandate that requires that people who are on the receiving end have to be heard and have to have their interests recognized before these central governments can come along and issue these pollution permits.

MRS. COLLICOTT: Mr. McInnis, I appreciate your comment. I'm perhaps from a little different direction than that. Common sense tells me that we can all three sit down and decide amongst ourselves which is the best way to go. I recognize that common sense doesn't always win out. However, I guess from where I sit today, my direction or my purpose would be to look at planned, organized, well-thought-out, and, yes, sustainable development for the entire province – not just the northeastern corner of the province or not just pulp and paper, but let's talk about forestry as a whole, let's talk about the oil sands, let's talk about the agricultural kind of situation we have. I mean, things are happening in all these industries. Surely if there are communities to be affected by development of any kind, they should also be at the table and should be discussing and bringing forward those kinds of concerns they may have. I don't believe that we need to get really hung up about who has authority. I believe what we need to look at is that people in a jurisdiction, whatever that jurisdiction is, not only should have an opportunity but should be actively consulted to bring those thoughts out, those processes forward.

Let me just describe for you one thing, the reason why I personally was a little upset with the pulp mill proposal. It was simply this. A population of 34,000 people who depended on one sole water supply, who actually have to go out and physically turn a tap off if we're not going to take in water that has been contaminated for whatever reason, were not invited, were not asked, were not encouraged until after the fact. I personally felt that much more of that negative feeling would have either been diffused or never arisen at all if right from the beginning we had an opportunity to say: "I want you to be aware; these are the things that we have a concern with. Now, how can you help us overcome these situations?"

I was equally upset when I read in an Edmonton paper that there had been an upset at a pulp mill to the west of us, and no one took the time to notify us. I think it's common courtesy to pick up the phone and say: "Look, we've had an accident. Watch for it. Make sure you turn off your intakes so that you're not contaminating 40 days' supply of water." It's not a big thing; it's just common sense.

That's why I'm saying that I don't think we need to get hung up on whose responsibility is what, but I think what we do need to pay special attention to is the fact that there are all levels involved and that all levels working together for the best interests of the people and of the resource base of that province or that jurisdiction would make probably much sounder decisions and probably longer lasting decisions and probably decisions which the public would certainly have bought in and supported very early.

MR. McINNIS: Mayor Collicott, I certainly agree with you that the things you've talked about are only common sense. I think common sense, reason, and logic govern maybe 80 percent of human activity, but unfortunately politics is mostly in the other 20 percent.

MRS. COLLICOTT: Now you tell me.

MR. McINNIS: That's why some of these questions are so difficult. My question is: given all of that, do you think the basic law of our country might be a way to beat some common sense into the people who make these decisions so that they have to sit around the table with the people who are affected before they make them? That's my question.

MRS. COLLICOTT: It can't hurt.

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mayor Collicott, for a very clear presentation. As Chief Dan George used to say, "My heart soars like a hawk" with much of what you said.

As the chief magistrate of a municipality, I'm wondering whether you might comment on some suggestions that have been made that we need to entrench a formal constitutional role for our municipalities. Now, this is particularly coming from some of the larger municipalities in the nation. Can you give us any direction in that regard?

MRS. COLLICOTT: I viewed those comments in newspapers both from Edmonton and Vancouver with some interest, a great deal of interest in fact. I guess to put in a nutshell how I would feel about this as a municipal elected person would be simply this. The representatives for the province, the representatives for the municipality, the representatives for the federal government are elected by the same people. From that perspective, since they have a responsibility and are accountable to those same people, they perhaps should be at the table when they're discussing some things.

Now, in terms of being entrenched in the Constitution itself, it was an interesting thought some time ago, and maybe I'm too strong a proponent of municipal government, but nevertheless it was my feeling that municipalities started this whole thing. It was small communities that started Canada, before provinces, before the country was ever built. What happened? Did we lose them? My thought would be that there should be some recognition for municipalities simply because they were in fact the ones that started the development of the country, albeit not in the same organized fashion that we have it today, but there was a basis, and the basis was within small groups first and then it branched. I believe that mention of municipalities in the Constitution is not wrong. It should be there.

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you. We've also had in our hearings to date a number of suggestions from presenters that access to government information by citizens is a right that should be put into the Constitution. It's fundamental, and there's a need for this. Would you be supportive of entrenching a right to information in our Constitution?

MRS. COLLICOTT: What kind of information? Anything?

MR. CHUMIR: Well, it wouldn't be any and all. I assume it would, you know, presumably be the basic information that reasonable people would say members of the public should be entitled to but excluding personal information about other

individuals, police issues. There's a whole range of matters that presently are excluded by common sense from the freedom of information legislation throughout the country. I think it just is a general principle. The view has been expressed that citizens should have some general rights to basic information from their governments.

3:42

MRS. COLLICOTT: Perhaps I'm from a different school of thought, but I always thought that if I wanted information, I simply dug it out until I got what I wanted. But I may be one of those individuals that goes after what I need to have, and a simple statement doesn't make a difference. I've always operated under the assumption that information is power, and to empower our community, the more information my community had, the better off they would be. The more sound decisions they would make, the more they'd be involved in the whole consultative decision-making process and the better the community would be as a whole. To be quite honest with you, it had never occurred to me that I couldn't get the information I wanted from a federal level. It just hasn't been a problem I have run into.

In terms of entrenching it in a Constitution, I'd have to question that. I'd have to question for what real purpose beyond what's there already. I guess my other questions would be: is it necessary, or is it already available? If it's necessary and it's not available, then I'd say put it in. If it's not necessary and it is anyway available, why bother?

MR. CHUMIR: Sure. Well, thank you.

I'm going to be designated by my colleagues as being near saintly by avoiding partisan shots about the provincial scene. I'm going to avoid them, but it's veritably saintliness. It's surely saintliness.

MRS. COLLICOTT: Are we not in a nonpartisan setting?

MR. CHUMIR: At this time.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Dennis.

MR. ANDERSON: Your Worship, I was very interested in your description of the kind of way in which we should exercise our authority on the part of those who elect us, provincial, federal, or municipal. I at least certainly agree with the statement you made that the government that's closest should be making the decisions or have the most delegated to them and with that authority should come some ability to obtain the dollars to carry that out.

The difficult part we have with the national scene is when you got into your other description on the establishment of standards and what that means. I guess I'd like to have some more examples from you of what that means. Nancy would be much more able than I to describe it, but nationally there are hospital standards that are established by an association, for example. I think we would all say that Canadians should be able to go anywhere and expect some reasonable level of hospital standard. Yet if the federal government, being most influenced, of course, by those citizens who elect them, those in central Canada first, found that in those parts of the country there was a need for more hospitals as such, but out here we were moving more towards home care and alternative care resources, or in northern Alberta there was a need for a different kind of air ambulance

service or whatever, would we be again in danger, if we're talking about standards, a national government establishing a standard most applicable to those main portions of Canada that may not apply as easily here? We've had that kind of problem in other areas. Now, of course, constitutionally health care is exclusively provincial as is education. Just what happened was your dollar example. The dollars didn't follow but, in fact, directed into the system. So where do we begin and where do we end?

The justice system. I understand your example. No question about it. It should be national in nature, allowing for some provincial variations, indeed, for administration as opposed to what a law is in a criminal sense at least. Defence. I don't think we have any problems agreeing that that shouldn't be done on a provincial basis. A basic running of our monetary system. When you get into things that are more people oriented – the health care, the social services, even the education – where we've evolved differently in different parts of the country and have different needs because of the space and the approaches that have been taken and are going to, are those kinds of standards things that should be established nationally? If they are, how do you then apply the need locally, with the dollars locally, without challenging that national standard which may have need to have been made in the best interests of the majority of citizens who aren't here?

MRS. COLLICOTT: Mr. Anderson, I recognize that what I said was an ideal perhaps; you know, some lofty blue sky. Let me just digress or step back for a moment and say that I recognize all of this cannot occur overnight or at the snap of a finger. I recognize that some of this would evolve over time, and perhaps what would be required would be a direction, that we'll be moving towards a certain goal rather than actually making the change and implementing it today.

Education is one example. Every province has trades. Every province has electricians and plumbers and whatever kinds of trades that go through an apprenticeship program. For the most part all the apprenticeship programs are within the same years, four years or so. Only some provinces have agreements where an interprovincial ticket would allow them to move between provinces and so on. Isn't that an example of how a national education scheme would be a national advantage in terms of tradespeople being required in different parts of the province or different parts of the country at any given time? Then the ticket that was earned, for example, in B.C. would be equally as good in New Brunswick or Ontario as it would anywhere else.

In terms of universities and colleges, it's a challenge; I understand that. Already we have so much movement from one province to the other, from one university – I have a nephew who's gone to three universities in three years in three different provinces. In that case would it not be wise if we looked at it and said, "For a degree in education these are the basic requirements we need no matter where you are"? If we have a degree in another field, whatever that might be, these are the basic requirements. Now, how the individual institution supplemented those basic requirements would be up to the jurisdiction of the individual degree-granting institution.

I think those are starts. We're already making big strides in moving in that direction. We saw it here in Fort McMurray with regular schooling in the days we were developing very rapidly. We had kids coming in from all provinces and virtually all countries of the world, and they were amalgamated into this school system as best we could under the circumstances. You know, some of those kids are graduating now, and some of those

kids are at the highest levels of academic achievement. Now, if they came from other provinces, other jurisdictions to begin with, why wouldn't it make sense to say that grade 8 requires this kind of minimum? If the province wanted to take it beyond the minimum, fine, or if the district wanted to take it beyond the minimum, that's also fine. What I'm suggesting is a start, a direction. I don't think I would live long enough to see my vision of this wonderful country of Canada actually materialize.

3:52

MR. ANDERSON: For clarification, you're not necessarily at least talking about a federal government establishing standards; you're talking about standards acceptable across the provinces.

MRS. COLLICOTT: Exactly.

MR. ANDERSON: I would generally agree with you. I might say there are some areas where it wouldn't seem likely, but it does differ. My father was a welder all his life, for example. He couldn't figure out why he couldn't be a welder in Newfoundland, the same reason here, and I couldn't either, until he went down and found that the salt from the air had a different effect and they needed a different teaching method there.

MRS. COLLICOTT: There are some unique situations, yes.

MR. ANDERSON: So there are some of those. But generally I agree with you. Certainly I think if we could have those standards across the country, it would be better.

MRS. COLLICOTT: Take the electrical trade. You actually have two divisions within the electrical trade itself, but you have one ticket at this point. You have the industrial side. A person who does apprenticeship through the industrial side perhaps never wires a house ever, yet it's, you know, a similar kind of a situation where you have one ticket that sort of does both. I'm not saying that's wrong. I'm just saying that what we need to do is look at minimums and perhaps nationally agree to minimums and then branch out to any specific requirements from there. I mean, we all know that what would be a minimum required for a trade in Alberta might have to be expanded on to work in a situation like Suncor or Syncrude because of their uniqueness. That's what I'm suggesting to you.

MR. ANDERSON: Good point.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: That exchange seemed to have generated a supplemental from Mr. Chumir.

MR. CHUMIR: Well, just for a point of clarification on that general area of topic, Mr. Anderson suggested that there were problems, perhaps insuperable problems, in establishing federal rules yet enabling local areas to have the flexibility needed to deal with social programs, health areas. As I see the health care system at the present time in Alberta, we make our own decisions by and large with respect to most areas in medicare. We decide whether we want to have air ambulances; we decide where and what kind of hospitals; seniors. All the questions that Mr. Anderson raised we already do. We're very different from other provinces in that regard, yet at the same time, we do have the federal rules with respect to universality, portability, comprehensibility: a very limited number of rules but rules which are standard for all Canadians. Now, would that be what

you perhaps had in mind when you said . . . [interjection]
Thank you.

For clarification, in terms of education, Mr. Anderson suggested that there need not be a federal role in order to get these standards that you were talking about. If we couldn't get these standards – let's assume that the provinces are unable to agree, as they have in many instances – would you agree that it would be useful and sensible to provide for the jurisdiction of the federal government to be able to referee in that particular instance if there is a national objective that needs to be achieved?

MRS. COLLICOTT: I don't know if I'd use the term "referee," but I think I'd use the term "being a partner," part of the negotiating team, if you want to use that terminology.

MR. CHUMIR: Having muscle.

MRS. COLLICOTT: No. I think maybe that's where we've gone wrong. We've given direction in the wrong way.

MR. CHUMIR: I couldn't resist that one. [interjection]

MRS. COLLICOTT: He might find more people saying no. I really do believe that the partnership, the co-operation, the collaboration is the key: not so much them, us, or we saying, "This is the way you should do it," but all of us sitting down and, yes, being systematic about it. I'm sure there will be occasions when tempers rise and when there will be great differences of opinion, but I believe that communication, that dialogue is critical if we're going to get to a point where in fact we are a united Canada with at least common goals if not identical goals.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Nancy.

MS BETKOWSKI: Thank you very much for being here, Mayor Collicott. I think you present a real leadership role in your community, and it's an opportunity for the committee to grill you. I also really support your view of a more collaborative model on constitutional reform as opposed to a dominance model. I think that's part of the transition we're moving towards.

I have two questions. I don't think they're related.

The first one is about citizens demanding accountability from their governments. You obviously see this in your job as we do in ours. You had mentioned the concept of a Senate being a board of directors, and really that was what it was established to be. This was the federal, this was the provincial, and the Senate was to be the part of the triangle that would provide the balance between the two. I'd be interested in, first of all, the makeup of that Senate. You suggested people of unimpeachable integrity. My question is: would that be an elected or an appointed person? Do you have any institutional or some framework for improving public consultation so that people would feel more involved in the process, other than just Senate? That's my first question.

MRS. COLLICOTT: In terms of the Senate, personally I feel the Senators should be elected and the election process follow what Alberta started some years ago, as I believe in that process. I also recognize that it may not fly in any other part of the country, that we may be of a different mind-set in this part of the country than others at this point.

In terms of a role for the Senate, in the sense of general direction or directive, policy direction perhaps, what we went through with this last – I hesitate to use the term, but what I really mean is fiasco. When we watched the Senate holding up decisions, I thought to myself: "This isn't the way it's supposed to be. This is not effective." Somehow we shouldn't have got to that level. It shouldn't have got to that point. I guess the public consultation process would have prevented it from getting to that point.

Now, how to improve the public consultation process? I think in any case we've probably all learned it from our farming backgrounds: you can lead the horse to water but you can't make him drink. I guess we can just keep opening the door and saying that the door is open and if you want it it's here, and, you know, please do come and participate. It's like this opportunity. It is an opportunity to have a real part to play in what the province of Alberta is going to say on constitutional reform, what individuals are saying, yet you find a small number of people actually taking advantage of that opportunity. If you didn't offer it, however, you would be taken to task, I'm sure, very loudly.

I have no great suggestions – I wish I did – in terms of trying to get people more involved and getting people to contribute. All I can say is we just have to keep presenting the opportunity. Perhaps one of the ways, particularly for us at a municipal level and, yeah, MLAs, too, is when we're talking to school children, because those are the ones that are the future, we talk about the importance of being part of a consultative process, of giving their opinions no matter how young they are. I've had in the past year or so many young people bring to my attention that they were quite surprised I was willing to listen. They thought that city council didn't have any use for the input of young people, and I think they need to be told that they do have a role. The role would simply be to bring some ideas out, and sometimes the young people have the most creative ideas of all, and sometimes they're the least inhibited when it comes to taking risks and making changes occur. I think from that perspective that's one very valid way that all of us, no matter which level of elected official we are, can actually start changing an attitude, because that's what it is.

4:02

MS BETKOWSKI: Well, I think public consultation is also public education, and there's a broader base of understanding when changes are made.

MRS. COLLICOTT: That's true.

MS BETKOWSKI: So I think that's an advantage.

My second question is on this one of standards. I agree with you that the model in the Canada health system works because it goes from national principles to provincial funding primarily to local governance. It's not perfect, but it's a very good model. When you get to the issue of education, one of the things that I think we need to look at is that if we were to say, "Here's a standard in education for the nation; every institution must do these things across Canada," that's one way to look at building standards. Another way is to say, "Let's look at education from the point of view of access of the Canadian student, and that access will be provided in Canada." That maybe will mean that not every single institution will be doing the same thing. Maybe we won't have a faculty of education at every university – the Canadian student will be able to access service in his, for lack of a better term, region – but we will start to make sure that we're

providing that access as opposed to allowing something to slip through the cracks. I guess I'd be interested in your thoughts on that kind of a model.

MRS. COLLICOTT: I would agree with that. Certainly from our own perspective here within the city it was very easily recognized that certain organizations do things better than other organizations, and instead of us trying to put complementary programs or competing programs into place, let's again get down to the consultative table. Let's say that, okay, you do this one well, so you continue doing it; you do this one well, you continue doing it; and I'll take this one, because I can do this one well. The same thing would apply to education. If the University of Calgary, for example, did education very well, let them do education, and then the University of Alberta in Edmonton do recreation, for example. There are opportunities, I believe. It's like moving the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle. It's like moving a fit. If it doesn't exactly fit, then maybe it belongs in a slightly different place.

I guess maybe that's where I'm coming from. We somehow get too hung up on the straight and narrow or on the way we used to do things or the way things are. I think that now at this level of development in our country, in our province, we need to be able to be a little bit more flexible with that instead of trying to jam a piece of a puzzle in there because that's where it's always fit, to actually look at and work with it a little bit more; maybe manipulate it a little bit like you do Plasticine.

MS BETKOWSKI: You know, the analogy we got in Calgary, which was a wonderful one, was not a jigsaw puzzle, but a Rubik's cube, and you can't fight a Rubik's cube to get the same colours on the angles.

Thank you very much.

MRS. COLLICOTT: You're welcome.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Barrie.

MR. CHIVERS: Thank you for your thoughtful presentation, Your Worship. I'd like to take you back to more or less where you started your presentation. You started out with some comments about some serious concerns, some reservations you had about the polarization of attitudes towards Quebec. I'm wondering if you could clarify for us a bit your perceptions of what the role of Quebec in Confederation should be, what sort of a constitutional relationship there should be, and particularly in the area of language rights.

MRS. COLLICOTT: Well, as an individual, and purely as an individual – this is not a political statement – Quebec to me is a province like Alberta is a province or like Saskatchewan is a province or like the Northwest Territories are a part of this country. It takes certain requirements to be a province or to be part of this Confederation of a country, and I believe that all of us, no matter where we are, should be of equal status, recognizing that some of the problems that we're facing today started prior to Confederation of 200 years ago. I think that goes for the problems around native issues as well.

MR. CHIVERS: I was going to take you there in a minute.

MRS. COLLICOTT: I guess my favourite way of describing it is that we're sort of living with the sins of our past; maybe the mistakes of the past are surfacing at this point and coming up as

problems. It's very difficult for me to say that I either agree or disagree with Quebec having its own language situation there or whether I agree or disagree with certain aspects of their membership in the Canadian context. As I look at this as an individual who is a first-generation Canadian and saying, "Hey, I'm no different than they are," it took pioneer spirit to get Saskatchewan and Alberta to the level it is. It took effort; it took a lot of different ethnic origins to produce this particular part of the country just as it did the two basic different ethnic origins in Quebec and Ontario. So I find it very difficult to say, black and white: this is the way it is.

I'm more of the mind to say that we need to talk about this a whole lot more. We need to really discuss this. We need to get down to what's causing the problems of feelings, because that's what I was getting when I was in Quebec City last year and through different other communities across the province. I met with the mayor and council of Châteauguay after the Oka situation, and I hear the kinds of things that they're saying. They're no different than the rest of us, but what has been different, what has changed in the last 10 years – and I hesitate to use this because we're surrounded by it – is the media.

MR. CHIVERS: I wonder if you could just address a bit more the situation as you see it with respect to aboriginals and aboriginal rights and whether there's a need for some sort of a constitutional entrenchment of aboriginal rights more than there is.

MRS. COLLICOTT: I guess I'm in the same situation there as well.

MR. CHIVERS: Uncertain?

MRS. COLLICOTT: Yes. It's . . .

MR. CHIVERS: A question of how you balance things?

MRS. COLLICOTT: It is exactly a question of balance, recognizing that these were people whose ancestors were here when my ancestors came. In history, some communities – when a group was conquered, they were conquered and amalgamated into society. We don't have that kind of a situation in Canada. We have really no basis to look at this as a straight black-and-white issue, so I'm saying at this point: balance is important; we need to look at all sides of the question. There have been recognizably some injustices, and if those injustices are recognized, they should be corrected, and at that point we're more or less back at square one again.

MR. CHIVERS: So would I be correct in sort of summarizing your position to be that you'd be prepared to look at some new relationships because of the value you place on Canadian unity? Although you haven't fleshed out those ideas, you appreciate that we should be looking at them?

MRS. COLLICOTT: Oh, yes.

MR. CHIVERS: I'd like to thank you again for some very helpful insights.

MRS. COLLICOTT: You're welcome.

4:12

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Pearl.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Your Worship, I was very intrigued by what you had to say relative to your view in terms of the communities. It's interesting to see that you have 33 percent under 17; that's incredible.

MRS. COLLICOTT: It makes for a very small tax base too.

MS CALAHASEN: That's what I was going to say; that's an incredible thing.

You brought out the fact that you said there's got to be a strong federal government but with a decentralized view in terms of some of the powers in terms of delegation and that nature. Something I thought was really intriguing that you brought up was that the grass roots or the community has got to be involved and that you have to be able to communicate with that particular grass-roots level and then empower that grass-roots level, which I think is something that I personally would also like to see.

The model that you brought out in terms of responsibility going to the lowest level and what you called a diffusion downwards: I think when I look at it in that sense and what you stated as the municipalities being involved initially in forming the Confederation, I wondered how from the diffusion downwards – or is it the diffusion upwards? In my view it's always the upwards one that I like to choose, because I think you have to get the small communities to be able to get empowered in order for you to be able to get the change, and I think that's what happened in particular in the Constitution. The one I was looking at was education and the different responsibilities in terms of where it should be, and I think you articulated that quite well when that question was asked. However, one thing I have is that the funding component comes, I think, in the diffusion downwards, whereas I think the ideas come upwards. The one I want to relate it to is that the native communities at one point were also involved at that level, and they were also involved in terms of the Confederation but on a totally different scale.

The question that I wanted to ask you, then, is that if you see the municipalities or the community empowerment occurring at the lowest level and going upward to be able to elicit change – the native communities also were at that level, more like treaties which they signed, and they were also involved at a municipal level and moved forward, I think, in a sense where it begins to be a federal responsibility – would you say, then, that there is a sort of look at one over the other, or is it sort of like both going in the same direction to be able to reach that aboriginal self-government?

MRS. COLLICOTT: I would say parallel.

MS CALAHASEN: The parallel movement.

MRS. COLLICOTT: Yes, moving forward, not necessarily – well maybe not even parallel. Sometimes I see a crossover, and I'm thinking of ourselves here in Fort McMurray in terms of our communication with, say, the community of Anzac or the community of Fort MacKay or even, for that matter, the separate bands where any one of us, if we have a question with regard to a certain issue or we wish to find out what the other parties are thinking of, have no hesitation in either picking up the telephone and talking to each other or coming in and discussing it over a cup of coffee. It may not be totally parallel,

but it's moving forward in a similar kind of a direction with sometimes a crossover occurring. I don't know how to best describe that.

MS CALAHASEN: A weaving.

MRS. COLLICOTT: Yes, it is. It is a weaving of ideas and so on. I look at most native communities as being very much like a municipality in their own right.

MS CALAHASEN: So in terms of the self-government aspect then, basically it's much like the municipal government in terms of what they have wanted and in terms of what they needed to be able to realize the goals of the people or the needs of the people.

MRS. COLLICOTT: Uh huh.

MS CALAHASEN: So in order for us to be able to get self-government incorporated or self-government to be looked at then, we've got to look at what the needs are and ensure that there's a definition of some sort to be able to deal with that.

MRS. COLLICOTT: Something like a definition of the term "municipality" in both the . . .

MS CALAHASEN: In a self-government context.

MRS. COLLICOTT: Yes.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Well, Your Worship, on behalf of the committee we'd like to say a sincere thank you for your appearance here this afternoon and for the assistance you've given us. Thank you.

MRS. COLLICOTT: Thank you very much for the opportunity. I enjoyed that, and I brought along a special little present for you.

MR. ANDERSON: Could we have Her Worship back tomorrow?

MRS. COLLICOTT: Do you want another present tomorrow?

MS CALAHASEN: Presents. He's talking about presents. Not only in words and wisdom, but also in . . .

MRS. COLLICOTT: I do appreciate the opportunity, and I really didn't plan on actually making an official presentation, but I wanted, certainly, for you to be aware of my own personal thoughts about the direction we're going in and I think also to identify to each of you that we really do care here what happens in the rest of the province and what happens in the rest of the country. Although we may be – and I hesitate to use this term – at the end of the road, we are not at the end of the road in terms of our thought processes.

Just to throw out a couple of other statistics to you, in Fort McMurray 50 percent of the people over the age of 18 volunteer in one way or another in this community. It's a very, very high percentage and virtually unheard of. Beyond that we're also a very educated community. Again this is just an average, but it indicates to you the extent of the education level in this com-

munity. Of the people over the age of 18, the average is two years of university or more, so we're a very highly educated community, a highly committed community, a highly energetic community, and I'm sure our own MLA, Mr. Weiss, can attest to that.

MS CALAHASEN: You could go far with that.

MRS. COLLICOTT: Yes, we can.

MS CALAHASEN: Very far.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you. We may be hearing more along that line because our next presenter will be Mr. Dan Meakes of the public school board, and of course the first presenter this evening will be a representative of the Catholic school board.

So to Mr. Meakes: please come forward. It's nice to have you with us this afternoon. We would like to also welcome you, Mr. Meakes, and say that really the floor is yours. Whatever you have to say probably will elicit some questions from the committee following your presentation.

MR. MEAKES: Thank you. First of all, I'd like to thank you on behalf of the public schools for the opportunity to share some ideas. I've met many of the people around the table on other occasions, so I appreciate the chance to share some of the thoughts that have come from that board with regards to constitutional reform, or probably more seriously to address some of the issues about how Canada governs itself.

The public school board has not had an opportunity to develop a thorough position, so what I'm drawing from is really three areas of discussion that have occurred over the last year that relate to key issues in the delivery of education within Fort McMurray. As our mayor has pointed out, Fort McMurray is an extremely young community, so the presence of education in Fort McMurray is very, very strong. Fort McMurray receives and spends approximately \$100 million a year in various forms of education. There's nowhere in Canada where as much money per capita is spent on education as Fort McMurray. It has a lot to do with the age and the fact that we live in a high-tech society in Fort McMurray. The issues that come to bear for much of Canada around issues of education really come to an apex in Fort McMurray, so some of the issues that we experience, I suspect, are issues that are experienced as a country.

The first item that I would like to share some reflections on is section 23 of the Charter of Rights and the recent Supreme Court ruling with respect to the governance of education in the French language. The governance of education in Alberta is probably going to go through some substantial changes, or we would hope, over the coming years.

4:22

Alberta has as many school boards as the province of Ontario, and they are proliferating very, very rapidly. There's probably not a need for more school boards simply because of their implications for cost in the delivery of education. As a consequence, one of the things that I think needs to be entrenched is a commitment to the French language in the existing governance of education. One more set of school boards in Alberta I doubt will serve the public well, particularly French-speaking individuals. One of the reasons it is a concern is that the French language in schools has been a very trendy item, and it would appear that by 1987 French in schools, whether it was French as

a second language, French immersion, French schools, reached a peak. For many of those of us who were raised in the Trudeau years the belief that if you spoke two languages had a high impact on kids, kids entering school from the years of 1975 right through to 1990, kids of middle-class parents. The belief was that if we spoke two languages, we'd have a much greater opportunity of employment. That trend has waned. In fact, what we're experiencing now is that the existing school boards are working hard to maintain a solid French presence.

In Fort McMurray we have a great variety of French language opportunities, and to split them out of the existing school boards would not only be redundant, it would probably threaten their existence, because the broad base of the two existing education systems allows a broad drawing of students for those programs. So our concern that there is momentum to establish French-language school boards within the province is that we think twice and that the government of this province give some support to French being present in the existing education systems.

The second area is the federal government's role in education. The new interest in education concerns us, because already at an adult level we run a constant risk of redundancy, duplication through Canada Employment. Mr. Weiss's area of responsibility is fairly well served with the existing programs. Presently we have a fair bit of dialogue at the local level from both provincial and federal concerns, but an increasing interest in education on the part of the federal government I believe will, at times, put a risk of two-tiered education, and I'm going to say more about that when we talk about native concerns.

An expansion of the federal government into education is probably best achieved with transfer payments. The BNA Act spells out the responsibility of who's accountable for education, and if there is a shortfall in the financing of education, it is that each tier of government is forcing down the tax burden. So the federal government increasingly puts the weight on the province. The province has withdrawn from education and its financing dramatically over the last 20 years. In fact, in Fort McMurray here, in 1971, 82 percent of education at the school level was paid for by the province. The public school board will receive 47 percent of its budget from the province. This pushing downward has left a very, very strong burden on the local taxpayer, through property taxes, to afford education. Our concern is that as the federal government becomes involved in education, its desire to spend money on education will undercut its present transfer payments for education. The more people we have spending money on education, the more the dollars are forced down onto the local property taxes. That's been the experience that we've had from the province to the point where we are in a very unstable position for rural Alberta. Rural Alberta does not have the dollars to finance education because the local tax burden cannot pick it up.

So around constitutional issues we are not excited about the federal government becoming involved in education if it means it's going to slice a new chunk of the pie without continuing to maintain its commitment to the financing of education it's presently involved in.

At a local level there is a need, because of the federal government's involvement in manpower and training, to maintain a consistent approach to the dialogue between the provinces' initiatives and the federal government's initiatives. We are experiencing some redundancy and also, around the stay-in-school initiatives of the federal government, a real inconsistency. The federal government will fund one school system but not fund the other school system. Quite often the reasons are very picky, worse than technical, in why particular programs are

funded or not funded, so that the initiatives appear to be very political in nature as opposed to being based on meeting local needs.

The third concern I'd like to raise is around the issues of native concerns and education. We're moving into a very complex period of time where native education appears increasingly to be two tiered: those native persons that are identified with the federal government receiving different services from those that are funded by the provincial government. Bill C-31 has led to a great deal of confusion around educational funding, and in some cases it's meant that individuals have been missed, postponed, while their status has been sorted out.

Presently, because of federal government involvement through the department of Indian affairs in education, it's meant that depending on what side of the line in northern Alberta you sit, whether you're in Northland school district or whether you're in Lac La Biche or a variety of other places south of Northland, the dollars available for education are dramatically different in some places. Northland school district in the province of Alberta has 250 percent per student of what the Lac La Biche area has. A lot of it is because of the infusion of dollars from the department of Indian affairs. It is a major issue for the governance of education that in terms of who is a native person in Alberta has not had common ground. So between different communities and different educational jurisdictions, commonality of programs or standards has been bypassed. The consequence is that the province of Alberta issues for many of these school jurisdictions the high school graduation. Many of those native people are not only not graduating, many of them are being given by the province of Alberta a certificate of high school graduation and are performing at grades 5 and 6 English. It has to do with overlapping jurisdictions and accountability that often when the federal government is involved, we end up with progress at all costs. So students are pushed through the system without an accountability for either the teaching staff, the schools' authority or, ultimately, the Department of Education, which trusts local leadership.

Because of the joint jurisdiction it's difficult to put a finger on who is accountable, but I can assure you that at the college level, when we review and begin to prepare people for employment, we have a consistent gap between what is being delivered and how students are being prepared.

One of the major issues in education at this point is to begin to develop a more common basis for the delivery of education in northern Alberta. Without constitutional reform, without seeing all Albertans as being Canadians and all Canadians in Alberta as having the same educational funding and the same educational system, I doubt that we will break through that.

When we talk about aboriginal rights or native rights, if those imply two systems, then it becomes a kind of rich man's apartheid, a separateness. So much of that is built into reserves, and as we grow through that process in terms of self-governments, however that takes shape, the cost is held by the children who enter school systems that have multiple authorities. Because the authorities are so strong, much of leadership time presently in local communities is spent wrangling about minor political issues rather than addressing the needs of the children involved. The consequence is that some major issues are not addressed. I will just name three that need addressing and that are of a crisis nature.

4:32

One of them is the epidemic numbers of individuals who now face fetal alcohol as their existence. Fetal alcohol rates we

cannot identify. Health authorities won't talk about them, but I can assure you that in some of the small northern towns fetal alcohol affects one in 10 children. It is epidemic. The societal costs far outstrip anything that we would imagine from AIDS. The cost to education in a lifetime amounts in the hundreds of thousands of dollars to respond to someone with fetal alcohol. At the local college here we probably address the needs of more fetal alcohol adults than anywhere in Canada. We've begun to become aware that it is a major issue to educators.

The second issue is that education authority is not on a common basis, does not have a common baseline in Alberta. It means that frequently students are not easily transferred from one jurisdiction to another. In terms of students, particularly postsecondary, their needs are not being met.

The third need that really we need to address in terms of the whole field of education is that the primary needs for native persons are polar in nature, and with two jurisdictions we find it very difficult to deal with. At one pole there are large, large needs for literacy, so we become very trendy and excited about literacy. On the other hand, we have a very large need for leadership development for small communities. It's one thing to talk about self-government, but if we have not developed the unique cultural ethos in which you develop small community leadership, what we do is set people up to govern without the tools to govern. Already that is the existence for many of the small communities that have large boards and have not had the opportunity to prepare for leadership.

These are three issues that have been in recurrent discussions about public education in Fort McMurray, largely because we have dealt with students who have transferred out. In many of the communities frustration has resulted in parents pulling their kids out of the Northland school system and then placing them in Fort McMurray. In some cases it's been a sharing of information between trustees and board members in Fort McMurray with small communities, information that has not been readily available to the leadership. In other cases it's been catastrophes for students that we have looked at and said: how can we do it better? So these are some concerns and some discussions that we've been involved in.

Thank you very much.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Meakes.

Pearl.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I'd like to say that you had a lot of information. I was quite concerned about the comments you made in terms of accountability of people who are supposed to be in an accountable situation, particularly with native education. You said it's difficult to assess who is accountable in the educational system, and as an educator myself I was always under the assumption that as a teacher you are accountable to that student, as a principal you are accountable to that student, as a board member you are accountable to that student or to the education of those students, and as a person who is in head office, like yourself, you are accountable to those students in ensuring that they learn. The concern I had is that you said there was a lot of overlapping in terms of jurisdiction; nobody was really accountable. My question, I guess, to you is: how do we see that there is some accountability from those people who are supposed to be primarily accountable when you're saying that there really is no accountability from any of these people? That's the first question.

MR. MEAKES: I think the accountability can be put in place by five things. I think one of them is through universal testing, and when I say universal testing, I'm not talking simply about standardized academic tests in grades 3, 6, 9, or 12, although I think that should be present. I also think of universal assessing from the point of developmental issues in education. Unless there's a common kind of evaluation, there is not an accountability.

MS CALAHASEN: On the national scale you're talking about?

MR. MEAKES: Well, I would say initially as a province. As a province we've said that that exists, and then we've sheltered certain areas. In terms of native persons we've been slow to say, "You're on the same scale; you're on the same platform." Out of a kind of caring, we've sheltered people. All I'm saying is: the first area of accountability is universal assessment.

MS CALAHASEN: Whether it's on a national or a provincial scale, then, you're saying that as a province we should be able to do that first and then go on a national scale for a standard? Are you talking about a minimum in terms of educational standards?

MR. MEAKES: Yes, I would say a minimum is just that. It is a minimum, but I think it should be present, and already there is a framework in the province of Alberta to do that. So without a great deal of constitutional issues we can effect that.

The second area of accountability, I think, is accountability in terms of a local authority. In the Northland school district, with its size and dimensions and so on, there are so many levels of accountability that the local authority does not feel it has control. In fact, the frustration is so strong that in the public education in Fort McMurray we receive the leaderships' children being enrolled in our schools: a loss of confidence. I think the second area of accountability is that at the local area there is accountability for the success of the students and the support to see that success happens on a local basis. I don't think there's any better place for self-government to begin than with the local school.

MS CALAHASEN: So you're saying that education should be a local - first of all, I see what you're bringing forward is a three-level thing: the local level in terms of the decision-making, then what I would call, I guess, a provincial level, and then a federal level.

MR. MEAKES: Well, that's sort of what we have. The difficulty is that particularly in the north we also have the federal presence. Native education authority buys a chunk of education. Native education authority can shift its students in and out of the system; it can shift its dollars. So we have another authority that quite often counterbalances or even has a potential of undermining the local school.

How we set up our jurisdictions I don't think is terribly effective. The more federal presence and the more provincial presence, the less accountability there is at a local level, and the less accountability at a local level, the more students drift out of school.

MS CALAHASEN: Therefore we've got the large illiteracy, is what you're saying.

MR. MEAKES: We do. Sometimes, though, the policy becomes: promote students even though they're not learning rather than be accountable for the delivery of education and saying, "Why aren't these students learning?"

MS CALAHASEN: So what you're saying, then, is: as teachers you respond to the federal versus the local, and therefore social promotions occur.

MR. MEAKES: Right. I think the fourth thing in terms of accountability that has to be present is a common ground in terms of status of people. As long as native people are given special status, either through educational funding or some other basis, they will be treated second rate. What occurs is that the dollars become more significant than the persons.

4:42

My experience in working with the Council for Yukon Indians in developing programs was that at the point that we say all native persons are native persons, at the point that we say all Canadians are Canadian persons, then at that point we get accountability for all persons rather than pushing aside a lack of action to the federal government. I think the federal government has some accountability, but as long as that funding in the systems is so often placed on the head of an individual - this person is a band member; they will have X dollars - then accountability starts to break down. Two-tier education systems begin to be developed.

The students who have the least are the students who are in central Alberta, not northern Alberta, and it is because in northern Alberta the dollars available are inordinately high. That isn't to say that across Alberta there aren't real issues in native education, but it's just the dollars available. Go to Lac La Biche. I mean, they're fighting to find a frying pan to do home economics. I go to Fort Chipewyan, and there are 36 computers there; it took two years to get the software for the computers.

MS CALAHASEN: So what you're saying, then, is that all people should be taken equally, that funding should come as equally as possible . . .

MR. MEAKES: Right.

MS CALAHASEN: . . . and that there should be no special status for anybody.

MR. MEAKES: Equal opportunities for all people.

MS CALAHASEN: On an educational point of view.

MR. MEAKES: Yes. I also have to say that my experience in the postsecondary level is that in many of the bands at the postsecondary level there are not enough dollars available, as there were prior. All of a sudden we go from a middle elementary school where there's almost the oppression of dollars at places to the postsecondary level where bands are extremely short in terms of education because of the federal jurisdiction. So in Saddle Lake only one out of 10 students who want to attend postsecondary education have funding. In terms of the system, my perception is that as long as there are two systems, a federal and a provincial presence in education, then there will be inequities that exist for native people.

MS CALAHASEN: So there should only be one system of funding.

MR. MEAKES: Yes.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you.
Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry. I don't know whether I missed something. Did you get to the fifth method of assessment?

MR. MEAKES: I think the fifth issue in terms of inequities is mobility and education. Mobility, particularly for people who drop out of school, becomes a real issue. For native people in the surrounding areas who come to Fort McMurray and are 16, 17, 18, frequently they are referred to return home because that is where their band is. So there is a kind of imprisonment with the reserves that does not allow for basic Canadian citizenship in terms of mobility. If you go back to your band, you'll be cared for, but if you are here, we do not have any supports. So the opportunity to chase both education and employment is not universal. That's a delivery of the Constitution issue.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Dennis.

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Chairman, a most interesting presentation. Most interesting in a number of ways. I guess, first, so that I'm clear, you're really saying from a constitutional perspective that you don't want any more federal involvement in it and you'd in fact like less provincial involvement in the administration portions of it. Is that right?

MR. MEAKES: Well, there's no question that the province's presence in education is presently entrenched and should remain. I think maintaining the financial relationship with local education and sustaining that is critical in this province in that there has been an erosion over the last two decades.

As far as the federal presence, I think the transfer payment model and "you stay off the turf" works better. I just believe that the more we have the federal government at the local level, the less helpful. If it means there has to be local leadership, then treat it as a municipality or a school board for the people who live there. Use the existing structures rather than overlaying something that's synthetic or from Ottawa.

MR. ANDERSON: Okay, thank you.

The other area that's very interesting is your suggestion that we treat all students the same. I haven't personally got a conclusive opinion on this, but those on the other side would argue that in the native community the development and the cultural preparation for school hasn't been enough to put them on an equal basis and therefore there has to be something to allow for that equal starting point or to at least help them through that process. Obviously you would disagree with that.

MR. MEAKES: Well, let me put it this way: I think all the dollars are available, particularly with the philosophical articulation that the province espouses, to enable students to move into that process. If it's an issue of nonreadiness for school, that is irrespective of racial origin. Right across this province we have students that are less ready, but to say that we'll have more money here because these are native persons and they're less

ready is racial in its essence. If constitutionally we can say anything, it's that Canadians are Canadians. So the issue then is: what do these people need? Well, in terms of developmental issues, these are persons like other persons who may have developmental issues, and the dollars will be available.

MR. ANDERSON: I see. So you're saying that the province's criteria for involvement in the school system is an adequate one, and there shouldn't be another criteria from the federal level of where it should go because of the native jurisdictional question.

MR. MEAKES: No, I don't think so. Our major issue in the north is not the culture shock that native students experience in the school but the culture shock of the ill-prepared teachers who invade the school. Right across the north we have teachers, and the average is an 18-month stay. If you don't know the families and the homes and the places that people come from, who's delivering culture shock? I mean, it's the foreigners who come into the communities. So the problem in the delivery of education is not those kids who arrive there and who may not have seen as many printed books as white, middle-class kids; the issue is the teacher who assumes in terms of developmental issues: the student is here.

If we need enhancement, it's probably through family development. I mean, for many families schools are obtrusive and dictatorial, and the family trust in the school system is not there, so the issue becomes one of teachers' relationships with homes.

MR. ANDERSON: Okay. Thank you. One other point just to clarify. In your original comments you talked about the French language and the school system. Did I hear you right that you said there is less involvement or less desire to get into bilingual programs in Fort McMurray now than there was before?

MR. MEAKES: Yes. That has peaked.

MR. ANDERSON: By peaked, do you mean you're at the same level as you were a while ago?

MR. MEAKES: Less than. There's been a diminishing of French students.

MR. ANDERSON: Interesting.
Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Sheldon.

MR. CHUMIR: Yes. Just for clarification, if I might. You referred to three main issues, two of which were the federal role in education, firstly, and then, secondly, native concerns with respect to education. I'm somewhat puzzled by the nature of the problem that you envisage in respect of the federal role in education. I think you referred to overlap, the risk of a two-tier education and so on. The only area in which I have heard or am aware of actual federal involvement in education in that sense would be in respect of the natives, because the rest of the funding is transfer payments in which there are no ties whatsoever; the federal government just gives the provinces the money. One of the concerns that have been expressed, in fact, is that the money is just given without any ties. So would it be fair to say that the concerns you've expressed relate to the actual hands-on administrative types of problems you've seen with respect to native education and that's the type of thing you don't

want to see replicated with respect to any of these suggestions for more federal involvement?

4:52

MR. MEAKES: No, there's more. At this point Canada employment and development of Canada's employment initiatives are large in this province, and they're handled through the local employment centres. By and large we have co-operation. I can think of a number of situations where we've had redundancy, but by and large those initiatives could be handled through Mr. Weiss's department. Send the money. Why duplicate staff? Those initiatives increasingly are of an educational nature. They're not just employment training.

MR. CHUMIR: Sure.

MR. WEISS: Can I applaud?

MR. CHUMIR: They sound very much, though, like hands-on administrative type of involvement in terms of specific programs. Is that . . .

MR. MEAKES: I don't think it's just administrative. I also think it's how at a federal level we conceive of how labour changes. At a federal level increasingly we've looked at the labour market as being trained into change or educated into change, and as we've ended up with – I don't know what it is – one out of five Canadians financially dependent on some form of government aid, the federal government's initiatives in employment are becoming increasingly vague, increasingly of an educational nature, and often very disruptive in that they are so short in length that the money is thrown at a problem and then withdrawn. Throw them the money and pfft problem. It undermines our postsecondary education stability.

That's a very distinctive issue though. Because personally I would have to say – and this comes largely from the college I am not representing today but have experience with – that at a postsecondary level the federal government has probably created more chaos than initiated positive initiatives because they are so short term in nature, very trendy. They've done the same thing now at high school with the high school retention programs: short-term commitments. Most high school dropout problems are solved over a decade, but you throw \$200,000 or \$300,000 at a problem in a community and then withdraw it, throw another \$200,000 or \$300,000 at a problem. If you just made a \$100,000 commitment for the next 10 years, you'd probably see some resolution. So I find that is a different issue, and it probably is constitutional in nature. Tighten up the Constitution and send the money.

MR. CHUMIR: We've heard from some presenters, particularly in Calgary, that there is a crying national need for some form of co-ordination, some form of national standards. It has been suggested that that is a role the federal government should be playing. We've had concerns with, you know, different numbers of grades being required in each province and things of that nature.

Earlier this afternoon we heard Mayor Collicott suggesting that perhaps a mechanism that might be used would be similar to what we have in the medicare system, where there are certain types of overarching standards and then the actual administration of how things operate is put into the hands of the one level, the provincial government, and through them to the local jurisdictions. Do you think there would be room for a role of

that nature, particularly if the federal government were committed to keeping the money coming?

MR. MEAKES: I think in terms of the standards of education . . . Like what is grade 12? It's critical that we have some pretty strong national standards, but I don't think that automatically implies control over funding. I mean, if we say there are three provinces that really can't teach grade 12 and they're at grade 11 so we'll cut 10 percent of their funding, I'm not sure that would make a lot of logical sense. In health care it does.

So, yes, the Alberta trustees association has worked very strongly with Alberta Education to work together with the other provinces in establishing universal indicators in terms of progress. That would be extremely helpful, but I don't think it puts at risk any national funding necessarily.

MS BETKOWSKI: Thank you for being here. It's very interesting to me to get the sense of a federal perspective on education, which frankly you don't get unless you come to areas like the north where you're dealing with the federal government far more directly in education delivery than probably lots of other parts of the province are.

My question is with respect to . . . I want to take you one step further and ask for your views. You talked about if there are tests for achievement, those results be shared and not hold back in the interests of caring for people. If those standards were shared and a particular group were shown to have achieved less measurably, not naming a group, would you think it would be proper for the education system to try and focus in on the needs of that particular group or community or school or whatever, thus creating not an equal education system but one that's trying to bring perhaps another group up to a particular standard? Now, is that a fair . . .

Let me extend it into the health argument, because you talked about the cost to education of fetal alcohol syndrome and its incidence. Knowing that and its incidence in the native population, which can probably be documented – certainly native health status in Canada is measurably lower than the rest of the population – should the province, or whoever, not be trying to improve that health status so that as opposed to dealing with the cost-to-education argument, you're dealing with the cause of it, which is trying to have healthier pregnancies as an example? I'd be interested in your thoughts on that whole issue of equality versus equity.

MR. MEAKES: Well, I think the first thing is that all should have equality of opportunity, and I think that's the first point we have to begin with in terms of education. Every child that enters kindergarten or grade 1 should have an equal opportunity to enter that system and have the resources and the teaching that is sensitive to where they come from.

MS BETKOWSKI: So in other words, you would treat different ones differently depending on where they arrived at at grade 1.

MR. MEAKES: I'm not suggesting we treat people all the same way. What I'm saying is that they should have an equality of opportunity and an equality of outcomes. So if we're not achieving the outcomes of an equal nature, then we need to be critical of the system we're trying to deliver, the education system. If different people need different things, it's not because they're native or Ukrainian or boat people or an English as a Second Language crew of students but because in terms of performance we need this to achieve this. I think it's only at the

point where we are open and public with how school jurisdictions do that we will develop the sense of criticalness and accountability that in the long run will allow all students to have an equality of outcomes.

MS BETKOWSKI: Do you think that's achievable?

MR. MEAKES: I do, but unlike the Minister of Education, I don't think we'll achieve it by the turn of the century. I think we've got a generation of hard work to see equality of outcomes in the north, because we have not achieved cultural compatibility. Northern culture, whoever's it is, is quite different from most of the educational ethos. And because we import all our teachers, the consequences of achieving the equality of outcomes is very hard.

MS BETKOWSKI: I guess I don't understand what you mean by equality of outcomes. Does that mean everyone has to get a grade 12?

MR. MEAKES: Well, 70 percent of people graduating. If 70 percent of people in Edmonton are graduating with an academic grade 12 that says this is the case, then the same is true in terms of Fort Chipewyan or other remote areas of Alberta. Unless we look at the outcomes, we have no way of saying, "How are we doing?" And so far we're not. That's the first step we're not doing. We're not saying, "Really, how are we achieving?" When we do have that information, we get very embarrassed and hide it.

MS BETKOWSKI: Thanks.

MS CALAHASEN: I just want to follow through on what Mrs. Betkowski was asking. You were talking about the quality of outcomes and how are we achieving. My question before that was to find out who's responsible, though, for those outcomes. I guess that was a question I was trying to direct to you. Who is the responsible party for those outcomes in order for us to be able to get the kids to achieve those outcomes we have established?

5:02

MR. MEAKES: I would say the principal people in those are our school principals and trustees.

MS CALAHASEN: They're the ones who set the standards in terms of what has to be done.

MR. MEAKES: Yes. They're the people who have their feet on the ground. Now, the province has a role . . .

MS BETKOWSKI: Are they setting the standards? Is that what you're saying?

MS CALAHASEN: Right.

MR. MEAKES: They are the ones that will determine locally whether those standards are achieved.

MS CALAHASEN: Right. Okay. Yeah.

MR. MEAKES: I think the province has put enough in place to make it work. Our question in terms of accountability then

becomes: are those people who have most influence in the situation?

MS CALAHASEN: Are you talking about in the delivery of education or in the objectives of education?

MR. MEAKES: Well, in this case, at the level of a superintendent, trustees, and principal, you now have all those ingredients interfacing.

MS CALAHASEN: Presently.

MR. MEAKES: Yeah. Now, whether it's delivered or not is another question.

MS CALAHASEN: Right.

MR. MEAKES: My point is that because we have so many jurisdictions, quite often those groups cannot effect that. We have a federal presence, two-tiered board systems, and all sorts of things. It becomes very confused who actually is accountable, who will carry the buck.

MS CALAHASEN: So that's where the accountability . . . The buck has to stop somewhere and it doesn't presently is what you're saying. Okay.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Stockwell.

MR. DAY: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Dan, you seem to have a clear handle on some ways of dealing with the inconsistencies and redundancies that come when there are too many layers involved. You talked especially about the federal layering on and the problems that creates. I think that would help to maybe pacify, for instance, as Mr. Chumir put it, the crying need for federal involvement that a couple of people echoed in Calgary when we were there.

First, regardless of where this committee goes, I just want to encourage you to keep on with your thoughts and initiatives at the local level, because I think they're going to have a positive impact. Can you just give us a couple of quick details on what you meant when you talked about if there's going to be enhancement at all, family development is needed. Do you see the school itself playing the key role there? How do you see that working in?

MR. MEAKES: Well, we inherited a culture of education in the north that is imported. I don't want to get into the details of the history, but the very culture of education is import/export. Starting with the residential schools of the north and ultimately in terms of our present education system, there is something about education coming from outside and then dealing directly with kids. As a consequence, much of the family fabric, whether it's strong or weak, we try to sidetrack rather than adopt. For those schools that have had greatest success among native people, it's been when the family has been a primary factor or presence in the local schools. For some of the students, the families they come from are not strong. For many of our young teachers who go to the north, respect for those families is not easily achieved, but in that relationship is ultimately the success of education. It's found in the relationship between the teacher and the family's trust in what that teacher is doing. If that is present, then we'll see success; in education in the north there

will be a great deal of hope. The relationship between the success of the student and their day-to-day presence in the school and family success are very closely intermeshed. So how we conceive of teachers in the north culturally becomes different; their role in the community becomes different. An example for teachers starting in the north: it would probably be helpful for them to spend two weeks to a month simply visiting in the community before school even fires up in the fall, simply so they're known as people as opposed to this imported person who comes for a year.

MR. DAY: Good thoughts. We could explore it more, but our time is going. Thanks.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: As a matter of fact, I think it's almost gone.

Dan, on behalf of the committee, I certainly want to express our sincere appreciation for your attendance this afternoon and the very valuable and well-articulated information you've given us.

MR. MEAKES: Thank you very much. I feel very honoured to have had this opportunity.

[The committee adjourned at 5:07 p.m.]

