

9:00 a.m.

Wednesday, June 5, 2002

[Mr. Clark in the chair]

The Chair: Okay. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My colleagues on the commission have heard me tell this story a couple of times. It's about the young, enthusiastic minister who went to all the work of preparing a sermon for Sunday, and there was rather a sparse turnout. The minister decided that he'd done all the work on this thing, so he was going to give them the full load of the sermon, and he did. As the one rancher who turned up at church was shaking the reverend's hand as he left, the reverend said, "Well, what did you think of my service?" He said, "Well, when only one cow comes up to be fed, I don't give her the full load."

I'm speaking about my opening remarks. I'm going to downscale them a bit, but basically I'd like to say five things to you. Thank you very, very much for being here this morning. We're here in Lethbridge this morning. We were in Medicine Hat last night and Drumheller yesterday morning, in Wainwright the night before, and in St. Paul on Monday morning. Last week we were in Calgary, Edmonton, Olds, and Red Deer. We're now taking a short period of time off. Then later in the month we're going to be going to Westlock, Edson, Slave Lake, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, and Peace River. That will have covered the province for us, and then very early in July we have to put together our conclusions and then cause our interim report to be worked on. We want to have an interim report in the hands of the Speaker early in September, and that'll be made public.

Then we urge you to look at that report and think about the changes that we're recommending. We'd like you to let us know what you think. We're going to have another tour – I'm quite sure an abbreviated one – around the province in December or early January with the view in mind of having a final report in the Speaker's hands by March of next year. Under the electoral boundaries legislation we have to do this within one year. Once our report has been finalized, it goes to the Speaker, and then it's up to the Legislature to deal with the report. The last report, under Mr. Justice Wachowich's direction, was pretty well by and large accepted by the Legislature and then became the boundaries for the last two elections.

Under the Electoral Boundaries Commission legislation after every two elections there's an automatic review of the electoral boundaries. Some of the conditions that we have to deal with are set right there and say that there will be 83 seats and to use the last federal census. Now, we're fortunate in that the last federal census was done in 2001 and has been released in March of this year, so it's very current, whereas the redistribution before that was three or four years old when they were using it. Under the legislation that's the basis we have to use. So the population of Alberta under the last census is 2.98 million. Divide that by 83 seats, and it comes out to 35,951. That's the ideal. That's the average.

When you see the maps back there, they have pluses and minuses. That's how much they're above the 35,000 in some areas or, if you look at other areas, how much it is below the 35,000. Under the legislation we can have a variance of up to 25 percent plus or minus. Now, the last commission basically had all the variances at 15 percent or less other than one riding.

There is provision in the legislation also for up to four ridings, which are regarded as special ridings, where you can have a variance of 50 percent, and when you get a chance to look at the map, look at Athabasca-Wabasca in the northeast corner of the province and also at Lesser Slave Lake. Those are the two ridings that have the variance now, and that can go up to as high as 50 percent. It has to do with sparsity of population, no large centre of population,

distance from Edmonton, and a number of factors like that.

The members of the commission are set out in the legislation. The Executive Council appoints two members, and the Leader of the Opposition after consultation appoints two members. The chairman of the commission is either a member of the bench, head of an academic institution, the Auditor General, or in this case it's the Ethics Commissioner. I'm not quite sure why they picked the Ethics Commissioner this time, but they did, so you're kind of stuck with me as chairman.

I'm really fortunate, though, that I've got four very experienced, well-respected Albertans joining me on the panel. To my far right is the mayor of Claresholm, Mayor Ernie Patterson. Ernie is the vice-president of the AUMA and has been, he tells me, the mayor of Claresholm for 33 years. That's an accomplishment. Next to Ernie is Glen Clegg. Glen was the member of the Legislature for the riding of Dunvegan, which is the Spirit River-Fairview area, in the northwest corner of the province. Before that, Glen was a municipal councillor, and he's a bit of a character. I can tell you that. To my immediate left is Bauni Mackay. Bauni is from Edmonton, and she's the former president of the Alberta Teachers' Association. Then to Bauni's left is Doug Graham. Doug is a well-respected lawyer in the city of Calgary. Both the government and the Leader of the Opposition were to appoint one urban and one rural person, so that's why we have the mix that we have.

I hope that I've covered most of the waterfront. We have briefs organized from now until noon today, so basically what we'd like people to do is come up and join us at the table here. I believe you're the first victim.

Mrs. Loewen: I don't like the sound of that.

The Chair: No, no. I'm really kidding. What we'd like you to do is make your presentation to us, Marg, and then my colleagues will have some questions. If things run as usual, there'll be some comments too. We want you to respond to them. So please be seated, Marg. Marg's maiden name was Birdsall, which is a household name in the Olds area, which I have some familiarity with. We're very pleased to have you here, Marg, and we look forward to hearing your comments.

Mrs. Loewen: Thank you. I'm not really good with mikes here. Hon. chairman, commission members, colleagues, and guests, my name is Marg Loewen. I am the current president of the Foothills-Little Bow Municipal Association, and on behalf of the Foothills-Little Bow Municipal Association I'm really pleased to make this presentation to the Electoral Boundaries Commission and to thank the commission for giving the association this opportunity.

Foothills-Little Bow represents 12 rural municipalities in southern Alberta: Vulcan county, the county of Warner, the county of Forty Mile, the county of Lethbridge, the municipal district of Pincher Creek, the municipal district of Taber, the municipal district of Willow Creek, the municipal district of Foothills, Cypress county, Cardston county, the municipal district of Ranchland, and the county of Newell.

As part of rural Alberta we are proud to play an important role in the economy of the province through agriculture and the various resource industries that operate in rural Alberta. As an essential part of the province of Alberta we continue to believe in the need for effective representation and agree with section 14(a) of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, which states that the commission shall take into consideration "the requirement for effective representation as guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms." We also applaud the province's further support for effective representation as evidenced in their pursuit of a triple E Senate.

Albertans themselves realize the need for effective representation as is shown from their support for the triple E Senate. The support of Alberta citizens for effective representation at the federal level must be transferred to the provincial level as well. Since Alberta doesn't have a Senate, effective representation must be attained in the Legislative Assembly.

Foothills-Little Bow recognizes the need for effective representation and is aware of the difficult task confronting the commission given the population parameters set out. A case in point is of course the balancing act for the cities of Edmonton and Calgary. Although the total number of seats in these cities falls within the population parameters – I believe that you all have a copy, so I'm not going to read them, and I think you're well aware of all the numbers – there are population inequities within the cities, especially in Calgary. As the commission you will need to resolve some of those difficult redistributions of electoral boundaries within the borders of those cities.

Our association does, however, deem it critical that the commission is guided by effective representation. As opposed to representation by population, effective representation ensures that all citizens have a meaningful voice and the right to participate. Just because citizens don't live in a major populated area doesn't mean that they should lose the basic rights of a democratic society. In addition, a characteristic of Canadian democracy is the fundamental respect for the rights of the minority. Representation by population alone would in itself destroy this fundamental.

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Rural Alberta plays a major role in the province's economic, environmental, and social development. This is especially true when dealing with the economy as productivity from agriculture, oil and gas, forestry, and other natural resources takes place almost totally in rural Alberta. Because of this, policy decisions of the provincial government can have a major impact on rural Alberta and the citizens of rural Alberta. Only through effective representation, not representation by population, can rural Alberta have a voice and participate in the decisions that materially affect their livelihood.

The Foothills-Little Bow Municipal Association respectfully puts forth several factors and arguments that need to be considered to ensure effective representation. First, the geographic size of the rural divisions makes it very difficult to meet face-to-face with an elected official. Face-to-face meetings are critical as a major part of the verbal message is the actions and mannerisms in which the message is given. In a rural riding it may take a Member of the Legislative Assembly the same time to drive across his or her constituency as it takes more urban members to walk across and, I would submit, in some cases probably more. This geographic size also couples with the distance that some of these rural areas are from the Legislature. Travel distances and time are expanded within the electoral division, and it's accentuated by the distance and corresponding time that it takes the elected representative to get to the Legislative Assembly or back to their rural municipalities. These factors combine to give rural Albertans less time and opportunity to meet with their elected representatives. The lack of media and other resources in rural areas also compounds the communication problem. If anything rural ridings should be made smaller, not larger, to more equitably address effective representation.

Another challenge faced by the rural MLAs is that the size of their ridings inevitably means that they will have multiple municipal jurisdictions to represent and also multiple school boards, health regions, other organizations, and here in southern Alberta irrigation districts as well, and I believe there are 13 of them. This further deteriorates their ability to effectively represent their constituents and all of the interests of all of the organizations at the same time. As I stated earlier, rural Albertans represent a major part of the

Alberta economy through the agricultural and resource industries. These industries have a profound effect on Alberta as a whole and on the livelihood of rural Albertans specifically. To protect these interests and the interests of rural Albertans, effective representation is a must.

Alberta is a vast province with regional diversity in geographics, economics, and demographics. All of these separate diversities must be represented. Simply grouping sparser areas with the closest urban area may not only dilute this diversity but may also disrupt the area's sense of community. Common interests from traditional transportation and trading patterns and the joint concerns of neighbouring jurisdictions could also be impaired if electoral boundaries were made larger. It's important that these communities of interest are maintained. This can be achieved by acknowledging municipal boundaries or at least the assumed boundaries of common interest.

In summary, effective representation is extremely important to the Foothills-Little Bow Municipal Association and to rural Albertans. To ensure that effective representation is achieved, we believe that the following principles are essential and need to be taken into account in the commission's deliberations: the geographic size of the constituency; the distance from the Legislature to the constituency; the numbers of local governments, school boards, and other community organizations within a constituency; regional diversities; the distance of the community from major urban centres – and here again I would add: just don't add sparse areas to the heavily populated areas – traditional trading and transportation patterns; and communities of interest.

That concludes my presentation. Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Marg.

Mr. Patterson, and then Mr. Clegg.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much for coming and making this presentation this morning. I appreciate your recognizing the problem that we have with the cities, particularly Calgary. One of the things I notice in here is that you've got communities of interest on your last page of your presentation and then you have traditional trading and transportation patterns. Could you elaborate a little bit on what you see is the difference between those two?

Mrs. Loewen: I guess communities of interest translate to some degree even in what you would consider a rural riding. I personally would not. I live in a rural riding, which is Strathmore-Brooks. Brooks and Strathmore do not face the same problems that I do being involved in the agricultural industry. However, the trading patterns certainly even within constituencies – depending on where you are in the riding, you would go to Strathmore and Calgary, or you would go to Brooks and Medicine Hat. In some cases from the southern part you would be coming to Lethbridge, and maybe Taber would be sort of your intermediate urban centre.

I think we faced it with the hospital boundaries as well, where people traditionally went and where the boundaries ended up. Bassano, in particular, was a case. They went to Calgary, even though they were in the Palliser health region, which is Medicine Hat. I think that some of the southern region faces the same problem in terms of Lethbridge and Medicine Hat. There are differences.

Mr. Patterson: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Clegg: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, Marg. It's great; you've certainly presented us with a very informative brief. My question is almost like my friend Ernie's: regional

diversities. You know, it's almost the same. You've listed seven principles that we should be looking at for effective representation. I totally agree with that. Could you just explain a little more about regional diversities when it comes to rural Alberta?

Mrs. Loewen: Well, southern Alberta in particular would probably have some really interesting diversities. Parts of it are fairly heavily populated. It's primarily an irrigation area, although there are still large, large areas of native prairie. People tend to think that irrigation means you have water. That may or may not be true as has been evidenced in the last couple of years. Then thrown in with that you have large agricultural industries such as McCain, or you have very small family farms, whose interests sometimes are opposing. You have the urban centres and the traditional urban/rural difficulties, which I would see as a regional diversity within even a constituency. Certainly southern Alberta, compared to northern Alberta, is very, very different, each with their own unique problems.

Mr. Clegg: Thank you.

The Chair: Would you lump in there the concentrated livestock operations? Is that part of the regional diversity?

Mrs. Loewen: Certainly. I think probably some of that diversity comes from a lack of understanding by a lot of people about the issues. Definitely more education is needed there.

The Chair: Just one question before I ask Bauni for any questions. I take it that this represents every rural municipal jurisdiction south of Calgary?

Mrs. Loewen: Pretty much, except for Wheatland. There are five. Wheatland works with the old area. But generally speaking, yes.

The Chair: This is the area that lost one seat last time – isn't it? – the Taber-Warner seat.

Mrs. Loewen: I believe so. Yes.

Ms Mackay: That was what my question was related to. So you're actually representing several constituencies?

Mrs. Loewen: Yes, through our municipal association. It's a region of the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties. We are the south region. While I am here representing Foothills/Little Bow at their direction, I am sure that most of them will also be submitting their own briefs, either written or in person.

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Ms Mackay: So what you're saying, just to clarify, is that you're happy with the boundaries of all those constituencies as they are now?

Mrs. Loewen: I probably couldn't say that specifically because we have not discussed that specifically, but they feel that it's very important not to lose any more seats.

Ms Mackay: Okay. Then you made some comment in answer to a question about Brooks and Strathmore not having a lot in common. Are you suggesting that those shouldn't stay together?

Mrs. Loewen: No. No, I'm not suggesting that. I was using that as an example. Not that Brooks and Strathmore don't have a lot in common but that maybe a lot of the area in between, which is very

diverse in itself, would not necessarily have the same interests and focus as Brooks or Strathmore.

Ms Mackay: Okay, but you're not suggesting changing that?

Mrs. Loewen: No, I'm not suggesting that at all. That just happens to be my constituency. I'm a little more familiar with it.

Ms Mackay: Thank you.

The Chair: Any other questions or comments?

Mr. Graham: Just to follow up on that. I think you perhaps have answered my question already, but I was interested in number 5 of the considerations that you indicated we should consider, where you say: "In particular, do not just add sparse areas to the closest urban centre." I just wondered if you wanted to elaborate on what that means. What do you mean by that?

Mrs. Loewen: I guess I would suggest that probably what would be the easy way to do things is to take the sparsely populated areas, for instance, take one that's over the limit significantly and split it and add a less populated area to it. I don't think that serves the people well, because those heavily populated areas quite often don't understand the issues that the more sparsely populated areas would have.

Mr. Graham: What I'm getting at is: what urban areas and what sparsely populated areas do you have in mind?

Mrs. Loewen: I didn't have any in particular.

Mr. Graham: Are you suggesting that Brooks and Strathmore don't have anything in common with the areas around them? Or are you suggesting that we not lump urban areas in with Calgary or Lethbridge?

Mrs. Loewen: Maybe that would be more addressing my issue, because the southern Calgary area I would assume is your problem area.

Mr. Graham: So you're suggesting we not lump parts of Calgary in with areas south of that. Is that what you're getting at?

Mrs. Loewen: Essentially, yeah, to some degree that's what I'm suggesting.

Mr. Graham: Okay. But you're not suggesting we not include Brooks, Strathmore, that sort of thing, in with their ridings?

Mrs. Loewen: I'm not suggesting you change the Brooks-Strathmore riding at all. I quite like it the way it is, and we got changed the last time. We were with Medicine Hat.

Mr. Graham: All right. That's what I wanted clarified. Thank you.

Mrs. Loewen: I recognize you have a lot of problems and issues to sort out.

The Chair: Any more questions or comments?

Marg, on behalf of my colleagues thank you very much for your presentation. When we get our interim report out, please have a look at it and then get back to us if you think we've strayed.

Mrs. Loewen: Certainly. Now I shall take my two-hour drive home, to emphasize distance.

The Chair: Okay. Good.

I'd like now to ask Mr. Don Johnson from the town of Taber. Mr. Don Johnson is a councillor in the town of Taber.

Mr. Johnson: The MD of Taber.

The Chair: I'm sorry. The MD of Taber.

Don, thank you very much for attending this morning. You heard my opening remarks, so I certainly am not going to go through that again. We look forward to hearing your presentation.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to be here, and I appreciate the time that you gentlemen and lady have taken to be here. I know that this is somewhat of an onerous task, going around the province to go through these hearings. I participated in the '96 round of boundary hearings and represented the constituency of Taber-Warner to the boundaries review along with Bob Bogle, a former MLA, and found it a very stimulating and challenging process. I don't envy you your task. Certainly there are challenges.

The Chair: We're finding that out too.

Mr. Johnson: Certainly I think that Marg has identified clearly a lot of the concerns that we have in rural Alberta, and I'm sure that you will hear that repeated as you go around the province. There are some consistencies in terms of our concerns about what is effective representation in rural Alberta. I'll eliminate some of the things from my presentation that Marg has already covered, but feel free to ask me any questions on that. I don't guarantee any answers though on that. I'm here today representing the municipal district of Taber. You've received and will receive a number of presentations from rural municipalities as you travel the province conducting these very important hearings.

Let me begin with a number of quotes and references from the initial report of the '96 commission to the Speaker of the Legislature. I want to emphasize effective representation today. As I said, you will no doubt hear that from a number of folks as you go around the province. There were a number of recent court decisions that were identified in the '96 hearings in this report, and I want to comment on a couple of them:

The Supreme Court of Canada and the Alberta Court of Appeal have agreed that the right to vote under the Charter includes:

A) the right to vote

And I think we all agree on that. I don't think there's any doubt about that.

B) the right to have the political strength or value of the vote of an elector not unduly diluted.

That gets into semantics in terms of: how do you define that, and what's really effective?

C) the right to effective representation.

That's the difficult challenge that you have: how to identify what really is effective representation. I'll make some comments and add some specific examples that I think may help in identifying why we feel the way we feel.

Just so you understand some of my background, I lived in Calgary for a number of years. It was in the administration of Mount Royal College. I worked in the political process in Calgary in Jim Dinning's riding for a number of years, which was, under Bill Payne, Calgary-Fish Creek. Then it was split and created Calgary-Shaw and Calgary-Fish Creek, and it has subsequently been split into Loughheed, Shaw, and Fish Creek. The largest area, Cindy Ady's

riding of Calgary-Shaw, right now has the largest number of constituents in the province. So I'm somewhat familiar with that area.

The Chair: We've heard about that riding from time to time.

Mr. Johnson: I'm sure that you have. I've heard some comments out of Calgary as well from some of my friends and family who are still there.

Item (D): "the right to have the parity of the votes of others diluted, but not unduly." That's the challenge that we have. I think I want to underscore this. I've worked with the provincial government in a number of areas. I've also chaired the provincial Family and Community Support Services Association for the last six years, and we're going through a boundaries review right now of our regions: how we match better with the health regions and so forth in terms of effectively representing our concerns to the government. How do we do that? Calgary and Edmonton are so large, and their needs are different from ours but no less one or the other. We all have the right as Albertans to have our concerns heard, whether we're up in your area, Glen, in the northwest. You're certainly familiar with the difficulty and challenge of distance. We need to have those views fairly represented – and I've wrestled through that already and have some sensitivity to what you're going through with this – and to not have that unduly diluted "in order to gain effective representation or as a matter of practical necessity."

Now, the Alberta Court of Appeal identified three possible solutions. One was a "mix [of] urban and non-urban populations," which, Doug, I think you were kind of getting to in your discussion with Marg. That's a challenge and a concern as well. Another was to "increase the overall number of Members in the Legislative Assembly." You don't have that option. You haven't been given that by the Legislature as a choice, although I would like to perhaps suggest that since we've had the last round, there have been 358,000 people added to the population of Alberta, and if you take the norm that you've identified of 35,000 roughly, that's another 10 ridings. You don't have that option, but perhaps you could make a recommendation for that to be considered in the future.

The third one was to "reduce the number of non-urban electoral divisions," which of course is unpalatable to those of us in rural Alberta. The court commented about the attitude of Albertans unwilling to look at the first two, and that's some concern to us in rural Alberta, the dilution of the rural vote.

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I'd like to also refer to comments from Madam Justice McLachlin writing for the Supreme Court of Canada in the Carter case, and I'm sure you're familiar with that. I won't go into a lot of detail, but I do want to make a couple of quotes from her comments.

It is my conclusion that the purpose of the right to vote enshrined in s.3 of the Charter is not equality of voting power per se, but the right to "effective representation." Ours is a representative democracy. Each citizen is entitled to be represented in government. Representation comprehends the idea of having a voice in the deliberations of government as well as the idea of the right to bring one's grievances and concerns to the attention of one's government representative.

She goes on and further comments: "What are the conditions of effective representation? The first is relative parity of voting power." Then she goes on to talk about that, how relative parity is impossible to achieve, and gives some comments on that.

Such relative parity as may be possible of achievement may prove undesirable as it has the effect of detracting from the primary goal of effective representation. Factors like geography, community history, community interests and minority representation may need to be taken into account to ensure that our legislative assemblies

effectively represent the diversity of our social mosaic. These are but examples of considerations which may justify departure from absolute voter parity in the pursuit of more effective representation; the list is not closed.

Before examining electoral boundaries to determine if they are justified, it may be useful to mention some of the factors other than equality of voting power which figure in the analysis. One of the most important is the fact that it is more difficult to represent rural ridings than urban, and I'm going to come back to that a little bit later in my presentation and give some specific examples of that. The material before us suggests that not only are rural ridings harder to serve because of the difficulty in transport and communications but that rural voters make greater demands on their elected representatives whether because of the absence of alternative resources to be found in urban centres or for other reasons. Thus the goal of effective representation may justify somewhat the lower voter populations in rural areas. I think that's a fairly clear statement about the parity of that as opposed to one man, one vote, or rep by pop.

The previous commission set up a series of matrices with 10 factors that they used in that and going into a quantifying and qualitative process. In our judgment I think that they left a little bit out on the qualitative side requiring the application of discretion and judgment included in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and those considerations would speak to community interests, community boundaries, geographical features, desirability or undesirability of clear boundaries. Marg spoke a little bit to that earlier in her comments.

You get into the interpretation of what is effective representation. Just a couple of comments on that. Those who have been in the Legislature certainly have an appreciation of what their responsibilities are, but one of the key areas – and this was identified in the previous discussion by the previous boundaries commission – is the communication and liaison function of an MLA, which involves participation in varied community, local government, and interest group activities. That becomes somewhat of a concern to us in terms of the distance from the Legislature, the number of jurisdictions that an MLA has to deal with. Marg identified some of those in terms of the number of municipalities that may be within a riding, and I'll come back to that in the example that I'm going to use a little bit later.

I'll eliminate some of the details that I was going to go through with regard to some geographic considerations by geographers, some comments that were in the previous document.

I want to talk a little bit about ratios and the current numbers if I may. I've taken the numbers that were provided in the document sent out to all households in the province of Alberta. I don't have the exact breakdown, as we did in the previous round of hearings, because no document was provided, but as I understand the numbers, Calgary has currently 878,866 people in 21 ridings, or an average of 41,851 per riding. So the suggestion there is that if you rearranged the boundaries within the city of Calgary, you would come under the average, which is just under 36,000. I don't remember the exact number. Edmonton has 666,104 with 19 ridings, for an average of 35,058. If you take the total of those two cities, 1,544,970 individuals, over the total population of 2,983,000, you have 51 percent of the population in Calgary and Edmonton. It's interesting to note that the previous commission identified Calgary and Edmonton as the only major urban centres in the province. How do you deal with that versus the rest of the province? The indication almost is that outside of that would be considered small-town and rural Alberta, so to speak. Now, Ernie, I'm not suggesting that Claresholm is Small Town, Alberta, but I think that there's some richness in having that designation, in my opinion anyway. Having lived in Calgary – and I love Calgary – I still have a flaming C on

one cheek and a Stamped horse on the other. Bauni, no reference to Edmonton there in terms of the sporting side of things.

It's interesting when you have 51 percent of the population in those two centres and you have 48 percent of the seats in those cities. If you take the entire population of the province – and I don't have the exact breakdown of urban/rural. In the '96 discussions we had an opportunity to see that breakdown, and perhaps after you go through this round, another document will be provided. I may be a little bit out on my numbers here, but as I calculate from the document that you sent out, roughly 71 percent of the population in the province is urban, and you have 69 percent of the seats in the Legislature represented there. The previous commission indicated that that 1 or 2 percent diversity is not a large diversity in terms of dilution of effective representation for the cities. I think that while we were concerned about rural Alberta, we also need to be concerned about the larger centres, that those people are not disenfranchised either, that they do have that opportunity.

What I'm suggesting is that I think there needs to be a significant consideration of rearrangement of those boundaries within those two cities as part of that discussion. We would be loath to see any further reduction. In '91 or '93 – I don't remember the date – we lost a riding in southern Alberta. We lost another one in '95. I know that in Calgary the representation is that they want a minimum of three new ridings for that city. They would prefer five, as I understand it.

The Chair: I should interrupt you, Don, and also say that some said two.

Mr. Johnson: Yeah. Just from the folks that I know that I've talked to there in relation to Calgary-Shaw, if you said three, their suggestion is one from southern Alberta, one from central, and one from northern. I don't want to get into a competition. I don't think it should be us or them. I think we're together on this and on a concern that we all have effective representation. I want to underscore that point.

The figures are interesting in terms of the ratios. It's interesting to note that Calgary has increased roughly 16 percent in population since '96. Edmonton has gone up 5 percent. Cardston-Taber-Warner, our riding, has gone up 5 percent as well, so we've gone up the same percentage as the city of Edmonton. Those are just interesting numbers that I bring forward to you.

I want to talk a little bit about the difficulty of serving rural versus urban, and I'm going to specifically refer to Cardston-Taber-Warner, which is my riding, versus Calgary-Shaw, which is one I'm a little bit familiar with. That riding has roughly 82,000-plus people in it; we have roughly 30,000 people in it. I went through this with the hon. Jim Dinning before because I'd lived in that riding. I indicated to Jim that he could get on his mountain bike and ride around that riding in 45 minutes, because I did it with my scout troop up there. In Cardston-Taber-Warner it takes two and a half hours to go from Grassy Lake to Waterton Lakes. It's not in a direct line to be able to do that, and Marg talked about the difficulty of that, in getting across.

Access to our MLA. This is a critical point, as far as I'm concerned. Currently our MLA, when the Legislature is in session, is gone Monday to Thursday to Edmonton, to the Leg., and comes home Thursday evening. On Friday he's in the east part of the constituency, on Saturday he's in the west part, and on Sunday he's back to Edmonton and ready to go to the Legislature. If you're an MLA in Calgary or Edmonton, when the Leg. finishes at 5 o'clock, you can have a constituency meeting that night. You can jump on the airbus if you're going to Calgary. You can have a meeting that night and jump on the plane at 9:30 or 10 o'clock and be back in Edmonton that night or, at the latest, the next morning.

The MLAs in the rural areas don't have that option. If you're coming to Lethbridge, by the time the Leg. gets over, the last flight out of Edmonton that would get you here would put you into Lethbridge at about 10:30 in the evening. You can't have a meeting, so you're looking at the next day. By the time you finish those meetings in the evening, it's too late to get a flight back, so you're looking at the third day. You're taking three days to do what is done in three hours in Edmonton or Calgary. So when the Leg. is in session, our MLAs do not have the option of being available to us, whereas in Calgary and Edmonton I know that they do have meetings when the Leg. is in session. They meet with their MLAs and have that option. So I'm diminished already in my access to my MLA, and I'm a little bit more aggressive than the average person in terms of wanting to get hold of my MLA. I'll phone him in Edmonton, I'll phone him wherever, and they usually phone back, but the average voter doesn't take the time to do that. They won't pursue that. That's a concern with regard to that.

9:40

In Calgary you have one council, two school boards, no irrigation divisions, and 21 MLAs to serve those. In our area you have roughly 28 jurisdictions when you consider municipal councils, urban villages, towns, irrigation districts, school boards, et cetera. Every one of those towns wants to have their MLA at their parade, they want to meet with them in the council, and they want him to come and sit down with them. Glen, you know that. Your councils wanted to have you come and meet with them. Ernie, you wanted to have your MLA come and meet with your council. So there is a difficulty in doing that, whereas in Calgary, again, you have 21. In fact, an alderman in Calgary told me recently that they didn't think they needed more MLAs than they have aldermen, that the aldermen work harder than the MLAs. I don't know if that's true or not, but he was making a quip about that, I think. Certainly people have the right to have equitable access to their MLA.

Just in summary, I won't review again some of the comments that Marg made, that she did a great job in covering, but I want to emphasize again the importance of the geographic size of the constituency and your ability to get out and serve those people; the distance of the community from the Legislature, as I've indicated, in being able to get out to your community either by car or by plane – and sometimes that's difficult with either – and the number of jurisdictions that you have to deal with within those ridings. The distance of the community from major centres is also a major concern for us.

While the commission has been directed by this Legislature not to consider increasing the number of ridings, as I indicated before, I would like to suggest that perhaps some comment be made that an increase at some future time be considered. I think it's unreasonable to expect that you can have 358,000 people, which would be a fairly large city, move into this province in the last six or seven years and not give those people an opportunity for representation regardless of where they live. When I'm saying that, I might be undermining my position a little bit, because what you're saying is that Calgary has had the lion's share of that increase and would get more ridings probably. That would have the effect of diluting the numbers in terms of urban versus rural. I would hope that the integrity of our MLAs is such that when issues come forward, they don't think necessarily urban versus rural, that they think about us collectively as a community. At least, I hope that that's the case. You have the faith that our MLAs represent us effectively that way.

We would encourage the commission not to bend to political expediency and unduly dilute effective representation in rural Alberta. We implore you to use great care, wisdom, common sense, and above all a sense of sensitivity and compassion for those that you serve in the process, not only in rural Alberta but also in urban

Alberta, all of us, collectively together. I happen to think that we live in the best province in the dominion. I really do. I'm grateful every day that I get up that I live in Alberta, that I have the opportunity to have input at a forum like this, because many parts of the world don't have that opportunity to have input to a commission such as yourselves. We're so richly rewarded for living where we live in this world of ours, and I'm grateful for that.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here this morning.

The Chair: Thanks very much, Don, for a wide-ranging presentation.

Mr. Graham, do you want to start?

Mr. Graham: Yes. It was an excellent presentation and wide-ranging and has certainly given us a lot of food for thought. A lot of these things have been mentioned to us before, and we've taken due note of them and will continue to take due note of them. Maybe it's because it's early in the morning, but I'm going to put you on the spot the same way I did Dave Bronconnier, and I'm going to ask you: if there were seats to be transferred to Calgary, how many do you think should be?

Mr. Johnson: Well, I come back again to – and I made this comment to Jim Dinning, that he could add 20,000 people to his riding and he wouldn't really know the difference in terms of the number of calls he gets. In fact, I asked our MLA: can you give me the number of calls you get in a week versus the number of calls that a riding in Calgary would get? Of course, he doesn't have that information available to him, although I know he's made comments that the rural MLAs are somewhat busier in terms of responding to calls than the urban people. When he first went to the Legislature, one of the new MLAs from Edmonton came into his office and wanted to know what that stack of paper was, and he said, "It's correspondence and call-back requests from our constituents." He said, "How many have you had?" He said: "I've had one. It was a lady that wanted to know how to get rid of the coyote in her backyard somewhere along the river valley in Edmonton." They went out and investigated, and it was a German shepherd; it wasn't a coyote.

In terms of numbers, to answer your question directly, the difficulty I have is the restriction on the number of ridings. I think it would be unfortunate and unfair to take any more ridings from rural Alberta. In the south particularly we've been diluted already. Cardston-Taber-Warner is extremely difficult. I ran against the incumbent guy for the nomination, and one of the proposals that we had made and he's picked up on is citizens' advisory groups to be able to sit down with constituent groups in each area of the riding to get input. How do you do that otherwise because of the time, distance, and diversity that he has? He's got Waterton Lakes on one end, and he's got dryland and irrigation row crops on the other end.

I'd like to see Calgary have at least one more riding, but not at the expense of rural Alberta. But you don't have that option. So I don't know if I'm really answering your question. What did Bronconnier say?

Mr. Graham: He said three minimum.

Mr. Johnson: Three minimum? See, that's where I guess I'm getting my information from, because the feedback I got is that they want three minimum.

Part of the problem is that I know that in that riding of Calgary-Shaw they were looking for a high school. It didn't happen in the budget. It got cut. They're saying: "Well, if you look at Lethbridge, Lethbridge has got a smaller population than Calgary-Shaw, and they've got three high schools. How come we don't have one?" I'm

not sure that that's a fair comparison. You're comparing apples to apples there.

The Chair: Those are the kinds of comparisons that are made; aren't they?

Mr. Johnson: Yeah. And if you're a resident in that area, you have a right to have some concerns, but that's not a function of whether or not they should have more. They say, "Well, if we had three more MLAs, we'd get the school." I don't think you can make that leap. But I do think that there needs to be a rearrangement of the boundaries in Calgary. Marg talked about being sensitive to natural communities and boundaries. I know that in the last round there were some concerns in Calgary when they redistributed those. It's a little easier, I would suggest, in Calgary to rearrange those boundaries than it is in the rural areas. My answer I guess is: one.

Ms Mackay: You're talking about rearranging boundaries within the city of Calgary, and I would assume that you'd expect that to happen in Edmonton as well.

Mr. Johnson: Yes.

Ms Mackay: You're in Taber-Warner; right?

Mr. Johnson: Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Ms Mackay: Your population is about minus 15 percent, 15 percent below the provincial average.

Mr. Johnson: Well, we're at 30,000, and the average is 35,000. So, yeah.

Ms Mackay: Yeah. So if it were necessary to do any rearranging of boundaries in this part of the province, do you have any suggestions as to which way we would move a boundary in your constituency to take into account such things as communities of interest and travel patterns and business affiliations and all that kind of thing?

Mr. Johnson: I don't want to take away from our gentleman from Cardston, because he's going to make some comments on that with that area, Hill Spring being in a riding that's not natural to them in terms of the community of interests. But when we had the split last time, we felt that Coaldale and Picture Butte should remain with us in part because of the row crop farming industry, with sugar beets and dryable beans and those kinds of crops, corn and so forth, and intensive livestock. The county of Lethbridge and the MD of Taber have a lot of similarities in that regard with our intensive livestock and intensive agriculture as a whole.

So I guess if there was any consideration, I think that the reinclusion of Coaldale at a minimum would be a positive. The town of Coaldale has roughly 3,000 people in it. I'm not sure of the county of Lethbridge's population. Their entire population is roughly 10,000, so if you added the entire county of Lethbridge and the town of Coaldale, that'd be 13,000. That'd push us up the other way. We'd be at 43,000. We'd still be under the average, but would our representative be able to effectively represent that given the number of municipal jurisdictions it simply adds to what he already has?

Ms Mackay: Thank you.

9:50

The Chair: Okay. Any further questions of Mr. Johnson? Thank

you for a wide-ranging presentation.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you for the opportunity.

The Chair: I appreciate your being here. Thank you very much.

The next presenter, I believe, is the reeve of the county of Lethbridge. Is that right? I'm pleased to welcome Mr. Dave Oseen. Dave is the reeve of the county of Lethbridge. Thanks for coming this morning. We'll look forward to your presentation.

Mr. Oseen: Thank you. On behalf of the county of Lethbridge council I express appreciation for the opportunity to submit a presentation to the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission. The county's comments on the issue can be summarized under two main categories: one, difficulties encountered by the MLA required to provide effective representation for a number of diverse communities spread out over a large geographic area; two, difficulties encountered at the rural municipal level when boundaries are split between two or more constituencies.

The county of Lethbridge shares a common trait with other rural municipalities in that county council collectively represents a stable, rural population spread over a large geographic area. In addition to the 10,000 county residents which council represents, we also interact directly with the councils of six urban communities on issues of mutual interest and concern. The realities facing the county of Lethbridge have emphasized the need for an electoral boundaries review process to address the above concerns during your review process. Knowing the diversity and needs facing each community within the county and the difficulty encountered by the county in responding to the range of issues dealt with, council has an understanding of how difficult it must be for one MLA to effectively keep in touch and develop an awareness of issues facing multiple communities across a number of rural municipalities. A system which requires one MLA to represent many diverse constituent communities within large, rural ridings weakens the same system's ability to provide effective representation.

Multiple communities translates into multiple interests and a manifold increase in requests and the time required by the MLA to respond to the issues. As the size of the geographic area covered increases, the problem of providing adequate representation is compounded, and any move to reduce the number of rural MLAs will further increase this problem and should be vigorously opposed. It is vital that this process halt the tendency to address the need for additional representation in the large urban centres at the expense of adequate representation in the less-populated areas of rural Alberta.

The second concern relates to the difficulties encountered when rural municipal boundaries are split between two or more provincial ridings. Many of the issues that local communities face require a significant investment in time and effort before a thorough understanding of the issues is developed. In some cases an issue within a rural municipality may be somewhat divisive in nature. Having two or more MLAs represent portions of a rural municipality increases the difficulty encountered when councils attempt to develop the support for a particular issue. The problem becomes even more acute when an issue of a divisive nature must be resolved. The split in boundaries may result in situations where political lines on the issue are drawn, and rather than facilitate a solution, the gulf between the sides is increased.

In summary, a further reduction in rural representation will result in an unworkable situation for the MLA and the municipal councils represented by the MLA. This will continue a downward spiral at a time when survival is the key concern facing rural communities as opposed to the unmanaged growth occurring in large urban centres. Rural Alberta needs enhanced rather than reduced representation. We ask the boundaries review commission to give full consideration

to the need which rural Alberta has to maintain the lifeline of communities and to ensure that the system provides opportunities for effective representation in the future.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thanks, David. Could I ask you to elaborate on your comments on pages 3 and 4, where you talk about difficulties of issues that flow between boundaries. I don't want you to be too specific, but can you tell us the issue you're talking about so we better understand it? Is that fair?

Mr. Oseen: Okay. Yeah, I think I could give you one example, and that would be with the intensive livestock. Had our county been split into two portions, I think our voice at our council would have been less effective there in trying to convince the provincial government that there needed to be action taken on that issue. It took a lot of effort on the part of county council to develop, along with the community, a direction we wanted to take in the first place. So I think that if the boundary had been split so that half the municipality had been in another riding, it would have been even more difficult to present that to government.

The Chair: So the pitch is really as much as we possibly can to have coterminous boundaries?

Mr. Oseen: I would say yes.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chair, just a very brief preamble before my question. A large number of our written submissions and some oral submissions have suggested that we reduce the number of MLAs, and of course that's not in our mandate, but a terrific number of submissions in that nature. Of course, you have made the indication that rural should continue to have representation. Then I find your last paragraph interesting in that the commission should look at ways and means to ensure that there's effective representation in the future for the rural area. One suggestion that we've had made to us – in fact, it's been made several times – is that there be some form of a second House to ensure the balance. In court cases we have to work it out. So what would you think of that or some form of that?

Mr. Oseen: Well, I guess I'm certainly not an historian or have read a great deal, but I think the Americans recognized that when they formed their Constitution too. Even though Montana is still sparsely populated, they had to have some means by which the issues in those sparsely populated areas could be brought forward. So, yes, I believe that would be one way of doing it. How you would do it I don't know.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you.

Mr. Clegg: Well, thank you for the brief. I totally understand what you're saying. I represented a constituency with 19 municipal governments and school boards and hospital boards in it, so I understand your concern. We've heard it before. I'm just an agreeable guy. I agree with you too.

Mr. Oseen: Well, thank you then.

The Chair: David, can I say thank you very much and please have a look at our interim report. Actually, can I ask you just one quick question?

Mr. Oseen: Sure.

The Chair: We've been asking areas adjacent to cities how they'd

feel about being a part of the city. I'm not saying it applies in Lethbridge, but in Grande Prairie it seems to have worked rather well. Do you have any advice there? The reason that we ask the question is that we hear a lot about the urban/rural split. Is there anything more we can do to kind of blend the two and try and help? In one sense it may make an MLA's job even more difficult. I'd be interested in your reaction.

Mr. Oseen: Okay. You have to realize that this is strictly my opinion. I mean, we haven't talked a great deal on council about this. Bauni Mackay, I believe you have been involved a lot?

The Chair: She was the president of the ATA.

Mr. Oseen: Right. I remember that. When our municipality split from the education side, that was part of the discussion there in setting up the new boundaries. We formed our school board from Vulcan and the county of Lethbridge, so when you set the school board out, we went from 13 – and I think they had seven – down to a board of about seven. So you're eliminating about 13 districts. So in doing that, then the discussion gets around: well, should we include part of the districts into the town and in the rural area? My feeling was that I didn't agree with that. Looking at the municipal side now with, say, the city of Lethbridge, we've worked very well with our urban neighbours. We're presently working on getting water systems throughout the county from the city.

But to get into anything deeper than that, I think the issues in the city usually are one or two issues, and it's much easier to handle an issue in the city, which affects everyone. You get into the rural area and, even within a rural area like the county of Lethbridge, it's very diverse. You have many different opinions, and I think with our seven councillors they certainly represent many diverse opinions there.

So I think if you got involved with the city and you included part urban and part rural, I would have difficulty with that, but that's my personal opinion. I think there is a difference. It's apples and oranges, I believe. It's hard to mix the two.

The Chair: Dave, thank you very, very much. We appreciate your representation.

Mr. Oseen: Thank you.

10:00

The Chair: I'd like now to ask, from the county of Warner, Emma Hulit. After we hear the presentation from Emma, it's the chair's plan that we would take a break. I told Emma when we were meeting over there that this is a pretty unstructured approach, that we hadn't lost anyone in any of these meetings yet, and we had no plans of this happening in Lethbridge. Emma, thank you very much for coming and making a presentation to us on behalf of the county of Warner.

Mrs. Hulit: Well, I thank you for this opportunity. In the past I've been known to be somewhat long-winded, and I was told I had only five minutes.

The Chair: I think we can make it 10.

Mrs. Hulit: I had quite a time making my presentation shorter, so I guess you're the lucky one here today.

The Chair: I let Mr. Johnson get away on me.

Mrs. Hulit: Well, we thank you for the opportunity to share some

points regarding the electoral boundaries review. The rapid growth and development of our great province creates an inequity or imbalance, be it perceived or real, as it pertains to effective representation.

I guess first I need to ask: what is our government's long-term vision for this province? Is it a strong, developing economy in all of Alberta, of all contributing resources: agriculture, oil, gas, tourism, forestry, mining, processing, manufacturing? One of the critical factors ensuring viable rural communities is the understanding and the support of the provincial government. Effective representation grants a meaningful voice in government to all citizens.

The county of Warner, right on the Montana border, is one of three rural municipalities in our constituency. There are also five towns, four villages, 15 hamlets, four school divisions, seven irrigation districts, and one health region. This list does not account for the many ag societies, recreation, libraries, emergency services, and community organizations that request our MLA's time and efforts. Within the Cardston-Taber-Warner constituency the communities reach from the foothills at Waterton park to the dryland ranches located in the Aden port of entry area, and that's the area that I'm from. This is a three-hour drive for our representative, who resides in the Cardston area. It's three hours if he doesn't get lost. We've had occasions that he's lucky he didn't end up in Medicine Hat, but he's had quite a time.

Effective representation is crucial in sparsely populated areas. These rural residents have a right to a voice in the democratic process. The single most important function of any elected official is to represent the priorities and interests of those who elect him. How can we assure effective representation to citizens of such large rural constituencies?

The distance factor from Edmonton is a disadvantage in the effectiveness of representation. Travel time for both the MLA or delegations wishing to make presentations to government is an added cost and a loss of effectiveness as well as timeliness. Rural municipalities then attempt to present issues at convention time, and as a municipality we've been faced with that many times. We've always said that, yes, we'll take the time and spend the money to go and make representation in Edmonton on issues that are hot at the time or very important. It seems like we don't do it, so then you do try to cram it in at convention time. It loses its effectiveness. It's not as timely. Rural communities have a strong grassroots involvement in government affairs and place great importance on maintaining contact with their MLA. This increases pressure on the workload of the rural MLAs to effectively represent the citizens.

The county of Warner acknowledges the huge task of making recommendations to design new provincial electoral boundaries in our growing province. The continuing growth and pressure of our urban centres must be considered. The citizens of rural Alberta, where much of the province's resource wealth is produced, have a right to an effective voice in decisions that affect their communities. We expect leadership that considers all factors of effective representation when considering our new boundaries. We do not want a province with a divided team of urban and rural representatives focused only on people-counting. All Albertans lose in that scenario.

Once again, what is the long-term vision of our province? Will the entire province develop, grow, and be part of that vision? This can only be accomplished through the effective representation of all Albertans. Rural Alberta wishes to be an effective stakeholder in this vision.

I thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I can recall yesterday in Drumheller – and my colleagues have to help me here – that one of the suggestions that was made to us was that rural Alberta supplied

the fuel for the engine of growth in Alberta and that quite a bit of that growth obviously was taking place in the cities. I thought it was a worthwhile comment.

Mr. Clegg.

Mr. Clegg: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's certainly a good brief, again one we've heard many times. Having the privilege and the pleasure to in fact represent the constituency of Dunvegan, I spent 12 weeks of the year on the road from Fairview to Edmonton just to be in Edmonton, 500 hours a year. I made 50 trips, and even if I flew or drove, it averaged 10 hours a week, so that's 500 hours. Your point of the distance from the Legislature is certainly a big factor. When you're driving down the road, you can maybe do a lot of thinking, but you don't do a lot of actual work, except at my age you get a very stiff back.

I understand rural Alberta very well. I'd just make a comment. I know we're supposed to ask questions, Mr. Chairman, but I just totally agree, so I have no questions for you. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Patterson.

Mr. Patterson: Yes, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much, Emma, for coming this morning and making this presentation. You understand the difficulties that we have here. We're limited to 83 ridings under our mandate. We have this huge population increase in Calgary, so something has to give somewhere. I guess my question to you is: are you basically happy now with Cardston-Taber-Warner as it is constituted?

Mrs. Hulit: I realize it's great difficulty for our MLA because of where he lives. He lives at the far western end of the constituency. And wouldn't you know? I live in a community that is extremely politically active. Be it at the local level, provincial level, or federal level, there just seems to be a group who are always wanting to be involved. They want to know the details of government issues and that type of thing. As long as our MLA presently can keep up with it – you know, it's huge. It's very large, and I know the pressures, the distance pressures on him. He's a very conscientious person trying very hard to represent all the people within his constituency, and it's a huge task. You ask any rural people, and it seems like they know who their MLA is. I've had occasion to be talking politics . . .

10:10

The Chair: I can't imagine that.

Mrs. Hulit: Well, I can't imagine that either.

. . . with friends in Calgary, and I have asked them: who's your MLA? They don't have a clue, and they have never voted. Well, you know, it's shocking. But with rural people, down here I think a lot of that involvement and interest is the distance factor. The MLA is the only connection we have to what's happening and what's affecting our lives.

Mr. Graham: Just be aware, Emma, that we certainly have heard these sorts of representations, and we're well aware of the concerns you've raised. I guess if I were to ask you hypothetically – and it is very hypothetical – understanding that your riding may also be affected by other ridings around it, if it were necessary to move a border to add a few people someplace, what would be your view as to the best way to do that? If you want to answer that.

Mrs. Hulit: I really cannot say unless it would be to move it – it's based populationwise naturally, so you would attempt to move it to an area where you could capture the greatest population. I wouldn't want to see it go farther east because farther east of where we are,

there are even fewer people.

The Chair: Almost comes up along the edge of Lethbridge, doesn't it?

Mrs. Hult: Yes.

The Chair: Well, Emma, on behalf of my colleagues, thank you very much. As Doug so properly put it, we've heard this point of view expressed many times, but it's important for us to hear it from a variety of individuals. From what Mr. Patterson tells me, there are few better than you at making the point, and you've done it well this morning. Thank you very much.

We'll take a 10-minute break.

[The commission adjourned from 10:13 a.m. to 10:27 a.m.]

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, I'm pleased to ask Dr. Mark Sandilands to speak to us. The good doctor and I were reminiscing that he was at the sod-turning of the University of Lethbridge, and I was there also. Both of us of course were a little younger then than we are now. It was only 35 years ago, but good memories of that occasion, doctor, and we look forward to your presentation this morning.

Dr. Sandilands: Well, thank you, and good morning to the panel. Are the microphones okay? You can hear me okay? Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to speak to you. The Lethbridge New Democrats represent the Lethbridge-East constituency association and the Lethbridge-West constituency association. Our membership is approximately 250, and we have maintained a Lethbridge regional office for the New Democrats for about 20 years.

We have some specific recommendations to make and a general comment. The specific recommendation concerns the dividing line between Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West, which is for the most part 13th Street. However, starting from the south, this boundary line turns east at 10th Avenue and goes easterly to Mayor Magrath Drive. It then follows Mayor Magrath Drive to the Crowsnest Trail, where it goes west again to 13th Street and continues to the northern boundary of both constituencies, which is the municipal boundary of Lethbridge. Some people refer to this as the "burp," and some people refer to it as a "jog." The actual size of this finger, or – we could sit and talk about many names for it, but it actually was larger, and as west Lethbridge has grown, this has shrunk. We recommend that it be entirely removed to make the dividing line 13th Street for the entire length of 13th Street. This would move, according to the latest report of the Chief Electoral Officer, 1,973 voters from Lethbridge-West to Lethbridge-East. The population of Lethbridge-West would decrease from 35,704 to 33,731 and would increase that of Lethbridge-East to 33,000 from 31,000.

An additional benefit of this change would be a decrease in the confusion among voters who live in the aforementioned district or pocket or burp or jog. During the election campaign we encountered many voters who were confused about which constituency they were to vote in and consequently which candidates' campaigns were relevant to them. Adding to the confusion is the fact that we use the term "west Lethbridge" for people who live on the west side of the Oldman River, and people who live close to the river perhaps can understand this, but as they get farther and farther away from it, it becomes confusing. Thirteenth Street is a natural boundary, and it makes eminent sense to place the electoral boundary there.

I also have some general comments regarding the electoral process in Alberta. In 1990 the Lethbridge-East New Democrats made a presentation to the boundary commission and advocated a reduction

in the number of electoral divisions in Alberta. We still believe that this issue should be considered. Alberta has 83 constituencies for a population of just under 3 million. With a population of four times that, 12 million, Ontario has 103 Members of Provincial Parliament, giving an average of 116,000 citizens per MPP. B.C. has 79 MLAs, and each has a representation of approximately 50,000. A reduction of the number of constituencies in Alberta would definitely save money for the people of Alberta, and I would like you to know that the New Democrats are always in favour of saving money for the people of Alberta.

On the other hand, it might be wiser to keep the 83 MLAs and have about half of them elected on the current first-past-the-post system but have the remainder appointed on a proportional representation system. It might be a surprise to those of us in Canada, but most democracies around the world use a system of proportional representation. Prince Edward Island in Canada is now very seriously considering adopting such a system. Proportional representation would bring back credibility to the Legislature at a time when many believe there is no point to voting. With the exception of 1986 the election in 2001 had the lowest percentage voter turnout in Alberta's history, 52 percent. This is nothing to be proud of and should be a matter of deep concern for anyone having a responsibility to foster democracy in this province.

We urge the committee to at the very least recommend that proportional representation be given serious study in this province. Many political innovations have arisen in Alberta. Here is an opportunity for one that will be widely approved.

The Chair: Thank you very much, doctor.

Dealing with your first recommendation, one of the things that I think all of us individually have mulled over is the imbalance between Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West. I take your suggestion here to really balance that out somewhat, and I can assure you we'll give very serious consideration to.

Dr. Sandilands: Thank you.

The Chair: I think the province of Saskatchewan has about 16,000 per constituency; don't they? It was 30,000 ideally last time. Now we're looking at 36,000. It's a mug's game to some extent; isn't it?

Dr. Sandilands: Right.

The Chair: Mr. Clegg, and then Mr. Patterson.

Mr. Clegg: Thank you, Mark, or Dr. Mark, for this brief.

Dr. Sandilands: You can call me Mark; I'll call you Glen.

Mr. Clegg: I think some of your remarks – I agree with you. Certainly it isn't our mandate to say how many seats Alberta should have. Have you got – the size of the ridings is an awful difference. We've heard for the last three days that the size of the different electoral divisions is a real concern to rural Albertans. You say that in Ontario there are 103, and I don't question that, but have you got the figures for the size of some of their constituencies? That to me is a very important factor. We as a committee have heard many briefs or presentations on this very factor. We just don't want to make a statement without some background information.

Dr. Sandilands: Right. I don't have the size of the Ontario constituency boundaries. I think that if you consider the map of Ontario, like Alberta there are concentrations of population in the southern areas, but there are certainly in the northern areas very, very large constituencies. Probably a few of them are larger than

any in Alberta. If you look at the area north of Thunder Bay or the area near Cochrane, Ontario, the province is very sparsely populated.

I think the commission could alleviate some of the problems of rural MLAs by considering a recommendation for better funding for them to get around in their constituencies and even set up some satellite offices so that they could have an office not in just one community but in several communities. I know there are now 1-800 numbers, you know, the toll-free numbers that MLAs can have in rural constituencies. I've had the opportunity to call some of them. That's just a small step, but I think that there could be a solid recommendation to support rural MLAs to get in touch with their constituents. I do think it becomes a problem when there are serious imbalances, and I think that people do feel resentful if their vote counts as only half as much of somebody in a rural voting district.

Mr. Clegg: Just a quick comment and a question. Well, I'm not too sure about a question, but the fact is that the constituency I represented, which was Dunvegan, is twice the size of the province of Prince Edward Island. So, you know, you better be talking apples and apples here. I did know, but how many MLAs have they got? My riding alone was twice as big as their whole province. So these figures, unless you have the size, to me it's not that relevant, if I can use that word.

10:37

Dr. Sandilands: Well, I'll do the research and get it to you if you'd like.

Mr. Clegg: Well, that would be very nice. Sure.

The Chair: Mr. Patterson.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chair. Thank you, Dr. Sandilands, and I especially appreciate you pointing out this jog/burp/pocket, because I know that this has been a bit of a problem with people not really realizing which constituency they're in. I'd just like to get your opinion on this because I think you have done quite a bit of studying on it. You talk about proportional representation. We've also had some submissions made to us about a different way of representing rural Alberta, maybe a second House. I'm just wondering if you have any thoughts on that. As the city of Calgary and Edmonton grow, is the problem in the rural areas going to become more difficult?

Dr. Sandilands: I know there are many models for proportional representation. When this comes up, many people think of Israel and Italy, where they have proportional representation and it seems that they have to change government every six months or so. But many of the more stable democracies also have this. Germany has it. New Zealand recently went for this kind of model. One suggestion that has come out among students of PR is to have the proportional part of the Legislature put into a different House. So for Canada, for example, we would have an elected senate finally, but they would come from PR-appointed representatives, and they would be selected in some democratic fashion.

The same model could apply to Alberta. I think this a very radical change. I don't think Alberta has ever had a two-Chamber Legislature, but that would be a way for rural Albertans to be represented and those individuals who cast their vote for parties that aren't one of the major two. I think that many members of the Alberta government are supporters of the Canadian Alliance party even though they're provincial Conservatives, and the Alliance party I think suffers under this in Canada, where in the last election they got 20 percent of the votes in Ontario but they got one or two seats. If this movement of proportional representation becomes widespread

in Canada, then it may mushroom and may snowball, to switch my metaphors, and it becomes something that everybody thinks is a good idea. Why Prince Edward Island? Why not Alberta lead the pack in this regard?

Ms Mackay: More a comment than anything. I share some of your concerns in terms of the increasingly lower turnout on election day, and we've had other people address that – well, barely but sort of. We've had several people in the two big cities talk about proportional representation. I wonder if you have any more comments on what you see might be some other reasons for having this lower turnout. I mean, we're getting pretty far from the boundaries, but it is something to keep in mind I think when you consider, for example, that in the last by-election there was a 33 percent turnout – I'm talking about Wainwright – and that was right on the heels of an election in Zimbabwe where people stood in line for 24 hours to be able to vote. You know, I have some theories on why we're like we are, but I'd sure like to hear what you have to say on that.

Dr. Sandilands: Well, I was a candidate in the last provincial election, and I encountered many people who said: I'm not going to bother voting, because it doesn't matter. So that's discouraging, and I think that if people feel that no matter how they vote – and they've had a long history. I spoke to people who said, "In my entire lifetime I've never voted for the candidate who succeeded in an election," because we have this first-past-the-post system. I think that's a factor. I think the lack of education in the schools – and I recognize you as a former leader of ATA. I think that if we lowered the voting age to 16, then students in school could have a chance to vote in elections, and some of the most enthusiastic followers of election campaigns are students studying social studies in high schools. If they actually got a chance to vote, they might get in the habit of doing it. I think that if people stop voting in one election, then that inertia builds over the years. "I didn't vote last time, and I'm not going to vote this time. What the heck? What difference does it make?"

Ms Mackay: Good. Thanks.

The Chair: Any other questions or comments?

Mr. Graham: Just one question, Doctor. We've had these submissions before with respect to the advantages of proportional representation, particularly in the large cities, and the implication which you wish us to draw is that introducing a system of proportional representation would decrease apathy and increase the voting percentage, and I wonder what hard evidence there is of that. I'm thinking of particularly: is the rate of participation in fact higher in countries where there is such proportionate representation, for instance in Europe?

Dr. Sandilands: Well, I should point out that my doctorate is a PhD in psychology, and I taught methods in psychology for 32 years before I retired in 2000, two years ago. One of the things I often said to students is that correlation is not causation, so if you find a relationship between two things, that doesn't necessarily mean that one is caused by the other. So we do find proportional representation in many democracies that accompanies a higher voter turnout.

What would be interesting would be to look at – and this has prompted me again to do some more research after I get done with getting Mr. Clegg's data for him. I think New Zealand introduced proportional representation not too long ago, and one could see if they actually had an increase in voter turnout. I do know that

Canada and the United States are pretty much neck in neck for democracies, you know, heading for the bottom of the list in percent of voter turnout, and neither of us has proportional representation.

The Chair: Okay. Any other questions or comments?

Thank you very much, Mark. I appreciate your assistance and your help.

I'd now like to ask Mr. Mike Cormican. Best we take Dr. Sandilands' card off there, or we may be attributing things to you that he may not want to be associated with or vice versa. Mike, thank you very much for being here this morning. Were you here when I introduced the members of the panel?

Mr. Cormican: No.

The Chair: To my right is Ernie Patterson, the mayor of Claresholm. To my immediate right is Glen Clegg, the former member of the Assembly for the Dunvegan riding, which is Spirit River-Fairview. To my left is Bauni Mackay. Bauni, the former president of the Alberta Teachers' Association, is from Edmonton. And a well-respected lawyer from the city of Calgary, Doug Graham.

The makeup of the committee is determined by the electoral boundaries legislation. It says that Executive Council will appoint two members and that the Leader of the Opposition, after consultation, will also appoint two members. Then the legislation says that the chairman will either be someone heading an academic institution, a member of the judiciary, the Auditor General, or the Ethics Commissioner. Unfortunately, you're stuck with the Ethics Commissioner this time around. So that's the makeup of the group.

We're in the third day of our second week of hearings. Last week we started in Calgary, then central Alberta and Edmonton. Then we started in St. Paul, down to Wainwright, down to Drumheller, down to Medicine Hat, and then here. We're in Wetaskiwin tomorrow, and then later on this month we'll be going to the northern part of the province, from Westlock to Edson to Slave Lake to Fort McMurray to Grande Prairie to Peace River. Then we have to put an interim report together. We want to have that in the Speaker's hands by the early part of September, so that'll become public. People will be able to look at the report, react to it, and then we'll be going out for a second round of hearings, hopefully a less extensive one, in December or early January. Then we need to have a final report back in the hands of the members of the Legislature in March. We're bound by taking the 2001 stats from Stats Canada and the legislation that says there'll be 83 ridings. There's provision for a 25 percent variance one side or the other, and also there's provision for four ridings to have a 50 percent variance. Presently there are only two of those, and those are the ridings of Athabasca-Wabasca and Lesser Slave Lake.

So that's a very thumbnail sketch of what we're about. We're very pleased you're here, and we look forward to your guidance and suggestions.

10:47

Mr. Cormican: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Honourable members of the panel and members of the public, I don't have a great deal to say. I happen to be chair for the five Liberal constituencies in the southwest here. We felt we should give some thought and discussion to the topic since we had the opportunity, and I thank you for that opportunity as well. Unfortunately, a big snowfall kind of pre-empted too many of us getting together, so there were only four of us that actually got together, but we thought we should go ahead because time was of the essence. We kind of thought that we wouldn't be able to influence too much change. By the way, I will give you a copy of

my presentation here. I'm just kind of summarizing.

The Chair: We have a copy; haven't we?

Mr. Cormican: Oh, good.

The main point that seemed to surface in our discussion that evening was: "Hey, we have an opportunity here now. This is the provincial side of it. How about suggesting to them that maybe they could link with the federal boundaries commission and give some consideration to coterminous boundaries?" That would I think help a lot of people. In that process we might be able to even drop a lot of people we pick up that – well, some people are for it and some against, but certainly a number of people think that we may be overrepresented. In that process, you might have to drop a little bit. I don't know that we are. Myself, personally, I don't think we are, given all the considerations. I'm very conscious – and I think we all are – of the need to kind of keep the distribution reasonable so it's not a big burden on any representative either and people feel that their voice is heard. We would really encourage that you give serious consideration to that if it's possible. You know, maybe some discussions with the federal commission.

The Chair: Perhaps I might comment on that. Ontario has done that.

Mr. Cormican: Have they?

The Chair: Yes. They cut their House down from about 120 seats to 103, but they're somewhat caught now in a situation. As you know, I'm sure, there's a federal redistribution taking place, and sometime in August or September of this year you're going to get their proposals. Their legislation works differently. They have a committee of three people. They look at the map, make proposals, come out and have a hearing. They consider that, and then take it to the MPs from the province. They have a look at it, and then once they make their recommendation to the Speaker of the House of Commons, the boundaries automatically come into place. So that process is in the works now, and there will be two more seats in Alberta.

Mr. Cormican: We didn't give a great deal of thought to it, but simplistically it appeared as though it should be feasible, when you look at the constituencies. You might need to make minor changes. I don't know all the details about the federal boundaries, but we have three MPs in the south here and seven MLAs.

Maybe I'll let Leslie talk on it as well.

The Chair: I think he's going to anyway.

Mr. Vaala: My name is Leslie Vaala, and thank you for the opportunity to be here today. The idea that Michael is talking about is really one that probably places some advantages on the side of the voters in terms of minimizing the confusion from one type of an election to another. Certainly our situation is different in the province, where we will have in the range of 30 federal members and substantially more provincial members. So some of the idea, for instance, would be that within the boundaries of a federal riding, that may actually be subdivided into two or three in terms of provincial seats. Certainly the same number of provincial MLAs as there are federal MPs is likely far too thin to adequately represent the needs of Albertans. If, as a for instance, a future direction would be to divide those ridings into two, that would somewhat reduce the number of MLAs in the province, and the public may feel that that's not necessarily a bad thing to do. Our suggestion would be to consider that with some of the savings that would accrue, certainly

for the geographically large ridings far more resources would be available to establish local offices for MLAs to be represented, then, in a number of communities across a very large geographic area to make it possible for the public to interact with local staff from the MLA and so on.

Some of the advantages, it appeared, are in terms now of having common voters lists that are established through the income tax system and so on, some of the management of enumeration. Potentially some of the familiarity of polling stations may increase the public's participation just in having a familiarity with what their geographic area was for representation, where to vote, and so on. I know that some previous speakers have talked about concerns for low voter turnout. Certainly in a city such as Lethbridge it's not unusual that people vote in one station municipally, another station provincially, and quite possibly a third polling station federally. Some of that confusion, I suspect, also dissuades people from voting on a regular basis. It is an inconvenience.

To wrap that up quickly and turn it back to Michael, coterminous boundaries, some of the commonalities between elections for the different levels of government, some more movement towards standardization makes it easier on the voter to adopt a pattern of participating in elections at the ballot box.

Mr. Cormican: Thanks, Leslie. I think Leslie put it very well, so I really don't have much more to say. We just thought there might be small savings, not that much, but again you guys would have to look at the bigger picture and see what is feasible. I mean, from our little standpoint down here it certainly seems as though it should be feasible. I mean, people follow trading patterns, all sorts of things, and I'm sure these are all the kinds of considerations that you have to take into consideration as you deliberate and come up with a new plan.

The Chair: Mr. Patterson.

Mr. Patterson: Yes, Mr. Chair. My good friend Glen here is just indicating to me that I only had two friends in Medicine Hat, so I want to indicate that I've got two friends here plus a few more who are going to make presentations.

The Chair: None of them admit it.

Mr. Patterson: Anyway, thank you for your submission. I'm also happy that you have mentioned this boundary, 13th Street, between Lethbridge-West and Lethbridge-East. This seems to be a confusing factor.

It's interesting. What you're talking about here with this alignment of federal and provincial boundaries – I just want to get to the question here – would mean bringing in rural and urban together. Of course, this now happens in federal ridings, but it's interesting that in the presentations we've had across the province, from Calgary to Edmonton, all over, people are saying: don't mix up urban and rural. Any further thoughts on that?

10:57

Mr. Vaala: One of our thoughts certainly in that regard would relate much more to the two large urban centres, where population is growing very rapidly. I guess the issue we would raise there – so far as setting the size of some of the urban ridings, our suggestion would be that in those rapidly growing areas, which for the most part are on the fringes of the urban areas, we look at establishing them with a bit of a balance certainly between rural and urban and, in terms of the overall size, establishing them much closer to the average or the below-average size with the anticipation that the growth is going to continue and that within an election or two they

may balloon back up again. Boundaries don't get changed all that often, and to look at some of those urban areas and say, "Well, if we get them down close to the average, we've succeeded" – likely within two elections some of those very large areas will continue to be large. Those would certainly be instances of looking at the notion of some real mix of urban and rural, at least in the short term.

Again, I think we appreciate that many of the interests of urban voters may differ from those of rural voters. Having said some of that, quality education, access to health care, efficient transportation corridors, and economic development are likely concerns that are widely shared in the province. I personally wouldn't be in a rush to say that rural voters have interests that are substantially different from those of their city cousins, and in some ways we may be creating artificial divisions where we ought not to do that.

So I guess that in cutting back, Mr. Patterson, to your comment, some mix is likely going to be necessary in doing some balancing of constituency size in the fringe areas for our large urban centres. Lethbridge and Red Deer might be, in a sense, kind of the anomaly, where a federal riding and the city are kind of a doughnut and a doughnut hole effect.

Mr. Clegg: A very quick question. I gather from you gentlemen that it's more important to keep the boundaries as close as they were before rather than change them. I mean, we've heard that many times. We can sit here and make it perfect, with 36,000 in each riding, but it doesn't do anything but just that. So you think it's important that we keep the electoral divisions as close after our job as before.

Mr. Vaala: If we were speaking just for the two ridings in this city as a for instance, our suggestion would be that we would use 13th Street, which is a north/south street.

The Chair: Was that the same suggestion that was made by the good doctor?

Mr. Vaala: I believe so, yes.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Vaala: Also, as a person who's been involved in some provincial elections, I would have to say that the part, quite candidly, of the city that is now in the Lethbridge-West riding but with our suggestion would show up in Lethbridge-East, a set of polls where I won the majority of them . . .

The Chair: I have to stop you right there. We have consistently as a panel – not one person on this panel has looked at any polls as to how they voted, and we're not going to start now.

Mr. Vaala: No. What I'm simply suggesting, Mr. Chairman, is that there's no gerrymandering lying underneath that suggestion.

The Chair: That's just what I'm suggesting too.

Mr. Vaala: I appreciate your caution.

The Chair: Good.

Mr. Cormican: In fact, it would appear as though it would be to our disadvantage to lose it, you know, but we're also cognizant of democratic interest and practicality.

Mr. Vaala: And, I think, confusion for the voters. Where the two ridings in this city are named east and west and where about a third

of the city is on the west side of the Oldman River, it creates some confusion as to the constituency in which some people live. We have people living east of the river but in the constituency of Lethbridge-West. So 13th Street, as a much stronger line of demarcation, I believe will have the effect of helping the public, helping the voters understand far more clearly which constituency they are in.

The Chair: One of the things we don't talk about but which is part of our mandate is names of ridings. In light of what you're suggesting, if you have any stroke of brilliance, please get it to us quickly, because that's one of the things we haven't spent much time on but is something we need to look at later on. So if you've got some ideas on that, let us know later on.

Mr. Vaala: Okay.

Mr. Cormican: During election times we have seen some confusion among the voters. You'll get calls at the campaign office asking: where do I vote? People would be confused, obviously, thinking that they were across the road, especially when it comes to 10th Avenue, which was the demarcation line a few years ago. The same has occurred now: it's 9th Avenue, I believe, to the centre of the city, up near McGrath.

Mr. Vaala: The little jog. It's like a nose hanging out.

The Chair: We've got your point here. We've also got Dr. Sandilands' point. We'll certainly take those into consideration.

Mr. Vaala: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Any other questions or comments?

Mr. Graham: Yeah, I have one. Could you clarify something for me from your presentation? I'm looking at your third paragraph. You say:

Likely there would be only minor manipulations of constituency boundaries in other areas of Alberta. Constituencies in the rapidly growing urban areas should be "re-sized" to be at or below the population average of constituencies as these areas will continue to grow.

My sort of back-of-the-matchbook calculations indicate to me that if we were to size the Calgary ridings at or below the average, we could end up adding five ridings in Calgary. How are we going to do that and keep the other boundaries roughly the same?

Mr. Vaala: Well, that's the test that you folks have, because you're the commission. Certainly there are some within the urban areas where the population, I would imagine, is fairly stable, and they may be above the average. Certainly with the information that you would be looking at in terms of census, they're likely not going to move a great deal. Some of those might be over the average, but in looking at some of the areas where it's 50,000, 60,000 folks in there, they likely weren't at that population at the last resizing.

The Chair: That was seven or eight years ago.

Mr. Vaala: Exactly.

Again, in terms of looking at area structure plans, outline plans, you know, the information that the development officer departments would submit to you through the municipalities of Edmonton and Calgary, I would imagine that you'd be in a strong position to predict which districts would be growing. So it would be those areas, we would imagine, that something would be happening to.

Certainly, as Mr. Clegg was pointing out to another presenter as we arrived, there are many areas in rural Alberta where the boundaries, we would imagine, likely wouldn't be affected at all.

11:07

The Chair: Okay. Any other questions?

Thank you very much. Be sure to get a look at the report and see what we do with your suggestion here on the city of Lethbridge, because that could be very, very helpful to us.

Mr. Cormican: Thank you for the opportunity. Best wishes with it.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'd like to ask Mr. Floyd Smith to come forward. Mr. Smith tells me he has a short, to-the-point presentation. Mr. Smith, welcome, and we look forward to your advice.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and board. I have a short request. I'm a councillor from Cardston county, and my division takes in Hill Spring and Glenwood and the surrounding area. In 1996 the electoral boundary was changed so that we were put into the Livingstone-Macleod riding instead of the Cardston riding, which we were in all the time before 1996. I think I represent the feeling of almost all the people in our area that we would be better served in the Cardston constituency, as we were before. Within the Cardston constituency we're the same as Cardston county, taking in the Hill Spring and Glenwood areas. The health region takes in the same area we're in. The school division takes in the same area. We do almost all of our banking and business in Cardston. Our kids go to school in Cardston. We just feel like we could be better served if we were put back in the Cardston constituency.

This is a little bit different than the other presentations in that they don't want to expand the constituency, but we don't think it would be too much extra strain for the present MLA, Broyce Jacobs. He lives approximately 15 miles from where we are. He travels through Hill Spring and Glenwood on his way to Edmonton and back. I served on the council many years with Broyce Jacobs, and he understands our interests and concerns in our district. We just feel that we could be better served.

At the present time I am the chairman of the Chief Mountain waste authority, which takes in Cardston, Raymond, Magrath, the county of Warner, the county of Cardston, and almost all of our meetings and any concerns that we have are within Cardston county. We just feel that we would like your consideration in going back to the Cardston constituency. We have nothing against being in Livingstone-Macleod or against Dave Coutts. We've worked with him, but we just feel that we could be better served.

The Chair: Mr. Patterson and then Ms Mackay.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would point out that this is another good friend of mine, and he's willing to admit it. Thank you for coming, Floyd.

You're pointing out something that is within one of our mandates, and that is natural trading areas, community of interest, and of course there's a natural boundary there also, which is the Cardston municipal district, and Glenwood and Hill Spring are in it. So I'm very happy that you have come to make this presentation, to make the commission aware of the situation there, because when you look at it, it is an anomaly.

Ms Mackay: I just wondered how many people you're talking about. Both constituencies are about minus 15, minus 16 percent below the provincial average, so that part is not a big deal, but how

many people are you talking about?

Mr. Smith: Well, we take in Hill Spring and Glenwood villages and then the surrounding area, which would maybe be 1,200 people at the most.

Ms Mackay: Okay. Good. Thanks.

The Chair: Any other questions of Floyd?

Well, Floyd, thank you very much. We appreciate your help.

Mr. Smith: Thank you.

The Chair: I'd now like to ask one of Alberta's characters, Ron Hierath, to come forward and make his presentation. I'm pleased to welcome Ron Hierath. You good folks who are here of course know Ron as the former MLA for – was it Taber-Warner, Ron, at that time?

Mr. Hierath: Well, it was called both Taber-Warner, prior to 1997, and Cardston-Taber-Warner, after '97.

The Chair: Ron was chair of the Leg. Offices Committee. The only people who'll know of the Leg. Offices Committee are Mr. Clegg and myself and Ron, but the Leg. Offices Committee is the committee which hires and fires legislative officers. That includes the Auditor General, the Chief Electoral Officer, the Ombudsman, the Ethics Commissioner, and the Information and Privacy Commissioner. So I've had the experience of having Mr. Hierath look me straight in the eye and say: "We're going to keep you on. We're not sure why, but we're going to do that." No, that isn't exactly right, but I had the chance of working with Ron as the chairman of the committee and enjoyed that experience.

Ron.

Mr. Hierath: Thank you, Bob, Glen, and commission members. It's a pleasure for me to be here this morning to give you some of the thoughts that I have as a previously elected Member of the Legislative Assembly. I scratched out some of my thoughts last night – and I may deviate somewhat from them, if that's all right – so I will start.

The Legislature has created another Electoral Boundaries Commission, the second in six years. These commissions do a great deal of damage to democracy in Alberta because they pit urban people against rural people. Over the last 30 years decisions and boundary changes decided upon by these commissions have resulted in a persistent erosion of rural representation. Yes, there is a continual growth in our cities, but the number of square miles to be covered by each rural elected representative in order for that constituency to be effectively represented remains the same. As an elected representative for eight years, I feel that I would like to share with you some of my thoughts.

A definitive description of the role of an MLA is needed, in my mind, particularly since I think that the role of urban MLAs and the role of rural MLAs are different. Urban MLAs deal with constituent issues, social issues such as policing and children's services, and of course education and health care. Rural MLAs, on the other hand, deal with constituents' issues and a wide variety of other issues, depending upon the makeup of their constituency. They include some or often many of the following: agriculture, timber, mining, roads, and of course health care and education. As well, rural MLAs work closely with and understand the issues of town councils, village councils, school boards, and RHAs, in my case some 13 elected bodies. The rural MLAs must have knowledge of a wide variety of agricultural commodities. In particular, in my case you

had to be informed on irrigation, production of many different commodities, particularly potatoes and sugar beets, and they were connected with processing plants, which also had kind of distinct needs from the standpoint of water treatment and municipal taxation. Of course, there were other specialty irrigation crops and smaller processing plants.

Contrast the urban MLAs, who individually are never directly in contact with school boards and city councils. A couple of times a year 20 MLAs from the two big cities will meet with these boards. Most of the time the mayors deal directly with the Premier, and problems are solved. Recently the fuel tax issue was a prime example of that. I don't think that the city councils communicate directly with individual MLAs in the cities of Edmonton and Calgary.

Then there is the distance factor. First of all, consider the distance a representative is from Edmonton. For me it was 635 kilometres to Edmonton, or 1,270 kilometres round-trip, which equates to 12 or 13 hours per week. If the schedule that I had corresponded with air times, some time could be cut off that, but a lot of the air traffic had to stop in Calgary, and virtually there wasn't much saving in time by the time you deplaned and got back on in Calgary.

11:17

Within the constituency, my old constituency, that now Broyce Jacobs represents, it was 170 kilometres across. I could easily put in six hours per week driving back and forth to important meetings and meeting with elected councils on a weekly basis. In all, I could accumulate close to 20 hours per week in travel time. Each year I would average making 40 or so trips to Edmonton. I calculated last evening that probably it was about 800 hours per year that I was spending traveling, and that takes a toll on elected people. Even with cell phones it's still basically very close to downtime or wasted time as far as being productive when going to and from places. Compare that tremendous amount of travel with an MLA from Edmonton. Could I possibly represent my constituents as effectively as an MLA from Edmonton?

In conclusion, a rural MLA must have knowledge about a wide variety of issues, from a town's water treatment plant problem to a school board's modernization project to municipal road issues and of course many agricultural issues. That rural MLA must be able to effectively articulate these problems to ministers or department people, which again is different than the urban MLAs, where the chairman of the school board contacts directly the Premier or the minister of education. The MLAs in those cities are free to spend their time doing ordinary constituent representation on other issues. If you engage in a comprehensive job description that compares rural and urban MLAs, you will have to conclude that you cannot continue to make rural constituencies larger in geographic area and maintain a degree of fairness in the manner in which people in rural Alberta are represented.

That's the end of my formal presentation. Thank you.

The Chair: Ron, I neglected to introduce you to the members of the panel: Bauni Mackay, former president of the Alberta Teachers' Association; Doug Graham, a prominent lawyer from Calgary; and Ernie Patterson, the longtime mayor of Claresholm.

Mr. Hierath: Yes. Everyone knows Ernie.

The Chair: And his nibs you know.

Mr. Hierath: I do.

The Chair: Okay. Who has the first question or comment? Glen.

Mr. Clegg: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks, Ron, for your presentation. There's not much in this presentation that I don't agree with. When we were working together, we had just about the same distance to travel and our concerns were the same. I like your figures there. I had given them just an hour ago, about your 800 hours, because I had figured 500 hours traveling to and from Edmonton and I never counted traveling around the constituency. Many people have said that they understand that, but all we should be doing is saying that rural MLAs need more staff. The question is: do you feel that that helps you a lot?

Mr. Hierath: Did we have extra staff?

Mr. Clegg: No. Do you feel that they should have extra staff?

Mr. Hierath: Oh, I thought maybe you had extra staff. I didn't have any.

Mr. Clegg: No. I didn't either.

Mr. Hierath: Well, you know, there could very well be some help in that regard if there were some extra staff, but the truth is that there's one elected representative, and the elected representative needs to be informed and needs to be the person that does the work. I don't think that it saves those hours of driving and/or travel. Certainly if you're this far away from the capital, nobody can do anything about that, and I certainly realize that. The staff and the cell phones are aids and they help, but that doesn't do it.

Mr. Clegg: Thank you.

The Chair: Ernie.

Mr. Patterson: Yes, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much for your presentation, and I just wanted to make a little bit of a preamble before I ask the question. You say in your second sentence, "These commissions do a great deal of damage to democracy in Alberta because they pit urban against rural." I take it that you probably don't really quite mean it that way, but we've had submission after submission as we've held the hearings talk about this. Of course, I know you realize that we're limited by the mandate of the commission and the numerous court cases that have been held across the country as to what we can do. Some people have suggested that this is going to get worse as time goes on, with the growth in the two large cities, so some people have suggested that maybe a second House or something of that nature be created to look after rural interests. The question then is: would you have any comments on that? I mean, we can't recommend that at the moment, but we could put some kind of a comment in our report on this, because it seems like this is going to get worse as time goes on. Any comments on that?

Mr. Hierath: Well, first, with regards to damaging democracy, I think it's more of a damaging of the understanding between urban versus rural. Certainly it's damaging from the standpoint of rural people thinking that their democracy is being eroded for them. The two-House thing of course is a national issue. Alberta can't deviate from the parliamentary system without the country doing it. Certainly growing up and living 10 miles from the border, I know that they never have this debate because they have one in the state of Montana that's purely geographical and one that's purely population based. You know, it only seems that for this country we should move in that direction, and to say that it's only going to get worse, from my perspective it already is worse. I would say to you that this continually increasing geographic size rurally burns people

out, not only physically but in being away from your family. My constituency prior to '97 was awfully close to half the size that it was after '97, and I think it was not manageable.

11:27

Mr. Patterson: Thank you.

Ms Mackay: I'm interested in your comments about the rural versus urban and particularly the comparison and the job description of the two. I'm very sympathetic about the effect of all the travel and so on that a rural MLA has to do. In my job as ATA president the whole province was my constituency, and I certainly know the wear and tear on body and family and all of that as a result of that kind of work. On the other hand, last night we had representation from a person in Medicine Hat, and he made a comment that I thought was one of the most telling we've had on these hearings, and that was that we had to forget about the fact that we were urban or we were rural and we had to remember that we are all Albertans first and foremost. So as someone who has sat in the Legislature, do you see that kind of a division in our elected representatives when they are making decisions in terms of the benefit of the province? I mean, is there a rural/urban split when it comes to talking about the issues that government has to deal with, obviously, and is that somehow a component in the makeup of constituencies?

Mr. Hierath: No, there isn't a rural and urban split 95 percent of the time. Occasionally one of these issues comes through and then it is, but normally, no, there isn't. Yes, in fact we're all Albertans, but rural Albertans have seen a continued erosion of their representation. My point is that the cities have – and I'm somewhat talking about Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, and Grande Prairie also but mainly kind of focusing in on the two big cities. You know, a lot of people would say that the two big cities are overrepresented in that the MLAs don't have as demanding a job as the rural MLAs, strictly from that standpoint. If you think about rep by pop, well, then, yeah, there's some discrepancy there. If there are growth areas in the city of Calgary, you can redistribute the boundaries within the city.

The cities of Calgary and Edmonton are particularly well represented. When 20 MLAs meet or there's a big issue, they're all singing off the same song sheet, representing Dave Bronconnier or Bill Smith on an issue of fuel taxes or something. He gets to have access right to the top. For the mayor of Cardston I have to understand his issues very clearly, and I have to make those points very succinctly in Edmonton in order for his problem to be solved. I see that as a hugely different job description, but for most people an MLA is an MLA is an MLA rather than looking at the huge difference between how an MLA from the city of Calgary or Edmonton is doing his job versus particularly a long ways from Edmonton. For the guy representing Leduc, well, the administration of the county of Leduc goes in and talks to the people in the affected department, and they're back and forth. He can be back finishing off his work that day. But when the area is 600 kilometres from Edmonton, there just isn't that access to the government, so the MLA's job is far different from that of the MLA in the city of Edmonton. Far different.

Ms Mackay: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Graham: I'm really intrigued by a suggestion you made I think in your presentation which to me is new. It seems to me that what you're saying is that before we draw any conclusions, it would be a good idea to explicitly and in some sort of formal way address the functions of the various MLAs and how they differ. We have, you should be aware, had presentations from a number of MLAs.

Our chairman has seen to it that we've had some input in that way, but it seems to me that what you're saying is that perhaps we should go a bit beyond that, that we should perhaps recommend in our report that as part of this process the MLAs themselves or in committee or in some structure that they might come up with formally and explicitly address this issue which people are making presentations around but not hitting directly. Is that what you're saying? It seems to me to be an interesting and kind of intriguing thing to do, and perhaps we should consider recommending that.

Mr. Hierath: Ernie was asking me whether the two-House thing was a solution, but if we keep going down the same road – you know, in '96 or '97 we took two MLAs, removed them from southern Alberta and put one in Calgary and one in Edmonton. I'm not sure what year the electoral boundaries before that was.

The Chair: It was '92 or '93.

Mr. Hierath: So as our province progresses and urbanization continues, you can't keep doing what's been done in the past. Otherwise, you'll have five or 10 MLAs traveling the whole province. Ninety-five percent of the province is rural in geography. Five percent is urban. So you can't keep doing what commissions in the past have done. It's just really impossible to keep parachuting a couple out of rural Alberta and putting them in the city. All I'm saying is that if it's representation by population – everybody recognizes that isn't what we're going to do, but we're continually doing it.

Mr. Graham: Would it be a good idea for a group of MLAs to talk this over, the differences in their job functions and the challenges they face, and make some sort of formal presentation or submission to us, put that before us in our deliberations? I guess that's what I'm asking, because it seems to me that is what you're saying in your presentation, and it is kind of a new suggestion and one that's caught my eye.

Mr. Hierath: Well, I doubt whether the PC caucus MLAs would be interested in doing that. You know, this is divisive. This is a divisive thing in the PC caucus, and I know that it is in the Liberal caucus also, so in trying to keep continuity and people working together, those caucuses won't do that, I'm fairly sure.

The Chair: Ron, I'm very intrigued by the way you described the need for a rural MLA to be an instant expert on a whole bunch of issues as compared to the people close to Calgary or close to Edmonton who are able to have the administration with the ongoing relationship. We've heard all sorts of things around that, but you've put your finger on it. That's a big help to us. I think that's very helpful.

Mr. Hierath: It's a big issue, because small, we'll say, villages for instance might have two administrators or two people working in a village office. They don't have the expertise to understand the bureaucracy or the structure in Edmonton, so the MLA has to understand their nuts-and-bolts issues of upgrading a sewer treatment or water treatment centre or the complicated program for sidewalks and gutters and so on. The MLA has to understand their problems. Each one of their problems is different than the town down the road, so it's hugely a different job description, and that's what I'm challenging your commission on. It's a hugely different job description than it is for the MLA for Calgary-Mountain View or Edmonton-McClung. It's hugely different, and you'll probably do the same thing the other commission did if you don't recognize that they're hugely different.

11:37

The Chair: Well, Ron, in your usual manner you've made us think some more. Thank you very much.

Mr. Hierath: Thank you.

The Chair: I'd like now to welcome Mr. Blair Barkley on behalf of the Highwood PC Constituency Association. Blair, if you would introduce your colleague and then give us your best judgment, please.

Mr. Barkley: Okay. Mr. Bill Laird is past president of the Highwood PC Association.

I would like to thank you for this opportunity to make this presentation to the committee. Thank you very much.

The board of directors of the Highwood PC Constituency Association has agreed that we like the electoral boundaries for our constituency just as they are. The current electoral boundaries respect the northern boundary of the MD of Foothills, a logical boundary between this MD and the city of Calgary. The issues of this riding tend to be homogenous and relate to the rural nature of the riding. The issues which arise in this area in many cases are not the same that face urban ridings: groundwater, agricultural issues including intensive livestock operations, natural resource extraction, land use, taxation issues as they relate to small holdings and agricultural activities, and the viability of rural towns, et cetera. There is a natural economic union within the area, and the transportation corridors within the boundaries promote trade within the geographical area.

We recognize that we exceed the 25 percent rule. However, we feel that one of the issues to be considered in allowing our riding to exceed this percentage is whether there is effective representation. We feel that in fact there is. There are several small communities: High River, Okotoks, Stavely, Nanton, Turner Valley, and Black Diamond. These numerous communities form communication centres so that information and communication is easily conveyed and gathered. Our MLA has a relatively large population to serve, but he can easily effectively serve those constituents.

We concur with the remarks of Jack Hayden, president of the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, as quoted in the *Calgary Herald* on May 28, 2002: this process is ultimately about representing people, not about representing numbers. We recognize that the city of Calgary has a great number of ridings that exceed the 25 percent rule. We encourage the boundaries commission to solve the Calgary riding distribution problems within the boundaries of Calgary. We do not want the issues of rural communities to be lost in a sea of expansion of population in the rural ridings.

It was noted that in the next five years the population of Alberta will increase, and again we will be tinkering with boundaries. Dividing the population by 83 and coming up with a new number for the provincial average, tinkering on a small scale to move 4,000 people here and there to meet this requirement seems to be somewhat self-defeating. We need to ensure effective representation, and we of the Highwood constituency believe that we now have that. One other consideration that the commission may want to explore is the addition of a further secretarial position to the MLA's staff. That's providing a least-cost method of assistance.

In summary, we believe that the current boundary of the Highwood constituency is appropriate and is effectively represented. There is a commonality of issues unique to the makeup of the area. There is a natural economic relationship between many of the small and medium communities in the surrounding area. The economic activity is supported by transportation corridors within the boundary. We do not want to dilute the representation of the area with the

addition or the loss of its current constituents.

Our observation of the present formula is that it will require amendments to allow for present and future population growth which could increase the maximum percentage. It is assumed that the present number of MLAs will remain at 83.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Blair. Your constituency is a different kind of challenge to us. I mentioned earlier that we started in St. Paul on Monday, down to Wainwright, then down to Drumheller, down to Medicine Hat, and then over here. On the eastern side of the province we had constituencies who were significantly below. In fact, one we were in yesterday I believe was minus 30 percent below the average. If my memory is correct, you people are almost plus 30 percent.

Mr. Barkley: Yes, I believe we're about that.

The Chair: So it's a different challenge for my colleagues and I to get our heads around. Who's got the first question?

Mr. Patterson.

Mr. Patterson: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, gentlemen, for coming to make your presentation. Of course, as has been pointed out by our chair, you are plus 29.5 percent and growing rapidly still. So this puts us in a different situation than we've heard in a lot of the constituencies in eastern Alberta, where it's the exact opposite of those two factors.

I've got two questions. Please take these as hypothetical at the moment because we haven't made any decisions, but I want to get your reaction to them. You're well aware of Calgary-Shaw with 85,000 people, which is on your northern boundary. What would be your reaction if we were to, hypothetically, take a Calgary riding or two to take part of your Highwood to try and get down to the factors. You realize that we have to try and do this to avoid the court challenges. Any thoughts on that?

Mr. Barkley: We discussed it as a board of directors. The feeling pretty much was that if we start into the MD, how far do we go? When you look at the northern end of the MD of Foothills, yes, most of these people do commute into Calgary, but the southern end is still ranches and farms. Like we say, if you start making these cuts, where does it stop? That was just the biggest concern that we had.

It may not even stop there. I mean, we could go five years, and then we'll go out another couple of miles. The biggest concern that we had was not, you might say, do the numbers match but "are our people being heard, and are they being represented?"

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chair, on the second question if I might. I want to switch to the other end of the constituency, because as you have seen in our brochure, we have the problem where we have constituencies with populations that are low. Taking into consideration what you've already alluded to in your report about trading areas and so on, again hypothetically what would be your reaction if the south end of your constituency, which takes in the northern half of the MD of Willow Creek, Stavely, and Nanton, were to leave and go south?

Mr. Barkley: Well, we discussed that too. The feeling was that they have been in and they have been out. Let's give them some security by leaving them in.

11:47

Mr. Patterson: You realize that there's a little portion of the north

end of the town of Claresholm in your constituency.

Mr. Barkley: Yes.

Mr. Patterson: If you had the choice to make, which one of the two would you prefer that we did? What would you feel? I know I'm putting you on the spot.

Mr. Barkley: Well, I guess hypothetically we would leave them both.

Yeah, I see exactly what position you are in, but if we start jockeying, I mean, there does come a point where I think people somewhat feel customary with where they're at too.

The Chair: I guess you're telling us that you'd sooner we make the decision rather than you.

Mr. Barkley: No, I'm not saying that. Well, ultimately that is your position. You will be making the decision. I guess our feeling is that to the people who are bordering it – I mean, as an example, you were talking about the north end of the riding. I reside on the very north end of the riding. We border the city of Calgary. We are currently looking at annexation. We also farm 1,200 acres in there, and I feel very much at home talking to farmers from Stavely or Claresholm. I have a lot in common with them. So even though they may be at one end of the riding and I'm at the other and some of the issues that I face may certainly in some respects be different than theirs, we have a lot in common.

The Chair: If I could just follow up Mr. Patterson's question. We have two ridings. We have the Livingstone-Macleod riding and the Little Bow riding, and both of those ridings could use some additional population. You may not want to answer this here, but you may want to think, if you were us, how you would help get some additional population in those ridings. The alternative is not very nice. I mean, we've heard repeatedly that we don't want to lose any more ridings in southern Alberta, and I think there's a lot of sympathy for that.

Mr. Barkley: Geographically, though, if you were to balance the numbers, how far are we going? That's kind of the thing that we discussed.

The Chair: Mr. Graham.

Mr. Graham: Yes. I think you have a very nice problem. There are good problems and bad problems, and you have a very nice one. However – and I don't wish to offend you – you have to understand our position. What you're asking of us, which is status quo, is impossible. We cannot do that legally. The parameters of our discretion are 25 percent up and in most cases 25 percent down, with a possibility of 50 percent down for special ridings. Of course, you're not in that category, so legally we are going to have to change your riding. We don't have discretion.

Mr. Barkley: Okay. Is this a federal ruling?

Mr. Graham: No, this is provincial law. This is the statute that we act under. The upward border of our discretion, so to speak, is 25 percent; therefore, your riding will have to be changed, and that was the reason for Mr. Patterson's questions and so forth. It may be something that you wish to consider further.

I know we've asked a number of people hypothetical questions: "If we were to change your riding, what parts of it would you like to lose?" It's a very sensitive question to ask in an open forum, and a

lot of people don't choose to answer it in an open forum, but this isn't the end of this. If you wish to go back to your constituency, consult, and make further submissions to us, this process is, you know, at no point closed until the thing is done. I would encourage you to do that, because we really would like your input as to how to do this. It's not a question as to whether we're going to do it. We're going to have to do it.

Mr. Barkley: As a hypothetical question, then, what would it take to require the percentage changed?

The Chair: Well, the Legislature could change that, but even if that were done, I'll get Mr. Graham to explain the complications with the Supreme Court of Canada.

Mr. Graham: The absolute line is 25 percent, but even within that 25 percent discretion we require reasons. We can't just arbitrarily do it. We don't have licence to do it; we have to give a rationale, and the rationale of course varies throughout the province. That's why I would invite you – and I know it's a sensitive thing – to go back, consult, and come to us with some sort of reasoned, coherent proposal as to what you want us to do. We're going to have to do something, I'm afraid.

Mr. Barkley: Okay. What would the time period be then?

The Chair: Could you have something back to us before the last week in June? Is that possible? I know that's only three weeks, gentlemen, but we're going to be touring the Peace River country at that time. Then right after that we're getting together as a group and coming to some conclusions for our interim report. It would be a great help to us to have that before then if you could do that for us.

Mr. Barkley: Okay.

Mr. Laird: Is it something to do with the federal government too?

Mr. Graham: No.

Mr. Laird: You were mentioning some of the laws.

Mr. Graham: Well, there's provincial legislation, and that legislation has in various areas, including Alberta, been subject to court challenges, so there's case law on that, all of which is available. The case law basically says that you have this discretionary band, but we can't just do it for no reason. We need reasons to apply that discretionary band.

The Chair: The blue-covered folder there is really a summary of court cases across the country that deal with this issue.

Mr. Laird: Very good.

The Chair: Any other questions or comments?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chair, I just have one more. As we've held hearings in Calgary and elsewhere, there have been suggestions that really major changes take place around Calgary. I don't suppose that these other constituencies have consulted you on that. I just want to mention this because I think you should be aware that some other constituencies are saying quite different, drastic things as affecting the area around Calgary, which you haven't heard here today, but those suggestions have been made. So I would like to really re-emphasize what my colleagues here have said, that it's very, very important that you consider this and look at it because

we're under pressure in all different directions.

Mr. Barkley: Okay.

The Chair: One of the ideas that's kind of been floated is really a Cochrane-High River-Okotoks riding.

Mr. Patterson: Yes, that has been suggested, and I don't know whether you're aware of that or not.

Mr. Barkley: No.

The Chair: I'm not sure how the numbers figure out either. It deals with the whole suburban growth area. We're not saying that's – please understand that. It's just one of the many ideas.

Mr. Laird: From what you're saying, then, would this be adding more MLAs?

The Chair: No, the same number of MLAs.

Mr. Laird: All right.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chair, if I might just say this: if our mandate allowed us to reduce or increase the number of MLAs, our job would be much easier.

The Chair: If ifs and ors were candies and nuts, we'd have Christmas all year. We don't have that privilege and that opportunity.

Gentlemen, thank you very, very much. We look forward to your getting back to us.

Mr. Barkley: Thank you.

Mr. Laird: Thank you.

The Chair: I would be remiss if I didn't recognize Barry McFarland, the MLA for Little Bow. Barry, thanks for coming out.

The next presenter is going to be David White, who will be presenting on behalf of the Hon. Clint Dunford. David, just before you mount the podium, we're going to take a five-minute break. Following Mr. White, then Brian Hammond from the MD of Pincher Creek, and if there's anyone else here who wants to make a presentation, be sure and let Doug know – all those gentlemen at the back – so we don't miss you. For the members of the panel, our checkout time is after we're finished, so we'll take a five-minute break, and then we'll come back.

[The commission adjourned from 11:55 to 12:07]

The Chair: Okay. David White. Thanks for coming, David. You look different than the last time I saw Clint Dunford. You've got more hair than the last time I saw Clint too. Thanks for coming, David, and we look forward to your presentation.

Mr. White: Actually, I'm not representing Clint. I'm representing the Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West PC associations.

The Chair: My apologies. I take all that back. Your hair: I won't comment on that.

Mr. White: But I do have more hair than Clint does.

I guess that as past president and past regional director of our party I've been sort of asked to make this presentation, but it seems

a little redundant because I see that the other two political parties that are the most recognized in the province have taken exactly the same position that we're taking, that the dividing boundary between Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West should be 13th Street. There's what we call a little panhandle, that others refer to as the burp.

The Chair: We've heard that too.

Mr. White: As it stands now, the variance of Lethbridge-West is .7 and the variance of Lethbridge-East 11.9. Taking the burp out probably will bring it a long ways towards equalizing both the growth in the west side, of course across the river, that seems to continually outstrip the growth in the north part, which is part of Lethbridge-East, and in the southeast corner, which is part of Lethbridge-East. So it probably is time to redress it. The fact that all the parties seem to have the same opinion I guess speaks well for that position.

Can I take one second more?

The Chair: You may.

Mr. White: As the regional director, in listening to Ron Hierath's comments, I'd have to agree fully. I traveled in that constituency that he came from before redistribution the last time and after, and with the MLA's job and being Clint's president as well during the same period of time, the difference between the job descriptions is astronomical. The amount of political dialogue you have with residents and elected officials of towns and villages far exceeds anything that you deal with as an urban MLA. I think we'll make a big mistake in this province if we don't keep that perspective firmly. Otherwise, we will disenfranchise the rural area.

The Chair: Thank you very much, David.

Let the *Hansard* record show that all three parties agree on how we should handle the burp in Lethbridge.

Mr. Patterson.

Mr. Patterson: No question. I just want to thank you for coming and talking about the burp, the pocket, the panhandle, whatever you want to call it, because I've heard that that has created a lot of misunderstandings.

Mr. White: Well, it would make life simple, because when somebody phones an office or something, if you're on one side of 13th Street, you go there, and if you're on the other side, you go the other way.

The Chair: Bauni?

Ms Mackay: No.

The Chair: Doug?

Mr. Graham: No. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, David.

Mr. White: Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

The Chair: I would now like to ask Brian Hammond to come forward. I'm pleased to ask Brian Hammond from the MD of Pincher Creek to make a presentation to us.

Mr. Hammond: I'm not sure if being last is an advantage or a disadvantage. Anyway, I appreciate the opportunity to be here and

to make some brief comments on this issue, so thank you very much for making that opportunity available.

I believe that my comments relate not so much to the issue of representation by population but to why populations need effective representation. If voter turnout is any indication, many Albertans, indeed many Canadians appear increasingly alienated from a political process which does not serve their needs. Why are they perceived as ineffective or unresponsive when many political representatives work so hard to address the ongoing needs of their constituents? Living outside the Calgary/Edmonton corridor of Alberta may place limits on the opportunity for effective representation because long distances preclude more frequent, quality communication with their elected representatives in Edmonton. Local municipal politicians may be perceived as a last-ditch attempt to connect with the political process because they are known, acceptable, and adjacent.

Ridings which cover hundreds of square miles must surely present greater challenges to effective representation than those where a much greater density of population allows for easier, more convenient, and simply more frequent opportunities for communication. It is difficult to believe that residents of constituencies in which travel between communities may be several hundred kilometres can be afforded the same opportunities for effective representation as those in much more densely populated urban areas.

What is magical about the numbers of constituents assigned to a particular representative? Where is rep by pop as a concept when all levels of government in Canada assign different per capita figures to their respective systems of representation? Could the absolute number of MLAs in Alberta be kept the same if boundaries within the major urban centres, such as Calgary and Edmonton, are realigned to achieve the appropriate variances? Is it conceivable that the margin of variance might be widened on both sides of the apparent optimum to more adequately represent people, not numbers?

The size of rural constituencies must not be increased to encompass a higher number of electors in individual remote ridings. It is no revelation to anyone that most of Alberta's population has shifted from rural to urban and from largely agriculture-based economies to a manufacturing and service industry economy. In light of this shifting demography, do those living outside densely populated urban areas of the province continue to receive effective representation for their distinct and unique requirements?

The direct economic benefits integral to the Alberta advantage, such as higher incomes, sophisticated infrastructure, and service systems prevalent in large urban communities, result in part from the resource base provided in rural and remote areas. However, the associated disadvantages of resource development often bear most directly on the constituents of those rural areas. Again, these same residents appear to have an increasingly marginalized input into the decisions which most affect them, whether that be on issues such as flaring in the petroleum industry, location of CFOs in the agricultural industry, or issues around rural infrastructure needs. The economic contribution of various sectors of the economy of this province must be fairly considered when representation for these areas is being considered.

The broad ranges of our province's rural and remote communities present a rich diversity of provincial and regional character. It must be recognized, preserved, and represented. It must therefore be effectively represented not by numbers but by contribution. The future of our rural heritage depends on a continued presence in the halls of government both provincially and across the country. Effective representation depends on a continued presence, not an ever diminishing one. Innovative models need to replace traditional population models of representation in order to sustain the diversity

and richness of traditions that rural communities bring. Attitudes towards the lesser importance of a segment of the population which is declining in number need to be balanced against the relative contribution that that community makes to the economic, cultural, and social fabric of this province.

Will large, urban oligopolies dominate future decision-making in Alberta, or will the many different segments of our society prosper as a result of restored voter confidence in the ability of the political system to serve their needs? Please continue to search for a reasonable solution to the problem of fair and effective representation for all Albertans regardless of where they live and not just because of how many or where many reside in a particular place.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Brian. Ernie.

Mr. Patterson: Yes, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much, Brian, for coming. I'm particularly impressed with the last statement in your submission. I mentioned earlier today and in Drumheller we heard that maybe we need a different form of representation to look after the rural situations. In fact, Jack Horner had suggested that maybe we have a second House, and we've heard suggestions that maybe the second House could be made up of people elected by proportional representation. This rural situation, as the cities of Calgary and Edmonton grow, is going to continue, and you've alluded to that here. I know from your past that you have done a lot of studying on parliamentary procedure and so on. What would you think of that, of a second House as some way of balancing the problems we have trying to meet the legislative requirements, the court requirements, all of those things?

12:17

Mr. Hammond: Well, as you well know, the Senate of Canada is intended to represent regional interests to balance the rep-by-pop concept in the elected Assembly, and I guess the scope of that thing allows that to be workable in some ways. I'm not sure about the provincial scene.

I made some notes as others were talking just a few moments ago, and a couple of things came to my mind. I was thinking more of what I call a regional/rural assembly, where meetings could take place in a formalized setting. I even went one step further, because I'm involved in local politics, that there be a more formalized structure where MLAs and local officials come together in the same room and discuss issues of commonality. Not just one representative but a whole group of rural representatives and, probably even more effectively, a number of their urban colleagues. I think the message needs to get out there that perhaps the differences are not that great, that perhaps rural and urban people share common values and value things similarly, and the communication is not there. When we start to talk about representation, people choose sides, it seems, and I think that's unfortunate. In today's world we talk about improved communication, but we do less of it on a personal level, and I think that needs to happen. I think our elected people need to get into a position where it's more convenient and more often that they hear what's going on in the rural areas and the remote areas, because as individuals they have great difficulty in getting across sparsely populated and divergent areas, especially in the remote parts of this province. I don't know if that answers your question.

We hear a lot of rhetoric about getting outside the box. I don't personally like that expression, but in this province I think we have to challenge the numbers concept, and I think we have to challenge the rep-by-pop concept. In my mind there's nothing magical about 35,000 people. What's to say that the variance of 50 percent couldn't go up in terms of urban areas and 50 percent down in terms

of rural areas?

I made a comment when I was listening, and I stuck it at the end of my presentation but didn't tell you. I would hope that perhaps not through the mandate that's been given you, because you're fairly bound in by that, but maybe by very strong recommendations and suggestions in your report, you can make it clearer to governments, in particular our own, that there needs to be a new and refreshing approach to this issue.

The Chair: Doug Graham.

Mr. Graham: I don't have any questions. Thanks.

The Chair: Glen.

Mr. Clegg: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I really appreciate your presentation. Obviously, we've got to have reasons to in fact have a differential of 25 percent either way. Now, it would be very difficult, in my mind, to give minus 25 in Edmonton. We used a matrix system. Have you studied that: the distance from the Leg, sparsity? There are many factors there that in fact we can use. Have you looked at that at all?

Mr. Hammond: I haven't studied that in great detail. I think it's – forgive me for saying this – maybe tinkering. I think there needs to be a philosophical shift in terms of representation and some way to avoid this continued marginalization and, you know, separation of the two, rural and urban. The part that kind of troubles me, though, is that only when we talk about electoral boundaries review do we have an opportunity to bring into the public arena discussions about representation and its effectiveness, and I think that's unfortunate. I would hope that out of this discussion comes a broader review of that and that it gets into the higher levels of government in our province, because I do think it needs to be looked at.

Mr. Clegg: Thank you.

The Chair: Bauni.

Ms Mackay: That's fine. Thank you very much for your comments.

The Chair: Brian, thank you very much. I've just written down here: some kind of a regional congress, urban and rural people meeting. I took that as one which you were alluding to earlier. So thanks very much.

I'd like to ask Barry McFarland, the MLA for Little Bow. Barry assures me that he's a man of few words. I think that's a fair statement. Barry, do you have any advice you want to give us before we conclude things here in Lethbridge?

Mr. McFarland: Thank you for the opportunity. I apologize that I couldn't be here earlier and that I didn't notify you earlier, but as part of the job description I had a two-hour meeting here this morning that I didn't know was going to last as long as it did, and I couldn't rearrange it to another time. So I do appreciate it, and I know you want to go home and eat or go somewhere pretty quickly to eat.

I'd just like to make a couple of personal observations from the time when I was first elected, in '92. I would start by saying that currently our riding is roughly twice the size geographically as it was in '92. At that time there were parts of today's riding represented by the Macleod constituency, part represented by the Highwood constituency, and part represented by Taber-Warner. After '92 we

had a substantial change. We had the north half of the MD of Willow Creek added as well as Chain Lakes, which is a rural municipality, and we had, as we always had had in our riding, the Siksika Nation to the north. Following that, there was another review. The north halves of the MD of Willow Creek and Chain Lakes were taken out, and the south half of the county of Lethbridge was put in. I guess from a riding point of view, as previous people have probably told you, there are a number of people in the ridings that don't know today if they're in or out or back in tomorrow, so there hasn't been a great deal of consistency other than the original core part of the riding.

I've taken note that about a 1 percent variance equates to 250 people, and I often wonder if there's too much emphasis put on this percentage altogether. As Mr. Hierath had indicated, I've always had a strong feeling that it is much easier to represent an urban riding, and I personally would like to see your commission as a priority look at the two large major city ridings of Edmonton and Calgary and see if there's some way to adjust internally, taking into account as a starting point that maybe the goal should be that they represent plus 25 percent of a provincial average. By doing that, I think you might even see the possibility that you could reduce one or two ridings and transfer that gain to the high-growth areas that you see with Airdrie, Rocky View, Highwood, and some of those others to alleviate the high pressures that they have. Really, our riding I gather is about minus 16 point something percent, but in terms of real people that doesn't translate to a lot of people.

By way of reference points, I like to go into the grade 6 classes when they study all levels of government, because the kids are quite interested to know what an MLA does, and sometimes they're really interested to know the geographic size of a riding. I'll tell them that as a starting point the south part of the riding begins at the county of Warner, south of Lethbridge. The riding circles, with the exception of Riverfront on the west side, the city of Lethbridge. It goes to within 30 miles of the city of Medicine Hat on the very southeast, and to the very northwest corner it's only 18 miles from the city of Calgary across the Bow River. So it's quite large. It takes two hours nonstop to go from the south end to the north end of the riding up the Carseland bridge on highway 24, yet it's only another three hours and 15 minutes to Edmonton after that. But in that period of time by bypassing Calgary, I'll go through nine different provincial ridings before I hit the outskirts of Edmonton.

12:27

So the point that I'm trying to make is that when you've got my riding, in looking at a map, it isn't any bigger than any of the other southern ridings. They're all fairly equal in geographic size. I believe, as the 1993 indices indicated, that provincially this riding was the second hardest to represent when you took into account the number of municipalities, the elected school boards, regional health authorities, and so on. I think that's something that should be considered when you're talking about effective representation. We do have natural boundaries on the north and the east, which would be the Bow River. To the south we've got another riding, but we're split in the middle with the Oldman River, which isn't a problem because we've got continuity now that we have all of the county of Lethbridge. To the north we have the entire county of Vulcan, and in the northeast we have the north half of the MD of Taber.

I am not sure how many people are on the Siksika Nation today. It could be 3,000 or it could be 6,000, but historically it used to be and always was in Little Bow. So there's one movement, I think, that would lower Strathmore-Brooks a little bit. But going to the west, it could be possible to move the western boundary, although I do know that there's strong bonding between Stavely and Parkland and Nanton and High River. Even if you were to move over a couple of townships from the west boundary, it wouldn't capture a

lot of people, but it would maintain that MD relationship.

By and large I quite like where we're at now because at least we've got some coterminous boundaries with our municipal partners and to some degree our regional health authorities. We have part of Chinook and part of Headwaters in our riding. We have all of the regional school district of Palliser and the north portion of Horizon. I believe there are about five private schools, with fragments of Holy Spirit Catholic school division as well. So it's quite large. It's very difficult, though, as I indicated at the start, when I talk to the kids.

This will be my last comment. I drive probably an average of 75,000 to 80,000 kilometres a year as part of my job, because I don't have ready access to the Calgary airport and I'm probably an hour north of the Lethbridge airport. Being a little bit fiscally conscious, I don't like the idea of a \$500 or \$600 cost for a round-trip commercial air flight which taxpayers are paying for. Convert the 80,000 into working hours and try to calculate how many hours that takes if you were to drive nonstop at 100 kilometres an hour, as I did with the kids in the grade 6 math class that I made the presentation to. It works out to about 13 weeks out of each year. If I were to drive nonstop at 100 kilometres an hour for eight working hours a day five days a week, it would take me 13 weeks. Now, that's a quarter of the year that I spend doing nothing but driving, and if that's effective – I'd love to live in the city, because there's nothing I'd like better than to be able to have all my meetings right here in the city of Lethbridge or up in the city of Calgary, but it isn't going to happen, because we've got something like 25 communities with elected councils that expect to see people there.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thanks, Barry.

Any questions or comments?

Mr. Graham: I wanted to thank you very much, Barry, for some very concrete and constructive comments. Those things are always very helpful, and we always highlight them and will be looking at them.

Mr. McFarland: Thank you.

Mr. Patterson: I'd like to just echo that, Mr. Chair.

Ms Mackay: Thanks, Barry.

The Chair: When you say that you spend a quarter of the year driving, that's kind of a thing that even I'll remember. Thank you very much, Barry.

Mr. McFarland: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Olthof, anyone else?

Mr. Olthof: That's everything, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Okay. Then this commission's hearings here in Lethbridge are adjourned.

We'll reconvene in Wetaskiwin tomorrow morning at what time, Mr. Olthof?

Mr. Olthof: At 9 a.m.

The Chair: At 9 in Wetaskiwin tomorrow morning.

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen.

[The commission adjourned at 12:32 p.m.]