

9:04 a.m.

[Chairman: Mr. Bogle]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I officially declare the meeting open and welcome Mr. Pat Ledgerwood to our meeting. Pat, you've had extensive involvement in electoral boundaries, both before the current round – if I describe the current round as beginning with the all-party select committee of the Assembly where you sat as an honorary member, an ex officio member, and assisted us in our hearings and our deliberations – and then as part of the five-member commission appointed by the Legislature. We are now in the process of attempting to finalize the drawing of lines on our maps, and we welcome your input and advice because of your vast experience.

May I begin by asking if you have any opening comments you'd like to make. Then what we'd like to do is have a free flow of questions and answers. Our session with you will run as long as you have something to say and Mike or I have questions to ask.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. As you indicated, we have worked together since September of 1989 when I first made a presentation to the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries. Of course, your report tabled in November of '90 formed the basis of the legislation which the five-member commission used. So there's been a lot of data collected on redistribution. The commission received 89 written submissions before we prepared our interim report, and you will recall that both you and Mrs. Black brought in written submissions to the commission. At the public hearings we received 402 briefs as well as 327 written submissions, so there is a great deal of data available to assist this committee in their deliberations.

I don't have any prepared remarks, Mr. Chairman, and would be pleased to try and answer any questions which might assist your committee in completing their task. As you know, I have a vested interest in this area, and I hope you will be able to table your report by November 15 so we can then prepare for the next general enumeration for the next general election.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Mike, any opening questions?

MR. CARDINAL: Pat, I've been going through the *Hansard* of the public hearings you mentioned which the committee in which you participated had. I was involved in laying out the legislation on the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries, and the November 1990 report which you mentioned outlined the legislation as to some of the guidelines the independent commission would follow. When I was reading *Hansard*, in most cases when introductions were made after the interim report was filed and you went back out and held your hearings, there were some indications that the committee had decided to stick to using 10 percent variance below or above the average for quite a number of the ridings rather than the allowable 25 percent below or above, plus the four ridings that could go as high as 50 percent. I just wonder if you'd like to expand on that a bit as to how we deal with that issue, because no doubt it will come up again. We are just . . .

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Yeah, I think we should understand that the plus or minus 10 percent was an average mean. If you look at the figures in the interim report, you'll see that we did go well above the 10 percent in that some of the electoral divisions were 20 percent from the mean. So that 10 percent is an average. Those that were

above the mean averaged out to 10 percent and those that were below the mean averaged out to 10 percent. You will recall that when we started our deliberations, the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal had overturned the Saskatchewan Electoral Boundaries Commission report and this was to be heard by the Supreme Court of Canada. In Saskatchewan the urban average was plus 8.3 percent above the mean and the rural was minus 5.02 percent below the mean. We're looking at the fact that the courts had overruled this particular variance, so we didn't know what the acceptable mean was. As a matter of fact, we still don't know, because the Supreme Court did not rule on an average mean which will be plus or above the normal as acceptable.

Of course, we had the B.C. report where their single municipalities were plus 8.9 percent above the mean. Their multimunicipalities were minus 4.4 percent below the mean, with the city of Winnipeg in Manitoba at plus 2 percent from the mean, the rural at minus 1.8 percent from the mean, and the four northern ridings in Manitoba averaging minus 6.1 percent from the mean.

So with that background we hoped the courts would find that although we were above any of the recent commissions, 10 percent might be found as a reasonable number, and we used that as a guideline. As it happened, more by good luck than good management we happened to end up at plus or minus 10. I think you'll find that once you get into your deliberations, the domino effect of moving a line here affects the numbers such so that down the road you'll be very lucky if you end up at exactly what you set as a target mean plus or minus from the norm.

MR. CARDINAL: Would you think the changes should be more gradual than a quick change, say, all at one time? There is, of course, a review of boundaries after every second election, which really is probably eight or 10 years down the road from now. Would you feel that a sudden change of this nature would be too drastic for Albertans both urban and rural?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: I think there are two factors that weigh on this. The first factor is that the 1983-84 commission was required to have all the urban ridings at plus or minus 25 percent from the mean – they had to fall within that guideline – whereas the rural did not have any average. So that's why we have such a disparity now.

Of course, it's exacerbated by the fact that the problem you're facing now based on the 1991 census data is that only 39 of your 83 electoral divisions fall within the plus or minus 25 percent. There are 44 that fail the plus or minus 25 percent, and it's significant that those that fail on the low side are basically rural ridings. The ones that fail to the greatest degree at the low end are Pincher Creek-Crowsnest and Chinook, which fail by 55.08 percent. There are 13,777 for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest and 13,778 for Chinook. At the high end you have Calgary-Fish Creek with 59,122. It fails because it is plus 92.77 percent from the mean. So there are those two factors.

I think what your committee is going to have to do is just weigh the recent court decisions and the fact that so many failed what I think has been established as the plus or minus 25 percent criterion.

9:14

MR. CARDINAL: I have further questions. Looking back on legislation, you're allowed four ridings that could use up to 50 percent variance. When I look at the riding of Lesser Slave Lake for an example, it was recommended it change to Lesser Slave Lake-Athabasca, a new constituency. Looking at the way the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is laid out as far as part 3 on Equalization and Regional Disparities – I've mentioned this before and no doubt you're familiar with it; it's in *Hansard* – and comparing the situation

in Lesser Slave Lake and the Athabasca riding too, and no doubt some ridings in the extreme south of the province would face the same situation, there are a number of Indian reserves, a number of hamlets that are very poor, a number of Metis settlements. In fact, in Lesser Slave Lake, out of the total population that generally lives in poverty more than 50 percent now are native. I notice that when you did your report, rather than using the legislation that was provided and making the riding geographically smaller, the area was increased almost three times. The native population in that area right now is over 8,000, maybe 9,000, and I just wonder why your committee would increase the geographic area and make availability of an MLA to the constituents less than it is now. When the legislation was provided there – the backup definitely is there when you look at more than 8,000 people, probably the majority, living in poverty. When you ended up with your final report, you only ended up with, I think, a 26-point-some variance in that constituency when you could have had 50 percent. Fifty percent would have allowed a more concentrated effort to the constituents for a period of time until the economic status changed in that particular region. At that time I could see a transition made where eventually you would change the variance closer to the average, but that could take 20 years in the case of that particular setting.

Now, Athabasca's in a similar situation also, and I think some of the southern constituencies face a lot of native population continuing to live in poverty. A great number of reserves in the south no doubt could have utilized the 50 percent variance also for a period of time. I'm not saying it should be that way forever, but hopefully not too long. I just wonder if you have any comments that would help us to look at the . . .

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Certainly we're aware of the problems that you've explained to me again. I'm particularly familiar with that area that you started with, the northeast corner of Alberta. You also referred to the legislation. I think if you look at the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, section 17(2) was that we were required to meet at least four of the seven criteria. We were unable to meet four of the seven criteria without expanding the area in that there was a requirement for surveyed areas and also mileage. Mr. Pritchard may be able to refresh my memory.

MR. PRITCHARD: They certainly didn't meet the criteria as it was drawn up.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: We tried to follow the legislation to the letter.

MR. CARDINAL: But there was nothing in the legislation that didn't allow your committee also to recommend an amendment to the legislation to deal with this specific issue, was there, or am I off?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. In fairness, Mike, if we go back to the days of the all-party committee, we looked at a number of areas that seemed natural for special consideration. Chinook was cited time and time again, but Slave Lake was also looked at. If I recall correctly, we had information which led us to believe that the Lesser Slave Lake constituency would indeed meet the criteria, so if the commission chose to select it, it would fit. Unfortunately, in the commission's work they discovered that by using the criteria we had set out, what we believed was applicable, Lesser Slave Lake did not meet the test.

MR. CARDINAL: Yeah. I just wondered. The reason I bring that up is that I guess when you really get down to work to try and put an

effective system in place, I hope that in the future provisions are provided to make amendments like that so people can work. You know, I'm not trying to be . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: The commission didn't have that flexibility.

MR. CARDINAL: Yeah.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: I think, Mr. Cardinal, you will have that increased flexibility so that you can then do some of the things the commission would have liked to have done but was unable to do because we had to stay within the legislation we were given.

MR. CARDINAL: Yeah.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. I have a couple of questions, Pat, that I'd like to ask. I think the first and most important one would refer to the time lines. We are mandated as a committee to complete our work and have a report presented to the Assembly by November 15. We know the various steps we must pass between now and November 15 in order to meet that goal. Further assuming that the Assembly passes legislation before the end of the calendar year, would you state for the record what steps occur from your perspective as Chief Electoral Officer so that we can ensure the next election is indeed on new boundaries?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Once the legislation has been passed, we look at new constituency associations. The new constituency associations will be based on the new boundaries. The key in the electoral process is the returning officer. There is a requirement that the returning officer live within the boundaries of the electoral division. You'll recall that returning officers are order in council appointments, so where there is a government member who can make a nomination, I don't anticipate any great delays. The problem will be where we're changing executives of constituency associations and there's not a very quick resolution to who are going to be the new executives so they can then select the returning officers. So the first stage will be the appointment of returning officers.

Once these returning officers are appointed, we can train them very quickly on their duties and responsibilities. One of the key areas will be in electoral division mapping in that the returning officers will be required to select new polling subdivisions. I think you're also aware of the increased emphasis on level access, particularly in the rural areas where level access is limited. We may be looking at changing the whole polling subdivision so that we can have a polling station with level access.

Once that is completed, then we will be passing the maps once we've validated them. The maps must match the legal descriptions. Once that's completed, we'll be passing those maps to mapping, and they will complete it on a priority basis particularly if we can give them some advance warning of dates so they can contract for additional help.

Once the mapping is done, then we'll be in a position to conduct a general enumeration.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So from the beginning of the calendar year 1993, on what date would you be ready?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: One of the problems with returning officers is that we were short 14 returning officers, and for over the last year we've been trying to get replacements. I recently received names of 10 individuals. They were appointed by order in council, and we will conduct their initial training on September 3. I still have four

vacancies. Some of those vacancies have been for almost a year now. So I can't give you a date because the key is the returning officer. If I get returning officers very quickly, then I can do it very quickly; if there's an extended delay in appointing returning officers, then my hands are tied.

9:24

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would you give this committee a letter emphasizing the importance of the returning officers being appointed very quickly? I'll assure you that that will become part of our report.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate that support.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Assuming that is done, are there any other impediments? For instance, I know from my work on Legislative Offices that we will be working with you on approving necessary dollars for new forms and material you'll need. That will go through quickly, I presume. Is there anything else you would require?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: No. The key will be the mapping, and I've already spoken to mapping. They normally require 50 working days. I've indicated to them that I think this is an unacceptably long time, and they will be working to try to reduce that time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Good.
Anything on that point you want to add, Mike?

MR. CARDINAL: No, I don't. Not on that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Could we go back, then, to a couple of other areas? Pat, could you bring us up to date on what's happening in other jurisdictions on redistribution?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Sir, one of the areas I'd like to mention is that in my remarks in the final report I indicated that in Nova Scotia there would be a separate seat provided to the Micmac people.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, you did.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Apparently there has been some problem getting agreement among the Micmac people to select this member of the Assembly, and they've requested that this be delayed until after the next redistribution in Nova Scotia.

The other jurisdiction that is currently conducting redistribution is New Brunswick. They have just tabled their initial report. The two interesting items there are, first of all, that they are giving emphasis to relative parity of voting; they're also looking at reducing the number of seats in the Assembly from 58 to 54, and there's some indication that they will not be following the county jurisdiction lines to the extent they did in past redistributions.

MR. CARDINAL: That's good to know.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions, Mike, on redistribution?

Pat, before the meeting began I asked you about Ontario. You checked and ascertained that they had their last redistribution in 1986, and their legislation guarantees a number of seats for the northern part of the province. Could you elaborate a little on that, please?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Mr. Chairman, I've given the compendium of redistribution to the senior administrator for this committee. As I recall, in Ontario they allocate 15 seats to northern Ontario. I'm not exactly sure where the line is. I understand it's north of the French River. The French River runs from Georgian Bay into Lake Nipissing. I don't know just where it goes from Lake Nipissing over to the Quebec border, but I will make a commitment to you that I will get that information and relay it to your committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.

MR. CARDINAL: I understand from the stats I have on file that these 15 seats presently run as high as 57 percent variance from the average.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: My understanding, Mr. Cardinal, is that they have selected that area and determined there will be 15 seats in the area. Now, you may recall that in that area you've got some fairly large communities, Sudbury and Sault Ste Marie, and some smaller areas, Kapuskasing and Timmins. I don't know exactly how they have followed their redistribution, but I'll try and get a copy of their last report and a copy of the legislation, which I'll pass to you.

MR. CARDINAL: Sure. That's good.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I wondered if you had any advice for us on the number of seats or criteria for seats in your work on the commission. The legislation directed the commission to use 83 seats, the existing number. As you know, we have flexibility on this committee in terms of what is recommended back to the Assembly. Any advice for us based on your work on the commission or input you receive from citizens?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: I think the transcripts in *Hansard* will confirm that a general consensus was that 83 seats was high enough, and there was very little support for increasing the number of members in the Legislative Assembly. I can see where your committee has a real problem with the legislation, and that's where we ran into our problems in the cities of Edmonton and Calgary with the fixed numbers. We were required to place residents of both cities and join them with residents of the areas surrounding both cities, and of course there were all kinds of names coined for this: hybrids, 'rurbans,' whatever. We did not receive support for this at our public hearings. As a matter of fact, very, very few people supported this concept. So I can see that your committee has a problem of addressing both the number of seats in Edmonton and the number of seats in Calgary. If you're going to look at retaining the number of rural seats, of course I think you are almost forced to look at increasing the number of seats in Edmonton and Calgary. If you're not going to increase the number of seats in Edmonton and Calgary, then you're going to have to look at the whole redistribution concept.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Mike, any other questions you have for Pat?

MR. CARDINAL: No. At least not at this time anyway.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Any concluding comments, Pat, that you'd like to make for us?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: No. As I said earlier, I'm very anxious that this committee will be successful in its deliberations and you can meet your time lines. I think we owe it to the Premier and members

of Executive Council to get the work done so we provide them with the flexibility they require.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Agreed. Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned from 9:32 a.m. to 11:10 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll reconvene, and let the record show we welcome Steve Zarusky, MLA for Redwater-Andrew.

Steve, do you have some thoughts you'd like to share with us?

MR. ZARUSKY: Thank you. Good morning. Lady and gentlemen, what's this, my third or fourth time making presentations to the different committees? It's too bad that the boundaries commission couldn't come up with a unanimous decision on what the boundaries should look like, I guess. I feel that the variations of plus/minus 25 could still fit in. With the exception of a few, as the legislation says – and again the city is different – it could have worked. Unfortunately, I guess we didn't go that way, so again I'm here to do sort of a presentation of what would work for the constituency of Redwater-Andrew.

At one time, I guess in the first report, it was split up into five different constituencies, and then when it came back, there were different versions of it. I feel that with a few minor changes it could still be a constituency and maybe even continue being called Redwater-Andrew. As I've looked at it, and talking to people in the constituency – the municipalities and towns and villages – with some of their thoughts, I guess firstly the majority of people feel it could probably stay the way it is with adding on very little area to come up to the minus 25 percent. I believe it's a bit under now. I don't really have any figures with me, but this is what I feel it could have been like. What I've done is sort of sat down and maybe made what could change a little bit, and that's following more boundaries of the municipalities because right now it's got seven counties and MDs in it, which gives a person a lot of work, I guess, to cover. You're dealing with seven municipalities, MDs, plus 10 towns and villages. It's quite a bit of traveling and extra work to work with these people, but it can be done.

So as I've said, what I've looked at: some of the ways it could keep its shape similar to what it was is maybe taking in the entire county of Smoky Lake, which would be natural boundaries. That would leave working with one county, of which I think the majority is in Redwater-Andrew . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could you stop for a minute, Steve?

Could you get the county/MD maps for us, please?

MR. ZARUSKY: I have a map here that I could give you which more or less gives . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does it show the county boundaries as well?

MR. ZARUSKY: Yeah, it does.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It does? Okay, thanks. Have you got an extra one?

MR. ZARUSKY: Yeah, I've got a couple of them right here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay; thank you.

MR. ZARUSKY: I'll give Bob one.

MR. PRITCHARD: Thanks, Steve.

MR. ZARUSKY: When you look at it, it's got all the MDs and counties in the area.

So what I sort of indicated: we could take in the whole county of Smoky Lake. It would add in, I believe, the village of Vilna and the hamlet of Spedden and then Goodfish Lake and Saddle Lake. I know the county of Lamont at one time did their presentations, and I had copies of some of them indicating that it would be very beneficial for them to stay in one constituency because right now most of it is covered by Redwater-Andrew and a little bit by Vegreville. So if you take that whole county in, that would take in Mundare and Chipman, I guess, some more and sort of go the way the lines go and then follow it on the west side, as you'll see there, and come up to the North Saskatchewan River, where you see Gibbons, and maybe take in that whole area straight across. I think there's Highway 38 in there, which is in the constituency anyways, and that would leave off the Lamoureux area around the North Saskatchewan. I'll tell you why. That area, I think, has requested to come maybe into Fort Saskatchewan, more urban. They seem to associate more with this area because people working in the city and just living out there are having more association with Fort Saskatchewan. If you have a map of the constituencies, at one time it just sort of jogged in there. It followed the river. So you could go straight across there – you know, this is just a suggestion – to north of Bon Accord, which is in the constituency anyways, Lily Lake and area.

Then going into the MD of Westlock, at one time the village of Clyde, that area, was in the Redwater-Andrew constituency and I guess could associate with it. So taking in the county of Thorhild probably as it is or maybe moving it a bit north if needed . . . As I say, I don't have any figures on population there, but it seems that would balance it.

So, you know, it's not that I'm drawing my own lines; it's just suggestions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could I ask, Steve? I notice that in county 13 and county 30 you follow the municipal lines exactly, and then when we get to county 7, you leave off the top part.

MR. ZARUSKY: The north part.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, the north part. Is there a reason for that?

MR. ZARUSKY: Well, yes. I guess traditionally it's always been in the Athabasca-Lac La Biche area, and I guess those people associate there, but I . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: And the kids go to school in Thorhild?

MR. ZARUSKY: Some do, yes. They go to Newbrook there.

MR. CARDINAL: And some to Westlock, shopping, and Boyle, Smoky Lake, and Thorhild too.

MR. ZARUSKY: Firstly, it would be nice to keep it more or less the way it is, as I said from the start, because the majority of the people associate with where they are and where they have been, but it looks like you need some extra area to come up at least to the minus 25.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, the other factor we're going to have to look at, Steve, is that because Redwater-Andrew at the present time borders Edmonton – and distance has been cited time and time again by people who are in – it seems to me at this stage of the game that the new constituency in that area would not be at the outer end,

minus 25. It's going to be closer to the mean, if you know what I'm saying.

MR. ZARUSKY: You mean to urban, right into Edmonton.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, coming up to Edmonton. We still haven't determined the exact number of seats, so we don't have a mean population figure to work on at the moment. But if the rationale is that distance is a factor, and it seems to be something that came out at many of the hearings both by the previous committee and by the commission, then a constituency which borders Edmonton, where the provincial capital is located, probably should be closer to the mean than to the outer end, the minus 25.

11:20

MR. ZARUSKY: Yeah. When you look at it bordering Edmonton, it really doesn't border the urban population.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I know. I understand.

MR. ZARUSKY: Edmonton is annexed so far north that it's still rural people that are covered there. So it is something – whatever their needs, they've got an office at Redwater or else they're close enough to the Edmonton office.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Steve, the other thing we're looking at. Obviously, wherever existing constituency borders can be maintained, it's something which the past commission and commissions in other provinces take into account, but when they do have to make changes, they tend to look at natural borders and at municipal boundaries. The North Saskatchewan River cuts right through the middle of your constituency. That's a natural border. What would your feelings be if your new constituency were entirely on the north side of the North Saskatchewan River?

MR. ZARUSKY: Well, I'll tell you. There was one proposal that did it. What happened there is that people came in with presentations, particularly from the county of Lamont, and at one time it sort of did take in part of the old part. What happens if you get too long an area: they seem to indicate that there's really nothing in common between, say, point A and point B 150 miles away, which it would have to be. If you used the river as a boundary, it'd have to be long and narrow.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. At the current time Mundare is in the Vegreville constituency. So the county is currently split between your constituency and Vegreville, and Vegreville also is in need of population growth.

MR. ZARUSKY: Yeah. You know, there have been all kinds of lines drawn.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So what would the arguments be if Vegreville came north to include all of the county?

MR. ZARUSKY: All of the county, and then you followed the river? What would you do with northern Alberta then? You'd squeeze somebody someplace up there for population.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, that's the challenge we're facing. As we look around the map, most of our current constituencies don't meet the norm. They have to be within the plus/minus 25 percent range except for four, and for the four exceptional ridings, we believe there have to be some very strong criteria as to why they're exceptional.

MR. ZARUSKY: Yeah. No, I understand. The way Redwater-Andrew is right now with communities and more or less with a little bit of change, the communities themselves would be all more or less the same size, anyplace from village populations of 500 and the largest town of 2,000 people. They seem to have much more in common. You're dealing more or less with just about the same issues in every community, because if it's the same size, naturally the people's needs are the same as far as the communities go.

Another thing is that with something like this, the agriculture part, which is predominant in this area and a bit of energy, the farming practices are very close to each other. It's mainly mixed farming and grain, and livestock as another. As a member representing the area, you deal with this, and it makes it much easier for you to deal with the same issues. A farmer at Mundare will probably have the same sorts of concerns as a farmer at Waskatenau because it's the same farming practices.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The farmer in Mundare has the same concerns as the farmer in Vegreville or Two Hills too, wouldn't he?

MR. ZARUSKY: Probably, yeah. I'm just saying the reason is that it makes it easier if you follow boundary lines. These jurisdictions can identify much better then. A lot of times what happens, there's a highway being done, and all of a sudden they say: "Which constituency is this in? We know it's in the county, but who is our provincial representative?"

MR. CARDINAL: But there are also advantages on the other side. Sometimes you do have two MLAs to work on one project.

Steve, I know you follow the municipal boundaries in your suggested plan, and being involved in the hearing process prior to the development in legislation and then having the opportunity to review *Hansard* during the hearings of the commission, the number one priority suggested is not using municipal boundaries. The number one priority that's been suggested, it seems, is that trading patterns are more important than actual municipal boundaries and that that should be considered when you design the constituencies: generally, north-south direction towards the major centres because the migration pattern of movement of people seemed to indicate, try and design constituencies that will consider those. Then, of course, if you can do it, maintain the municipal boundaries at the same time, but if it's not possible, then trading patterns.

One area you outlined in this particular case. When you're looking at the east boundary of county 13, the Indian reserve of Saddle Lake is included in the county 13 you're proposing. Now, when you look at the shopping pattern, of course, I suspect – and I'm not familiar with Saddle Lake – that because of the distance to St. Paul and the size of St. Paul, no doubt the majority of that reserve may shop at St. Paul. Or do they shop at Smoky Lake, because that would be the next bigger centre?

MR. ZARUSKY: Those are good points, Mike.

MR. CARDINAL: That's what we're hearing. Because if you're going to go shop at St. Paul, then it would be nice if your MLA was there and government departments also. That's what we tend to hear coming across.

MR. ZARUSKY: Okay, because the ones I have attended, the suggestions were: try to follow municipal boundaries as close as possible. One did come up with one hearing at St. Paul. I think Lamont made a presentation and said that at one time that was all combined. They said: "Say a member was elected from that area,

why would we head that way? We've got our different trading area.” You hit it right on, that there are more similarities with . . .

MR. CARDINAL: Do I hear you saying that your constituents and municipalities are saying: try and make minor adjustments if possible to stay within the criteria?

MR. ZARUSKY: Yeah, that's mainly what's being said. This is by no means – it's just the starting point, I guess, sort of what I see out there. It's my opinion, and that's about it. It's going to be you the committee that will have to work with it, but if it's of any help, it's sort of a start, I guess, and that's where it's going to be.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure.
Any other questions, Mike?

MR. CARDINAL: No, I don't have any more questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any other observations, Steve, you'd like to make to us?

MR. ZARUSKY: I think at this point with things the way they are probably economically in all Alberta or maybe in all the world right now, people need that assurance and representation as best as possible because they need the information at their fingertips economically whether they're in business or agriculture, and as a rural MLA I can tell you that many of them come into constituency offices seeking this information. You tell them: “You can go to the DA's office and get this on agriculture. We'll get this for you. We'll set up a meeting for you with economic development if you want to start up a business.” I've been getting a lot of that lately, and I think if you make them much larger, it's going to be difficult for one person to do it. There have been suggestions saying staff and everybody else can accommodate these, but the surprising thing is that the majority of the people in my constituency will talk to staff and say: “No, no; we still want to talk to Steve, because we want this information. We want a meeting.” Now, you get 30,000 people: if everyone requested a meeting, it'd be pretty difficult.

11:30

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right.

MR. ZARUSKY: So this is why at this time, in our economic situation and what's happening in Canada and the rest of the world, I would sum up that it is important to keep constituencies so people would have access to their elected representative as quickly and as close as possible. I think we'd better start looking at that before we start looking at population and just chopping everything up. That's what I'd strongly stress anyways.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you very much, Steve.

[The committee adjourned at 11:31 a.m.]