

6:00 p.m.

Tuesday, June 4, 2002

[Mr. Clark in the chair]

The Chair: Well, good evening. I'd like to welcome you very much to this part of the Electoral Boundaries Commission hearing. My name is Robert Clark. I'm the chairman of the commission. The members are to my left and right. To my right is Ernie Patterson, the longtime mayor of the centre of Claresholm and also one of the vice-presidents of the AUMA. To my immediate right is Glen Clegg. Glen is a former Member of the Legislative Assembly for the constituency of Dunvegan, which is up in the Spirit River-Fairview area. To my immediate left is Bauni Mackay. Bauni is the former president of the Alberta Teachers' Association, and Bauni is from Edmonton. To my far left is Doug Graham, who is a prominent lawyer from the city of Calgary.

We'd like to thank you very much for coming this evening and giving us the benefit of your thinking on what's a very challenging experience that we've undertaken. Just a little bit of background. After every two elections under the law in Alberta, under the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, there's an automatic redrawing of constituency boundaries. The population we use is based on the last 10-year federal census. That 10-year federal census of course is the census which was done in 2001 and which was released in March of 2002. The population figure that they have for Alberta, when you add Albertans whose names were taken in the census plus the addition of some people from some First Nations reserves that don't take part in the census, gives us a figure of 2.98 million, and then the legislation also says that there will be 83 constituencies. If you divide the 83 constituencies into that, you get something like 35,951. So for all intents and purposes ideally you'd have 83 ridings of 36,000 people. Well, this is not an ideal world. Effective representation is very important, so there's a variance that you can have of up to 25 percent plus or 25 percent minus.

The last commission that did this work seven years ago – their recommendations were that I think every riding had a 15 percent variance one way or the other with one exception, and that one had a 16 percent variance. The legislation also says that after the commission is appointed – two of the members are appointed by the Leader of the Opposition after consultation with the third party. The other two members are appointed by the Executive Council, and the chairman is selected from a group of either the Auditor General, the Ethics Commissioner, a judge, or head of an academic institution. This time it's the Ethics Commissioner's turn, and I think that's how come I happen to be the chairman.

We have met on three or four occasions prior to this first phase of going out and hearing what you good folks have to tell us. Then last week and this week we've been getting around the province. Last week we were in Calgary, Olds, Red Deer, and Edmonton. This week, in fact yesterday, we started in St. Paul in the morning. We were in Wainwright in the evening. We were in Drumheller this morning. We're here tonight obviously. We're in Lethbridge tomorrow. We're in Wetaskiwin on Thursday, and then we're going to have a break for a couple of weeks. Then the last week of the month we're going to be going to Westlock, Edson, Slave Lake, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, and Peace River.

Right after that, the commission has to get together and come together with our findings, because we want to have in the Speaker's hands early in September the interim report. That interim report will then of course be made available to everyone who makes a presentation plus anyone else who wants it. There will be an opportunity for feedback on that interim report, and then we expect to be in some areas of the province again for a second round of hearings sometime in December or early January next year. The

reason for that time frame is that we have one year to get our work done. We have to have a report in the Speaker's hands in the early part of March next year. Then it's up to the Legislature after that.

The last commission, which was chaired by Mr. Justice Ed Wachowich, gave the report to the Speaker and to the Legislature, and within a reasonably short period of time after that the Legislature approved, by and large, the report, and that became the boundaries for the last two elections. So this chairman is hopeful that our report will meet the same fate as far as getting through the Legislature virtually unscathed. The boundaries which would be recommended and approved by the Legislature would then be the boundaries that would be used in all likelihood for an election in 2004, 2005, or 2006 and the next election after that.

In a nutshell, ladies and gentlemen, that's really what we're up to. We're under no illusions. This is not a highly sought-after responsibility that we have. We don't expect that people are going to say: you've done a great job. We do expect that people are going to point out all sorts of things that need to be changed or things that need to be done one way or the other, but on the other hand I think that the five of us see it as a challenge. Certainly it's a challenge that's worthy of our very best efforts, and it's a great way to meet a lot of fine people in the province and again to see a province that's a pretty remarkable place. Can I say, on a very personal note, that I've never seen Medicine Hat look greener than it is right now. Someone told me it's a good thing we weren't here three weeks ago, but it's a garden spot of southeastern Alberta.

Mr. Olthof, do you want to read off the list of people who are going to make presentations, please?

Mr. Olthof: Lawrence Gordon is the first presenter. The second presenter will be His Worship Mayor Garth Valley of Medicine Hat. There will be Lutz Perschon, then Alan Hyland, and finally Ted Fisher.

The Chair: Okay. Anyone else who feels compelled to make a presentation to us, just let Doug know, and he'll put you on the list. The procedure we've been taking is basically this: we'd ask someone to give their presentation to us – and we've been thinking in terms of 10 minutes, something like that – then we get involved with a question-and-answer session. I have some problems with my colleagues sometimes, you know, with the questions. It's a little bit like the Legislature once in a while with long preambles. We may ask you to give us some additional information, and if you'd please get that back to us before the last week in June, that would be extremely helpful.

Without any further ado I'd like to ask Mr. Lawrence Gordon to come forward and make a presentation. We're pleased that you're here, and we look forward to your presentation. So give us your best advice, please.

Mr. Gordon: Well, thank you. It's my privilege to be here. I was here the last time the commission met in Medicine Hat, and I thought the report was a very good one, and there are things in it that I would like to see this commission carry forward.

There's a summary of the presentation that I have given to you, and I'll run through it quickly. As you're well aware, the population in Medicine Hat is 35,889, which is just .2 percent below the provincial average. So we're as close as you can get to being right on the money, quite frankly. You're also aware that this constituency is surrounded by Cypress-Medicine Hat, which is of course very instrumental in everything that happens in this corner of the province. It has 31,513 as a population, which is just 12.3 percent below the average. I think that one of the important considerations is the rate of growth in this area. I've set out in my

submission of relevant facts the population, and there's a map attached. If you flip to the second page, it's an agglomeration area, regular census agglomeration for Medicine Hat, and that area essentially includes the area to the border east of us, the Saskatchewan border, a good portion of Cypress-Medicine Hat, and all of the Medicine Hat constituency. That's the only breakdown we have, but the statistics show that the population in 1991 was 52,681. It grew by 7.4 percent in 1996 to 56,570, and it grew by another 9.1 percent to 61,735 in 2001. So the point we're making is that in this area we're pretty darn close to the provincial rate of growth, and of course that leads me to the conclusion that things are okay the way they are with respect to our electoral boundaries.

6:10

I also attached a map from the Medicine Hat Real Estate Board Co-operative, and if you take a look at it, the whole purpose of it is to show the areas of growth that are anticipated in the city of Medicine Hat. I'm aware that Mayor Vallely is speaking after me and can probably better address this, but if you look at – it would be B7 on the map, there's an area that's being developed, and this is in the Medicine Hat constituency. You can see the 2002, 2003, 2004 projections for lots that will be developed in that area. Then you can look at – it would be C1, which is in the Medicine Hat constituency as well, an area called Burnside Estates, and that's projected development for the same period.

With respect to Cypress-Medicine Hat, if you go to I5, the boundary, as you're aware, is the Trans-Canada highway and the South Saskatchewan River to the west. In Lorne Taylor's riding, or Cypress-Medicine Hat, we have the projection that's set out in an area that we know as South Ridge, and then of course we have a suburb – it's not really a suburb but an area called Dunmore – that's east of here, and it's growing quickly. So it's our view that the growth in this area will continue at the same rate that the province is growing, and we think that that is supported, and for that reason the boundaries should remain as they are.

The Chair: What's happening in Redcliff?

Mr. Gordon: Redcliff right now, I believe, continues to grow, but that's in Lorne Taylor's riding; isn't it? There's some growth there. I'm sorry. I don't have a map that shows exactly what they have planned, but if the commission would like that, I can certainly inquire and see if that information's available. If it will help you, I'll certainly get it.

The Chair: We may hear something later tonight. If not, we may ask you to do that. Is that fair?

Mr. Gordon: Great. Thank you.

There's one other thing that I do want to address, and it's what I think came out of the last commission's hearings. It was the matrix that was developed, that ranked various constituencies, and I'm aware that one of the Calgary constituencies has made representations that to me indicate that you should scrap the matrix. The purpose of the matrix, as I understood it, was to rate the effectiveness of your MLA. It's a double-edged sword. Numbers are one part of the game, but the other part is: how effective can an MLA be if he has a huge geographical area to cover, if the density of the population is very small, if he has a large distance to travel to get to Edmonton? Those are factors that affect the effectiveness of your MLA, and I think the last commission was on the right track. They said that it wasn't binding, but they said that it was something that was to be considered, and they certainly said that, you know, they had to use their own discretion when all the smoke cleared. I

certainly urge you not to discard that model.

I think, just as an example that would cross my mind, that when you look at someone like Mike Cardinal's riding, the number of issues that he has in that riding are just huge. He has lumber there. He has water. We're talking about water transfers, whether you should move it south or not. You have environmental issues in every rural riding. Any MLA that's representing a rural riding has to be very well versed in many issues. If there's anything that I could suggest you add to that matrix, it would be the number of issues that the MLA would have to represent. For example, if you go over near Lethbridge, you'll have rural MLAs in Feedlot Alley dealing with issues of intensive livestock. Well, that isn't an issue that's going to be dealt with solely by one MLA if he's in Edmonton or Calgary. I really, if anything, urge you to expand your matrix to take into account the number of issues and the complexity of them that could be unique to a constituency.

I think that summarizes our position. We feel that you should maintain the boundaries as they are. We think the growth justifies it in this area, and we're well within any variation of population that's been set out in the guidelines in the past.

The Chair: Good. Thank you very much, Lawrence. Any questions or comments?

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much for a very concise submission. Just for my own information here and understanding, Cypress-Medicine Hat: in the city of Medicine Hat is that everything south or southwest of the Trans-Canada highway?

Mr. Gordon: Up to the South Saskatchewan River. So when you see the area marked Burnside to the north, that's in the Medicine Hat constituency.

Mr. Riley: To supplement that, Mr. Chair, the area that we call Ross Glen is also in Cypress-Medicine Hat. You can see Carry Drive there perhaps at H-8, and it runs along to G-8. The area that's kind of on the southeast side of that section also belongs to Cypress-Medicine Hat, and that's a very heavily populated area.

Mr. Gordon: Yes, and I think that the actual boundary goes from Carry Drive to the South Saskatchewan River at an area just about south of Police Point park.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chair, if I might ask this question. Let's say that we find it necessary to make some changes maybe to balance a little bit more, is there another portion of the city that could go to Cypress-Medicine Hat? I'm just wondering: if that were so, what would be your suggestion?

Mr. Gordon: When we're within .2 percent of the average, it's a suggestion I don't like to address.

The Chair: We're tinkering maybe a little; are we?

Mr. Gordon: Well, obviously we'd like to see it the way it is now. One of the points I'd made the last time that I appeared – and I'll make it again. Redcliff is a perfect example. It's been bounced back and forth. It was in Lorne Taylor's riding to start with, then Lyle Oberg's, then Lorne Taylor's. I don't know that that's good for the voter. I think that voters are entitled to have if at all possible a little degree of certainty with respect to who their representative is, where their voting stations are, issues that relate to their constituency, and if you keep bouncing certain areas around – I really urge you not to do that unless it's absolutely essential. I'm

looking at it from the point of view of a voter when I say that.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chair, I couldn't agree more, but my question was kind of hypothetical, I suppose. If we have to do something, I thought maybe we might get some words of wisdom here now rather than later.

Mr. Gordon: I'm just hard-pressed – I don't know the actual numbers in that area, so that puts me at a disadvantage, because you really are into a numbers game to a certain extent, and without knowing the exact numbers, I'm sorry, but I really couldn't give you a good answer.

Mr. Clegg: Well, thank you for this brief. If our problems were this simple right across the province, we wouldn't have as big a job as we have got. I know that the city of Medicine Hat is split, regardless of which way it's split, representing some rural, some urban. My only question is: do you see any problem with that whatsoever?

Mr. Gordon: You know, it's just a practical fact that it's been done that way. Do I see a problem with it? I don't know that there's another way to do it. I think that what's happened here is that given the background of the MLAs and the people that have chosen to run – they know the nature of the constituency, so it works out okay. I guess you'd call one a 'rurban' constituency, and one is strictly urban. Well, in those areas you wind up with people running and seeking election that are consistent with the nature of their constituency. It's worked out okay I guess is what I'm really saying here.

Mr. Clegg: Thank you.

6:20

Ms Mackay: You haven't mentioned anything about this, but I'm just curious as to where you would stand on the ratio of the two large urban cities, the seats there relative to the rural seats. I mean, do you have some words of wisdom in regard to maintaining a ratio there?

Mr. Gordon: Well, I think that that's the issue raised by the matrix that your last commission dealt with. You're trying I think to establish an effective and fair system of governance. You can't do it just on numbers. For example, in the matrix it says that the number of government bodies that you deal with is a factor to be taken into account and scored. You have – what is it? – 23 MLAs in Calgary to deal with the one regional health authority and only a few education systems, whereas in a rural riding you may have three or four different hospitals to deal with and you may have half a dozen municipal governments to deal with. So I think that the commission was on the right track when they used the matrix to try and balance things out a little bit.

To answer your question directly, I think that urban areas can service a larger number of voters than rural areas. Pure and simple. I mean, for rural areas the example I gave of some of the multiple issues that arise that are unique to an area – I think you have to have a way to weigh those issues if you're going to get fair and effective representation. I don't think it can be just a numbers game.

Ms Mackay: But of the 83 seats, I mean, what's your opinion on the commission increasing the number of seats in Calgary, for example, and decreasing in the rural area?

Mr. Gordon: I'd prefer not to see it happen, but I also realize the constraints that the Supreme Court of Canada has imposed. If

you're stuck with plus or minus 25 as being the maximum leeway that you have, subject to I think it's four statutory seats that can be outside that, then you have to live with that. It might not be my idea of a perfect world, but those are the rules. So I would urge you to try to lean toward having some of the larger constituencies in the urban areas. Now, obviously you run the risk that it just becomes a problem next time around. Some of those areas are growing; there's no question. That shows in the figures you have, that they've grown immensely. Some of them have double the population that's the average for the province now. I wouldn't for a minute suggest that you can't or you shouldn't do something about that. You have to. There's just no way around it.

Mr. Riley: Mr. Chair, sort of in another capacity, with the Alberta Teachers' Association, the area that I represent is roughly coterminous with the area that Lorne Taylor represents as an MLA. We are a very, very long distance from Edmonton. Just getting to and from the area is a six-hour drive. Well, it does depend on certain occasions.

Mr. Clegg: Not for Lorne.

Mr. Riley: Well, actually not for me either. To do an effective job, you have to sometimes cut some corners, and going down a highway at a little faster pace than one ought is part of the corner you cut.

In visiting the different communities that he represents and I represent in a different capacity, they are quite different communities just in terms of culture and personality and character, and it's a very, very different thing than just representing a fairly coherent unit within a city. They are very, very different communities. Some of them even are a few kilometres apart. They are very different communities and have very, very different interests. I think that's part of the matrix concept that has been discussed here. You do spend many, many, many hours on the road just to try to get to these people that you represent. So in answer to the question of numbers, in terms of effective representation I think you'd have to take that into consideration when making your decisions.

Thank you.

The Chair: I think that you people along with the good folks of Grande Prairie are the only two cities in the province where you have – they really divided Grande Prairie down the middle and got Grande Prairie-Wapiti and Grande Prairie-Smoky. You're the other city where a portion of the city is a part of a rural riding. From what you're telling me, that's worked pretty well.

Mr. Gordon: I think it has, yes.

Mr. Riley: Sir, if I might supplement. We would be very, very concerned if both constituencies were made that type of constituency.

The Chair: I wasn't suggesting that. Don't misunderstand me.

Mr. Riley: The Medicine Hat constituency as it currently exists basically represents the traditional city of Medicine Hat, and Cypress-Medicine Hat has the growth area of Medicine Hat in it. That's pretty generally true. So the current structure is the one that we would most prefer.

The Chair: Okay. Thanks, gentlemen, very much. We appreciate your help.

I'd like to now ask Mayor Garth Vallely to come forward, please.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Chairman, is it okay if I have my city clerk sit next to me?

The Chair: Oh, by all means. Who would take on a city clerk?

Mr. Patterson: Not a mayor.

Mr. Valley: Not a mayor, no.

The Chair: Your Worship, we're pleased that you and the city clerk are here, and we look forward to your comments. We do appreciate your coming. We know that you're very busy.

Mr. Valley: Well, Mr. Chairman, thank you and members of the commission. My old friend Ernie is sitting at the end there.

The Chair: There aren't many who refer to Ernie that way. I'm kidding really.

Mr. Valley: On behalf of city council and the citizens of Medicine Hat I thank you for being here in our city today. I really appreciated your comments about how beautiful our city looks. Three weeks ago, as recently as a week and a half, we got a rather freak snowstorm and some rain. You know, a little bit of heat and we're finally starting to green up. I thank the commission for picking Medicine Hat. I assume that you're staying overnight here, so we thank you for utilizing our hospitality industry.

It's also important, I think, for the changing demographics. I compliment the provincial government and your commission for addressing that. Obviously, the province is growing rapidly. The population is growing, and the demographics are changing, so it's important that the legislation is in place to address those needs.

The Chair: I'd better ask you to congratulate the Legislature. We're a committee who reports to the Legislature.

Mr. Valley: I appreciate that.

Some of the stuff that I'm going to say Mr. Gordon has already presented, and I guess he's still here. So some of it will sound a little bit like a broken record, but there are some things that I could clarify for you, I think, with respect to some of the information that he provided you with and also what we consider our particular growth areas.

First of all, we have provided the points to the commission at an earlier date, and there's very little change in that. I'll start out by saying that on May 6 the city council unanimously adopted the position that the current boundaries are satisfactory. So let's start with that premise. Repeating what Mr. Gordon said, as of the 2001 census the Medicine Hat electoral division only had a .2 percent variance from the provincial average and the Cypress-Medicine Hat electoral division, 12.3.

A little bit of background information. In 1991 and 1995 city council's position was that we should have one constituency south of Seven Persons Creek and one constituency north of Seven Persons Creek, including Redcliff. However, with the population of Medicine Hat now at 51,249 as of the last census count, the current council feels that the present situation is more than adequate and more than satisfactory. Going on with that, you know, looking into the future a little bit, we consider one of our two major growth areas to be the South Ridge area, which is in Cypress-Medicine Hat. For information purposes, on our current municipal development plan we expect that area to grow from between 5,000 and 6,000 people now to eventually 17,000 people. The other major growth area is the northeast Crescent Heights area, which is in the Medicine Hat

constituency, and we expect that also to grow from currently around 5,000 or 6,000 to around 15,000 under our current MDP. With respect to the Burnside subdivision, which as Mr. Gordon mentioned is in Medicine Hat, that is actually on hold. We are not projecting to do any development in that subdivision at least in the very near future. So I think that we see all our growth occurring in the two areas that I've mentioned.

6:30

The only other point that I wish to make, and then I'd be more than happy to answer any questions you might have, is that currently the situation is very satisfactory to us. We have the purely urban riding represented by Mr. Renner and then the 'rurban' riding represented by Minister Taylor, and both are going to be subject to some growth in the next five to 10 years, when we'll come along two elections from now and look at it again. I would make the point that if Medicine Hat really booms and goes along, you may be in a situation somewhere down the road where potentially you might have to create two seats in the city of Medicine Hat, as you did in the city of Red Deer and the city of Lethbridge, but that is speculation on what may occur, you know, five to 10 years down the road.

So I guess all we're saying is that we as a city administration are quite happy with the electoral boundaries as they are today, feel quite strongly about it, and support Mr. Gordon's presentation.

The Chair: Just before I turn Mr. Patterson loose on you, I would have to say that this is rather a unique experience for the commission. When we were in Calgary, it was a question of more ridings, and then when we got to Edmonton, it was a question of what we were going to do with the ridings in two particular areas. In the last two days we've heard an awful lot of: "Lookit, our population might not be growing, but we'd like to maintain what we have now" kind of thing. In your situation you've got a population that's percolating along nicely, and that presents the commission with a different kind of challenge, rather a pleasant one.

Ernie.

Mr. Patterson: Yes, Mr. Chair. First of all, Your Worship, I want to thank you for indicating to this group here that I do have some friends. I appreciate that.

The only other comment I would make is to thank you for clarifying this Burnside Estates. I don't have any comments or questions, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Clegg: Well, I haven't got any comments or questions either, but I'd be remiss if I as an MLA for 15 years and being on planning boards – I would have sworn that Medicine Hat grows brown grass. It does grow green grass. It's great to see Medicine Hat look like it is.

Mr. Valley: Well, thank you very much.

Mr. Clegg: We sent it down from the north, by the way.

The Chair: I think you'd give that remark the kind of credence it deserves.

I take it none of my colleagues have any further questions, Your Worship. Thank you very much.

Mr. Graham: I just don't want you to be anxious, Your Worship. There's no point in me asking a question or interjecting. Things are going very well for you. Just be aware that we're aware of what you've told us.

Mr. Valley: Good. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Valley: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: I'm now pleased to have the opportunity to ask a representative of the county of Cypress, Mr. Lutz Perschon, to make his presentation to us. Lutz.

Mr. Perschon: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, members of the committee, for this opportunity to make a submission. I won't read my submission. It's apparently in your package, and you can read it. Moreover, most of what is in the submission I suspect you've already heard several times and already a couple of times here tonight, or at least the principles. But I do want to make some sort of highlighting comments if I could.

In this country we talk about effective representation, and I think it was referred to as being something which would allow a variance of plus or minus some numbers. My submission doesn't really deal with the numbers, because I think once certain principles are established, anyone can do the arithmetic and come up with solutions to the boundary issues within certain parameters. What we really need to do is to decide what principles will guide that particular process, and our submission, of course, is – as I say, you've heard the words "effective representation," but really what does that entail?

As we look at the situation in Alberta, we have two very large cities that are growing at a very rapid pace. As I looked at the numbers for the MLAs there, most of them were above the average, so there's this ongoing pressure. The question begins to arise as we move forward: does Alberta become really Calgary and Edmonton? When you think about it, we want to emphasize this whole issue of geography and communities, and as Mr. Lawrence Gordon pointed out, one MLA in a large rural riding may have several communities that he has to look after, community groups that have interests and those kinds of things.

We find our current MLA, Dr. Lorne Taylor, to have worked very, very hard to represent a huge constituency, but now – and this is kind of a two-edged sword; we don't want him to have to give up a ministerial position because he's got such a large area to represent – that has compounded the issue of trying to represent a huge area, a diverse number of issues, communities, small towns, school divisions, and that kind of thing. In the submission I may have not gone so far as to say this, but in coming here, I thought maybe this government has to sponsor the idea of incorporating into our Canadian Constitution the concept of effective representation.

The county, by the way, faces this issue that you're facing right now when we do an electoral division review as well. We have a huge rural municipal area, very sparsely populated, and people are starting to move just outside the city. So when it comes to reviewing that kind of thing, we are wrestling with exactly the same conflict: large areas versus representation purely by population.

So it's interesting because for the submission I'm making today – and I almost don't want to admit this – I pulled off the one that we gave to the last commission and made a few changes to it. There aren't many new arguments here, and the arguments are known. When we do this again two elections from today, the only thing that will have changed is that probably a few more seats will have been massaged into the large metropolises, and the rural ridings will have been thinned a little bit. I'm speaking now more provincially than I am particularly about our riding. We'll come back here, the same folks. Well, maybe I'll be retired, hopefully; who knows?

The Chair: I'm sure we won't be asked back.

Mr. Perschon: But we'll make the same argument again until such time as constitutionally we recognize that in Canada – and this is true federally; it's true provincially – we have a vast country and that somewhere along the line the formula has to entrench things like area, communities, things that have been talked about earlier. That has to be taken into account. Otherwise, I guess the only thing I can come up with is that we have to adopt – and I don't want to say a U.S. system – a system like they have in the U.S., where they have two Houses. One represents sort of geographical areas and one represents population, basically, but the two Houses are effective and have power, and the balance is gotten that way. Okay; since we have a single-House system, I think we have to incorporate those principles that the U.S. system gives to the senatorial House into the single, representation situation.

6:40

Let me sum up by saying thank you very much for coming and hearing us. We hope that you'll have the wisdom of Solomon to come up with some sort of resolve to the issues. We understand that the pressure is on from others, and we're just trying to let you know that we really feel strongly about our position as well. I want to reinforce the fact that the mixed riding we have here has worked very successfully. We are certainly not unhappy with it. Because we happen to be very good neighbours with the city of Medicine Hat, their issues are often our issues and vice versa, so it works.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Graham: Mr. Perschon, we're well ahead of schedule, so I'm not going to ask you a question. I'm going to give you a little lecture because I'm the lawyer on the panel. The lecture is this. My understanding of the law is that the law of Canada and this province is effective representation. That matter has gone to the Supreme Court of Canada, and it has been decided. It's been decided, I might add, by someone we should all be very proud of, who happens to be the Chief Justice of this country right now and who was born and raised in Pincher Creek. She probably has some knowledge of the matters that you're talking about. So I don't think that you should feel quite the amount of anxiety you seem to be feeling that the courts are somehow attacking this doctrine of effective representation. In fact, they invented it. In fact, it was invented by an Albertan. We should all be very proud of that.

As far as this doctrine being entrenched in our Constitution, from a lawyer's point of view it is. Because it's been decided upon and adjudicated by the highest judicial body in the land, there is no further appeal, so it's not a question. We're well ahead of schedule, so I just wanted to make you aware of that. It may somewhat alleviate your anxiety.

Mr. Perschon: I'll accept that lecture.

The Chair: We're far enough ahead of time that you can comment on the lecture if you want to.

Mr. Perschon: Well, okay. I understand what you're saying, sir, very much so. I think that as time progresses, four statutory seats with a variance of greater than plus or minus 25 are going to become necessary in our viewpoint, so I think it's a matter of how you interpret effective representation. Our riding was once represented by an MLA purely rural. Now we're half and half. The city of Medicine Hat is surely going to grow faster than Cypress county, which means that eventually this kind of body that I'm facing today is going to have to deal with the issue of whatever they're going to have to deal with, but there you go. I don't want to make too much

of it. I appreciate the fact that those kinds of issues are there and that there is effective representation. It's just a matter of whether or not we have the same view.

The Chair: We've had the lecture, and now we've had the response, so we'll go on to Bauni.

Ms Mackay: And I'm not going to lecture. I'm just going to ask you a question. In your written submission on the last page here you make the statement: the county submits that the area is too large to fit our concept of effective representation. Are you indicating, then, that there should be some portion of Cypress-Medicine Hat that should be cut off so that the geographic area is actually smaller? Is that what you're saying? If so, what area?

Mr. Perschon: Okay. I don't want to contradict myself. I think the point is that it could become too large to be manageable with all the small centres that are in it and all the community groups that are vying for an MLA's time and representation. But, at this point, no. I think that if they stayed just the way they were, we'd be happy with that; no doubt about it. We're concerned that it's going to get worse. Dr. Taylor's average is only 12 percent, but given sort of growth patterns and other pressing issues, if you had to find an MLA somewhere, you're going to have to possibly crowd somebody out and make somebody's area bigger – right? – to provide that for the city. I don't want to push that one too far; okay? We're happy where we are.

Ms Mackay: Okay.

The Chair: I think that's one for you, Bauni.

Ms Mackay: I wanted to clarify that.

The Chair: You're the third person in the course of 24 hours who has talked to us in one sense or another about a second House. It came up last night in Wainwright, I believe; didn't it? And no less of an authority than Jack Horner this morning spoke to us about the idea. It's certainly well beyond the terms of reference of what we're doing; nevertheless, it's something that people are looking at when you consider kind of the urban/rural issues that we face.

Mr. Clegg: I'm very happy with the report.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chair, just following up on your statement there, we've had two different kinds of suggestions coming to us. One, a very large number of submissions is saying in writing and in presentations that the number of MLAs should be cut down. Then interestingly enough, as the chair has said, we now are beginning to hear that there's a problem, which is going to get worse, with trying to look after the rural representation.

Having just come back from Australia this last winter, they do have some upper state Houses there. So I guess my question to you is: what would you think if this commission did put some suggestions in for consideration that there have to be some special provisions made in the future for rural representation other than the present system? As the growth pattern continues in Alberta, if the number of MLAs is left the same, this is going to be a continuing process. I'm just wondering about that, because, you know, we're pressured to reduce, and now we've heard this interesting concept of possibly adding another process or method. Just any thoughts on that.

Mr. Perschon: Well, I hadn't thought it through enough to say,

because I think there are obviously ramifications with that kind of thing. But if we cannot incorporate it within the single-House system, with all due respect to the comments that were made earlier – in other words, stretch the effective formula with less numbers and more factors in it – then I would have to say that I would look as an alternative to a two-House system, yes.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you.

The Chair: Lutz, on behalf of my colleagues thank you very much. I've known Lutz in another life, when I certainly had a much different responsibility than I have now. You were blunt and to the point then, and you're one of those people that doesn't change. Thank you very much.

Mr. Perschon: Thank you very much.

The Chair: I'd now like to ask Mr. Alan Hyland to come forward. While I'm doing that, I'd be remiss if I didn't recognize Rob Renner in the room. Rob, thanks for coming. Your president did a very good job on your behalf, sir.

Mr. Renner: I apologize for being late, but I was traveling from Edmonton, and you know how long it takes.

6:50

The Chair: I would be remiss if I didn't say, Alan, that it's good to welcome you. Alan and I sat in the Legislature, albeit from different vantage points. I'm sure his remarks tonight will be far more in keeping with what we've heard than I thought on other occasions. No. I'm only kidding, Alan.

Your Worship the mayor of Bow Island, we're pleased to have you here.

Mr. Hyland: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, panel members, commission members. I don't know how many times I've appeared before committees in my 18 and a half years in the Legislature and once since that, and this is the first time, I think, that I've known a majority of the panel personally.

The Chair: Did you meet all the members, by the way?

Mr. Hyland: Well, I've known Bauni for a few years off and on.

The Chair: And you know Ernie Patterson.

Mr. Hyland: Oh, I know him, yeah. I was going to ask Ernie, if I can deviate a little from my speech, if he's recently renewed his membership in the federal Liberal Party. With all the goings on, he might need it quickly.

The Chair: Look out now. Let's not go there. On that elevating note, I want you to meet Mr. Doug Graham, a prominent lawyer from Calgary.

Now, back to your script.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, before you do, I would like to indicate to the panel that Mr. Hyland is also a good friend of mine.

The Chair: That's two in one evening.

Mr. Clegg: He's got two friends in Alberta.

The Chair: The committee does plan to stop in at Claresholm and talk to the people there.

Alan.

Mr. Hyland: Thank you. As I said, I've appeared a number of times before committees through the years, and as Glen and Bob know, I speak from notes. I don't speak from a written text, so I don't have a text to hand you. At the end of it, if you want my notes and you can read them, you're welcome to them.

As I said, I've appeared a number of times. Some of the times people sat and listened; the commissioner sat and listened. Some of the times, they just – I remember one time that was a little unnerving. One of the members sat there and typed on her laptop for the whole thing, through the whole night, and I don't know how much they listened. I think this might be the first commission that hasn't had a judge as chairman.

The Chair: I think we'll leave that there.

Mr. Hyland: I think that's good, because we've got people that have been involved in politics, we've got people that have been involved in service groups and in organizations, and I think that will put a nice slant to it. I hope it puts a nice slant to your decisions.

Effective representation. As I said, I served this area, and the MLA that Lutz was talking about previously was me. For 18 and a half years I served the area that was known as Cypress and then known as Cypress-Redcliff. It did surround the Hat. It didn't come into the Hat, but it did surround the Hat. One time Redcliff was added to part of Medicine Hat, and then Redcliff was taken away in one redistribution and put back the next. So the area has moved around. Part of the area has moved around; part of the area has remained much the same.

I appreciated Mr. Graham's comment about effective representation: that it is, in his mind, part of the law. I think the question is: what is effective representation, and does effective representation allow for a variance? In modern times, as we know, electronic equipment can be helpful in communication, but people want to talk to you, as you guys that have been it know and as Ernie knows from his life in another level of politics. People want to talk to you. They don't just want to talk to you over the phone; they want you to see you personally.

Can a 'rurban' constituency work? I think we've proved here in Cypress-Medicine Hat that it can work, and it's worked effectively. The whole area co-operates, and we work with our MLA in the area. I think the thing is that part of the reason why you need some sort of a variance is because in a rural and in an urban riding it's different. In an urban riding you have one council to deal with, two school boards, and your community organizations. In a rural riding you've got any number of councils, any number of school boards, plus you still have the community organizations. If the area gets too big, you can't do it.

I always went into schools as part of my work and talked to kids in grade 6 and grade 9, when they study government, so that they could understand and become better citizens, and in my mind that was important. From this area we're five and a half or six hours to Edmonton. I think Glen and I timed it once; we were 10 minutes apart in what it took us to get to Edmonton. Not all of us drive like – where did Terry go? Did he leave? Not all of us take the same amount of time as Terry does to get anywhere, and if any of you travel with him, you understand why.

So on a trip to Edmonton to start the session from either the north or the south, you've lost a day and a half of your time. There and back in reality is twelve hours, so you've lost a day and a half of time. And in that day and a half, how many people, if you're in an

area in the city or closer to the city, could you see and deal with in that time period? You can handle more calls because you have more time to do it. Plus if you're closer, you can go home at night. If you're farther away, you can't, obviously, go home at night or in the middle of the week.

I enjoyed very much what I did for 18 years, but I had a young family. They were growing up without me, and it was time to come home and be part of the raising of them. So what you have is somebody who's going to be an MLA that either doesn't have any kids or their kids are grown up. It's getting tougher and tougher to have that opportunity when you have kids that are younger, because in reality your spouse ends up being a single parent and you miss out. Even in today's times you should at least be entitled to a little bit of family time, and there just aren't the hours in the day. Thus, I think there's the need for at least a decent variance of population, whether 25 percent is the right number or not.

With those who proclaim and say that we shouldn't have any variance and that effective representation is one and one – one person, one vote – I sometimes wonder how many of them have ever tried or participated or sat in the position of an MLA to find out just how much area they cover, how much time it takes, and how much people contact they have. I'm reminded of one of the redistributions a number of years ago, probably about 10 or 12 years ago. The city of Calgary took a very definite, tough stand on one person, one vote: that's the way it should be, and that's the only way it should be. I heard the mayor on TV saying it on the news and I read it in the papers, and be damned if at the next council meeting they didn't pass a motion that said that they could have a 25 percent variance in wards because it was too tough to draw up on the one person, one vote. I mean, why was it not okay for the provincial boundaries to be drawn with a variance, but it was okay for the city boundaries to be drawn with a variance? If you're standing on principle, you would think that at least your principle would remain the same on both.

There's no question that you guys have a tough job and that no matter what you do, somebody's going to be mad at you. I remember the last time they came out with a report, they listened – or they said they listened; let's say that – and with the difference between the initial report and the second report, it looked like they hadn't listened, that they had made up their own, and then came out and wondered why people were upset. I can remember my presentation on the second go. It was more communication between the chairman and I about what they had done, and we really didn't get a chance to comment properly on the report.

As I said, my comments and concerns are from serving 18 and a half years in the Legislature, a time when you're putting on anywhere from 70,000 to 85,000 kilometres a year, and you ask Glen how often we trade vehicles and how often you're on the road. There isn't a lot of other life when you're doing that, so I feel strongly about the ability – and I always felt strongly. In every election I was in after that when I was in the Legislature, I gained votes. I might have lost polls, but I gained more total votes. To do that, I must have been doing something right. The people must have thought I was representing them. So, as I said, I feel strongly about the ability that one needs to be able to be in contact with people, and to be in contact with people in a rural area, you can't have the one person, one vote. You have to have some sort of a variance that can work with the population that you have in the area that you have to work with. You have to have some sort of a variance where you can work that out to the best of your ability.

Thank you.

7:00

The Chair: Thank you very much, Alan.

Glen.

Mr. Clegg: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Hello, Alan. It's great to see you again. Hello, Rob. It's great to see you again. Your excuse for being late doesn't hold water with this committee. If you want to get somewhere earlier, you leave earlier. That's how the system works, Rob.

Anyway, Alan, I want to thank you for your remarks, and if we forgot anything that you said, we'll certainly read it in *Hansard*. I understand that you're for rural Alberta, and certainly we see your point, and when we were in Calgary and Edmonton, we saw their points. There's argument both ways, but being a rural MLA and knowing the 12 hours I spent on the road every week, we recognize it, at least I do, and thanks for your remarks.

Mr. Hyland: You know, Rob, I've got to tell you a story about Glen. When I was deputy . . .

The Chair: Just a minute. We're going to have to take a coffee break in a minute. You can tell us then.

Mr. Patterson.

Mr. Patterson: Yes, Mr. Chair. I believe that I heard you say that this current constituency of Cypress-Medicine Hat works well with part of the city of Medicine Hat and the rural area, that you, being mayor of Bow Island, think it's working fine as it is.

Mr. Hyland: Yeah, I believe it is, Ernie. Because we've been working together, we've developed an economic union, the Palliser economic partnership. We're co-operating more than we ever have, and we don't find it any trouble. We find it good working together with the municipalities and the people around us, and the people in the constituencies are working well together.

Ms Mackay: From your comments I just want to clarify. You kept talking about the need for face-to-face contact. So you would say, I would guess – you can respond – that the increase and the advancement of communication technology isn't something that should be taken into consideration in terms of making a rural MLA's job easier. I'm talking about things like e-mail and fax machines and teleconferencing and all that kind of thing that now exists, which wouldn't have been used that way, say, 15 years ago or for that matter even 10 years ago.

Mr. Hyland: Well, when I was in politics, e-mail was just in its very infancy, and of course the fax machines and that – I think people still want the face-to-face contact. Maybe that's the difference between rural and urban; I don't know. I would wonder if the urban people wouldn't want to see their MLA, too, other than come knocking on the door every four years. Electronic equipment may go a ways in the initial contact, but the feeling that you're talking to a voice or that somebody is actually listening to you I think goes a long ways. I guess that it's no different than being in front of a classroom or being in front of a group of people. If they see somebody that feels that they're part of them, you'll get further that way.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, Alan. One of the things that you notice Alan isn't bragging about is that he was on the Legislative Offices Committee that hired me some 11 years ago, and we're not going to go down that road either. Alan, thank you very much on behalf of my colleagues.

We're going to take a 10-minute break, and then the next presenter is going to be Mr. Ted Fisher.

The Chair: I'm pleased to introduce Mr. Ted Fisher, who's going to speak to us, and then Mara Nesbitt is going to make a short verbal presentation. Well, I guess you wouldn't be making an oral written presentation; would you? I believe there's a Mr. Gardner who wants to say a few things to us also.

So, Ted, thanks for coming, and we look forward to your comments.

Mr. Fisher: Mr. Chairman, members of the commission, thank you very much. I am a director on the Cypress-Medicine Hat constituency board. Hopefully, the comments that I'm going to make won't put you to sleep, because you've heard them now three or four times. Hopefully, I've got something new to add.

Basically, as you know, the Cypress-Medicine Hat constituency encompasses a portion of Medicine Hat and the area surrounding Medicine Hat. The constituency is 16,236 square kilometres, with 31,513 people. To travel from Jenner in the north to Aden in the south takes the same length of time as it takes to travel from Medicine Hat to Calgary, so it's a long drive. The constituency has one MLA, the Hon. Dr. Lorne Taylor, who is the Minister of Environment; two counties, being the county of Cypress and the county of Forty Mile; one city, being the city of Medicine Hat; three towns, being Bow Island and Foremost and Burdett; and 10-plus other numerous community centres within that jurisdiction. There are a number of school boards and one health authority.

Although the push may be on to have population characterize the representation, I think it's imperative that the commission look at – and it's been said over and over – effective representation. Whether we're dealing with the city of Calgary or we're dealing with constituencies like Cypress-Medicine Hat, there must be effective representation. The people in Alberta expect it and should have representation, not only those in the city but those in the rural areas also. Obviously, where you have a municipality and a rural area together, there are different issues affecting those people than if you have a straight urban riding. One must remember that the city of Calgary and the city of Edmonton are also represented by a number of aldermen – I believe 15 in Calgary and 12 in Edmonton – along with the 23 or 24 MLAs in Calgary.

It seems to me that in order to make sure that the people of the province of Alberta are adequately represented, as Mr. Gordon and Mr. Perschon and also the mayor said, basically I think you have to take into consideration more than just population. The last commission utilized the matrix system, and I agree with Mr. Gordon, that the points they used could be expanded. Obviously, when you're considering that focus, you look at the actual population, the number of households, population density, distance from the Legislature, bodies such as councils, health authorities, school boards, towns, and communities within the area. I think, as Mr. Gordon said, issues may be something that should be added to the matrix, because obviously, as everyone knows, the issues are different in the rural ridings than in the urban ridings. Often there are more issues to deal with in the rural ridings than there are in the urban ridings, and we would like the committee to take that into consideration.

Our board is the same as the Medicine Hat constituency. We feel that the representation has been effective. We feel that we've gotten along being half a rural and half an urban riding, and we honestly don't see that there should be any changes. We feel that Lorne has been effective. Although it is hard, I would sure hate to see the number of MLAs in our particular area, including Medicine Hat and Cypress-Medicine Hat, changed; i.e. reduced. I think that would take away from the effective representation that Albertans expect and should have.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I don't mean to argue with you at all, but you made the comment about the wide variety of issues. I live in the little town of Carstairs, about 30 minutes just north of Calgary, and I was quite impressed by some of the things we heard from urban MLAs. One Edmonton MLA told us that there are 22 different languages spoken in that particular constituency and that a significant portion of their problems dealt with people who had mental health problems. I guess that all I'm saying to you, Ted, is that when you talk about a wide variety of issues here, I understand that. I think that my saying this, kind of defending urbanites, is a bit of an experience. I think there are two sides to that a bit too, and that is all I'm saying, Ted.

Mr. Fisher: Mr. Chairman, I guess I'm not saying that there are more issues. I'm saying that there are different issues. That's all I'm saying. I know they have probably as many issues as we have, but I think the issues are different with respect to rural and urban ridings. That's all.

The Chair: Okay. Good.

Mr. Patterson, is this another friend of yours?

Mr. Fisher: I don't know the gentleman, but I could be a friend if he wants another one.

Mr. Patterson: Well, I guess, you know, I'll never hear the end of this, that I at least have two friends in this area. Ted, if I got to know you, I'm sure you'd be my friend too.

I don't know whether or not you were in here earlier when we were talking about how Mr. Jack Horner was suggesting earlier this morning in Drumheller – and our chair mentioned it. You were here when he was talking about that?

Mr. Fisher: Yes, I was.

Mr. Patterson: I just wonder if you have any thoughts on that, because this issue, the urban and the rural, is not going to go away. Probably eight or nine or 10 years from now Calgary will be even more massive, and we'll still have the same problem. Just any thoughts on that.

Mr. Fisher: Well, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Patterson, I guess to me it really doesn't matter how we have the representation as long as we have that representation, and whether it be in one House or two Houses, I honestly don't think it matters as long as the representation is there. If it means that we have to have an increased number of MLAs, so be it. I think the people in Alberta expect to be represented properly, and I think they deserve that. Whether it's in one House or two Houses, I honestly don't think that matters.

Mr. Patterson: A second question, Mr. Chair. I'm trying to make sure I ask questions.

The Chair: That's very important.

Mr. Patterson: We've had a tremendous number of written submissions and some oral submissions saying to reduce the number of MLAs, and of course that's outside of our mandate. I just wonder if you have any thoughts on that.

Mr. Fisher: Again, I think that if the commission believes that the people of Alberta can be represented by fewer MLAs – and when I say that, I mean represented properly by fewer MLAs – then I'm all for that. I guess that if we can reduce the amount that it costs to run

the government, I'm all for that, but I think we have to make sure we don't do something that has a drastic effect in the end. I guess I want to make sure that representation is there, and if it can be done by fewer MLAs, let's do it, but I'm not sure it can be. I'm not sure it can be.

Mr. Patterson: I guess, you know, I'm finding a little contrast now in hearing what you've just said. If we have fewer MLAs and then we try to get this variance going, even if we follow the full variance, then are we not going to find the rural areas even being bigger in area?

Mr. Fisher: That's what I'm saying. I understand what you're saying, and that's why I think I would like to make my point that if you believe that the people, be they rural or urban, can be represented properly by fewer MLAs, then I'm for it. But as I said before, I don't think that can be done in our particular situation. Alberta is much like Canada. Hong Kong can be represented by I think fewer people than the province of Alberta can because of the distance and because of the difference. You have rural and you have urban, and I think there is a difference.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you for clarifying that.

The Chair: You can see that Mr. Taylor isn't the only good politician in that constituency.

Mr. Graham: I'm a lawyer too. You can't fool me with that kind of answer.

Mr. Fisher: I honestly wasn't trying to.

Mr. Graham: The question that I had is this. The matrix that was used before, it seems to me, contains a bunch of things which can be very objectively measured: things like miles of highway, number of households, so forth and so on. How would we isolate and what criteria would we use to determine this further measuring stick of issues? How would we determine what's an issue and what isn't an issue?

Mr. Fisher: Well, I guess, as the chairman indicated, that perhaps you have to look at each individual riding and determine what issues are there. As I believe Mr. Gordon indicated, if you look at Mr. Cardinal's riding, the issues that Mr. Cardinal has in his riding are a lot different than the issues that a member of the Legislature may have in Calgary. Although the member of the Legislature in Calgary may have different types of issues and maybe as many, they aren't the same.

I guess what I'm trying to say is that you have to look at each individual case, and our issues here in Cypress-Medicine Hat I think are different in a certain respect than the issues in Mr. Renner's riding, in the city of Medicine Hat. There are different issues. I think you have to look at each individual one, and you may have to come up with a number of issues that affect all of the areas. It may be too cumbersome, Doug, to do that, but I think that's something that may have to be done.

7:28

Ms Mackay: I just want to clarify something. I think I heard you use as an argument the fact that the large urban cities have not only MLAs, as, say, Calgary with 23, but they also have a number of aldermen. How is that different, though, from a rural constituency, which would have the one MLA but would have a number of councillors – would they not? – like the county council or the town

council or whatever?

Mr. Fisher: Well, I guess, Ms Mackay, the problem you have is that, yes, you do have a number of councillors, but you have so many individual communities within that area. We have Bow Island, we have Foremost, and we have Burdett. Those are three what we may consider as a little bigger towns. But then we have 10-plus communities such as Aden and Jenner in the north and south, that are two and a half to three hours apart. They do have a council, but the city of Calgary has one council that deals with those issues within Calgary. Each of those communities has different issues, is dealt with by a different council, and this MLA has to deal with each one of those different councils. I think it's not the same. You do have representation, but they're separate. In Calgary you have one council of 15 people.

Ms Mackay: I see what you're saying.

The Chair: Okay. Well, Ted, thank you very much for a to-the-point presentation and a good exchange. Thank you very much.

Mr. Fisher: Thank you very much. I enjoyed that.

The Chair: I'd like to ask Mara Nesbitt to come forward, please. Mara is going to, she told me – and I'm not holding her to this – make a short presentation. She's very much involved in Dr. Oberg's riding of Strathmore-Brooks.

Mrs. Nesbitt: Mr. Chairman, members of the commission, Strathmore-Brooks – because it hadn't been mentioned too much this evening if at all, I felt it was important to give our plug for that area – stretches from the village of Tilley on the east to and including Strathmore to the west, south down to the river, and north up past Hussar and a few other areas up in there, Standard and a number of other areas to the north. My position this evening is only to comment that our current boundaries for the Strathmore-Brooks constituency are working. The traveling pattern for our MLA is easier to encompass this whole constituency, as he travels back and forth to Calgary and up and back from Edmonton, than it was going east. We used to have Redcliff within our Bow Valley constituency before the last change. The unfortunate part is that we did lose the good people of Redcliff at that time, but it certainly is a better working pattern for our MLA.

Having Strathmore within the constituency does give Dr. Oberg an additional RHA, two additional school districts, another county, an additional irrigation district, several municipal governments, and varieties of groups. As I've heard commented before, rural MLAs must be very versatile and deal with a number of different varieties of issues. Our current MLA with his rural background does handle our issues very effectively. To add more area to this constituency I personally feel would be a mistake. The balance is there right now. It's been working very, very well. Holding a minister's portfolio does cause time constraints, but I do feel that our MLA is very versed on the issues within his constituency and has a good working relationship with the many governing bodies currently within this area. So I'd ask you not to change our Strathmore-Brooks area. That would be my position.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. I notice that Strathmore-Brooks is plus 9 above.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chair, this is a hypothetical question at this point in time, but since you've decided to make a representation, if we did have to take some area from your constituency, what would

you suggest we do, realizing that Tilley I believe, if I remember correctly . . .

Mrs. Nesbitt: Well, no, I don't think of Tilley.

Mr. Patterson: That is in the trading area of Brooks.

Mrs. Nesbitt: Yes. It is definitely within our trading area.

Mr. Patterson: Can you think of an area if we had to look at this, hypothetically?

Mrs. Nesbitt: Well, probably the Hussar area, the Standard area, in that it is a little north, but they do trade within our Strathmore area, so I don't know that that would be fair to them either. The river boundary is what has been used in the past, I believe, and it works very well.

Mr. Patterson: The river boundary on the south?

Mrs. Nesbitt: Yes, and the river boundary on the north as well.

The other area we travel down to is Carseland, but again it is a trading area within the Strathmore region. All of the county is within that complete area, so you'd be breaking up a pattern there too, and that isn't very consistent. That would not be consistent. It's better to keep them within their groups. I would expect that that would be the easier method.

Mr. Patterson: Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Nesbitt: You're welcome.

The Chair: I could ask you if you'd like Chesterwold or Langdon, but I won't because you already told me what you thought of that idea, and it wasn't very good.

Okay. Mara, thank you very, very much.

Mrs. Nesbitt: Well, thank you for your time.

The Chair: The final presenter this evening is Mr. Rob Gardner. Rob is from Medicine Hat, and we look forward to hearing his comments. We do have a presentation you made, a very thorough one I might say, in that you made a number of suggestions as to what should happen in various places across the province, and that's much appreciated.

Mr. Gardner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not affiliated with any political party. I consider myself an Albertan. I don't consider myself an urban Albertan or a rural Albertan. I live in the city of Medicine Hat. I spend much of my time in other parts of the province, in rural areas. I spent last week in Mr. Clegg's former riding cruising the beautiful highways and hiking the trails through the Dunvegan area, in Spirit River and over to High Prairie. So I spend a lot of time in other parts of the province, and I put on 50,000 kilometres last year. I guess I'm not quite up at your level, but I'm moving there.

I'm concerned with the repeated reference to urban ridings and rural ridings. I think we're Albertans. I think our government ought to be working at pulling urban and rural people together. It's been mentioned that there are urban issues and rural issues, but they're all Alberta's issues. If the government and the people of Alberta don't care about rural Alberta, then we're all going to have problems, and the same thing with the urban situation. People in Medicine Hat, because Medicine Hat is a pretty homogenous community, have hardly any concept of the sorts of issues that can arise in inner-city

Calgary or Edmonton, where significant numbers of people are homeless and have social problems we can't even imagine, and I'm glad I can hardly imagine them.

I think we need to be looking at ways to break down this barrier. It's true that the cities are growing very rapidly, more rapidly than the rural areas. I think that's partly due to development policy. Smaller communities could be growing faster than they are, but they've been given little support. I realize that that's beyond the mandate of your committee. Until that changes, I guess I would encourage you to look at examples and ways to blur that urban/rural issue. If I can suggest what MLAs' jobs are, it's to provide governance for our province. It's not to be an expert on forestry or policing policy. I think that the broader your level of experience is, the more just and equitable your decisions will be in all areas, and it's certainly true that urban MLAs don't abstain from votes that happen to deal with rural issues. Likewise, rural people don't abstain from urban issue votes; right?

7:38

The Chair: Right.

Mr. Gardner: We've heard repeatedly tonight that the mixed urban/rural riding of Cypress-Medicine Hat is working very well, and I would say it's doing that because it has a balance there. It has a significant number of urban people with the issues that come with that, it has a balancing number of people in the rural area with those issues, and the MLA is forced to deal with both of those and keep them in balance. It gives him a better perspective on the entire provincial scene.

I would hope that your committee would look for ways to create more ridings like that, where you're able to balance an urban population presumably on the perimeter of a city or include a smaller city like Medicine Hat or Fort McMurray and surround that with a balancing rural population. This is a way to blur those boundaries, and certainly in through the foothills there are lots of areas where you can be doing that. In through High River, Cochrane, Okotoks, Airdrie, and on up following number 2 highway up to Edmonton there are a lot of areas with significant urban populations. The other area that would really lend itself to that is Fort McMurray. The constituency of Fort McMurray could be merged with the surrounding one and then divided in half on an east/west basis, with somebody taking the north and one the south half.

People have talked about the time it takes an MLA to get around. I think there are two aspects of that. One is from the constituency to Edmonton and back, and you can't really change that. The other is within the constituency, and certainly making it smaller gives the MLA better access to his entire community. It's no surprise that these constituencies have grown so enormous when the population centres are consciously excluded from the constituency. Think how much smaller and more compact these rural ridings can be if they're given a population centre within them. What hasn't been mentioned much is the difficulty of a constituent getting to the MLA's office, which is a significant thing, and he's not paid to do that. That's the constituent's own time he has to put out. He could be, as I say, driving three or four hours each way within that constituency.

So without belabouring this at all, I would encourage you to find opportunities to mingle these for two reasons: to give the MLA a better balance of issues and, second of all, to reduce the overall size of some of these enormous constituencies.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Rob. I'm sure that will engender, knowing my colleagues, some comments and questions too.

Mr. Clegg.

Mr. Clegg: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Rob. You know, I thought that maybe Dunvegan was in jeopardy, but I didn't know Olds-Didsbury was, and I guess we might as well leave right now. I really appreciate – I'm serious. When I read through, there's always justification for every brief we get. It's interesting, and certainly as a committee we'll be looking at it.

I missed one of your points, and maybe you can explain it. You said that you need a population centre in each constituency. I totally agree with that, but it's very difficult. How do you get that? I'll use Dunvegan for example. Fairview is the biggest town at 3,200 people. Fairview would love to be 10,000, but it's very difficult to do it. I mean, I know a lot of these people in the south would like to come up there and live, but it costs money to live up there.

The Chair: And he's going to tell you that there's no money up there.

Mr. Clegg: Well, there's no money up there; that's for sure.

Could you explain what you meant by each constituency having to have a population centre? Like, I've lost you on that one.

Mr. Gardner: I didn't say it had to, but I said that if it were possible, it would be beneficial.

Mr. Clegg: Oh, for sure.

Mr. Gardner: I recognize that there are parts of the province, vast areas, that are very sparsely populated. If Cypress county had not taken in part of Medicine Hat, they would have had to extend the riding north all the way to Wainwright to get the equivalent number of people. So by taking in a quarter to a third of Medicine Hat, they're able to make that constituency much more compact. If it's not possible in the Dunvegan area, that's the way things are.

Mr. Clegg: Well, for sure it's the way they are.
Okay. Thanks.

The Chair: When we had presentations in Edmonton – I think we had 27 presentations last Wednesday – we repeatedly asked a number of communities on the edge of Edmonton: would you be prepared to become part of the city of Edmonton in a riding? And with monotonous regularity they all said: no, no, no. When we questioned them, the big reason seemed to be that they felt they'd lose their identity. Any comment on that? I'm talking of Sherwood Park, I'm talking of part of St. Albert, I'm talking of Beaumont, Devon, places like that.

Mr. Clegg: Stony Plain, Leduc.

The Chair: Leduc, yeah.

Mr. Gardner: Sure. I think most of those areas around Edmonton are big enough on their own for a constituency. I think that in Calgary it might be more the case where a pie-shaped riding will extend out, away from the city centre. Some of those communities don't have much of an identity now, if I can say that. I know they feel they have that, but I think they identify with a larger community in the same way that Medicine Hat identifies with Cypress county. I think that they're used to working together. Other people were just talking about the shopping area, the purchasing area. I think that fits in well. If you look at the traffic between Cochrane and Calgary at 8 o'clock in the morning, those people are interacting there. I'd just

encourage you to look in that direction.

Ms Mackay: I don't have a question, but I would just like to thank you for your comments regarding the fact that, you know, we keep talking about the differences between rural and urban and forgetting that we're all Albertans. Although of necessity when we redo the map, I guess we have to make some of those distinctions, it's kind of refreshing to hear the statement that what we have to keep in mind, all of us who live in this province, is that we're Albertans first, instead about worrying about the difference, being an urban Albertan or a rural Albertan. So just thank you for putting that point forward tonight.

Mr. Gardner: Thank you.

Mr. Graham: I'd echo Bauni. I think it's a wonderful attitude. I also want to thank you for all the effort you've gone to, because it was a tremendous effort and you obviously put a lot of time into it. I've marked it, you see, with the yellow sticky. That means I'm going to look at it again.

Ms Mackay: I meant to say that too.

Mr. Graham: But one thing that I noted: you've added three ridings to Calgary and I think one other in the area or something. When I go through this, maybe I've missed something, but you've only taken two out. So is that right, or am I missing something?

Mr. Gardner: I'm not sure.

Mr. Graham: I only see that you're removing Wainwright and Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

Mr. Gardner: Mr. Chairman, for the people in the audience here, I attached a map more for my own interest, doodling as to where boundaries might be. I'm curious to see how close my ideas were to the committee's ideas when it finally shakes out.

Mr. Graham: It's all here. I just haven't noticed it.

Mr. Gardner: There's one that was merged with another. I identified, just using the broad numbers, for the population of Calgary that three more ridings would make the average size the same as the provincial average, whereas in Edmonton they didn't require any more ridings. They just needed some readjustment within the Edmonton ridings. The rural areas are the opposite. Three less ridings would make the overall average the same. Personally, as I said, I don't like this.

7:48

In reviewing the information, the brochure that was sent out, I was interested to see – I feel that a quarter of the ridings in Alberta are not rural, although they're listed as that. I feel they're smaller cities. Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Red Deer, Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray, Leduc, Camrose: these places don't feel rural when you're there; they feel like a city. They certainly are closer to the landscape than in Calgary or Edmonton. I think you'll find that we actually have a quarter rural, a quarter small cities, a quarter Edmonton, and a quarter Calgary. That might be another different way of looking at it. There's a balance of four constituencies there.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much.

Mr. Patterson.

Mr. Patterson: Yes. Just a question here. We were talking tonight about – particularly we've heard a lot about Cypress-Medicine Hat. You say Bindloss and Empress should come into the Cypress-Medicine Hat riding because people living there, a small population, trade in Medicine Hat. Now, are they in Cypress county?

Mr. Gardner: No. I believe the Cypress-Medicine Hat northern boundary is the South Saskatchewan River, and there's a narrow space with perhaps 400 or 500 people living in it between the Red Deer River and the South Saskatchewan. I'm suggesting that that might be best moved to Cypress-Medicine Hat. It looks like a very big area on the map, but it's a very small population because Suffield has nobody living in it.

Mr. Patterson: To get this straight in my mind, because you may be pointing out something here that needs to be corrected, you're saying that it's an area south of the river that's in another constituency?

Mr. Gardner: Yes. It's in Drumheller-Chinook right now, and I believe they tend to trade this way.

Mr. Patterson: Okay. I just wanted to ask that because these are the sort of things that if we can correct and not make much difference, we should. Thank you.

Mr. Gardner: Yes, and it would help balance it. Mr. Taylor's riding should be just slightly larger.

The Chair: Rob, thank you for a very thought-provoking presentation. We appreciate it very much.

Might I say to the good folks here: thank you very much for coming. This commission's portion is adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock in Lethbridge. Thank you very much.

[The commission adjourned at 7:50 p.m.]