

**Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings  
Drumheller**

1:05 p.m.

[Chairman: Chief Judge Edward R. Wachowich]

THE CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon, gentlemen. I welcome you to the public hearings of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. I have quite a lengthy statement of introductory remarks, but I don't know whether it's worth my time to waste them on you three people.

MR. McCARTHY: How does that make you feel?

THE CHAIRMAN: No. What I meant by that was that normally there are 20 other people to hear them.

MR. SLEMP: Well, when all the cows come up, if they're not all there, you don't have to put a full load of feed out.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think I should go through them anyway, so you're going to get the full load.

MR. GRBAVAC: This will make *Hansard* interesting reading for a change.

THE CHAIRMAN: My name is Edward Wachowich, and I am the chairman of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. I am also the Chief Judge of the Provincial Court of Alberta.

Let me introduce you to the other members of our commission. On my far left is Robert Grbavac of Raymond, on my immediate right is Joe Lehane of Innisfail, on my far right is John McCarthy of Calgary, and on my immediate left is Wally Worth of Edmonton. The five people you see before you make up the commission, and I want to say that we are very happy to be here to receive your comments and consider your thinking with respect to our duties.

The commission is holding public hearings here in Drumheller to receive and to consider your arguments and points of view with respect to the areas, the boundaries, and the names of the electoral divisions in Alberta. We must do this according to a particular set of rules, which I will review in a moment.

I want to assure you that every member of the commission has reviewed the law and the literature which has been recently written concerning electoral boundaries in Alberta. So I want to tell you that our minds are open inasmuch as we have not reached any conclusions. We have given this matter a lot of thought, we have reviewed the law, we have reviewed the work of previous commissions and committees who have studied boundaries in Alberta, and we have reviewed what the courts have said about electoral boundaries in this province and in Canada.

I would like to put before you for your consideration the following summary of the law of Alberta with respect to electoral boundaries. Our function is to review the existing electoral boundaries and to make proposals to the Legislative Assembly about the area, the boundaries, and the names of the electoral divisions in Alberta.

We have very limited time to accomplish this task. We must submit a report to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly setting out our recommendations with respect to area, boundaries, and names of any proposed electoral divisions, with our reasons, by the

31st of January 1996. The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly shall make the report public and publish the commission's proposals in the *Alberta Gazette* as soon as possible.

The commission is required to hold two sets of public hearings. This is the first set. These hearings are being held before we make any report or proposals to the Speaker. The second set of hearings will be held in 1996, probably in March, after our report to the Speaker has been made public. We are required to hold public hearings to enable representations to be made to us by any person or organization in Alberta about the area, the boundaries, and the names of the electoral divisions. We are required to give reasonable public notice of the times, places, and purposes of our public meetings, which we have done in this case.

After our report is published by the Speaker, we will undertake a second set of public hearings as is required by the Act and lay before the Speaker a final report by June 30, 1996. Again, the Speaker shall make this report public and publish it in the *Alberta Gazette*.

If more than one report is submitted from among the members of the commission, the report of the majority is the report of the commission, but if there is no majority, my report, or the report of the chair, is the report of the commission.

The final report of the commission is then laid at the earliest opportunity before the Legislative Assembly, immediately if it is then sitting or within seven days after the beginning of the next sitting.

Then it is up to the Legislative Assembly by resolution to approve or approve with alterations the proposals of the commission and to introduce a Bill to establish new electoral divisions for Alberta in accordance with the resolution. This law would come into force when proclaimed before the holding of the next general election.

Population. Population means the most recent population set out in the most recent decennial census of the population of Alberta as provided by Statistics Canada. We are also required to add the population of Indian reserves that were not included in the census as provided by the federal department of Indian and northern affairs. But if the commission believes there is another provincewide census more recent than the decennial census compiled by Statistics Canada which provides the population for proposed electoral divisions, then the commission may use this data.

The number of electoral divisions. The second rule is that the commission is required to divide Alberta into 83 proposed electoral divisions. The commission may take into consideration any factors it considers appropriate, but it must and shall take into consideration the following.

One, the requirement for effective representation as guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; two, sparsity and density of population; three, common community interests and community organizations, including those of Indian reserves and Métis settlements; four, whenever possible existing community boundaries within the cities of Edmonton and Calgary; five, the existing municipal boundaries; six, the number of municipalities and other local authorities; seven, geographical features, including existing road systems; eight, the desirability of understandable and clear boundaries.

The population rule is that a proposed electoral division must not be more than 25 percent above or below the average population for all 83 electoral divisions. There is an exception to the 25 percent rule. In the case of not more than four proposed electoral divisions the commission may have a population that is as much as 50 percent below the average population of the electoral divisions in Alberta if

three of the following five criteria are met: one, the area exceeds 20,000 square kilometres or the surveyed area of the proposed electoral division exceeds 15,000 square kilometres; two, the distance from the Legislature Building in Edmonton to the nearest boundary of any proposed electoral division by the most direct highway route is more than 150 kilometres; three, there is no town in the proposed electoral division that has a population exceeding 4,000 people; four, the area of the proposed electoral division contains an Indian reserve or a Métis settlement; five, the proposed electoral division has a portion of its boundary coterminous with a boundary of the province of Alberta.

This is a very general overview of the legislation, but we must now also turn to the guidance that has been provided by the Supreme Court of Canada and the Supreme Court of Alberta.

What have the Supreme Courts said? The Supreme Court of Canada and the Alberta Court of Appeal have agreed that the right to vote under the Charter includes, one, the right to vote; two, the right to have the political strength or value or force of the vote an elector casts not unduly diluted; three, the right to effective representation; four, the right to have the parity of the votes of others diluted, but not unduly, in order to gain effective representation or as a matter of practical necessity. The rulings of the Supreme Courts as well as the electoral boundaries Act must guide our decisions and ultimately the proposals that we make to the Legislature.

Now I want to talk to you about the focus. The commission in its public advertising has clearly stated that it is considering after its preliminary deliberations, one, merging a number of rural electoral divisions into contiguous or neighbouring divisions; two, adding a number of urban electoral divisions to Edmonton and Calgary; three, any other revisions necessary to achieve one and two.

We have set forth our focus after preliminary deliberations. We have not reached any final conclusions. The commission wishes to hear the views of all Albertans with respect to this focus. Please let me assure you that our preliminary deliberations are preliminary and that no final conclusions have been drawn. The commission will not move to the consideration of proposals without the benefit of and input from individuals and organizations. Indeed, this is the purpose of the public hearings.

I also want to say that without public input the work of the commission will be seriously impaired. We want to hear the arguments and the reasoning of all organizations and individuals in Alberta with respect to the area, the boundaries, and the names of all electoral divisions.

I would like to welcome Jay Slem, representing the Special Areas Board of Hanna. I understand he has two assistants, Jim Andrew and Tom Osadczuk. Go ahead.

*1:15*

MR. SLEMP: It said in the brief too – and I don't know if you have it or not. You have? Then I guess maybe what we can do is just read through it. It's just a couple of pages, and then if there are some questions you have, I'll answer them quickly as well.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our views on electoral boundaries. We have tried to deal with the issues based upon the considerations as mandated in the legislation.

Effective representation. What is it we are seeking when we are looking for effective representation, and how is it affected by constituency boundaries? We're of the opinion that it has at least four components.

Understanding of the issues. All regions have unique issues and problems, and ours is no exception. We do feel that our climatic conditions, recurring droughts, the amount of public land that makes up our farm and ranch units, about 60 percent public land, our sparse population, and the impact of resource development result in situations where we're often hardest hit or in need of an effective voice to resolve our problems. How do we access some of the significant contribution we make to the provincial economy to meet these needs? Can these issues be understood by an MLA who is from a considerable distance away and possibly even in another climatic zone?

Ability to focus and resolve issues. MLAs face a great variety of issues on a day-to-day basis. On top of constituency issues some are asked to wrestle with issues on a provincial and, on an ever increasing basis, on a national level. Time becomes a severely limiting factor. We begin to question if they have time to focus on our particular issues. Larger constituencies inevitably result in more issues and less time to resolve them. Constituencies with large geographic areas that are in remote locations are further disadvantaged as compared to our counterparts in the corridor or even in the city due to the time required for travel to and from the constituency. Even in getting to functions when they are in their constituency requires travel time.

Accessible to electorate. Many rural MLAs are required to travel considerable distances just to service their constituency. In fact, many rural residents are required to travel significant distances to even reach the constituency office. Many issues need to be viewed firsthand if they are to be understood. Rural electors understand the distances involved, but we can assure you that they are not anxious for government to be moved farther away from them.

Accountability to the electorate. Accountability is an ongoing process. Keeping short accounts and dealing with the issues in a timely fashion is an important fundamental to good government. MLAs with constituencies that are of large geographic area find it difficult to get to all the communities on a regular basis. We see the toll it takes on their personal lives. Making larger constituencies cannot contribute in a positive way to the need for good communication on an ongoing basis.

Sparsity and density of population. In this region we are dealing with sparsity of population. In addition to the aforementioned issues related to effective representation, we would like you to consider the following.

In terms of recent moves to regionalize health care and education, we have been amalgamated into large regions. As a board we are dealing now with three regional health authorities, three amalgamated school districts. Keeping abreast of the changes is an ongoing challenge. We are tied to more urban populations in order to get enough population to meet the government's opinion of what an economic unit is. As resources become in short supply, the high cost of doing business in sparsely populated areas becomes a significant issue if not a liability. Services are reduced or moved farther away, putting further pressure on a falling population. We always seem to have a problem when revenues are redistributed on a per capita basis with no consideration for the high cost of sparsity and distance. In simple terms, the average does not work for us.

This scenario of being outvoted by populated centres is not new. It has been Alberta's struggle within Confederation for some time.

Use of existing municipal boundaries. Specifically to our municipality, the Special Areas Board manages special areas 2, 3, and 4 as a board. We are currently part of two constituencies. If our

constituencies were amalgamated into other neighbouring regions, we would then have to deal with more MLAs. This adds the disadvantage of trying to co-ordinate the schedules of more MLAs to deal with a special-areas-wide issue. Our preference would be to deal with a maximum of two MLAs. The number of municipalities and other local authorities, just as information, are currently three rural municipalities, five if you count each special area separately, nine urban, three health regions, four school districts.

Other considerations: rural/urban belts. The Special Areas Board would like you to consider in the Legislature the belts that exist between urban and rural constituencies. At present there is some balance, which is healthy for Alberta in our opinion. There are significant differences in the issues each must deal with. Two powerful horses in balance is a much stronger team than having one overpower the other. We are both forced to strongly consider the other's views and can strongly state our own. One is not able to put conditions on the other that they cannot live with.

As we see it, you have three choices when it comes to our constituency. Option 1: divide it up between two or three neighbouring constituencies. This would add to the distance problem and possibly link us with more heavily populated areas who have different problems than we have. This may also lead us to having to deal with more MLAs. Option 2: make it bigger by adding parts of neighbouring constituencies. There are really no large centres close to us. Neighbouring constituencies are all larger. How much larger can we make it and still have an MLA that lives within a reasonable driving distance? Option 3: leave it as it is, considering it as it is at present as a special consideration electoral division. To us this is logical in light of the distances, the large geographic area, and our need for effective representation.

We urge you to find the balance between representation by population and the physical constraints of a large, sparsely populated geographic area. Our recommendation is: we would hope that you would consider 3. We attached a map of the area behind.

THE CHAIRMAN: So your final conclusion is: you want to be left alone.

MR. SLEMP: Well, we like the status quo, I guess. We all do.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I was just wondering whether Mr. Andrew would like to add anything.

MR. ANDREW: Nothing I have to add.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Osadczuk.

MR. OSADCZUK: No, thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, are there any questions from the members of the commission?

MR. GRBAVAC: Jim, it's been proposed by some of the urban presenters that have appeared before us that with the advent of communications and enhanced road infrastructure, et cetera, the argument for accessibility to the MLA has been somewhat diminished. I just wonder how you'd respond to that.

MR. ANDREW: Well, if you take into consideration the special areas, over the years we have been left behind in roads. Our

secondary highways were the last ones on the list when the highways got done. Communications in our part of the country are pretty poor really, you know, accessibility to communications. We just got cell phones so they work pretty well through the area. Up until a couple years ago cellular phones wouldn't work in the area. So, you know, communications are not real good, and we're very sparsely populated.

MR. GRBAVAC: Thank you.

MR. WORTH: Well, on the question of population, the latest figures we're dealing with show about 11,500 in the three special areas, and that's based on the '91 census. Just for my information and my colleagues', what's the current population? Would you estimate it is above that? Below that?

MR. SLEMP: I think 11,000 is our last census population. That would be special areas. If you include the towns and villages, we have about 12,000 within the special area. That 12,000 would include the towns and villages.

MR. WORTH: Now, would that include Hanna and Oyen?

MR. SLEMP: That would include Hanna, Oyen, Consort, you know, the other hamlets: Veteran, Cereal, Empress, Youngstown. The special area has a rural population there of about just under 6,000.

MR. WORTH: What's the population in Oyen? I'm asking this because I once lived there when it had 600.

MR. SLEMP: About 1,100.

MR. WORTH: Oh. Then it's growing.

MR. SLEMP: Yeah.

MR. WORTH: Another question about population. It's about the demography, I guess, in the sense of the composition of the population. We were told yesterday in Wainwright and in St. Paul that the composition of the small villages and small towns is changing in the sense that more recently the people moving in and living there are seniors who have come off the land and are residing in an area close to where they farmed. Is this what's happening in Hanna and Oyen? I mean, is population stability or growth based in large measure on seniors moving in?

1:25

MR. SLEMP: I would say that's the biggest increase. If you take Hanna and Consort, those two are driven by – in Hanna's case the Sheerness power plant has been a big employer and the mines that service that. That's probably influencing it as much as anything. Consort: very big oil and gas development in the last few years. We're actually seeing, you know, with the industrial development some younger people moving in. But those are up and down things. The stability comes from seniors moving into those places.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe? John?

MR. WORTH: I have another one, if I may.

THE CHAIRMAN: Go ahead.

MR. WORTH: I'm interested if there is much interaction between the people who live in the sort of southern portion of special area 2 and down into the Brooks area, into the county of Newell. Is there much traffic flow or commerce flow in that direction?

MR. SLEMP: Tom lives just at Jenner, so I'll let him answer that.

MR. OSADCZUK: Do you mean north and south flow?

MR. WORTH: Yeah.

MR. OSADCZUK: Oh yeah. Like, right now in the oil business of course a lot of oil is transported from the Jenner fields to – where do they come up to here? – Craigmyle, I think. So there's a lot of traffic going that way, north and south, if that answers your question.

MR. WORTH: Well, I'm also interested in – Cessford is south of Hanna; right?

MR. SLEMP: Right.

MR. WORTH: Yeah. Now, the people from Cessford, just to take an illustration, do they have much to do with the people in Bassano or Brooks?

MR. SLEMP: Brooks would be their centre. Once you get to Cessford, the Jenner area, Buffalo, at Buffalo it splits. Those people would be serviced in Brooks. As you go east from there to the Bindloss-Empress area, they tend to go north and south down towards Highway 41 to Medicine Hat. They tend to be linked a little more north and south. Along the border it tends to move north and south, and as you move to Hanna, then they start to move a little bit east and west, although Highway 36 is another north and south route.

MR. WORTH: In terms of moving west, is there much interaction with Drumheller?

MR. SLEMP: I would say that we have some but not a lot. People are coming through. The syndrome is a little bit more like, you know, they don't jump one size; they jump two. So you tend to have people driving by Drumheller. Although they will use it as a source, they tend to go to Calgary. Once they're in their vehicle, they'll jump two sizes of towns, although Drumheller is important to the Hanna area. The farmers in that area are serviced by Drumheller.

MR. WORTH: Well, thank you for giving me a better understanding of the area.

THE CHAIRMAN: Where do you come from, Jay?

MR. SLEMP: I live in Hanna.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hanna. Well, we won't hold that against you. How about you, Jim?

MR. ANDREW: I'm from Youngstown.

THE CHAIRMAN: Youngstown. So you gentleman cover the area quite well then. Where would the people from Wardlow go?

MR. SLEMP: Brooks.

MR. OSADCZUK: There's a split there. Cessford is about halfway between Brooks and Hanna, so there's kind of a split there. Some people go to Hanna; some go to Brooks.

MR. SLEMP: We also service the Consort area, which is another unique area. It tends to be north and south, Provost and Wainwright, and then as you move down a little bit down towards Veteran, they start to go a little bit more – from Consort down they start to move towards Coronation or Stettler and jump those two sizes and go up. It's just kind of how things happen.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, if there are no more questions, I want to thank you gentlemen for coming here. It wasn't the nicest day, but you at least have told us what you want to tell us.

MR. SLEMP: Great. Thanks for the opportunity.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The next presenter that I have on my list is Ann Wilton, alderman from the city of Drumheller. I guess alderwoman.

MRS. WILTON: Alderman is fine, sir.

THE CHAIRMAN: Go ahead.

MRS. WILTON: Hon. Chief Judge, distinguished members of the panel, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the mayor, the council, and the administration of the city of Drumheller I wish to express our concern that it has been deemed necessary to embark on yet another scrutiny of Alberta's electoral boundaries. I urge you to not permit this review to result in an unnecessary, expensive, and probably fruitless redrawing of those boundaries.

Coming closer to the area, Drumheller is already a large riding. It's time consuming for our MLA to cover it, to consult with his constituents. There are in the area many divergent points of view that he has to represent. The Drumheller riding is bounded on the west by the Red Deer River and the corporate limits of the city of Calgary and on the south by the Bow River. On the north there is a line, not very clear, which runs between Big Valley and Rumsey, and on the east the riding has joint boundaries with the constituencies of Chinook and Bow Valley. It's served by highways 9, 21, and 56, but most of the areas and certainly many of the people living therein are reached only by the secondary road system. There are fairly large areas, long distances which have to be covered.

The focal points for the population are the city of Drumheller and the town of Strathmore. The rural electorate is sparsely spread over the wide agricultural area I have referred to. Based on the most recent available figures, Drumheller has 23.4 percent and Strathmore 19 percent of the population with the remaining 57.6 percent being rural.

Even Strathmore and Drumheller have differing concerns, arising largely from their relative locations and also from the different characteristics of the communities. Strathmore has the good fortune, as we see it, to be situated on the Trans-Canada Highway. Drumheller – and I'm certainly happy to see all of you here today. I would

be happy to see you come back some time when you could spend some time with us and see what a great place we have here. It is a great place. It's a wonderful place both for the people who live here and for the large tourist population who have come to see Drumheller as a destination.

We do suffer from being well away from both highways 1 and 2. I'm the alderman responsible for economic development, and I can assure you that continually, every week, I face problems which arise from the distance, perceived but real as well, that we are a way from the main transportation corridors. I know that you can't change that. This is a reality that we live with. But we do seek to broaden our industrial and commercial base, as we have to do, and it is a problem that we come up against and we have to try to deal with.

In Drumheller we are striving to provide more and better facilities for our citizens to keep our population stable, hopefully to see some increase. We believe we are on the verge of really good times for this area, but at present there certainly is a leakage of spending dollars to the larger cities. Drumheller is committed to an intense and ongoing and creative effort to maintain and improve its trading position at a time when revenues and services from all levels of government are being cut consistently. We are very proud to say that we have taken leadership in Canada in the area of energy conservation.

1:35

Now, at first glance a perusal of the figures which were disseminated showing the population variances of the Alberta ridings would seem to show that there are wide variations from the electoral quotient. May I just take a moment to put the figures into perspective? A variation of 1 percent is equivalent to 294 people. That's what it amounts to. When I think of the recent referendum where 1.2 percent of the vote was representative of 55,000 votes, it's quite a difference. One of the hats I wear is that of an accountant. Although I sometimes hate to say it, there are times when I have to subscribe to that person who said: there are lies, damn lies, and statistics. We can make it say anything we want. But the reality in Alberta is that 1 percent of this variation is 294 people. So if only 300 people move into the area, our area, any area, the negative variance is lessened by over 1 percent, and in the past five years the population of Strathmore has increased by 1,342 people. I'm sure that some of those people are coming from the rural area; nevertheless, there has been this increase.

Now, looking at the cities of Calgary and Edmonton, there is no question that they have a somewhat higher variance from the average, but they're still well within the acceptable limits. When you look at the cities, you can tell by definition that there is a high level of homogeneity, which we in the Drumheller constituency do not have. Calgary has 20 MLAs who can represent them, 20 people who very often will have a common cause to support. Edmonton has 18. The Member for Drumheller, the Speaker of the House, the Hon. Stanley S. Schumacher, has to advocate for many very different and often conflicting opinions and needs. We submit that our ability to be heard would be affected in a very negative fashion if there was a further dilution of our representation as a result of the review which this commission is undertaking. There are other constituencies in Alberta in the same situation. So it is not surprising that the highest courts in our land, the Supreme Court, the appeal courts of provinces have ruled on several recent occasions that electoral boundaries for rural ridings may vary by a higher degree from the average without transgressing principles of equality

because of the necessity long recognized to give rural citizens effective representation.

Now, Drumheller is classed as a city, and we're very proud of that, and we certainly seek to provide an appropriate infrastructure in lifestyle and services. But realistically the Drumheller riding is a rural constituency, and as such it merits the special considerations which the courts have recommended to ensure appropriate and equitable representation across the province. The electoral boundaries were redrawn quite recently. They may not be perfect, but at least the rural ridings are recognized for their special characteristics.

So we ask you, gentlemen: how many times must the situation be reviewed by political commissions or by the courts? No should mean no, not maybe. Now, this province doesn't accept the result of the Quebec referendum to be a licence to review and to rereview, as we have been threatened with. The city of Drumheller considers that redrafting the electoral division boundaries now in a time of avowed financial constraint and when in any case the boundaries will be redrawn in the year 2001 to be unnecessary and to be prejudicial to rural Alberta.

I thank you very much for your attention.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. You're sort of questioning why we're here, and we have an expert on our panel who answers that question.

John.

MR. McCARTHY: Yeah, maybe I can comment briefly on why we're here. Before I do, however, I should just note that, number one, I'm from Calgary. I'd also note that Mr. Kush last night through another individual put in a submission, so I just all want you to know that I'm fully aware of this part of his submission that I think you'd find interesting.

It is a well known fact that larger centers create more crime and corruption than rural centers. We all know that a person's intelligence will be substantially reduced when he is crammed into an urban environment.

You can keep that in mind as I make my comments.

MR. LEHANE: Do you take issue with that, John?

MR. McCARTHY: I'll try and answer the question of why we're here. None of the members of this commission, first of all, are responsible for the legislation. This is the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, which was amended by the Legislature and put in force in the spring of this year. As a result of that, this commission was appointed by the Legislature through the provisions of this Act. Although the members here agreed to serve, they certainly didn't create the commission this go around.

The background to this and I think the reason why the Act was amended and why the Legislature created this Commission has its history in a number of legal decisions, the two most important being a Supreme Court of Canada decision back in 1991 where the Supreme Court of Canada was dealing with the Saskatchewan boundaries problem. To summarize it briefly, they dealt with the common problem of the urban versus rural voter. In other words, the urban voters had fewer seats when you divided it by the average population than the rural people did. So it's not dissimilar to the problem we're facing now.

The Supreme Court of Canada did not require, you know, strict equality, as far as that goes. They gave some guidelines. If I can

just take a minute to summarize what the Supreme Court of Canada said with respect to the issue.

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". The right to vote therefore comprises many factors, of which equity is but one. The section does not guarantee equality of voting power.

So far this is good news to rural people.

Relative parity of voting power is a prime condition of effective representation. Deviations from absolute voter parity, however, may be justified on the grounds of practical impossibility or the provision of more 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. Beyond this, dilution of one citizen's vote as compared with another's should not be countenanced. . . . Effective representation and good government in this country compel that factors other than voter parity, such as geography and community interests, be taken into account in setting electoral boundaries.

Then I think the majority opinion in that decision said that in certain circumstances where these factors were considered, a variation of up to 25 percent would be acceptable and in certain extreme conditions, remote areas in the north, even more than that, up to 50 percent.

So far that takes us to 1991 or so. Then after the last go around on electoral boundaries, which I'm sure you're aware of, the results of that – that was quite a controversial process, to summarize that – the commission was unable to come up with a majority viewpoint, and then it got referred to the Legislature. The opposition parties refused to participate, and then a committee of government MLAs made recommendations, and they were implemented. The result of that was put to the court for its approval. The court didn't condemn what was done, but they said – and I'll just summarize the conclusion. I think it will very briefly explain to you why we're here.

In the result, we again have decided to withhold any Charter condemnation. We do, however, wish to say more precisely what we meant by "gradual and steady" change. We think that a new and proper review is essential before the constitutional mandate of the present government expires, and, we hope, before the next general election. We reject any suggestion that the present divisions may rest until after the 2001 census.

So I think that gives you a little background as to why we're here.

1:45

MRS. WILTON: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, John. Do you have any questions, Joe? Robert?

MR. GRBAVAC: I don't think that you're going to get a very strong argument in opposition to the comments you made, but as in many circumstances in life, it's a matter of degree and it's a matter of compromise. When you look at the extreme ends of the spectrum in terms of representation where you have people in special areas, effectively their vote counts for two votes in an urban riding. I can think of a couple of special areas that are in the neighbourhood of 16,000 in terms of population and others in urban centres where they approach 40,000. Do you feel that that's reasonable? Maybe that's an unfair question, and maybe you don't want to answer it. Do you feel that that's a reasonable compromise?

MRS. WILTON: That's a tough question. The reason I'm smiling, I guess, is that on occasion boards on which I sit have had their differences with special areas. I suppose that there is no one really easy answer. It is, I think, a case of factoring in area and population, and I do believe . . . Now, the argument that I used in this particular riding where I talked about a lack of homogeneity of course doesn't apply largely in special areas where you have pretty well the entire electorate coming from an agricultural-base background and with agricultural and agribusiness viewpoints.

When I look at it that way, I certainly hear what you are saying. I hear you saying that one vote is going to count for much more in the city. But I still think you have to offset that by the fact that there are 20 votes in the city of Calgary, and those 20 votes – I don't know the area of the city of Calgary; perhaps I should – are concentrated in a small area, certainly concentrated over people but people with the same interests. I do believe that the court decisions are based on the fact that one of the problems of Canada, which is such a wonderful country, is that it's made up of big, sparsely populated stretches of land. I cannot believe, for example, that the area around Fort McMurray has the same concerns as the area around Hanna – some perhaps, but others, no.

I think that the courts have been saying, and I have to give weight to those decisions, that this has to be factored in. There has to be some flexibility to allow people to have proper representation. Otherwise you would really end up with a very skewed system whereby the population of Alberta is represented in the Legislature. So I hope I've managed to answer your question without answering it too badly.

MR. GRBAVAC: I'd hoped you'd have put it in more quantitative terms and given me a percentage variance, but I appreciate that's not easy to do.

Let me ask you a bit of a supplementary question, again hypothetical. We don't particularly relish this job, and I certainly, for one, don't want to be back here in two years. The reason we're here is because our urban friends – and I speak as a rural member of this panel – took the last process to court. They felt that it wasn't fair. They took it to court, and the court said: do a thorough and proper review. I think one of the comments of one of the judges was that if Alberta expects to call itself a democracy, then this must be reviewed. I was just wondering: if the trade-off were that we not come back here till the year 2002 or maybe beyond and we had to give up one or two rural seats in Alberta to diminish that chance of it being taken to court, would that be too great a price to pay?

MRS. WILTON: Well, it's tempting to say not in my backyard.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, people say that.

MR. GRBAVAC: Other people have answered that with one word.

MRS. WILTON: Let me say that I do understand. I know that this is a job for you. I understand the background, and I appreciate very much your clear commentary on that. I don't believe there is an objection to the review itself. As far as the city is concerned – and that's all that I can clearly speak for – we would be very opposed to a change in the boundaries in any major way without it clearly showing that the whole province would benefit. Now, for example, I looked at the Edmonton ridings, and I could see where a couple of those – I've no idea how they line up, but possibly there needs to be

some change in the way those boundaries are drawn. I don't know that. I have to admit that I did not take the time perhaps to do all the homework I should have done, so I'm not sure whether you can recommend additional members, but perhaps Calgary and/or Edmonton need one or two others.

All I can say is that, first of all, I believe the rural representation must be protected and should not be diluted. Secondly, I would specifically – very specifically – ask that when you look at the Drumheller riding, you remember our very particular problems and not do anything to further disadvantage us when it comes to representation.

MR. WORTH: Could we just talk about Drumheller specifically for a moment? In your presentation on page 2 you point out that Strathmore and Drumheller have differing concerns. Then on page 3 you refer to the fact that Drumheller, although it's a city, really primarily serves a rural population. This leads me to this kind of question, about which I would welcome a speculative or any other kind of answer. Strathmore and the area particularly to the east of it between Strathmore and Calgary is becoming more of a suburban area, and because of that, it would seem to me that their interests will probably grow further and further apart from those of Drumheller. I'm wondering if it would make sense, therefore, to consider perhaps moving the western boundary of Drumheller further east and moving the eastern boundary further east to take in some of the special areas. How would you react to something like that?

MRS. WILTON: I think that's an interesting point.

Just for clarification, I wasn't necessarily saying that Drumheller and Strathmore are very different. We are somewhat similar size populations surrounded in many ways by a large rural area, but the point that you have made, certainly, that Strathmore is becoming – I don't think I perhaps should characterize it as a bedroom community for Calgary, but a lot of people who live in Strathmore certainly work in Calgary. Strathmore, because of its location, is growing well. It's showing a very enviable increase. There are industrial organizations moving out there. Believe me, if I had some way of tippytoeing down there in the dark and harnessing somebody and bringing them back here, I'd do that in a minute, but I haven't figured that one out yet.

1:55

When I was talking about Drumheller being a city, if we were to be incorporated now, we would not be a city; we would be a town. We were a city because we were relatively larger back in 1930 when Alberta did not have the size of population or the definitions of classification that it has now. We were made a city at that time, and as I say, we really are proud of that. Realistically, I suppose, in many ways we are a town in a large rural area.

Now, to speak directly to your suggestion, I suppose that if the result was that the Drumheller constituency, or however it might be renamed, was to result in taking in Hanna – although Mr. Kush would not agree with me. Actually, I offered to have him made an honorary citizen of Drumheller; he wasn't too impressed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hanna might be happy to get rid of him.

MRS. WILTON: He said that any community that would make him an honorary citizen he wouldn't want to belong to.

I can understand that there may well be more relative connection between Hanna and Drumheller anchoring a constituency, perhaps, than Drumheller and Strathmore. Now, that's a personal response to your suggestion. I'm not prepared to say that that would be the official point of view of the city until there had been an opportunity to think about it, but that's my response. Now, if we ended up taking in a whole lot of special areas, all of these really nice people – do not get me wrong; these are wonderful people. I like their people, and I like their cows, and I like their crops. I like all that they do, but what we do not need is to have our representation further diluted by more rural votes. So please keep that one in mind.

MR. WORTH: Well, thank you for your candid reply.

MR. McCARTHY: I just have one point of clarification. When Mr. Grbavac indicated that it was the urban people that resulted in putting the reference to the Court of Appeal, that's incorrect. It was the government of Alberta that invited the Court of Appeal to determine whether or not the Charter of Rights was being followed. So the government of Alberta invited the court to make comment on it. Prior to that – and I'm speculating here – probably the reason why they did it is because the town of Lac La Biche had commenced an action to have it condemned as being in violation of the Charter of Rights. So they kind of got merged into the same case. The town of Lac La Biche intervened; they appeared. The Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties appeared, and they were in support of it being upheld. The New Democratic Party of Alberta, the Alberta Liberal Party, and the Alberta Civil Liberties Association intervened in that as well. So I just wanted to make sure that that was clear.

MR. LEHANE: Now, can you tell me approximately what the distance is from the north end to the south end of the Drumheller constituency?

MRS. WILTON: Certainly from Drumheller to the northern boundary would be about 35 – oh, dear. If I say miles, am I in big trouble?

MR. LEHANE: No, that's fine.

MRS. WILTON: I'm not sure what it is in kilometres without doing some counting on my fingers, to be honest.

To go straight south from Drumheller to the southern boundary is probably very similar, maybe 40 miles.

MR. LEHANE: Down towards Gleichen.

MRS. WILTON: Yes.

MR. LEHANE: Then there would be a larger distance from the southwest corner to the northeast.

MRS. WILTON: That's right. Yes.

MR. LEHANE: Where does the MLA maintain a constituency office?

MRS. WILTON: Certainly one in Drumheller, and I'm not sure if there is perhaps one in another location as well. Possibly Strathmore.

MR. FULLERTON: I believe there's one in Strathmore also.

MRS. WILTON: Strathmore.

MR. LEHANE: What's the approximate time and distance to travel from Drumheller to Edmonton?

MRS. WILTON: Three hours if you drive . . .

MR. FULLERTON: Like Stan.

MRS. WILTON: Yeah. I was going to say three hours if you drive like me and two hours if you drive like Stan. In reasonable weather conditions, three hours, three and a half hours.

THE CHAIRMAN: I have a question that's not relevant but I want to ask it, because it doesn't look like we're in a big rush today. One of the reasons I took this job as chairman: I said I might learn something about Alberta. You have stated that we're probably taking the leadership in energy conservation, and I'm aware of the fact from my young days that there were countless coal mines here and that they probably have enough coal mines and coal around Drumheller that will last them till the year 3000 or 5000.

MRS. WILTON: That's correct.

THE CHAIRMAN: I wasn't aware that Lethbridge had taken the leadership in energy conservation, and I was just wondering. I don't think they have to, but what have they done that you can make that claim?

MRS. WILTON: Well, I am really pleased to have the opportunity to tell you a little bit about our retrofit program. Drumheller entered into a partnership with Alberta Power and with Bentley-Park, who are consulting engineers out of Edmonton. We did a two-part program at the present time. Part one was to do an energy audit of all municipal facilities and to refit them with energy-saving and new technology items. So the lights were changed to use less electricity and give us better lighting. At the swimming pool the necessity to chlorinate the water using chemicals has been taken away, and they have put in an electronic chlorinating system which uses electricity to provide the effects of chlorination. They have done a similar retrofit at the arena, and we are already seeing really good savings just from those. We had previously changed all of our street lighting to a more efficient and less costly mode.

The exciting thing is that we're just in the process of doing a retrofit of all residential homes so that the showerheads, the bathroom taps, and the kitchen taps are fitted with aerators providing excellent pressure but using less water. We expect that by having less waste water to process, we are putting off for several years the necessity to build a new sewage treatment plant. We are very excited about this. There is no cost to the individual homeowners. The payback will be in five to seven years, and after that we expect to see really excellent savings which will continue on an ongoing basis to the city and allow us to be increasing our reserves. So when the time does come and we have all this additional population and all of these people who are going to come out from Calgary to retire

here, we expect to be able to handle it in an efficient and appropriate manner.

2:05

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. The only other comment I want to make as a result of your presentation is: I noticed you said that Drumheller is classed as a city. I didn't realize that it became a city by virtue of legislation years ago. I sort of make a point of the fact that you want no part of Calgary or Edmonton.

MRS. WILTON: Oh, I wouldn't say that. I hope I'm too tactful to say that.

May I ask the panel a question?

THE CHAIRMAN: Certainly.

MRS. WILTON: We are aware that the provincial government is encouraging communities, municipalities to restructure their political municipal setup so that savings will be recognized from joint administration. To what extent are those efforts going to be taken into account in your review of the boundaries?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I'm not aware of any. If I may interpret your question this way, we've had quite a few written representations and quite a few presentations to date in respect to reducing the number of constituencies in the province. If you're talking about that, that is not our mandate. The mandate is clearly 83 constituencies that we have to divide the province into. If people want less constituencies in the province, they should deal with their politicians and not with this panel.

MRS. WILTON: Actually, I meant more the type of thing that has happened on a municipal level. For example – and this is not new – in the Crowsnest Pass area they've become a special municipality where various small municipal areas have come together and formed one administrative centre. Something similar has happened in the Fort McMurray area where Fort McMurray has actually abdicated its position as a city and is, I understand, a hamlet in the MD of whatever it is. Drumheller certainly is looking at something similar.

MR. McCARTHY: Well, I guess we've had hearings now in three smaller areas. We sat in Edmonton, and then subsequently we sat in St. Paul, Wainwright, and here. In St. Paul and Wainwright and even in Edmonton, because some rural representations were made there, the message is – and I don't know whether this is the point you're trying to make – that they've been subject to a large degree of change, particularly with respect to amalgamation of school boards, hospital boards, municipal districts in some instances, and municipalities. There's been some difficulty in adjusting to this kind of change, and any further change at this time is undesirable. They would like to take some time to catch their breath and have at least their constituencies in a stable position. So that's been put forward on a number of occasions. I don't know whether I'm summarizing what your concern is or not, but certainly that's been put forward to us.

MRS. WILTON: That would certainly be part of my concern. Quite possibly in our area any restructuring would not in fact – even with the comments that have been made, I doubt that it would change and take part of it outside the current constituency. I just felt that there



may be some areas in Alberta where restructuring was being considered that might in fact involve areas that are partly inside and partly outside of current boundaries or where in fact a rejigging of the boundaries might end up happening to an MD.

MR. GRBAVAC: Ann, if I could make a comment. I'm currently in my sixth term as a municipal councillor, so I'm pretty much aware of what you speak. I think part of the mandate of this commission is not only to set the boundaries for the immediate future but for the longer term future as well, and I think obviously that has to be a consideration. I think it's an eventuality. If you want my bias view, the Municipal Government Act is mandating that we do that, but the Provincial Treasurer is forcing us to do it. So I think that's something we have to take into consideration.

Frankly, I think there's a broader picture than that too. I don't think the distinction between urban and rural is all that clear. I know the municipality of which I am a part and the area that I represent. The farmers have all moved into Lethbridge, the acreage owners have moved out onto the farms, and one Hutterite colony operates the whole division almost. So, you know, the whole makeup of rural Alberta, particularly within a 50-mile radius of some of the larger urban centres – it's hard to know what is rural and what is urban. I submit to you that if you take a negative position politically in the city of Lethbridge, you can be assured that every farmer in the city, of whom there are a great many – you may find yourself in an undesirable position. You don't want to go against the rural community in that urban setting, I can assure you.

I think there needs to be some creative solutions brought to the front here. We can certainly appreciate the problems you have in the more remote rural areas of the province, but I'm not so sure that that corridor of Highway 2 between Calgary and Edmonton is as rural as some people would have us believe it is. I just wanted to make that comment.

MRS. WILTON: We'd love to have the opportunity to check it out.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe wants to ask you a question.

MR. LEHANE: Ann, the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, which is the legislation that governs what we can and must do, in section 13 says, "The Commission is to divide Alberta into 83 proposed electoral divisions." So we're constrained by that mandate in terms of the number of electoral divisions, but we've received numerous written submissions from all over the province suggesting that in a time of government cutbacks one thing they haven't cut back is the number of MLAs in the province and that there should be cutbacks in that area. I think if we went through the many submissions that made that point, we'd have submissions which suggested we should have anywhere from 8.3 MLAs up to 76 in terms of cutbacks.

Now, last night when we were in Wainwright, one of the presenters there took the opposite point of view. His position was that for rural Albertans to have effective representation, any cutbacks in the number of MLAs which would result in enlarging the geographical areas would result in them not having effective representation in the government. His position was that in fact when you take into consideration the important element of population, which is probably the most important but can be changed based on other considerations, if Edmonton and Calgary must have greater representation, he'd rather see an increase in the number of MLAs rather than those

MLAs coming out of rural Alberta. Can I get you to comment on that perspective?

MRS. WILTON: Well, certainly I can appreciate the presentations that have been made to you suggesting that it might be a prudent way to go to cut the number of constituencies. It makes sense. That's what the restructuring that I was talking about is all about: can we do more with less? But I can tell you that if you're talking about taking out rural representatives and leaving urban representatives, Calgary and Edmonton and I may not be on quite such good terms, but if you're talking about spreading this reduction over the province in an equitable fashion, I think there may be a lot of merit to the idea.

THE CHAIRMAN: You talked about looking at the restructuring. Last night we had one of the presenters who said: don't get married to the regional health association boundaries because that marriage is not going to last. So if you were suggesting we look at that kind of reorganization in boundaries, we've had that statement.

You suggested also what is happening in what I think is now called Wood Buffalo-Fort McMurray, whereby they made the whole area into a municipality. That's the city and that big area. We've already received submissions in respect to making that a constituency, and we're presently checking out the figures, but that has a problem because it goes over the 25 percent allowance. As simple as it would be to say, "Okay, the government has made that a municipal district, so we'll make that a constituency, and that solves that problem," we can't do that by the looks of it, but we're not sure.

MRS. WILTON: I have faith in your creative powers.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MRS. WILTON: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, the next presenter is Bryce Jenson, being joined by Barry Fullerton. I'm told that Mr. Jenson is the president of Drumheller and District Chamber of Commerce. I don't know what Mr. Fullerton does.

2:15

MR. FULLERTON: General manager of the same.

MR. JENSON: Mr. Chief Justice, distinguished members of the panel, my name is Bryce Jenson, and I am the president of the chamber of commerce in Drumheller. I represent a membership of approximately 300 individual and business interests in our area. We are a chamber with wide-reaching tentacles, an extremely respected organization in our area, probably as respected as any organization or any chamber in the province. We have addressed many similar situations as this.

Our position very, very quickly, very easily, and very briefly is: do not change the balance of the constituencies from the situation it is right now. Further to that, our position would be one of: if we were to vote whether this exercise should be happening or not, we would suggest not now. During a period of restraint this is an extremely costly exercise to establish something. I realize that you have placed before us some legal situations and some government decisions that require that this exercise go on, and I appreciate that.

I also appreciate that you probably did not run but were elected to run and do this, and I appreciate that also.

There isn't anything new in the paper in front of you than you've not heard in many, many different rural communities. We do not feel that we would want the balance of constituencies, if they were to change, to change from where it is right now, which is a position of 44 to 39 that have been clarified as rural as compared to urban. Now, we've also heard a couple of things that say those things are not as black and white as urban and rural, and I'll agree with that. In Drumheller, in this constituency, those gray areas probably don't exist so much except as perhaps they're discussed within the area of Strathmore, which is fast changing from some different things in the city.

The average urban ridings are only a 12 percent difference from the rural ridings at this point. That is not a great deal. That is not a vast difference when we consider that the Supreme Court has allowed up to a 25 percent variance. If in fact there was not going to be a review in a period of not more than five years from this, perhaps this would be a better understood exercise. That is going to happen, and it's going to happen in five years, which is only going to take us probably completely through one election, possibly to that next election. I don't know what that timing would be.

The rural MLAs, when we go to point 3, have a distinct and single interest in their constituency. They do not bulk together to the extent that the MLAs in the cities are able to in a common interest. When we were discussing the point where there was one constituency, where because of the differences in number the vote was 2 to 1, I would suggest that that difference when the MLAs in a city are banded together in a single interest reverses that to possibly 10 to 1, if in fact they have a common interest. So we reverse that depending on what an issue might be in the city as compared to being in a rural riding.

The review that's coming up in 2001 is the final item, and here again we speak of something that's happening. This will change it possibly. Perhaps there will be other things changed. Perhaps the number will change from the 83 that there are right now. If in fact we live within the structure that there is right now and they were to change from rural to urban and the lines were redrawn and if two were to go into urban areas, the difference then becomes four: the two that are lost, the two that are gained. That balance doesn't change by the two; it changes by four. Of course, we're now talking a greater disparity in balance. There are many other points that you've heard, and you've heard them in many different locations I'm sure, but the position of our chamber of commerce is that we would like to see it the way it is until it has to be changed in that review in 2001.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Fullerton.

MR. FULLERTON: Nothing to add.

MR. GRBAVAC: I have one comment. Bryce, I don't quite follow your numerical deviance from the electoral quotient. My figures are that the city of Edmonton is approximately 11, 11 and a half percent above the average ridings; that is, the average for the province. The city of Calgary is about 15. So between the two cities you're about 13 percent above the average. The remainder of all the ridings in the rest of the province are about 8 percent below. By my way of doing arithmetic, that makes a difference of about 20-some percent as

opposed to if you're comparing Edmonton and Calgary versus the rest.

MR. FULLERTON: I think what was looked at, if I might interject, was the average riding as opposed to the difference between the top and the bottom.

MR. GRBAVAC: Well, I'm just comparing the difference between the rural and the so-called . . .

MR. FULLERTON: I think it was meant that it was from the average riding as opposed to from a rural riding.

MR. GRBAVAC: Yes, okay. Now I understand, then, what you're saying.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I at a glance thought the mathematics was wrong, but maybe it is right. I'll have to have that checked out.

MR. FULLERTON: I can send you the information if you wish.

THE CHAIRMAN: Are you using the information that we used in the back of our drop leaflet?

MR. FULLERTON: I'm not sure. I don't recall seeing that.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's okay. We have staff that will check that out for us.

MR. McCARTHY: I've got a question.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry; I want to ask one more. When you say: urban ridings, 39 – now, this is also another gray area. There are a lot of gray areas. Which of the 39 are urban ridings?

MR. FULLERTON: Forty-four.

THE CHAIRMAN: No, no. That's rural ridings. Oh, 44.

MR. FULLERTON: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: How do you get your 44? Edmonton and Calgary have 38. Who else are you counting?

MR. FULLERTON: I believe what they're looking at are Red Deer and Lethbridge.

THE CHAIRMAN: I see. Okay.

MR. McCARTHY: Perhaps that gives you the 42, and I was going to say probably Sherwood Park and St. Albert, which really are part of metropolitan Edmonton.

MR. FULLERTON: Which are Edmonton also, which we would look at as Edmonton.

MR. McCARTHY: That would bring you to your 44. The thing is that it could be argued there are even more urban ridings if you look at Fort McMurray.

2:25

MR. FULLERTON: Medicine Hat.

MR. McCARTHY: Perhaps Medicine Hat, although it's divided in two. I'm not sure what the split is there as far as the city versus the rural. Certainly Fort McMurray could be argued to be totally urban, so it could be more.

The only other comment I have to make – I'm going to see if I can get you to agree with me here – is that when you talk about a change of two seats, it really is a net of four, and I accept that logic.

MR. FULLERTON: That's right.

MR. McCARTHY: When you say a variation of 12 percent, it's equally fair to say that the net is 24 percent – is that not correct? – if you have one at minus 12 and one at plus 12.

MR. JENSON: Yes, it is. It is. If you apply one, then of necessity you would have to apply that to it, and it is.

MR. LEHANE: It might equally be as fair to say, gentlemen, that when the Supreme Court of Canada talks about a plus or minus 25, it's 50 percent of variance.

MR. McCARTHY: It's a net of 50.

MR. FULLERTON: And 50, I believe, was at their high end also in extreme cases.

MR. LEHANE: Special considerations.

MR. GRBAVAC: No, actually the special considerations allowed for even a greater deviance than that. We have instances of that. I believe Chinook is around 48 percent below the electoral quotient.

MR. JENSON: But the 25 percent is from that average.

MR. GRBAVAC: Plus or minus, with the allowance for four special areas in the province that can go considerably higher.

MR. McCARTHY: So in that circumstance he said that it's a net of 50, according to what the Supreme Court has said.

MR. WORTH: I'd like to bring it a little closer to home and invite you to respond to the question that I asked the alderman from Drumheller: your reaction to a hypothetical proposal at this stage of trying to relate more of the Drumheller constituency to parts of what are now in Chinook and removing perhaps that part of the constituency that's close to Calgary from Strathmore west. What's your reaction to that kind of a proposition?

MR. JENSON: I'd have to see where the lines are drawn specifically as to the communities that they're drawn to and around, because without that it would be very difficult to give an answer. If in fact it did not necessarily change the balance nor the structure from small community to large community – and let's use that term rather than rural and urban – it possibly would be okay. It would be an idea.

MR. WORTH: Yeah. If you took out Strathmore and everything on the other side of it.

MR. JENSON: Yes.

MR. WORTH: And maybe incorporated Hanna and Youngstown.

MR. FULLERTON: Really if you took Hanna and Youngstown, then you've almost got to go all the way to the border. Let's be honest; what's left in the population out there is not going to be large enough to be incorporated with somebody else. It's going to be to the north or to the south. I think the one thing that we tend to forget is the traveling distance that is already being incurred. If in fact you take away an area such as Strathmore, which has got a concentration of population, and you add a similar population to the other side, you're going to have to take in a tremendously greater area to accomplish the same numbers.

MR. WORTH: You'd almost have to go to Kindersley.

MR. FULLERTON: Well, I have a feeling that they might not like that, but you never know. I guess what I'm trying to say is that you're going to apply tremendous pressure to our MLA then to, again, service those areas. I think that's the danger that you have by doing what has been suggested.

MR. JENSON: If in fact he's three hours from one end to the other the long way now, that would change that by another possibly two hours. He could be as far away as five hours from one end to the other. Those of course are very rough numbers. Part of that would be even a long ways away from the core or the hub of his constituency for a very few people. That in itself would tend to weaken their representation.

THE CHAIRMAN: So you're telling us that your MLA is working hard enough now without making him work harder.

MR. JENSON: I don't know; maybe he does. Yeah, I think he works hard, but more specifically the logistics of it would be very difficult if he were to have to travel an extra two and a half hours for something that only had in it the possibility of a hundred people. It would tend to be a long time between visits simply because of the distances for the small number of people.

MR. FULLERTON: Something that was mentioned earlier, of course, was that communications have improved and so on. We have faxes and modems and all of those kinds of good things. However, I believe when you're talking to a government person, it is best done face to face. You can't beat it for getting your point across either way.

MR. McCARTHY: In court terminology that would be the most effective way of communicating with you.

MR. FULLERTON: Yeah. I realize it's not always possible, but it is the best.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I think there are no more questions. I want to thank you two gentlemen for coming. I want to make one point, Mr. Jenson: I was merely being facetious about Mr. Schumacher's work habits.

MR. JENSON: So was I.

MR. GRBAVAC: Duly noted. Maybe he can make them part of his Christmas card.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, we have on our list Mr. Art Grenville, who is the reeve of the MD of Starland, but I understand he was unable to make it, so we're not going to hear from him. I think everybody here has spoken. So I guess there's nobody else that wants to speak, unless some of the staff want to make a presentation.

I want to thank you for coming. The hearing at Drumheller for today is now adjourned. Thank you.

[The hearing adjourned at 2:32 p.m.]