

10:04 a.m.**Monday, June 3, 2002**

[Mr. Clark in the chair]

The Chair: Okay. Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to move along. We have a busy morning. We have Mr. Ray Danyluk, MLA, at 10:15, then the St. Paul chamber of commerce at 10:30, the mayor of Cold Lake at 10:45, the mayor of Lac La Biche at 11:00, the MLA for Bonnyville-Cold Lake at 11:15, the mayor of Elk Point at 11:30, the mayor of Bonnyville at 11:45, and the Lac La Biche chamber of commerce at 12 o'clock, so we need to move along.

Ray, you're our first victim. I mean, you're our first presenter.

Mr. Danyluk: Don't say victim like that. Does that mean that these boundaries are predetermined?

The Chair: No, it certainly doesn't. That's why we're coming out here, to get some good advice.

We're pleased to be in St. Paul this morning. Last week we spent all day Monday in Calgary and heard 20-some briefs and spent Tuesday in Olds and Red Deer. We had 27 briefs in Edmonton on Wednesday. We're here this morning. We're in Wainwright this evening, then in Drumheller tomorrow morning, in Medicine Hat tomorrow night, in Lethbridge on Wednesday, and then in Wetaskiwin on Thursday. Later on this month we're going to be in Westlock and Edson one day. We're going to be in Slave Lake and Fort McMurray, and then we're going to be in Grande Prairie and Peace River. That'll get us to the end of the month, and very soon after that we have to get together and come to some conclusions. We want our first report in the hands of the Speaker early in September so that that can be made public and people have a chance to respond to it. We plan another set of hearings in either December or early January and then come to our final decisions and have a final report in the Speaker's hands early in March. Then it's up to the Legislature as to what they do with our report after that.

This is a process that happens after every two elections in Alberta under the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. There's a commission of five people set up. There's a choice of the Auditor General, the Ethics Commissioner, a member of the judiciary, or the head of an academic institution. I guess somehow it was the Ethics Commissioner's turn, and that's how come, I guess, I'm chairman. The Leader of the Opposition after consultation appointed two people, and Executive Council appointed two people, and those are the four people that I have the honour of working with.

In no particular order, to my far left is Doug Graham, a well-respected lawyer from the city of Calgary. To my immediate left is Bauni Mackay, one of us from Edmonton. She's the former president of the Alberta Teachers' Association. To my immediate right is Glen Clegg, the former member of the Assembly for the constituency of Dunvegan, which is really the Spirit River/Fairview area. To my far right is the mayor of the good community of Claresholm. Ernie Patterson has been the mayor of Claresholm for some 33 years. Glen wonders what's wrong with those people down there, but we're not stopping in Claresholm to find out. So this is the group, the five of us.

We realized from the outset that this is not an easy task. We're bound by the legislation that says that there will be 83 seats. The legislation also directs us to use the 2001 census, that being the last 10-year census of Stats Canada. So if you take the population of 2.98 million and divide that by 83, you get something like 35,951, or 36,000 people is what the average would be. Then the legislation says that there can be up to 25 percent variance plus or minus, but there have to be reasons for that. The last commission's recommendations, when they did their work, were that all ridings

were within 15 percent except one, and their recommendations were accepted by the Legislature and were not challenged within the courts.

There's also provision in the legislation where there can be four ridings that are special ridings, where there can be up to a 50 percent variance, and if you look at the maps back there, the riding of Athabasca-Wabasca, which is the northeastern corner of the province excluding Fort McMurray, is one of those two special ridings, and the other special riding is Lesser Slave Lake. Now, the legislation says that there can be up to four, but there are some very definite conditions. They have to touch a boundary, there can be no centre over 4,000 people, and a number of other conditions.

We have met as a group several times prior to starting to have these public hearings. I can look any of you in the eye and honestly say that we have not sat down and drawn lines any place. As you can see, once we get finished though, we have to start that quickly so we have the September report in people's hands. I hope that's a fair summary of where we are. We're here today to hear from this part of the province, and unless I've left out something serious, then Ray Danyluk – Ray is the MLA for this area. Of course, you folks all know that. Ray, we look forward to hearing what you're going to tell us.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much. Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the commission. As the MLA for Lac La Biche-St. Paul I would like to thank you first of all for choosing St. Paul as one of your 16 hearing locations across the province. I realize the large task that you have ahead, and I commend you for the commitment that all of you are putting in.

I am here today to talk about my constituency and to provide some insight into the importance of the maintenance of rural constituencies such as Lac La Biche-St. Paul in the province of Alberta. My message may be consistent with those throughout rural Alberta, but I think this message has merit and needs to be emphasized. I believe the fact that two of your commission members are rural representatives is a case in point that our province values rural roots and will be fair when it comes to representation of rural areas.

I am pleased to say that my constituency has grown in population since the last census, maybe not to the same degree as some in the large urban centres, but this reinforces the fact that our rural communities are vibrant and growing. As the MLA for this constituency I represent nine municipalities, which include three counties, 10 hamlets in those three counties, which also have their separate identities, as you know, and three towns and two villages. There are four different school boards within Lac La Biche-St. Paul, a constituency which consists of 25 schools as well. I also represent five First Nations communities, two Metis settlements, one health authority, which has three hospitals, two colleges, seven seniors' homes, four chambers of commerce, and a multitude of community halls and churches.

Mr. Chairman, I will provide you with a copy when we're done. If you want a copy now, I can give you one now, but I will provide it.

The Chair: That would be helpful.

Mr. Danyluk: Would you like it right now?

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Danyluk: I only have one. I'm sorry.

The Chair: Oh, that's all right. We'll get copies later.

How many Metis settlements was that?

Mr. Danyluk: We have two Metis settlements and five aboriginal communities, five reserves. Each of these groups has its own elected representatives at the local level, but I have the honour of being their provincial representative, and I am in contact with each of them on a regular basis.

When I look at other constituencies in large urban centres, some do not have hospitals or schools, any community halls or even churches. It currently takes me three and a half hours to drive from one end of my constituency to the other, and all of the communities I mentioned previously are located throughout the constituency. They are not concentrated in one part. In some urban constituencies one can drive across the riding in 15 minutes.

It brings up the argument for allowing exceptions for density. As you are aware, four electoral boundaries are given exceptions for sparsity when it comes to representation by population. Why can't this be used the same for density? Electorates in large urban centres are in close proximity to all essential services and to their MLA. Constituencies have limited resources, which prevent MLAs from having more than one constituency office. Being that I only have one office in St. Paul, constituents are limited by distance to the access of this office. If you took a look at Heart Lake, it would take them over two hours just to drive to St. Paul to see their MLA. I do spend a lot of time driving to different communities so that people have contact with their MLA, but it is physically impossible for me to attend two or three events or business meetings in one evening. This shows that there is not equal access to MLAs when you compare the urban constituencies with the rural. People in rural areas tend to know who their MLA is more so than people in urban areas. Traditionally, rural MLAs grow up in their constituency and have many community ties to the area. That's just one characteristic of living in a rural area. People know their neighbours and take immediate interest in what is happening around them.

10:14

From my experience rural citizens are also very aware of government decisions and how they will affect them. This could be because more ministries affect people in rural Alberta than do in urban areas. Issues pertaining to sustainable resources, energy development, agriculture, and so on, all affect rural constituents along with the traditional holistic ministries.

Because people in rural areas are familiar with their MLA, they tend to contact their MLA when they are in need of assistance or information. My constituency office receives anywhere from 20 to 40 phone calls and five to 10 drop-ins per day, and I'm using an average, because there are days, of course, when there may be less, but there are days when it is a lot more. This does not include the phone calls I receive at home or at my Legislature office. To my knowledge there are urban constituencies that have not had a drop-in in the last three years. Like myself all MLAs have an office at the Legislature as well. From my experience it seems as though urban constituents will associate with the office at the Legislature more than the constituency office. The opposite is true in rural areas, where people know who their MLA is and will contact the constituency office on a regular basis.

Just as there needs to be a balance between government and opposition for our government to run effectively, I believe there also needs to be a balance between rural and urban representatives for good government. Decisions are made at the Legislature that have a large impact on rural residents. Rural constituents need to be represented adequately. There is a difference between equal representation and adequate representation. While representation by population is deemed equal representation, I believe minority rights

also need to be brought into the equation. Our rural areas are considered a minority due to the lack of population, and in order for fair representation at the Legislature these rural regions need the same weight as their urban counterparts. Our measure always seems to be by population. Drought, fire, fishing, oil recovery, logging, and agriculture are not a measure of people but of area and economic development. Do not ignore the surface. Large urban centres would not grow at the same rates if it were not for the raw products and economic support of rural Alberta.

It is fair to divide up urban areas that have more in common than to continually realign municipalities with competing interests. As an example, the community of Lac La Biche, which is in the northern half of my constituency, has been shuffled between Athabasca, Fort McMurray, and St. Paul in the last three boundary reviews. Members of the Lac La Biche community support staying within this constituency, and they have adamantly agreed that they want to remain part of the Lac La Biche-St. Paul constituency. In 1993 the community of Lac La Biche challenged the decision of the last boundary changes made by this commission. This was because Lac La Biche was changed from part of the Fort McMurray region in 1982 to part of the Athabasca region in 1985 and then to St. Paul in 1993. I am sure you can all understand how difficult it is for the Lac La Biche area to identify with their MLA when they have been changed around so much. In the eastern part of my constituency the Heinsburg community has experienced the same injustice.

As you can see, this is not an issue of an MLA trying to save his riding. We need stability in this region. I understand that other presentations and submissions from my constituency will likely follow this line of thinking. Rural people have been honoured with the stewardship of our land and have a major part in the enhancement of our environmental protection. I want to stress that again: rural people have been honoured with the stewardship of our land and have a major part in the enhancement of our environmental protection. We need stability and adequate representation to continue to accomplish preserving rural Alberta for all Albertans.

I appreciate being given the opportunity this morning to present my views to you, and I am hopeful, Mr. Chairman, that you and your commission will consider these points when making your decisions in months to come. I thank you and your committee very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Okay. Just before Glen and Ernie have questions for you, you said that your riding has grown during the last eight years. Can you give me ballpark figures?

Mr. Danyluk: What happened – and I don't want to say from the beginning – is that the last census we had was approximately 27,000, and we're 32,000, 33,000 right now. So from the last census that we had . . .

The Chair: Do you mean that over the 10 years, then, there's been 5,000 growth?

Mr. Danyluk: I'm not sure if it's the 10 years; I'm sorry. I don't have that right at my fingertips.

The Chair: I was just going by the last commission. They used the census from 1991, it would have been. We have to use the last, and now we're in 2001. So that's almost 500 people a year; isn't it?

Mr. Danyluk: Mr. Chairman, I think one very important point that hasn't really been addressed when we talk about representation is that we are very heavy in logging, and we are very heavy in oil development and resource development, so we have a very high

transient population which not only taxes our services but adds to the population at peak times. That's not when the censuses are taken, so as you can appreciate, we do have a much higher population because of the type of community we are.

The Chair: I suspect that that's an argument we'll hear in Fort McMurray too.

Mr. Danyluk: Without a doubt. It's common to any highly resource-developed area.

Of course, in our area – and I don't want to say that, you know, we're unique – what ends up happening, if you take a look at northeastern Alberta, is that northeastern Alberta has heavy oil or tar sands, which really is more labour intensive and development intensive as far as the extraction of those resources. So there's a higher commonality of that happening maybe than in other areas.

The Chair: Mr. Patterson.

Mr. Patterson: Yes. Mr. Danyluk, I was interested in your statement that, you know, you have one office and how far it is for your constituents to drive to get to that office. One of the things that we're charged with looking at is how to enable effective representation. I just wondered what your thoughts are on having a second office. Where would you locate it? Would this help, and how would it help?

Mr. Danyluk: Well, I think what happened is that if you look at major communities, or higher populated communities, there is no doubt that we do have St. Paul in the south, and the southern area has a higher population than the north, but the Lac La Biche-Plamondon area also has a high population. Those of you who have been involved in public life know that trying to maintain the needs of one office in the rural area and one office in Edmonton and trying to be at those places is tough enough without trying to get to three. Without a doubt Lac La Biche would be the second office.

10:24

To answer your question as to what I'm doing, I try to spend a lot of time in Lac La Biche. We try to have breakfast meetings so that we can hear the concerns of the people. It's not so much my having to travel. That's using the example. It's people having access. People want face-to-face contact, so that's how we're trying to alleviate it. But from that point as well, there are no other communities that are that much closer anyway. I mean, you could take Athabasca or Bonnyville-Cold Lake. I mean, this is rural Alberta, and some of the uniqueness of it is being sparsely populated, with major centres being located some distances apart.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you.

Mr. Clegg: Two very quick questions, Ray. How much time do you spend traveling to Edmonton? I know that you have to travel there often. What is it; a three-and-a-half-hour or three-hour drive?

Mr. Danyluk: Well, no. It depends on the time of day how long it takes me to get there. No, I shouldn't say that. Let's say it's anywhere between two and a quarter hours to two and a half hours for me to get to Edmonton. You know, I had talked about when you have business meetings or appointments, to try to get three in one night. My assistants are always trying to organize for me to be able to be in an area or to try to be in an area. They're trying to co-ordinate events or trying to co-ordinate meetings. It's not that hard to co-ordinate meetings, but I don't expect people to co-ordinate

events around my participation. Do I spend a lot of time going back and forth to Edmonton? Yes, you bet. It is a lot of time.

Mr. Clegg: A second quick question is: communications these days are much better than they were when you were young, not when I was young.

Mr. Danyluk: We're not that far apart.

Mr. Clegg: Do you think the Internet and fax machines and all this stuff has helped a lot in communications with your constituents?

Mr. Danyluk: Well, what happened with the advent, of course, of the Internet is that I do spend a lot more time on the Internet answering messages or answering concerns. It does two things. It provides everybody with access at a quicker rate, which I think is very beneficial, but I also stress to you that it provides everybody. That means that traditionally where you would have any MLA in an area, an individual through the advent of the computer can ask 10 MLAs the same question at a drop of typing his name out or putting his name on the top. What happens is that we also answer a lot of questions of constituents that may not be in my constituency, so that does tax the situation a little bit.

We were at a Telus presentation which talked about telecommunications being more widespread, and I think it would help if we would be able to have some of our committee meetings via conference calls or via videoconferencing. I think that would not only save the taxpayers some money, but it would sure allow us to be in our constituency a lot more.

You know, I appreciate being allowed to speak this morning, but what happens is that I sit on the SPC for agriculture, and it starts at 11:30.

The Chair: So you'd like to get out of here?

Mr. Danyluk: No. That's not a problem. Do you know what I'm saying?

The Chair: Yes. Sure.

Mr. Graham: Two questions, Mr. Danyluk. I note that Lac La Biche-St. Paul as of the most current figures we have is minus 10.2 percent from the quotient. Now, the purpose of this committee is to try to achieve a balance which will get effective representation. In your view is that minus 10 percent too high, is that too low, or is it just about right for a constituency such as yours?

Mr. Danyluk: Well, as we talked about before, understand the difficulty of rural representation. Is minus 10 better than minus 23? Yeah, you bet. Is it average? No, it's not. I think what happens is that rural representation is always going to be hard to be average. We just don't have the access to the services that urban areas do.

I'm not trying to dance around your question, because what happened is that I don't have a problem with minus 25; I can live with minus 25. I still think that I will not provide the same kind of representation as someone that has a small land area or has the economic development and the diverse economic development. I need to stress the diverse economic development because we have very highly intensive agriculture in the southern part with livestock. In the north we have logging, and we have fishing. You know, we have the natural gas. We have the heavy oil. So we are very, very diverse as well as taking all of these individual communities and all of the economic development that is here to sustain itself.

Mr. Graham: Just to clarify that point you made before I asked my question, which I thought was an interesting one, it seemed to me that what you were saying is that it would be helpful to you if instead of having a number of offices so that you could meet more constituents, you could stay in your constituency and have your committee meetings by videoconference and therefore cut your travel time, which would allow you more time to meet with your constituents.

Mr. Danyluk: Exactly.

Mr. Graham: Which is an interesting point.

Mr. Danyluk: I think what happened is that we very much must stress representation. We are members of the Legislature, and our responsibility is to be representatives for our constituents. It is very hard for us to be representatives for our constituents when we're in Edmonton. We need to have a pulse on our community.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, Ray. We appreciate it. Bauni, did you . . .

Ms Mackay: No. My questions were all asked by others.

The Chair: Good. Thank you very much.

The St. Paul & District Chamber of Commerce. Well, Mary Anne, welcome. Were you here when I introduced the members of the panel?

Ms Finley: No, I'm sorry. I was a few minutes late.

The Chair: Not a problem. Mary Anne, every two elections this committee is put together to look at the electoral districts across the province. Two of us were appointed by the Executive Council, and two were appointed by the Leader of the Opposition in consultation with others. Our job is to make recommendations and have a final report back in the Speaker's hands by next March. Once we finish this week, then we're taking a trip to northern Alberta later on this month. Then we're going to have an interim report in everyone's hands early in September. You'll have a chance to look at that and tell us what you think of the job we've done. Then there will be another chance for you to give us a second bit of input if you think that's appropriate.

On my far right is Ernie Patterson. Ernie is the mayor of Claresholm and has been the mayor of Claresholm for 33 years. Glen Clegg, next to me, was the member of the Legislature for Dunvegan, which is in the Spirit River-Fairview area. Bauni Mackay is from Edmonton, and Bauni is the former president of the Alberta Teachers' Association. Doug Graham is from Calgary and is a well-known and well-respected lawyer in the city of Calgary. I'm the Ethics Commissioner for the provincial Legislature. The chairman can be the Ethics Commissioner or the Auditor General or a member of the judiciary or the head of an academic institution, and I guess it was the Ethics Commissioner's turn.

We're really pleased that you're here. Please, what we'd like you to do is tell us what's on your mind, and then we'll have some questions. Don't worry about getting into an argument with us, because it isn't our job to argue with what people are telling us. It's our job to make some recommendations. So have at us, please, Mary Anne.

10:34

Ms Finley: Okay. Well, thank you very much. I am Mary Anne Finley, and I'm the president of the St. Paul & District Chamber of

Commerce. On behalf of St. Paul and the chamber of commerce I would actually like to welcome you to St. Paul. We have in several meetings put together what we feel are the thoughts of our members, which I am going to read to you.

The St. Paul & District Chamber of Commerce wishes to see no changes to the current electoral boundaries in the Lac La Biche-St. Paul constituency. We point out that the boundary changed only a few elections ago. We believe that the riding is very functional as it is. Since the last boundary change we have worked hard to learn to work together and promote a solid, coherent population. We are seeing natural business patterns developing within the riding. What was once a we-and-they attitude is giving way to a more co-operative frame of mind. The flow of business from one end of the riding to the other is helping to foster a more inviting environment for economic and tourism development. A business climate like the one just mentioned is a tool that can be used to grow and build on what we have now. Any changes to the current boundaries would jeopardize this hard work.

We want to guard ourselves from being on the outside looking in. By this we mean that we want to ensure that the interests of the rural communities are taken into consideration when the decisions are being made in government. There has been a perception in the past that decisions made in Edmonton do not reflect the interests of the rural residents. The feedlot issue is a case in point. We want to ensure that we are not viewed as a playground for the urbanites in this province.

The stresses placed on a rural MLA are very real. Our MLA must travel three hours by vehicle to get from one end of this riding to the other. An urban MLA can physically walk across his or her riding. The time constraints on rural MLAs is also a factor not to be ignored. While urban MLAs can see their constituents on a nightly basis if needed, a rural MLA is often expected to give up his or her weekend to tend to riding matters. We do not intend to instigate an urban versus rural debate but only to shed light on a major discrepancy which has some value when we look at the issues like representation.

Our MLA must work with three counties, three towns, one village, one summer village, 13 hamlets, two school boards, five First Nations reserves, one health authority, and two Metis settlements. I hope I didn't miss anyone. All of those varied interests have specific needs, which an MLA must be familiar with and responsive to. One person to represent this vast array of interest is challenging and is made even more difficult by geographical barriers. We would not want to see more barriers set up.

The Lac La Biche-St. Paul riding has a very large First Nations population, which is critically important to the economies of the riding. There are approximately 12,000 First Nations people in this riding. These residents often do not show up on an official representation figure because of the jurisdiction issues. Nonetheless, a good MLA worth his or her salt should be aware of the importance that these communities have on the local economy.

Agriculture is still one of the major pillars in this province, and the rural farmers and ranchers provide much of the food consumed in the urban centres. Yet with this important economic contributor, smaller communities are seeing elevators closing, small businesses failing, and difficulty attracting professionals to their locations. It is our belief that agricultural value-added processing is one of the best hopes for economic growth in our constituency. We have some light processing now, which may have expansion possibilities. With the increase in niche market production such as bison, elk, wild boar, ostrich, and more we require an abattoir and processing plant located in the northeast. This could provide more economic opportunities and jobs.

Despite the Alberta advantage smaller communities still need

some developmental assistance. We in the Lac La Biche-St. Paul riding suffered disproportionately in the job cuts a few years ago. St. Paul, for example, was traditionally viewed as the regional service centre. We are still seeing cuts in government departments in our communities and less service being provided to area residents. The department of agriculture has recently announced new job cuts in St. Paul, which will hurt us even more. There is a perception that we in the rural ridings do not receive the same level of services that urban dwellers receive. We have difficulty attracting doctors, dentists, and other medical professions that add to the quality of life in a smaller town. We fear urbanization and the damage it can do to smaller centres. It will be even more difficult in future years. We want to provide an economic environment that is inviting for our children to return and have a prosperous life in our communities.

In summary, we wish to encourage the commission to consider carefully the information it is gathering and to ensure that any decision made will be made for practical reasons and not political ones. The St. Paul & District Chamber of Commerce wishes to emphasize that changes considered should not include dropping existing communities and exchanging them for others. This option we believe would not benefit the interests of a riding that is building strong relationships and developing natural business patterns and internal trade.

We'd like to thank you for the opportunity to be heard and will make ourselves available upon request to elaborate further. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Mary Anne, what business are you involved with in town?

Ms Finley: I have one of the local newspapers.

The Chair: Very Good.

Okay. Who has the first comment? Bauni, a question?

Ms Mackay: You gave an eloquent description of why your constituency should stay the same. I'm curious: do you believe that the number of rural constituencies should stay the same as well?

Ms Finley: I understand that as the urban centres grow, of course there's going to need to be more constituencies there. Then I feel that if that continues to happen, where does that leave us, especially with the area that we represent, even though we don't always represent the number of people. So I'm not sure whether or not our area, because of the distance that it takes, is one that could be expanded or deflated, whichever. There are some areas that are a little smaller. I'm not sure of the total numbers. We worked quite a few of the numbers when we were looking to see whether there were other areas that could join with someone else or whether we could join with someone else. We actually felt that our area was large enough as it was.

I'm not sure if I totally answered your question or not. I would like to see more rural representation of course, but I realize that that's not possible.

Ms Mackay: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much for your presentation. You realize that we have to do our work in such a way as to try to avoid a court challenge. You also realize, I guess, that we're limited to the 83.

Ms Finley: Yes.

Mr. Patterson: So we have to work there. Maybe this is an unfair question, and if you don't want to answer it, it's fine. If we did have to add a little bit to your riding, which direction do you think we should go?

Ms Finley: Probably south of the river. You would have to add from there, which would, you know, make St. Paul more of a centre. I guess that's what you would look at. We go right to the North Saskatchewan, so anything across there, you know. Then perhaps that would be Two Hills is what we were looking at.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chair, the reason I'm asking the question is because we have to do the best we can to even this out. You've already said that you realize that we have a very difficult task.

Ms Finley: Yes, I realize that.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay.
Mr. Clegg?

Mr. Clegg: I'm fine. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Graham?

Mr. Graham: Mr. Patterson asked my question. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. I know that Lac La Biche was rather a problematic relationship to start with. That's worked out pretty well? I guess we'll hear from Lac La Biche a little later on. I know we will.

10:44

Ms Finley: We feel as business people that the relationship is working, and we're looking at it as a business relationship, not a political relationship. We find in talking to some of our members that there is consistent trade back and forth between St. Paul and Lac La Biche, and that's why we stress that we would like to keep it as a business idea and nothing political.

The Chair: Okay. Mary Anne, thank you very much. I appreciate your frankness. You'll notice that my colleagues do enjoy asking difficult questions, but we have a difficult assignment. Thank you very much.

Ms Finley: Yes, I understand that. Thank you. I left copies at the front.

The Chair: Great.

Now we're very fortunate to have Her Worship Hansa Thaleshvar. You were here when I introduced the members of the panel; were you?

Mrs. Thaleshvar: Yes, in the last round I was here.

The Chair: And you understand the challenge we have?

Mrs. Thaleshvar: Yes, I do.

The Chair: So we're looking forward to your advice then.

Mrs. Thaleshvar: Well, I am not sure if I have any words of advice, but it's going to take a fair bit of work on the panel's part

from everybody's suggestions, and I am here to offer you some from the city of Cold Lake, what our views are and what our thoughts are.

First of all, I want to begin by thanking all of you for taking the time to come out to the communities and listen to the people and try to get their views. We are specifically of course interested in the Bonnyville-Cold Lake constituency because that's our riding. As you know, Bonnyville and Cold Lake are both growing communities, and so is the surrounding area. I think a number of points have been already made in the short time that I've been listening about the diversity and the large geographical area and the workload that an MLA has. Those are some of our concerns as well.

I think the other point I wish to add to that is that we have developed a very good relationship with our MLA, and he has worked very, very hard with the constituents in the area to make sure that the constituents' concerns and views and other interests are heard. He makes a very concerted effort to get out to meet with the councils and the other constituents that he needs to meet. That's our concern, that perhaps that's going to be lost.

You probably have read also in the paper from the federal census that the Cold Lake population was declining, and we will talk about that a little bit here as well. We encourage you to take into consideration a more current population than what has been reported through the federal census. First of all, I will focus my remarks on the population range that is allowed under the present legislation, which may or may not change after the review. Our sincere hope is that it will be at a level where we can still allow the rural areas to be represented and where also there is representation by population for the urban areas.

I'm somewhat distressed to hear that you are working with the limitation of 83 ridings, as Mr. Patterson pointed out. I'm very sorry to hear that. I wish there was not that restriction, because as we grow in the province, it's necessary that we don't fall into the same concerns that we have voiced federally, that Alberta is not being listened to because we don't have proper representation. If the tables are turned around, we can apply the same to rural ridings, that because there is no population, we will perhaps not have adequate representation in the Legislature. So that's my concern about the 83-riding restriction.

The other one of course is that when you listen to people, many are right now losing confidence in government and the people who are elected, because they feel that their voices are sometimes not being heard. One aspect of that is that the larger the riding becomes, the more removed the people feel: they are not a part of the democratic process, it's very difficult to get hold of their MLAs, and it's difficult to have their voices heard. I would suggest that we would take that into account as well.

The next point of course is the MLA's workload. A lot has been said about that.

The next one of course is the forecasted growth for the Cold Lake area. We have oil and gas and the defence industry. Both are on the upswing right now, and we are expecting a fair bit of work expansion that is going to occur in those areas. We have Four Wing Cold Lake, which is the biggest industry in Cold Lake, and right now they are at the discussion stage where it may turn Four Wing into a super wing, which means that some of the services that are located at other bases may be coming to Cold Lake, thereby increasing the population of the city of Cold Lake.

The Chair: Do you have any idea, Your Worship, of the time line for that decision?

Mrs. Thaleshvar: No. It's not finalized, but in speaking with our wing commander, it is – how should I say it? – a very strong possibility. We don't have a time line, but it should happen

hopefully before the next provincial election.

The Chair: You're tantalizing us.

Mrs. Thaleshvar: Yes. And that's the point: the population may not be at a point that the range of population may allow, but it may increase before the next provincial election to meet those guidelines as well.

With the next point of course the focus is the accurate population numbers, as I've been talking about. It is necessary that we have the right number or the most current number. The issue with our federal census has been that because of the residency requirement with the federal base residents, it somehow under Statistics Canada's criteria doesn't fit into that. We are in the process of doing the census right now. We have looked at the barracks, which were not counted in the last federal census. The number at this time is 198. We know that a number of other residents were not counted as well in the federal census that was done just recently. This concern we also had in 1996. Our number differed at that time from the municipal and federal census. As is pointed out in our brief, there was a discrepancy of over 300 people, and we are very confident that our census coming through the municipal one will be higher, exceeding the number that had been given through the federal census.

10:54

The biggest evidence that this number is underestimated through Stats Canada is that since 1996 we have had 400 homes built in the city of Cold Lake. We right now have zero vacancy to find a home or to find a rental accommodation. We have trouble understanding the number that the federal census has come up with, and this is why we are very much of the opinion that accurate numbers must be utilized when the commission is making a decision on the electoral boundaries review.

I have not gone into any other business pattern or people using the services in the area. The MD of Bonnyville, the town of Bonnyville and surrounding area, and Cold Lake work very strongly with each other. We have joint programs and agreements that are in place. Our people travel to communities. There are natural patterns as well for people to access services or businesses. Basically it's a riding that they have adapted to very, very well.

Your deliberation, as has been recognized, is going to be a challenging one and a difficult one. From the city of Cold Lake, if there is any way that we can add some constituencies to the Legislature to recognize the population growth in the urban area, I think we will support that.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mrs. Thaleshvar: Thank you.

The Chair: I'd just like to ask first a question going back to this defence industry growth. You don't think that there'll be anything very definitive on that before the end of this calendar year.

Mrs. Thaleshvar: We don't know that. Information is only released when it's almost definite to give us the indication of when this will happen, but we have been given the information that this is a strong possibility. It's been in the works for quite a while. It's not something new that's just starting to be discussed. So we are hopeful that it will happen soon.

Mr. Clegg: Just one quick question. Your remarks were that you feel that your constituency is going to grow, but we must use the 2001 census. This committee has a tough enough job – and we've

heard this many times – and I don't think we can start predicting, because the economy is what drives population. Whether it be in Calgary or Bonnyville or Cold Lake or Peace River or Grande Prairie, it doesn't matter. So we have to work with the figures, because if we tried to say, "Well, you know, some areas are going to grow and some areas are going to decline" – if we look at the growth in areas, we also have to look at the decline. We have areas that have certainly declined since the last federal census. Would you like to remark on what our job would be?

Mrs. Thaleshvar: I think that you have made the point very clearly that the population increases or declines based on the economy. All our economic indicators right now are that it is going to grow. If we can use any substantial indicators, they are the economic indicators from what's happening with the oil and gas industry and what's happening with the defence industry. So we're not just saying that it's going to grow. It's based on some definite information from the industry itself with their projects, with the investment from Imperial Oil and other companies. Imperial Oil has millions of dollars coming up in new projects. Over 70 percent of their population lives in Cold Lake, and they have continued to show that they would prefer to live there. That's one indicator.

With Four Wing there are other factors that are happening, and that's the NATO flying training in Canada, which is a major, major international training program. With their negotiation I believe that seven countries have signed up, and there are more in the process. We have the super base, of course. That has been in discussion many times. The major one that we're working on right now with the Alberta hub is the Aerospace Engineering Test Establishment. It is a world-class facility. They are working on bringing in different companies, and they've been successful in their business plan to do that. So it's all based on economic indicators.

Mr. Clegg: Thank you. I was in Bonnyville and Cold Lake once or twice, and they've certainly got the right name for the lake: Cold Lake.

Thank you.

Ms Mackay: As we look at the population figures – and you've already been told that we have to use the 2001 census numbers – Bonnyville-Cold Lake is 19.3 percent below the provincial average. If we had to move that boundary – and we obviously can't go east – which direction do you think would be the way to increase the size of the riding? I mean, even if you don't want that to happen, just give us a direction.

Mrs. Thaleshvar: I would have to say that at present I cannot answer that question, because we have to look at it closely, at where our close patterns are with the businesses and with the natural patterns of citizens coming in, using our services like medicine and businesses and recreation and all those kinds of services. We'll be able to give you a definitive answer after looking at that.

The Chair: Your Worship, I can see why you're a very successful mayor.

Mrs. Thaleshvar: I'm being honest.

The Chair: I appreciate what you're saying.
Mr. Patterson.

Mr. Patterson: Yes, Mr. Chair. I appreciate your comments on Statistics Canada. Far be it from me to defend Statistics Canada, but having experience in our own community, they use a little different

criteria. I don't know whether you've looked into this or not. With Census Canada, people who are temporarily in an area – and I don't know how long that is – are allowed to declare where they want to be counted. We ran into the same problem in Claresholm, because we do have a large mental health facility, with people coming and going. I just wanted to, if I could, point that out. There's always this contradiction because you can never predict when the census forms are going out. [interjection] I just wanted to make a statement this time. I'm following in my companion's footsteps.

Mr. Graham: Just a comment, Your Worship, and it's this. You shouldn't feel that these hearings are closed at this point or that your presentation is closed at this point. If you have a further submission to make, please get it into us in writing. That would be helpful, particularly the answer to Bauni's question, because I think that's going to be important to us.

The second comment I'd make – and it's very brief – is that the law that we're bound by is effective representation; it is not equal representation. You should rest assured that that's the concept we're wrestling with. The point has been made to us on many occasions that there are difficulties in rural ridings. We're fully aware of that. So that was just by way of, I suppose, comfort for you if nothing else.

Mrs. Thaleshvar: I appreciate that.

Mr. Graham: Thank you.

Mrs. Thaleshvar: If I may just take 30 seconds.

The Chair: You may even have a minute.

Mrs. Thaleshvar: Thank you. From the Stats Canada perspective I think that the major industries, like in Fort McMurray, have run into the same problem. However, the problem for municipalities is that when these people are not counted, we still have to provide the services at the municipal level, and that's where the whole issue comes in: how many people do we have here?

11:04

The Chair: That's where the rubber hits the pavement; isn't it?

Mrs. Thaleshvar: Exactly.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chair, I'd like to thank Her Worship for rescuing me. It really was a question. Thanks.

The Chair: I was going to say to my colleague to be more direct next time, but I won't.

Your Worship, on behalf of my colleagues on the committee thank you very much. We appreciate you being so frank with us.

The next presenter is Mr. Duane Young, mayor of the town of Lac La Biche. Following that, we'll take a short recess. Mr. Young.

Mr. Olthof: Actually, Mr. Young will not be appearing. It will be Gordon Elliott, Phil Lane, and Ray Ewaskiw.

The Chair: Mr. Elliott and company then.

Good morning. To the members of the panel, I would like to introduce to you Mr. Gordon Elliott. Mr. Elliott is going to be the lead spokesman and is going to introduce the group. I'm told that this is a combined venture between the town of Lac La Biche, the county, and also the chamber of commerce. I was asked, panel members, if it would be agreeable for the three of them to speak

together to show that in fact they really are united. I didn't consult with you, but I told them to go for it. So we welcome you.

I should take just a minute or two and tell you about the process we're involved in. Obviously we're a panel of five. After every two elections, under the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission Act there is to be a relook at the electoral boundaries. The chairman can be picked from a group of four or five: the Auditor General, the Ethics Commissioner, a member of the judiciary, or the head of an academic institution. Somehow it must have been the Ethics Commissioner's turn this time, so that's how come you got me as the chair, I gather. The chairman of Executive Council appointed two members, and the Leader of the Official Opposition, after consultation, appointed two members.

I would like to introduce my colleagues. To my left is Mr. Doug Graham, a well-respected lawyer in the city of Calgary. Next to me is Bauni Mackay. Bauni is a former president of the Alberta Teachers' Association, and she's from Edmonton. Mr. Glen Clegg was formerly a member of the Legislature for the Dunvegan area. That's the Spirit River-Fairview area. Ernie Patterson, the long-term mayor of Claresholm. As you know, Ernie has been the mayor of Claresholm for 30-some years. As chairman I'm extremely fortunate to have such an able and experienced group on the commission with me.

The challenge before us is this, gentlemen. There are to be 83 seats in the Legislature after this redistribution. We're basically charged with taking the 2001 census, which comes to a number of 2,980,000. You divide that by 83, and it comes very close to 35,951. So we've said that approximately 36,000 is what we're looking at if every riding was exactly the same, but obviously that isn't going to happen. Our job is to go out to Albertans, like we're doing. Last week we were in Calgary, Edmonton, and Red Deer. This week we're here, Wainwright later on today, and Drumheller, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, and then Wetaskiwin. Later this month we're going to go to Westlock, Edson, Slave Lake, Fort McMurray, and the Peace River country.

Right after that, we have to get our heads together and come up with some conclusions and recommendations. We want to have the interim report in the hands of the Speaker by the first week of September. Then I'm sure the Speaker will release that report to all Albertans. You'll have a chance to look at it and then give us your views. Then we're committed under the legislation to go to those areas in the province where there's a request to hold a second round of hearings. That'll likely be in the early part of December or the early part of January. We have to then have a final report in the Speaker's hands early in March. It's my biased hope as chairman that once the report is in the Speaker's hands – and I know there'll be some controversy – the Legislature will be as charitable to this report as the one done by Mr. Justice Wachowich, when they then virtually passed all the boundaries which were recommended. Those then become the boundaries for the next election, be it in 2004, 2005, or 2006.

So that's the procedure, gentlemen. We're very grateful for you taking the time to come and give us your views. Without any further ado, please have at us, Gordon.

Mr. Elliott: Okay. Thank you very much. I think that first of all I'll introduce my mates here. This is Phil Lane. He's the deputy reeve of Lakeland county. Ray Ewaskiw is the representative for the chamber of commerce. What we'd like to do is I will read the first half of this presentation, Phil will read the second half, and then Mr. Ewaskiw has a separate presentation, if that's okay with you.

The Chair: A hundred percent.

Mr. Elliott: On behalf of Lakeland county and the town of Lac La Biche we appreciate the opportunity to provide our comments to this commission's review of the provincial electoral boundaries. The town and the county are located in the northern portion of the Lac La Biche-St. Paul constituency and are supportive of continuing its current boundaries.

The Supreme Court of Canada has stated that "the purpose of the right to vote enshrined in Section 3 of the Charter is not equality of voting power per se, but the right to 'effective representation.'" The right to vote therefore comprises many factors, of which equity is but one. This section does not guarantee equality of voting power. Effective representation and good government in this country compel that factors other than voter parity, such as geography and community interests, be taken into account in settling electoral boundaries.

Accessibility to an MLA is critical to the success of government. In an urban centre public transportation systems and geographically small divisions mean that all persons are within minutes of their MLA's office or an appointed meeting place. City MLAs reside continually within their ridings, with a face-to-face accessibility that other Albertans simply do not have. Typically, urban MLAs have untold more hours to meet, consult, listen, and troubleshoot, while many of their rural colleagues are in travel both to and from their electoral divisions and within them. Simply put, the farther from the seat of government and the larger the geographic area, the more an MLA has to work to match the representation of those closer to that seat of government.

An MLA's time is further impacted by the number of different boards, councils, and other local authorities within the electoral divisions. In our case the constituency consists of three counties: Lakeland, Smoky Lake, and St. Paul; three towns: Elk Point, Lac La Biche, and St. Paul; one village, Vilna; a summer village, Horseshoe Bay; and 10 different hamlets. Further, it contains two Metis settlements, Buffalo Lake and Kikino, and five First Nations: Beaver Lake Cree, Frog Lake, Goodfish Lake, Heart Lake, and Saddle Lake. As you can see, there's a wide diversity of municipal interests to consider in this one riding. We believe that diversity is typical of most rural ridings.

If the province wishes to go to one person, one vote, this riding might have to be about 50 percent bigger in territory than it is now. It is already close to 180 miles from one end to the other. The larger the riding the harder it will be for people to access. That, I believe, is an important part of effective representation. The government must be answerable to the people of this province in assuring effective representation for our region.

As a result, there is no factor more consistently essential to this province's well-being than balancing its vital urban interests with its vital rural interests and ensuring that each has as close to effective representation as a one-House system can give. Effective representation from a rural perspective means in part that rural voices must be heard in balance with urban ones. It is a truism that when diverse interests share a balance or near balance of power, they are more likely to be co-operative.

11:14

Mr. Lane: Mr. Chairman, committee members, just a comment before I get started. You were mentioning figures in the area of 35,000. I'd like to point out that Lac La Biche-St. Paul is already at 32,278.

We must not forget that all MLAs, rural and urban, serve their regions as much as their populations. Individuals come and go, but roads, bridges, hospitals, tourist facilities, seniors' facilities, and numerous other benefits remain. If we ignore the regional nature of representation by focusing too narrowly on population quotients,

rural Alberta will lose its effective voice and suffer immeasurable losses. Ultimately, this will impact on all Albertans.

The case for effective representation as opposed to representation by population has been clearly made and has been recognized by the courts. For instance, how can citizens of Edmonton or Calgary possibly hope to understand issues like agriculture or the implications of forestry, oil and gas development, as well as the people who actually live where the development is occurring? We as rural residents can also gain from the knowledge base of our urban neighbours.

We would encourage your commission to follow a few principles in your deliberations. Firstly, maintain the integrity of municipal boundaries. It is important that citizens with a community of interest be included in the same constituency wherever possible. Alberta's municipal boundaries reflect those interests more closely than any other measure, and we would urge the commission to avoid splitting municipalities among different constituencies if at all possible.

Secondly, think of people instead of numbers. Within reason, this is not about how many electors reside in a constituency. It is about how people can be assured of reasonable access to their elected representative.

I have offered a third suggestion. How can people expect consistency in representation from an area that could be experiencing its fourth change in 20 years?

In conclusion, if our government's mandate is to represent all its peoples and regions in the best way it can, that means carefully weighing interests in establishing our provincial system. We would ask this commission to preserve the balance Alberta has historically recognized, that rural regions in a one-House system will only experience effective representation if population is but one factor in many.

Both Lakeland county and the town of Lac La Biche are in support of continuing the current boundaries for the Lac La Biche-St. Paul constituency. We would ask this commission to preserve rural Alberta's voice within the Legislature.

A further comment of my own that is not on your brief. It is a fact of life that rural urbanites are becoming a larger representative group in rural areas. We are aware of this. The needs of both should be blended, not separated, so as not to lose their unique identities. This present constituency reflects that blend. If it isn't broken, don't fix it.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I might just before I ask Ray to make a comment or two – in my summary of our challenge I neglected to say that the commission does have the ability to have some variation from that 36,000. We can go up as far as 25 percent, but with the last commission I think every constituency was within 15 percent other than one, and that was at 16 percent. That's a kind of plus and minus thing. I got thinking partway through the presentation that that's likely a point that I hadn't made. My colleagues are getting sick and tired of hearing me say this so often, but it is important that you understand that we do have that capacity.

Mr. Elliott: I believe we're at 4 percent.

The Chair: I've seen 10.

Mr. Elliott: Yeah. You're right.

The Chair: Ray, thank you for coming.

Mr. Ewaskiw: Mr. Chairman and members of the commission, the Lac La Biche & District Chamber of Commerce would like to take

this opportunity to inform you of its position on the electoral boundaries revisions. The chamber feels that the best representation for Lac La Biche and region is with the Lac La Biche-St. Paul electoral division. It is our preference that the boundaries remain the same.

The Lac La Biche region has undergone many political changes in the recent past. In 1995 the Lac La Biche rural region changed from ID 18 to the MD of Bonnyville. In 1998 again the region faced another change as the MD of Bonnyville changed to Lac La Biche county. In 1993 the electoral district of Athabasca-Lac La Biche changed to the Lac La Biche-St. Paul district.

Due to the overwhelming political restructuring, it is the chamber's concern that another political change would not be beneficial and would be very detrimental to the area. The constituency needs an opportunity to solidify those communities within the region. If I might add a bit of an analogy at this point – it's not in the text – the foster child analogy, where you're simply shifted from one family to another, really not having the ability to find its own roots and its own determination.

The chamber also has concerns with the integrity of rural representation. The chamber feels that a boundary change based solely on population figures will not allow for fair representation. For example, as was mentioned earlier, in the Lac La Biche-St. Paul constituency there are 18 municipalities, four school boards, five First Nations, two Metis settlements, one health authority, two colleges, seven seniors' homes, and four chambers of commerce. In contrast, the constituency of Edmonton-Meadowlark deals with one municipality, two school boards, one health authority, no colleges, no Metis settlements or First Nations, and one chamber of commerce. The urban areas do not face the same representation challenges simply because the physical area is so condensed. There cannot be fair representation when the issues and concerns are so drastically different and the interests are so diverse.

Currently we are very satisfied with the representation we have been receiving from our MLA, Mr. Ray Danyluk.

The Chair: Did he write this?

Mr. Ewaskiw: No.

The Chair: Sorry.

Mr. Ewaskiw: That's okay.

We feel that he is representing the constituency fairly, and his interests lay with the community at large. He recognizes that there are different issues facing the rural population versus that of the urban vote. He has a unique ability to work with shared communities that each face their own individual issues.

Again, we respectfully request that the electoral divisions remain as they are so that the communities involved can retain some cohesiveness and continue to develop our rural communities' interest. A sincere thank you on behalf of Mr. Brad Musat, president of the Lac La Biche & District Chamber of Commerce.

11:24

The Chair: Well, thank you very much. I can say that this is the first time we've had a group representing the business interests, the rural interests, and the town's interests make this kind of approach to us. I'm not trying to prejudge the success of it. It's an effective way of letting us know what you think. We have had situations where we've had towns saying one thing and the county saying something else and not hearing from the chamber of commerce at all. So this is a good approach, and I commend you on that very, very much.

Who has the first comment?

Mr. Lane: We appreciate the fact that you recognize that, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Clegg: Just a very quick comment. I appreciate it, because you took the words out of my mouth, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Oh, I apologize.

Mr. Clegg: Certainly it makes our job easier when we know that there is more than one municipality, because when you get one person saying this and somebody there and somebody down the middle saying something else, it makes it very difficult, and being a rural MLA for many years, I understand the difficulty in representing rural Alberta.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chair, I'll ask a question this time.

The Chair: Good.

Mr. Patterson: Again, a commendation for your joint presentation. My question is: have you also formed a regional economic development initiative? Are you all in the same one?

Mr. Elliott: Yes.

Mr. Lane: Yes.

Mr. Ewaskiw: Yes. [interjections]

Unidentified Speaker: We just can't help but work together on this.

Mr. Elliott: Yes, we have. We have an RCDC in Lac La Biche, and it basically has been contracted to work with the bodies of the area to develop that area, and the chamber of commerce works as part of that organization as well.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you.

Ms Mackay: You talk about the diversity of municipal interests, and you say to think about people instead of numbers. I'm just curious. With the exception of the aboriginal/Metis component of your population what kind of diversity do you have among the population of the constituency in terms of socioeconomic, ethnic, linguistic differences? Would you say that you're generally homogeneous, or is there a big range?

Mr. Elliott: We have a wide, wide range. Mayor Young refers to our area as a mini United Nations. We have a number of very identifiable communities within our area. We have the people from Plamondon. We have the White Russians from north of Plamondon. We have Italian communities out in Hylo and Venice. Add some more.

Mr. Lane: Le village de Plamondon, c'est plutot des Francais.

The Chair: This may be . . .

Mr. Lane: Do you want me to go back to English now?

The Chair: You beat me there.

Mr. Lane: But, Mr. Chairman, I've been practising for a whole week.

The Chair: If you'd given us your script, it would've helped us.

Unidentified Speaker: I appreciate this, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Lane: I guess you understand. Plamondon is predominantly French. We also have a large Lebanese community that goes back historically in the area, mink farmers, and they're a very large part of the community. I happen to be a Metis myself, not of a western persuasion but eastern. We're the ones that like blockading bridges. I think they're called Mohawks or something like that. That's my ancestry.

So, yeah, the diversity is definitely there, and all these people have to be addressed and their cultural needs and their identity with the community, and I know that the county and the town support promoting their identity and their recognition. I can honestly say as a fact that it's hard to develop an identity with a government because of all the changes in the last 20 years. I can't help but throw that in, because it's true.

Ms Mackay: Are several of those communities recent immigrants, would you say, or two or three generations removed?

Mr. Lane: I would say that they're mostly historical, generations removed.

Mr. Elliott: But they have preserved their cultural community. They haven't blended in and sacrificed their past. They've worked hard to preserve their cultural roots, all of the communities.

Mr. Lane: I encourage you, Ms Mackay, to visit our area and allow us to give you a tour, and you'd actually think you were visiting five or six countries on one bus.

Ms Mackay: Actually I'm quite familiar with the area and I sort of knew your answer, but I wanted you to bring that out, because I think that is an important consideration.

Mr. Lane: Thank you for allowing us to shine the light on it.

Mr. Graham: Just a comment and question, Mr. Chairman, and it's this. You've made your points very effectively, and I think the points that you've made make enormous sense with respect to your constituency. However, you have to understand our position. We have 83 pieces of a jigsaw puzzle to work out here, and it's even worse than that, because it strikes me that the pieces of this puzzle keep moving on us. They keep growing and shrinking and so on and so forth. So from the perspective of the presentation you've made, it's very good; it makes tremendous sense from the point of view of your constituency. But from our point of view we haven't of course made up our minds; we haven't drawn the lines. There may be factors extraneous to your constituency that may affect what we have to do here.

Getting to the point, Mr. Chairman, it's this. The question that's been asked by Bauni Mackay on numerous occasions – and it's a very good question. We understand your point, but if we had to do something, what would that be? Believe me; we do totally understand your point. But what you have to understand is that your constituency may have to move because of factors beyond the borders. You know, you may choose not to answer that question, but if you don't, then you risk us not knowing what your wishes would be in the event that we are forced into that situation. You see what I'm saying?

Mr. Ewaskiw: If I may, in response to that, would it be possible – and I'm not attempting to answer it. Would there be some consultation, then, prior to making that decision with the respective constituency or the members of it?

Mr. Graham: Oh, absolutely, because the first report is a draft report.

Mr. Ewaskiw: Okay. So perhaps we could wait until that point.

Mr. Graham: I'd just like you to understand and bear that in mind.

Mr. Ewaskiw: I understand.

Mr. Graham: The borders aren't going to be just affected by your constituency.

The Chair: As you go home today, think about that. If there is a logical area where you could do that kind of thing, please let us know; will you?

Mr. Lane: Well, Mr. Graham, if I may, sir, I realize you have a heck of a task ahead of you when I look at these numbers. However, when you do look at the numbers, it seems that the greater amount of work that has to be done is more in the urban areas. How you're going to meld or work out seats in Calgary and Edmonton to take in some rural influence is quite a daunting task. I guess that being from Lac La Biche, that's where I hang my hat and that's the one I care about. To answer your question, I think we're in agreement that if there has to be any movement, towards the west would probably be the most appropriate, and you've probably already thought of that. Now, I say that on the grounds that it may tend to incriminate me.

Mr. Graham: Phil, I fully understand that, and it may be that nothing will have to be done, but we just don't know yet.

Mr. Lane: Yeah. I understand.

The Chair: Well, gentlemen, I had the privilege of sitting in the Legislature with Dam Bouvier, Ron Tesolin, and Mike Maccagno, and this area has never been short of effective and outspoken representation. I better appreciate this morning why they had to be that way or you wouldn't have elected them, and they were on both sides of the House too.

Thank you very much for your presentation.

Mr. Lane: Thank you for your time.

The Chair: Good. Now we'll take a short five-minute break, and then we'll hear from the MLA for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, Mr. Ducharme.

[The commission adjourned from 11:34 a.m. to 11:44 a.m.]

The Chair: Okay. Right now I invite Bonnyville-Cold Lake MLA Denis Ducharme to make his presentation to us. Denis.

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you, Mr. Clark, and good morning to everyone. I'd like to thank the commission for the opportunity to discuss why changes to the boundary of my constituency, Bonnyville-Cold Lake, should not occur. I'd like to state at this time and on behalf of my constituents that any changes will not benefit my constituency and that there are a number of reasons why changes

should not be made.

The key reason, which I will fully illustrate, is that the constituency of Bonnyville-Cold Lake is experiencing a high growth rate both in population and in industry, and proposals for development in many sectors show that our growth will continue. Bonnyville-Cold Lake is growing quite rapidly, and the need to change the electoral boundaries is significantly less than it was after the last election in the early part of 2001. Doing so would adversely affect the proper representation of my constituents for years to come.

Following the 2001 federal census, it was calculated that the constituency was at 19.3 percent below the electoral threshold. This census confirmed our population to be 29,002. Currently the electorally representable balance by law has to be a certain percentage of 36,000. Today we are not only within the acceptable range, but by the time the next election rolls around, we will be even closer to the provincial average.

The overall population of the constituency has grown a total of 3 percent from 1996 to 2001. This calculation of 3 percent growth was taken even before the astronomical increase in the amount of residential development which happened in the city of Cold Lake and the town of Bonnyville as well as before many industrial developments were announced just this past April by major oil companies in my constituency. Given that there was an overall increase in both goods and service production in Bonnyville-Cold Lake between 1998 and 2001 and several major oil production developments which have been proposed or are ongoing since 1997, the population has and will continue to increase.

A perfect illustration of how quickly my constituency is growing can be taken from the increase in housing and development statistics in the town of Bonnyville and the city of Cold Lake. Bonnyville developed 17 single-family units in 2001, and they are expecting to develop around 40 in 2002. That would be a 135 percent increase in housing development in one year. As well, there's potential for the Millennium housing subdivision in Bonnyville to develop over 100 housing units.

Cold Lake's building statistics show great increases as well. New residential development jumped from 27 in 1999 to 72 in 2000 and then to 117 in 2001.

The Chair: Would those be development permits, Denis?

Mr. Ducharme: Those are new-home starts.

New residential building permits have already reached 38 as of May 10 of this year. This is a considerable increase in housing development in Cold Lake.

These figures make it difficult to believe that the population of Cold Lake was calculated to have decreased by 2 percent by the federal census released in 2001. Surely the rapid increase in the housing development would show that the population of Cold Lake has indeed increased since the census was conducted last year. Not only was the federal census conducted before Cold Lake experienced major growth last year and this year already, but federal regulations did not count the single-quarter barracks of the air force in the community.

In order to get a more realistic report on services needed to support the growing community and on how extensive the community development is in Cold Lake, the city has undertaken its own census and has included all of the residents of the busy air force base. The preliminary census, which will be completed by the end of June, indicates that they will exceed the federal census figures of 2001. The census will illustrate that the number of people living in Cold Lake has indeed increased significantly.

There are people coming from all over the world to invest in Alberta's industries, especially oil and gas. With all the projected

development in this sector and in my constituency in particular many great job opportunities will occur in Bonnyville-Cold Lake. There is a statistical pattern, which has been proven, that when development occurs in a community, with every four industry jobs created, the addition of one job in the service sector also occurs. The booming oil and gas industry will continue to attract a number of businesses, which have moved in to support and provide services to this industry. Overall the constituency averaged 2 percent greater growth in the development of business establishments from 1998 to 2001 than the average growth experienced in Alberta.

The Alberta Business Monitor reported in September of 2001 that there was an 18 percent overall growth in all industry in Bonnyville-Cold Lake, comprising a 20 percent increase in the goods-producing sector and an 18 percent increase in the service-producing sector from 1998 to 2001. These numbers only included businesses or enterprises already existing in the Bonnyville-Cold Lake constituency as of 2001. I would like to stress that these numbers do not take into account the millions of dollars' worth of investment in industry and other sectors which have been proposed and announced as of 2002. The March 2002 Inventory of Alberta Regional Projects report listed \$6.18 billion worth of oil, gas, and oil sands investment to be completed in the region of Bonnyville-Cold Lake. Ladies and gentlemen, this is an incredible number, which will attract people to the oil sands in my area for years to come. The March 2002 Inventory of Alberta Regional Projects also counted \$18.5 million in agriculture and related investments and \$8.3 million in infrastructure investment, again millions of dollars in investments which will impact my communities.

We also have over \$10 million worth of approved institutional developments and upgrades to accommodate the growing population and influx of families through the construction of new schools in Glendon, Cold Lake, and Ardmore. As well, the city of Cold Lake is receiving a new RCMP building, which is presently under construction. New schools and bigger RCMP buildings are being built to address the needs of our communities. Such expansion doesn't fit with the proposed need for the boundaries of Bonnyville-Cold Lake to change in any way.

Another factor about increasing the size of the boundary is that it will skew the close and highly efficient working relationship the MLA office has with the MD of Bonnyville. Having the municipal district aligned closely with the provincial electoral boundary has allowed more collaboration with project development and gaining of industry investment into the region. Such efficiency would be lost and responding to the needs of the constituents in a growing population would be more difficult if these boundaries were not so similar.

Presently our local municipal governments in Bonnyville-Cold Lake are collaborating in several areas to combat some of the infrastructure problems the region is facing due to the exploding population and rapid development of industry. Rental availability is standing at zero percent, and landlords are hosting interviews to rent out their spaces as they become available. Many growing companies, especially in the oil industry, have complained to my office, the MD office, and other local governments that there is no available housing to rent for new families who have moved into the area to work. Even suitable housing is difficult to develop fast enough to accommodate all the families which are moving to Bonnyville-Cold Lake as well as all the housing problems of our region. There is an adjustment period to match need with demand, and right now we are facing a lack of housing supply, which we are addressing.

With this in mind, the pressure to work together to ensure institutional development is also occurring as well as development of recreation facilities to maintain the lifestyle levels of both new

and old constituents.

As the MLA for Bonnyville-Cold Lake I am aware of how much progress has occurred and how much growth can be reasonably assumed to happen in the future with all the projected development in the constituency. I must stress that concerns of being under the provincial average will disappear sooner than the return of another election. Our economy is picking up speed, and as more jobs in both industry and service sectors are created, families will move into the area and drive up the population. If the boundaries are extended, it is highly probable that there will be too many constituents for one MLA to represent them properly and effectively besides the larger landmass which would be added.

The final point that I would like to stress to the commission is something that is very prevalent in Alberta and continues to become a more pressing issue as the urban populations of the Edmonton-Calgary regions grow at a rapid pace as well. If more electoral boundaries are shifted to accommodate their increasing population, there will be a squeezing out of the representation of rural constituencies in the Legislative Assembly. It is wrong to have such a high representation of urban constituencies in the Assembly when a greater area of the province is rural. Though we need to acknowledge that the urban population of Alberta is increasing on the whole, we cannot ignore the rights of rural Albertans and the important role they play in the development of this province. We need to ensure that a balance is maintained for the province to function properly and that development occurs in all places and not just in the urban centres. This point would prove to be beneficial to all Albertans as we must work together to responsibly build our economy.

I hope the arguments that I have presented to this commission are clear in proving that any changes to the electoral boundaries of Bonnyville-Cold Lake are not going to benefit my constituents. By capturing a greater area, the population will soon be too great to manage effectively by one representative. It is not their wish nor mine to have their needs slip through the cracks when they are already facing challenging times due to such rapid growth. This could be an exciting time for the constituency of Bonnyville-Cold Lake as there is much opportunity created in the near future. Please allow me to help these people realize the economic and lifestyle potential that is possible by keeping the electoral boundaries as they are.

Thank you very much for your time and for your consideration.

11:54

The Chair: Did you want to touch on this one also?

Mr. Ducharme: I did not keep a copy, but I have brought forward on behalf of the MD of Bonnyville their submission. Unfortunately, they were unable to bring a representative, but I think that they'll state their case in written form as to the concerns that they face if the boundaries were to be expanded.

The Chair: Okay. That's the presentation from Mr. Ducharme and also from the MD of Bonnyville. Who'd like to ask the first question?

Mr. Patterson: I appreciate your submission. It's well put together, and I'd like your reaction to this. We have the situation in Calgary-Shaw, for example, where there are 85,000 people that are represented by Mrs. Ady, and we're limited to the 83 constituencies. We're looking at this constituency being 19 percent under. I guess what I really wanted to ask you is: if we have to do something with your constituency in order to recognize the pressure from the other areas of the province, where should we go?

Mr. Ducharme: First of all, I'd like to just raise two points in relation to comparing a rural constituency with, say, Calgary-Shaw. I think the presentation previous to mine from the community of Lac La Biche certainly did demonstrate to you that the role of a rural MLA is very different in terms of the different clientele. I didn't want to bring my situation into the report, because I'm sure you've heard it all over the place as you probably went through. I do have two First Nations reserves, I have two Metis settlements, I have a city, I have a town, I have a village, I have hamlets, and I have four different school boards: all the different groups. So in most cases when there are educational problems or infrastructure concerns that take place in the city of Calgary, those respective councils are large enough and have a strong enough base that they're basically dealing directly with the minister responsible. So the MLA is basically left out of the loop. That is different in rural Alberta. The MLA is part of the team in terms of being able to devise the lobby effort.

I understand that in Cindy's case the population is very large. Somehow there might have to be some restructuring that will take place. If you look at your maps and the figures, there are some constituencies within Calgary that could use a little bit more people, so there might be some sharing. To go and make a rural area larger: I have a tremendous land base to take care of, and it's hard to get around. If I have to be at a meeting in one area in the morning, in some cases I have over two hours of traveling time to go from one end to the other besides the traveling time that we incur coming back from the Legislature to meet with our constituents.

I know that you have a very difficult choice. If, say, my constituency had to become larger to accommodate people, I'd probably recommend that you look at going towards the southern part of it, where maybe another First Nation could be moved into the area. I know that you're bound to look at the 2001 census. We all really know that it's skewed. They didn't take care of the barracks. We know that our area has grown tremendously over the past year, and we've got over \$6 billion in projects that have been announced this year, so to think that the population isn't going to increase dramatically is basically having our head in the sand.

So I think we've got to be looking at that in terms of having to look at the future rather than going and rejigging something that eight years from now we're going to change again. I don't think it's fair to the people of Alberta to have to face that type of challenge. I think Lac La Biche demonstrated it well when they said that there have been four changes in the past 20 years and that that makes it difficult. It's emotional on people. It's confusing. I certainly hope that as you go through your deliberations, you will review that.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chair, I'd just like to point out that one of the problems we have, as the chair pointed out earlier in his opening remarks, is that we have to try and do this to avoid a court challenge with our decisions. For example, Calgary-Shaw will probably in two years have another 18,000 people in it. I'm just pointing out the problem we have, because when we finish with this report, we have to be able to do it to avoid a court challenge.

Thank you.

Mr. Ducharme: Oh, I understand. Thank you.

Mr. Graham: Just a comment. It's very clear to me that a lot of people from your constituency, Mr. Ducharme, believe that the census is inaccurate, and that has come through loud and clear. I think that for us to take account of anything other than the census, we are going to need very good evidence that that was the case, so I'm just stressing that to you. To me at least that would involve presenting new figures, and it would also involve presenting to us the rationale for those figures – in other words, how the new census

was done – so that we could satisfy ourselves that indeed other figures that were presented were accurate. It wouldn't probably be good enough to just say, "We've done a census and here's our number," because we've got the federal census. So if you are going to present that number to us, I would encourage you as well to present the evidence underlying the new census that you'd prepare.

The Chair: Following along that, Denis, could I ask you also to give us some kind of figures? I think you said that the four-by-four barracks at the base weren't counted. How many people are involved in that?

Mr. Ducharme: I've tried very hard to get that information, but we didn't want to come here and throw out some false figures. The census will be complete hopefully – possibly within the next couple of weeks we should have some very strong preliminary figures that would be coming through on that, and I think we would be able to put up an argument. I know, as far as your commission, that verification with the federal government if in fact the barracks were excluded should be proof enough that, hey, they weren't done.

The Chair: If you could get something from, dare I say, the commanding officer of the base saying that kind of thing, it would seem to me that that kind of thing would help us.

Mr. Ducharme: That's not a problem.

The Chair: And also some as far as the towns are concerned. Doug is right. We do have a dilemma here.

Anyone else?

Mr. Clegg: Just two very quick questions, Denis. I understand – and I haven't looked at the map specifically in Bonnyville – that you do border on the Saskatchewan border.

Mr. Ducharme: That's right. I guess we could have added "into" if we want to amalgamate into Saskatchewan.

Mr. Clegg: Well, we're thinking about that but not seriously.

The reason I bring this up, Denis, is because if we do have a population – you know, we've got to justify any, so I'm just using that.

Secondly, how long does it take you to drive to Edmonton?

Mr. Ducharme: Two and a half hours.

Mr. Clegg: Thank you very much.

Mr. Ducharme: If I could, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to add that if the commission has to look in terms of moving the boundaries of Lakeland-Cold Lake farther west, I'd suggest that you take a little bit of time to inform yourselves. As the group from Lac La Biche indicated, when ID 18 was disbanded, it was brought in together as a group with the MD of Bonnyville. That was one of the first committees I served on as a rookie MLA back in 1998, the restructuring of the MD of Bonnyville. We soon found in our work as a committee that we had to take trading patterns. It's a different world as we crossed those borders. So we've done that. We've done that type of marriage in the past and then had to go and basically form a divorce. There's a wide expanse of land where there'll be very little population to be gained, but the cultures between the two communities or the two constituencies are very different. You know, that would be a point that I'd like you to consider.

12:04

The Chair: Okay. Seeing no further questions, Denis, thank you very much.

Mr. Ducharme: Thank you.

The Chair: I appreciate your usual straightforward, no monkey work approach. Thank you very much.

I'd now like to ask the mayor of the town of Elk Point to make a presentation.

Mr. Goyan: We don't have the mayor. The mayor is busy today. I'm Myron Goyan, the administrator of Elk Point.

The Chair: Okay, Myron. Thank you very much for coming. You were here when I introduced the group before. You know the task we have. Have at us, please.

Mr. Goyan: First of all, I'd like to thank the commission for allowing Elk Point to make a presentation. I have to apologize for our mayor, who is gainfully out to the 4-H achievement day and cap sale today.

The Chair: That's a very important reason.

Mr. Goyan: That's right. Our youth are our next group.

Anyway, ours is really short, as we made a presentation. After receiving the brochure on recommendations for changes in the electoral division boundaries in the province, it appeared that rural seats would be lost to the larger urban centres. We therefore would suggest that the 21 electoral divisions in Calgary be realigned to give an average of 41,851 per riding, which is 3,100 over the acceptable range, or you could move two seats from Edmonton to Calgary to give an average of 38,624 per riding in the two cities.

Although four of the rural ridings are marginally under the range and four are over, we would recommend realigning the ridings to meet the acceptable range without removing the rural seats for the benefit of the large urban centres. Presently the rural MLAs have a hard enough time serving their constituencies, and adding additional area to their ridings will not make it easier.

The Chair: Okay, sir. You're in which constituency?

Mr. Goyan: We're in Lac La Biche-St. Paul. We're sitting at minus 10, I think, right now. The rural ones average about 33,464, where the two cities would be that 38,624. I know that the old provincial average was 35,951. So we're in support of the global picture: keeping rural and urban at the same level rather than moving seats from one to the next. We did have a conversation. We had breakfast with the representative from Calgary-Shaw, and our MLA asked her how long it would take her to campaign. She said: oh, two or three weeks. He said: I'll be lucky in four years to visit all my constituency. So you can see the difference, like Mr. Ducharme brought up about the various school boards in every municipality. But removing rural, we are totally opposed to it, as our letter indicates.

The Chair: Good. I appreciate that you're straightforward and to the point.

In the second paragraph, in the second line should that not be "over" rather than "under," or am I reading it wrong? Isn't that 3,100 above the accepted range?

Mr. Goyan: Well, the upper limit of 44,939. In the brochure that

you sent out, there was an acceptable range of 26,963 to 44,939, so if we realign those to about 41,000, that would give you about a 3,100 difference.

The Chair: Okay.

Who's got one or two short, snappy questions for a short, snappy presentation?

Mr. Goyan: Well, you're running behind schedule, so I figured a nice short one.

The Chair: Anyone?

Well, I think we know where you stand. You don't want any changes. You want the same number of rural ridings as there are now, and the urban folks will have a higher quotient. Thank you.

Okay. The mayor of Bonnyville, please. Her Worship was not here when I introduced the members of the commission. Your Worship, Ernie Patterson to my right, the Mayor of Claresholm; Glen Clegg, who was a member of the Assembly from Dunvegan for a number of years for the Spirit River-Fairview area; Bauni Mackay from Edmonton, the former president of the Alberta Teachers' Association; and Doug Graham, a well-known lawyer in the city of Calgary.

Kathryn, what we're about. Well, you told me that you understood the nasty task we have. Every eight years under the law the boundaries in Alberta are looked at by a committee such as this, and then they make recommendations back. Our interim report will be available in September, and then you'll have a chance to look at that. Then we'll have another set of hearings in December or January, and our final report will be in the Speaker's hands early in March. So we look forward to hearing your presentation.

Ms Wiebe: Thank you and good morning. I appreciate this opportunity to be here and to speak on behalf of the Bonnyville-Cold Lake constituency. I do believe you know that we will request that no changes be made to the Bonnyville-Cold Lake riding. Our position is that rural Alberta must be well represented, and I want to reiterate perhaps the entire presentation that our MLA, Denis Ducharme, made. I think that he convincingly put out in detail the arguments for why it should remain as it is.

The concerns that the town of Bonnyville would like to express are as follows: the need for effective representation, the differences in travel, institutions, and agencies between rural and urban ridings, and the expanding population of our area. Effective representation should be measured not only by the number of eligible voters in an area but by the effort needed to represent those voters. Transportation, area, and communications are all factors to be considered in determining the size of the constituency. The concern about the undue dilution of the urban vote must be viewed within the context of fair and effective representation of the rural electors.

Although the current census shows the riding to be somewhat below the average of the riding populations across the province, there are I believe several important factors that need to be addressed and should be appreciated. The first is that the population of the town of Bonnyville has increased by 11.9 percent in the last five years, and I believe that ours is one of the fastest growing areas. The second is that the population of the MD of Bonnyville has increased by 5.5 percent in the last five years, and we are all aware that despite the census of the city of Cold Lake, it is rapidly growing. It's probably one of the fastest growing areas in the entire province. This above-average growth is due in part to the increased activity of the heavy oil industry in the area, and as more plant additions are developed, more employees are required.

Mr. Ducharme gave you a full picture, I believe, and I have some

that probably are not additions, so I will just name several of the planned upgrades: Canadian Natural Resources, \$225 million they are planning from 1996 to 2002, money being put into their planned upgrades; EnCana Corporation, \$767 million, \$844 million; Exxon Mobil, a hundred million; Husky, \$450 million; Imperial Oil with its newest Mahkeses project, \$650 million; Numac Energy, \$30 million; Suncor Energy, \$10 million. For Suncor Energy the first one was the OPTI, and the other one is \$100 million. So these are all in our area, the Bonnyville-Cold Lake constituency. I think that this speaks very loudly for ourselves. Even if we are a minus 19 at this point for population, we are a very rapidly growing area, and we need that.

The wide expanse of the territory is a concern to us, because if our MLA is to go and make sure that everybody is represented, then rep by pop becomes – I don't want to say that it's not relevant, but we do have to take that with some measure of acceptance.

12:14

The Chair: I think that's why there's the 25 percent variance. The last commission had its recommendations up to 15 percent. One was 16, I believe. So that gives you some idea of the ballpark.

Ms Wiebe: Okay.

So basically that is it as succinctly as I can put it. The information presented today is in support of our recommendation that there be no change to the Bonnyville-Cold Lake riding boundaries. We are confident that you will support this position, and we certainly hope so. So I thank you very much. I will submit this, but we will send it to you because I have made notes on it.

The Chair: When we talk to your MLA and others, can you help us out with any information that can really be substantiated on this population issue?

Ms Wiebe: Well, certainly our . . .

The Chair: I know the argument is also for Cold Lake.

Ms Wiebe: Well, the census actually is in our favour. It shows 11.9 percent growth. So I'm assuming that we don't have to build that up. The MD census is also 5.5 percent growth as well. I do know that our vacancy rates – the town for the first time has gone and bought land, and we are now developing a subdivision. The problem is that there's so much activity in the area. People want to buy the lots to build houses, but they can't get contractors. So it becomes that kind of problem. But we are, you know, very busy and getting work, and it's very hard to get people to do work for you. The town is engaged in developing land just for residential purposes.

The Chair: I know. I was in Bonnyville two weekends ago at the annual meeting of the Alberta Junior Hockey League, and we couldn't get enough hotel rooms in Bonnyville. Some people stayed out in neighbouring communities. So I can vouch for the hotel room problem.

Ms Wiebe: That could have been, too, because of Maple Flag in May and June. This week we're having the Northern Alberta Mayors' Caucus coming to Bonnyville. There'll be 30 mayors here, and we hope to also discuss some of these things.

The Chair: Any questions or comments?

Mr. Clegg: No. Thanks for the brief. I was personally wondering if Denis told you to say that, or did you tell Denis to say what he did?

Ms Wiebe: Well, I think we work quite closely together, so I would have a hard time answering that question.

Mr. Graham: Just the standard question. We hope that certainly we can accede to your views, but if we can't because of factors beyond the boundaries of your constituency for instance, do you have a preference as to where the constituency ought to move, and if so, what is that? You don't have to answer that.

Ms Wiebe: No. When I say to my family, to my sons, "Well, what is plan B?" you know what they say to me? "Mom, there is no plan B, because if you have it, plan A goes down the drain." I don't know if that answers your question or not, but right now we haven't tackled that part: like, where should we go?

Mr. Graham: Sure. I understand.

Ms Wiebe: I probably would have to think about that.

The Chair: Your sons are quite likely quite successful.

Ms Wiebe: I'm not going to answer that either.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you, Your Worship, for the presentation. We will recognize as much as we can the submissions this morning, but you also realize how our hands are tied and limited by what is set out in the act for the redistribution. So we'll do the best we can.

I would like to emphasize the statement of my friend Doug over here that if you do have any thoughts on where we should go, it would be good for us to know them, because we want to take into consideration trading patterns, what will work. You people know better what will work than we will.

Thank you.

Ms Wiebe: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Your Worship, thank you very much. Might I take this opportunity to thank the good folks of St. Paul and everyone who made presentations to us today. They're straightforward, factual, and a very harmonious approach to the issues. You've made some interesting suggestions to us, and certainly they made an impact on us. So thank you very much.

This commission now is adjourned until 7 o'clock tonight in Wainwright.

[The commission adjourned at 12:19 p.m.]

