

**Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings  
Lethbridge**

7:02 p.m.

[Chairman: Chief Judge Edward R. Wachowich]

THE CHAIRMAN: Could I have your attention, please. I wish to say good evening. 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 the commission. On my immediate left is Robert Grbavac of Raymond. On my immediate right is Joseph Lehane of Innisfail, Alberta. On my far right is John McCarthy of Calgary. On my far 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 Lethbridge 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 the 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.

With respect to the matter of 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 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: the requirement for effective representation as guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; sparsity and density of population; common community interests and community organizations, including those of Indian reserves and Métis settlements; whenever possible existing community boundaries within the cities of Edmonton and Calgary; the existing municipal boundaries; the number of municipalities and other local authorities; geographical features, including existing road systems; 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.

For our purposes the boundaries Act instructs us that the municipality of Crowsnest Pass is not a town.

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 the Supreme Courts have 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.

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 input from individuals and organizations in Alberta. 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.

Now, we're having this meeting in Lethbridge tonight. Up until now – our meetings started in Edmonton last Monday, and we've been at various other towns this week – we've been able to hear all the presenters and talk quite frankly with the presenters after our meeting. I'm told tonight that we may have as many as 17 to 20 presenters, so we may have to, if necessary, limit the time. We hope that we won't. We're scheduled to stay here from 7 till 10, and we will stay longer if necessary.

The first presenter that I would like to call is Dr. Alan Dudley from the town of Magrath.

7:12

DR. DUDLEY: Does it matter which mike?

THE CHAIRMAN: No. You sit down at any one that you like.

DR. DUDLEY: Okay. I'll try to keep this within the five-minute guideline. I appreciate the tremendous challenge that you as a committee have in justifying the boundaries as set up by the select special committee of 1992 and appreciate having the opportunity to add my voice and concerns before this commission.

My grandfather brought his family to Alberta in 1899 because there was good opportunity here and fair government. He served as the first secretary-treasurer of the town of Magrath. My father served his community for years, part-time as mayor during the Depression. I have had the opportunity to serve on various boards and committees, including three terms as mayor, and from this background I'd like to share with you some of my observations of 30 years in the community.

I live in the Cardston-Chief Mountain constituency and have had my office in Lethbridge for 35 years. This has given me the opportunity to observe some important differences between the urban and rural ridings in representation. Since Lethbridge has been split into two ridings, I have had two occasions to discuss political issues with my patient base. It was very interesting to me that very

few people from Lethbridge knew or know which riding they actually live in or who their MLA is, and many didn't even care.

Let me contrast this to my experience in living in Magrath and in the Cardston constituency. Most of the people in the riding, I have found, know which riding they live in and claim to know the MLA personally. I would expect that this phenomenon comes about because of the culture of the rural and small-town setting. I'm sure many presenters tonight will go over these statistics, but our MLA serves six irrigation district councils, three town councils with their various committees, two village councils with their various committees, the county council of Warner, the council of the MD of Cardston with their various boards and committees, the regional hospital board, the Blood Indian reservation, and the various other community organizations, groups, and clubs.

Most of those serving claim to know their MLA personally and are very comfortable in contacting him personally with their needs and concerns, whether it be to attend the next meeting of the committee to raise funds for the new library or to referee the squabble between the parents and the school board. Our citizens feel that this is their right, and they expect their MLA to help in whatever their interest is.

I'm sure the MLAs from Lethbridge are very busy, but they have two of them to serve, in my opinion, no more councils and committees. Taking this example to Calgary, where there are 22 MLAs to serve one city council and the various other boards and committees, this example goes forward.

I do know this, that the residents of Cardston-Chief Mountain keep their MLA very, very busy from his long drive from Edmonton on Friday evening until he drives back on Sunday afternoon. In my opinion, the special circumstances of Cardston-Chief Mountain and other rural ridings like it deserve the special status they have and for very good reason. They do have very special needs, and I would submit that this is good grassroots government. The present borders are legal. They work very well. I would urge the committee to leave the whole province alone and let them work.

I thank you for the opportunity to submit that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Dr. Dudley. I just wanted to point out that there's one little error in your submission. Calgary has 20 MLAs, not 22, unless you want us to give them two more.

DR. DUDLEY: No. I'll change that.

THE CHAIRMAN: I would just like you to wait in case there are any questions from the members of the panel here.

John, you don't have any questions?

MR. McCARTHY: No.

MR. LEHANE: Sir, Cardston-Chief Mountain is surrounded by three constituencies: Pincher Creek-Macleod, Little Bow, and Taber-Warner. Each of those constituencies has approximately 6,000 more constituents than the Cardston-Chief Mountain constituency, approximately one-third greater in terms of population. Those constituencies fall just barely within the requirements for an ordinary constituency, and Cardston-Chief Mountain is in the special areas because it has a minus 38.5 percent variance from the provincial quotient. Can you provide us with any particular reasons why Cardston-Chief Mountain is different from the constituencies surrounding it in terms of why it should be a special area?

DR. DUDLEY: Well, other than that we fall into those four out of the five criteria that were given. I haven't lived in those other constituencies, but I have spent time in ours, and I've worked with all of the MLAs during that time. I know how busy they are representing us, and they're expected to be busy. They're expected to be at all the parades, and they're expected to be at all the openings in the various little communities. They're busy traveling all the time. Whether or not that could be divided up, I don't know, but I don't think that they should be watered down to where they can't do that, because government will suffer, government to the people.

Some of them are closer; I can say that. If he flies to Lethbridge, he's got to have a car in Lethbridge to drive on out. It's easier probably and just as quick to drive. So that's a major consideration. I know what time he gets down here. It takes him five hours. I know he has to leave early Friday afternoon. So my concern is for the citizens in the area, not necessarily the MLA. I'd like to see government stay the way it is.

THE CHAIRMAN: Robert.

MR. GRBAVAC: Yes. Alan, given that you're from Magrath – one of the mandates of this committee is that we are to review the names of the constituencies, and we've had numerous representations made to us that the names ought not to be political in nature, they ought to be neutral, and they ought not to refer to one particular urban municipality within the riding at the expense of the others. So from your perspective from the town of Magrath, I'd be interested in getting your response to that.

Further to that, we've been, I don't know if the word is chastised or criticized because we are allowing a constituency in this province to name itself over a geographical feature in another country, that being Chief Mountain. I just wonder if you want to comment on that.

DR. DUDLEY: Well, the last part doesn't bother me. I did think of this the other day, driving to Cardston, of that view of Chief Mountain, which is seen from the whole constituency. I thought of that at the time. I would rather have it just be Chief Mountain constituency. As far as being in another country, I don't think that would be a concern in my mind.

THE CHAIRMAN: So you would have no problem calling the constituency Chief Mountain?

DR. DUDLEY: No. In fact, I thought that very thing.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.  
Wally.

MR. WORTH: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, we want to thank you for coming, Dr. Dudley, and for your fine presentation.

DR. DUDLEY: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next presenter is Susan M. Smith.

MISS SMITH: Mr. Chairman and members of the commission, my remarks are going to be more of an overview rather than specific to

Cardston, where I am presently a resident. I would like to begin by saying that I understand the push for stricter representation by population at the provincial level. Above that, I also understand the frustration Albertans have felt living under such a system at the federal level. Their regional interests have not been given adequate voice, with the result that vast regions of Canada have felt powerless and without effective representation. My plea is that we do not gravitate provincially toward that which we have suffered federally, especially when Alberta has for all its history demonstrated great commitment to protecting the voices of regional and rural interests.

7:22

We in Alberta do not have a bicameral system, which when properly structured can accommodate both population and regional interests in different Houses. This means that with our one-House system we must be open to paying the costs of balance and to ensuring effective representation for our less populated regions. One of those costs will be in population numbers. For many that is an unwelcome concept, but the flip side of that is just as untenable for many rural residents, when persons residing in perhaps 2 or 3 percent of the provincial area are given a heavy deciding hand in policies and practices that govern 100 percent of the provincial area. Thus if urban MLAs gain control over rural matters in a focus on population quotients, most will have neither the information nor the requisite commitment to make legislative judgments in the best interests of their rural neighbours.

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

Effective representation is also very much a matter of the accessibility of voters to their MLA and vice versa. In Edmonton that accessibility is greatest. Public transportation systems and geographically small divisions mean that all persons are within minutes of their MLA's office or an appointed meeting place. These MLAs reside continually within their ridings, with a face-to-face accessibility that other Albertans simply do not have. Typically, urban MLAs, including Calgary ones, have untold more hours to meet, consult, listen, and troubleshoot while many of their rural colleagues are in travel both to and from their electoral divisions and within them. Simply put, the farther from the seat of government and the larger the geographic area the more an MLA has to work to match the representation of those closer to that seat. An MLA's time is further impacted by the number of boards, councils, MDs, and other local authorities within the electoral divisions. In other words, a rural MLA's umbrella must overarch an area vastly larger and with more competing interest than that of urban MLAs.

We must not forget that all MLAs, rural and urban, serve their regions as much as their populations. Individuals come and go but roads, bridges, hospitals, tourist facilities, senior facilities, and numerous other benefits remain. If we ignore the regional nature of much representation by focusing too narrowly on population quotients, rural Alberta will lose its effective voice and suffer immeasurable losses.

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

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Susan.

John, do you have any questions?

MR. McCARTHY: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe?

MR. LEHANE: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Wally?

MR. WORTH: No. I think the message is clear. Thank you.

MISS SMITH: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next presenter is Dr. Brigham Y. Card. Go ahead.

DR. CARD: Mr. Chairman Judge Wachowich, members of the commission, I greatly appreciate the opportunity of being here tonight. My brief is also, like Susan Smith's, of a general nature. I give it to you in a way that I hope will serve as a resource for you as you perform your duties as a commission. If you have it before you, you will know that I've taken my title directly from your flyer. I'm trying to bring things into focus, and I'm going to use a number of perspectives in doing it, but I won't have time to elaborate on them tonight, just barely indicate them and come to some of my more definite considerations.

Dynamic assessment. In a nutshell, I think this present commission is at a turning point in Alberta society, and you have a unique opportunity to bring forth a report that's going to be more than plucking gooseberries. Some of you may know what that refers to. There are burning bushes all around. So I'm taking the position that the main function of this commission is to bring life in a very basic sense into the constituencies, or electoral divisions, of Alberta. Each one has thousands of people. We need to have a conception of electoral districts; I wish we had a big map before you. You'd see 83 places in Alberta with the potential for life. Some of those potentials aren't being reached in a number of our constituencies – I could name some of them – but others can be. So it's with that thought that I'm trying to get a fresh view from a sociological perspective on the work of the commission and offer some very positive help. I'm not going to go through the focal field. I've got that outlined pretty well in the appendices, and you can use those tools as you see fit.

Special consideration electoral divisions. I think the province is to be commended for setting aside these four electoral divisions. It's a marvelous idea, from my basic experience. I have done research in the Lesser Slave Lake and Athabasca areas with the mixed populations there, and I know the problems at hand. I know in depth the problems of the Cardston-Chief Mountain area and the Lethbridge area as well. I think the province is to be commended for

this, and I would not like to see this principle reduced in any report in the future.

Now, I will say something specifically about the Cardston-Chief Mountain area that is not generally too well known. I think Mr. McCarthy or Mr. Lehane asked: why is this different? I have outlined the differences on page 6, the final 6, of Cardston-Chief Mountain, and I am going to make a recommendation that Stirling, with its estimated population of 896 registered voters, and the appropriate territory lying outside of Stirling be returned to the Cardston-Chief Mountain electoral division. I think that is a very important thing for historical and cultural reasons.

Now, there's another bit of evidence that needs to be brought forth. I've outlined some of it in my brief. There is a factor that is historic and still operates, and that is that we have a functional local option area in this constituency. It's the only one in Alberta that remains, and interestingly, it now includes both the municipalities of the area plus the Indian reserves. That's something that needs to be taken into account. There's a certain achievement there in the control of alcohol, which is a very strong part of the culture of this constituency. I'm not going to say that I'm going to be fearful about what changes you make, because I think there's enough moral resiliency in that constituency to adapt to whatever they have to adapt to, but right now I think this is a very important asset for Alberta, as you will see in a later part of my brief where I talk about the importance of moral density in our constituencies if we have a real life in them and they contribute optimally to the life of Alberta.

The next point I make, my last and concluding one: can democracy in Alberta be strengthened through electoral division reform and boundary change? I have some suggestions that go a little bit beyond your mandate, but not if you consider this in the spirit of effective representation.

7:32

The main point I want to make first is: can we have a standing boundary commission instead of the kinds we've had? We've had six in the last seven years. I think this is a waste of effort and time. We could overcome that with a continuous standing boundary commission, and I would like to see it headed by a judge. I think we're deficient in our Alberta government in the way we use our judiciary, and I want to put that forward as something to be considered.

The next one: I think the role and function of the Chief Electoral Officer can be strengthened as a means of facilitating better electoral divisions. I want to pay tribute to the Chief Electoral Officer first. Right here I've got a box of materials that I received from the Chief Electoral Officer's office in Edmonton that I used in preparing this brief, and I would just like to commend those people who sent that to me. It was thoughtfully put together. It will probably be put in a repository in a college or university library. That was just excellent support, and I'm thrilled that we have this kind of support.

There's one document here that I think should be held up and shown publicly. It's called the Compendium of Canadian Redistribution Procedures, produced out of the Chief Electoral Officer's office in Alberta. It serves all Canada as a basic reference. Gentlemen, there is a rich background of resources to draw from as we complete the work of this commission, and that is one of the major ones.

Now, I've looked this over, and I think there is a deficiency. It was evident in the brief from Magrath, in Miss Smith's brief. I think there's a deficiency in our electoral divisions at the organizational

level which impedes effective representation, and that is that we don't have enough role power in our MLAs. So I'm going to propose a quasi-judicial official which I would name an electoral division adviser, who would have a quasi-status comparable to a justice of the peace and who could be nominated and sworn to nonpartisanship for the term of his office. It could be a part-time office. He would take the place of what's been dropped from our electoral apparatus. We used to have continuing chief electoral officers for constituencies, but I think that's been dropped as an economy measure. I think this kind of a person could help ease the need for somebody to represent a whole division and be available for ceremonial and other functions which I spell out, but that's an idea which I'm putting forward as a basic innovation for consideration in your work.

That is essentially where I want to leave off. I would say that we are facing a challenge. It's not unusual. It's found all over in civilized societies. That is: how do we relate rural and urban, and how do we bring into play the full gamut of our political and governmental resources to enhance life in constituencies, where the people are?

I'm going to suggest, in finale, that we revise the Alberta income tax forms so that people can make a direct contribution to a constituency. Having a constituency officer there would make this possible, as I spell out in the brief. I think people should be able to give donations directly to a constituency as a whole, as much as to political parties, and get credit for it. It would strengthen democracy at the grassroots level if we could give a greater recognition to electoral divisions and the people in them as things in their own right, living things worthy of support and consideration over time. I think we can have a better democracy, and I hope we do it partially as a result of your deliberations.

THE CHAIRMAN: Dr. Card, I want to thank you for your well-prepared and innovative presentation, which I guess we will have to look at in respect to some of your suggestions. I'd like you to wait and see if there are any questions from the other members of the panel.

MR. McCARTHY: I just had one comment rather than a question. You suggested that a permanent Electoral Boundaries Commission should be put into place. Sitting on this commission for me is like going to the dentist every day for six months, so if you have a permanent one, I think you might have some trouble getting people to sit on it.

MR. LEHANE: Dr. Card, thank you for your very interesting presentation and your well-researched paper, and thank you for responding to my question to the first presenter this evening with respect to why Cardston-Chief Mountain should be a special consideration district when it seems to be of a smaller size and not much different in terms of the bordering constituencies. I understand your answer is that there's a community of interest in Cardston-Chief Mountain that you feel should be recognized in terms of the special consideration district.

DR. CARD: Correct.

MR. LEHANE: I acknowledge that, but I struggle with what I consider a significant problem in terms of the size or geography of the Cardston-Chief Mountain constituency. As you're aware, the

legislation allows for only four special consideration areas. Cardston-Chief Mountain's size in terms of geography is much smaller than any of the others. You have the statistics in your paper. Cardston-Chief Mountain is approximately 6,200 square kilometres. Chinook, which is the next smallest, is 23,639, almost four times the size of Cardston-Chief Mountain.

DR. CARD: Just a minute now. Which one are we looking at that's 23,000?

MR. LEHANE: That's the Chinook constituency.

MR. McCARTHY: Page 6 of your brief.

DR. CARD: Oh, page 6, that's right. I was wondering if you were referring to another constituency in, say, the Lethbridge area.

MR. LEHANE: No. The Chinook constituency is the next smallest special consideration district.

DR. CARD: Oh, yeah, that's right. That's up in the Hanna area.

MR. LEHANE: Yes, that's correct. It's about four times the size in terms of geography of Cardston-Chief Mountain.

One of the other special consideration districts is Athabasca-Wabasca. It's 124,000 square kilometres. That's over 20 times the size of Cardston-Chief Mountain. The other one is Lesser Slave Lake with an area of 87,900 square kilometres, 12 or 13 times the size of the Cardston-Chief Mountain. So I'm wondering if you can help me with that problem that I have in terms of geography, because in terms of special consideration districts I think there's a significant problem in terms of geographical size.

DR. CARD: There is a vast difference in size, but qualitatively the populations in each one are unique, and their histories and their cultural development are each unique. You know, Chinook is a special area, the dried out area that had to be taken over and turned into pastureland, and it's still a marginal agricultural area, although it does take in – if you go to my map, you'll see it there. It's appendix 4. You'll note that Coronation, Hanna, and Oyen are the three farm cities in that constituency, and if I had my map out, I think there's one other place there that's fairly good sized. There's a lot of vacant land around there in terms of population, so that is a very special area in terms of the underutilization of land in terms of population. It has always been since we made those reforms in Alberta I think it was in the 1940s.

Now, as far as southern Alberta is concerned, I think there's another aspect of the Cardston-Chief Mountain constituency, and that is a developmental one. The white population, the non-Indian population, and the Indian population are about equal. If you turn to your annual report and see what we have there, we have about 1,900 enumerated people on the reserve and have a very low rate of performance in terms of voting in Alberta elections. Now, there may be good reasons for that from the native point of view, but there is the potential there for maybe another 6,000 or 7,000 people to be brought into a more functional relation in Alberta society. There's a very important developmental aspect to this constituency that I find worth while paying attention to.

MR. LEHANE: Thank you, sir.

THE CHAIRMAN: Robert.

MR. GRBAVAC: Yes. Dr. Card, I'd like to refer you to page 7 of your brief, to your nonrecommended suggestion, if you will.

DR. CARD: Yes.

MR. GRBAVAC: As a possible change, you refer to including the Stirling area in with the Cardston constituency, and then in your nonrecommended suggestion you suggest that possibly three constituencies could be carved out of the current four surrounding Lethbridge. I assume you come to that conclusion as a result of the fact that including Stirling in Cardston would result in the Taber-Warner constituency then being beyond the 25 percent threshold. Is that a fair assumption?

DR. CARD: Well, does it work out that way? That's a pretty small population.

MR. GRBAVAC: Well, I just did the rough arithmetic, and it seems to me that Taber-Warner is approximately 24,000 people. So if you extract roughly 1,000 people from that, you're going to extract roughly 4 percent of the population, and they are currently at 21.8, roughly 22, percent deviance now. So if you extract those 1,000 people . . .

DR. CARD: It would put them down to about 17 or 18 percent; wouldn't it?

MR. GRBAVAC: Well, actually it would increase it to about 24 or 25.5 percent, according to my figures.

DR. CARD: I mean deficit. That's right.

MR. GRBAVAC: Well, that's right; you're subtracting. So then Taber-Warner's got a problem.

DR. CARD: Yes, it would. If you take Stirling out, it does put Taber-Warner a little bit higher on the deficiency. I agree with that; there's no problem there. What we're doing is asking for a return to something that was basically an organic community. Think of the school ties. I think it'll be spelled out later in another brief tonight, but take a look at all the ties that link Stirling with the other founding communities of that area. That's what I'm trying to get to.

MR. GRBAVAC: Well, I'm just suggesting that a domino effect takes place, and with all those ridings that you refer to, we're pushing the envelope with virtually all of them: Taber-Warner at minus 21.8, Little Bow at minus 21.5, Pincher Creek-Macleod at minus 20.3. So we don't have a lot of latitude is all I'm suggesting.

DR. CARD: No, I don't see much latitude for change in the Lethbridge area. I think it could pretty well stand on its own feet regardless of what happens in other parts of Alberta.

MR. GRBAVAC: All right. Thank you.

MR. WORTH: Dr. Card, I would like to add my thanks to those of my colleagues for your well-researched submission. I think it will certainly be a benefit to us in dealing with some of the questions we have to deal with.

One bit of information I want to share with you and with the other people present this evening is the fact that there are 16 constituencies in the province of Alberta, including the Cardston-Chief Mountain constituency, that meet the criteria for special consideration either in whole or in part. Your submission will help us in trying to decide which of those 16 constituencies ought to be treated in the special way as provided for in legislation, because obviously there are four times as many who qualify as can be endorsed.

The other comment I would like to make and indeed invite you to respond to and define for me in probably 25 words or less: could you expand a little on what you mean by "moral density"? You used that term a couple of times.

DR. CARD: That comes from Emile Durkheim, the *Division of Labor in Society*, and it's especially found in the preface to the second edition. He points out that in a society you have to have some kind of moral force to rein in the forces that are more strictly based on competition, particularly in the business world, and I transfer that over to the political party realm. That's part of it. There's that side of it.

The other is that – well, let's put it bluntly. Cardston, Raymond, Coaldale were three of Canada's five top communities for charitable donations last year. You know, that's a form of moral density. It's the surplus that people have got and are willing to spend on behalf of public enterprises.

MR. WORTH: So, as I understand it then, if you had a high moral density within constituencies, you'd have a better chance of building and maintaining a sense of community that would serve the well-being of the constituency?

DR. CARD: Yes, and it would increase the effectiveness of representation.

MR. WORTH: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Dr. Card, for coming.

DR. CARD: Thanks for the privilege.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next presenter is David White. We had him down as the mayor of Magrath, but I'm told it's the Lethbridge-West construction association.

MR. D. WHITE: Constituency association.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. D. WHITE: I thought I got a promotion there for a minute.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, we tried to get you into another business. Go ahead.

MR. D. WHITE: Mr. Chairman, commissioners, tough act to follow. The Lethbridge-West PC Association feels that electoral boundaries in our constituency should not change. It is serving the

citizens very well in its current configuration. Neither the board of directors nor the constituency office have received complaints about our current boundaries from the general public. In preparing for this presentation, I asked a number of constituency members what they thought about the boundaries issue. They universally did not recognize that there was a boundaries issue. They felt that the current boundaries are quite acceptable.

What they did express concern about was the expense of the ongoing review process. How many more times before the census in the year 2001 are we going to waste taxpayers' dollars on this issue? The average person is not interested in change or the resulting confusion, and they really don't like wasting tax dollars. If it isn't broke, why are we continually trying to waste so much time fixing it? This goes to the fact that this has gone through a number of reviews and was found to be legally correct. We suggest that there should only be one review after each census and the current boundaries should remain the same until the review in 2001.

THE CHAIRMAN: I want to say this, Mr. White. This question has been posed to us at every session we've had so far. We have now declared Mr. McCarthy a specialist in answering this question.

MR. D. WHITE: You've got to love the responsibility.

MR. McCARTHY: Yes. I guess I can say in general terms that the reason why we're here is because the Legislature of Alberta amended the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. We're a creature of that statute, and we're here because of that. That was amended and came into force on the 17th of May, 1995.

Now, by way of background – and you've alluded to some of it – I'll take you back to 1991, when the Supreme Court of Canada made a decision with respect to a boundaries question in the province of Saskatchewan. They were dealing with the problem, as we are dealing with the problem, of the imbalance of urban and rural representation. In other words, if you divided the population of the province by 83 constituencies here in Alberta, the larger metropolitan areas are considerably above that quotient of 30,700 and a number of rural areas are below that.

7:52

A similar situation occurred in Saskatchewan, and the Supreme Court of Canada came out with some principles. It was Madam Justice McLachlin, who, ironically, grew up in the Pincher Creek area and then went to B.C. and became a judge and eventually found her way to the Supreme Court of Canada, and the Supreme Court of Canada, through her, came out with some principles with respect to this issue. A summary of what it said is as follows.

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.

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.

It goes on to summarize and say:

Effective representation and good government in this country compel that factors other than voter parity, such as geography and community interests, be taken into account in settling electoral boundaries.

Now, the problem that arose was that in the last boundary review which was done by a commission, the commission was unable to come to an agreement, and then it was done by a committee of the Legislature. Those are the boundaries that we presently have. They were presented to the Alberta Court of Appeal by the government of Alberta, and a number of intervenors appeared on that as well, such as the town of Lac La Biche, the Alberta Civil Liberties Association, the Liberal Party of Alberta, and the New Democratic Party of Alberta. The Court of Appeal was aware of these guidelines that were set down by the Supreme Court of Canada, and their conclusion, I think, will stand out as perhaps a reason why the Legislature reacted and hence the reason why we were created by the Legislature.

The Court of Appeal concluded as follows, after looking at the boundaries.

In the result, we have again 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 that's what the Court of Appeal concluded in its concluding remarks. The legislation as it stands provides that this is the only review that can take place before the 2001 census, as I understand it.

MR. D. WHITE: So this will be the last review?

MR. McCARTHY: Yes, unless the court intervenes again. As Chief Judge Wachowich has said, this question has come up at every hearing we've had. I've done my best to explain to you as to why we're here. We certainly didn't volunteer to be here. We're a creature of the Legislature.

MR. D. WHITE: I did read the same background material. I understand the process. I just want to make the point that at some point surely it has to come to an end.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe, do you have any questions?

MR. LEHANE: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Robert? Wally?

Well, I want to thank you for coming, Mr. White, and making your viewpoint known. We've tried to answer your questions.

MR. D. WHITE: Thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next presenter is Dick Williams.

MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Your Honour and members of the commission. I recognize that the process you are about is relating to effective representation and not necessarily representation by population, and I wish you well in your deliberations.

As you know, the Cardston-Chief Mountain constituency is one of the four special consideration electoral divisions. The four

constituencies represent over 37 percent of the total area of the province. I believe there is great wisdom in the continuation of these exceptions. There are several reasons, and they all relate specifically to the democratic process of adequate representation. Please take into consideration in your deliberations the following complexities for our MLA: firstly, six hours south of Edmonton, often under very poor driving conditions such as many of us have experienced today; secondly, seven jurisdictions to communicate with, towns, villages, and MD; thirdly, six irrigation districts to consult with; fourthly, the largest Indian reservation in Canada, with over 6,000 residents; and fifth, a consolidated school district and a regional health authority to consult with.

The normal weekend for our MLA will usually include a six-hour drive to the constituency on Friday afternoon, to work Friday evening and Saturday in the constituency, then drive back to Edmonton on Sunday, a pretty gruelling schedule with no time to include more entities and organizations to meet with and to represent.

Compare this to a typical Calgary MLA's travel and representation commitment, with only 40 minutes of airbus travel from the city of Edmonton, only one city council, one regional health authority, and two school boards, plus 20 other MLAs to help with this representation process.

Cardston-Chief Mountain, because of its location and complexities, undoubtedly deserves a continuation of this special consideration. I urge you to uphold the wise decision that was made under similar conditions only three and a half year years ago, and I wish you success and wisdom in your deliberations.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Williams.

John, do you have any questions? Joe? Robert? Wally?

We want to thank you for coming forward and making your presentation.

MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you for the opportunity.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next presenter is Garry Johnson from the Cardston Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Johnson.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you very much, Your Honour and members of the commission. Setting boundaries is a very difficult task, borne out by the action and final resolution of the last boundaries committee.

You should all recall that a committee was struck not unlike the one we have today, with representation appointed by the Legislature, reflecting recommendations by the major parties of the day, and chaired by the Assistant Chief Judge of the Provincial Court of Alberta. A review of records will show that after extensive public hearings and committee discussion there was no agreement, and so no meaningful recommendation could be made.

The Legislature found itself in a dilemma because the mandate of the government was running out and the boundaries had not been reviewed, which was necessary by law. The Legislature moved decisively and struck a new committee of MLAs attempting to reflect parties in the House. The two opposition parties chose not to participate for reasons that served their own purpose.

The Legislature subsequently formed a committee of government MLAs, who proceeded to draw the boundaries we presently have. They were submitted to the Court of Appeal for ratification. The

court decision was that our boundaries should be reviewed or justified before the next election, and that is what we find ourselves doing today.

It should be noted that there was no issue taken with the number of seats nor with the 5 percent of the constituencies that could vary beyond the 25 percent from the average. A review of the boundaries clearly shows that the committee was diligent in following municipal boundaries and incorporating areas of community interest while at the same time endeavouring to ensure equal and fair representation. With the foregoing conditions in place it is clearly within the mandate of this committee to show justification of the boundaries as they now exist. On the specific circumstances of the Cardston-Chief Mountain constituency, which finds itself one of the four exceptions in the province, we believe the case can be made for the status quo based on the special circumstances that exist as opposed to the circumstances of a typical Calgary or Edmonton MLA. I'm not going to go through the challenges our MLA has. Mr. Williams has gone over that very closely, so I'm not going to repeat it.

8:02

Just to sum up, let me say that to increase the size of our constituency to the 25 percent level would be a tolerable second choice to leaving it as it is, but to combine it in total with an adjoining constituency would fall far short of addressing the objective of fair and equal representation. So we encourage you to leave the Cardston-Chief Mountain boundaries as they are.

I'd just like to add something to what Mr. Grbavac brought up about the name. Being from Cardston myself I have no problem with changing the name. That's something that's always bothered me. The Cardston constituency is much bigger than Cardston itself, so I would certainly support that idea.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Wally, any questions?

MR. WORTH: No, thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Robert?

MR. GRBAVAC: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe?

MR. LEHANE: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: John?

MR. McCARTHY: No. Thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I want to thank you for coming and making your presentation.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next person I'd like to call is Kirk Hofman, village of Nobleford.

MR. HOFMAN: I take it you've all had a chance to glance at the brief submitted, and I hope you paid special attention to that first sentence there. If you haven't, take a look at it now because that is



exactly, without question, what this document is suggesting. You may say that reducing the number of electoral divisions is not your intent, but in reviewing this document, without question reduction is what will happen to . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry. I'm not hearing you. Would you start again?

MR. HOFMAN: Okay. You have the document in front of you submitted on behalf of the village of Nobleford?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. HOFMAN: I'll draw your attention to the first sentence. That is exactly what we in the village of Nobleford, as part of the Little Bow constituency, see as the impact of what these possible recommendations that you address in your three considerations are intending, being that you want more representation in Calgary and Edmonton, less in rural Alberta. Simple arithmetic if you base it on population. That's what will probably happen. If you simply base your boundaries on population, you immediately significantly reduce the representation of rural Alberta. The current boundaries already give the majority of representation to the cities of Calgary, Edmonton, and if you add Lethbridge, Red Deer, and Medicine Hat, you have a majority there. It would be a sad day in Alberta when rural Alberta does not have an equal or equitable voice at the Legislative Assembly.

In reviewing your current boundaries, it is obvious that there are large physical area boundaries with less than average population. You've done those calculations in the document. Little Bow constituency, for example, a population of 24,168: you've got a minus 21.5 percent sitting there. You can see why we're concerned. You compare that with the Calgary-Egmont population of 37,689: plus 22.4 percent. Comparing the physical size of the two divisions, Little Bow is significantly larger. If you were to increase the size of Little Bow in order to achieve a population closer to the average, you would have probably twice the physical area in size and considerably larger than the entire city of Calgary.

I guess my point is one you've heard again this evening: how much time do you want our MLA to be driving on the road to come and visit us in our communities? If you look at Calgary-Egmont, this guy could walk down the street in an afternoon and he would probably meet a hundred people. It takes probably two or three days of planning to co-ordinate that many people in rural Alberta for a meeting with an MLA. It's just reality. That's the way it is.

I've lived in rural Alberta for 30 years. I've served as an elected official for the municipality of Nobleford. I've served as a trustee for both the county of Lethbridge and Palliser regional schools, and something we welcome is having an MLA to hear our concerns. We can't do it as easily as if we lived in Calgary-Egmont.

I believe from experience that urban and rural populations have considerable varied views on topics such as education, fire protection, the infrastructures: roads, water, and treatment plants. That's just to name a few of them. This is very obvious. If any of you have ever attended an Alberta Urban Municipalities Association convention or an Alberta School Boards Association convention, these are levels of government which our MLAs, I hope, take with seriousness, because we recommended them, and I'm sure Robert can speak on this.

There are some divided issues when it comes to Calgary-Edmonton versus – we don't like to say versus, but it's reality – the rest of the province. If you end up giving them the balance of power by more than 51 percent of the vote, I don't think we're going to be looking at what I would call equity education, equity municipality infrastructures. Equity governments, equity democracy will not be there. I would question you if you were to make a recommendation to decrease the number of rural municipalities so that they would be the minority in this province represented in the Legislature. If you were to shift to the majority of seats representing urban Alberta, I would question your democracy. Therefore, I would suggest that no more than 50 percent of all the seats combined from the cities, Calgary, Edmonton, make up the electoral boundaries. Any reduction in seats, if that is indeed what you may recommend, should reflect the balance of democratic process of equity representation.

At first glance most people would say, "You know, boundaries based on population is a simple way to make a division." It's one person, one vote. It's called science. It's arithmetic. A grade 2 student could figure that one out.

Alberta's a very good place to live, probably one of the best in the world, and it's not this way because of the large centres making decisions. It's often because of small groups working together making decisions and recommendations on how to improve our standard of living in this province.

I do fear that reducing the number of electoral boundaries in rural Alberta would not benefit all of Alberta, but there would definitely be a benefit to Calgary and Edmonton because of the population growth there. We don't all want to live in Calgary and Edmonton. We do not want to do that.

If there are two words I want you to remember, they're probably the last two in the presentation there: "equity representation." That's what makes your job difficult. I'm hoping you'll hear the voices from everybody that makes presentations at these hearings. I looked in *Webster's* dictionary for what "equity" is, just in case some of you aren't aware. This is the way it's defined: fairness, equal adjustment or distribution, giving to each his due according to the sense of natural right.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Fine. Thanks, Mr. Hofman.

Wally, do you have any questions?

MR. WORTH: No, thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Robert?

MR. GRBAVAC: Yeah. Kirk, I do. I need a little help. My distinction between rural and urban is not that clear, and I'll give you a reason why. As you know, I'm involved in municipal government, and many of the people that I represent in my rural area are people who live in my area but whose businesses reside in Lethbridge. Many of the people who own the land in the area that I represent live in Lethbridge. So I get confused in terms of urban and rural issues, and I submit to you that anyone as an MLA taking a negative agricultural stand in the city of Lethbridge probably would do it at his or her own peril.

One suggestion that's been put to us as a resolution to this problem is one that was put to us in Medicine Hat last night and I suspect would be put to us in Grand Prairie next week, where there are

`rurban' ridings. Now, I know we're going to hear from Mr. Heinen in a few minutes suggesting that `rurban' ridings, if you will, are not the answer, but the people of Cypress-Medicine Hat last night told us that was the answer for them. A portion of the city is included with the rural area. It gave their rural residents an opportunity to understand the problems and complexities of an urban riding and vice versa, and I just wonder if you feel that there's any option in Lethbridge or the Lethbridge area or, for that matter, in this part of southwestern Alberta for any kind of `rurban' riding. That would certainly be an easy way for us to make these numbers work.

8:12

MR. HOFMAN: It definitely would. Again, it's called science. Give it to a grade 2 student. They could figure that one out for you. The truth of the matter is that it's the same issue as amalgamation of municipalities, and the village of Nobleford did investigate that option and found out that we're not going to save any money. We're not going to be able to maintain the quality of life that we want in a rural setting in the village of Nobleford. No offence to the county of Lethbridge but things are a little different.

I would think that Lethbridge and the surrounding rural area have more similarities than, say, the city of Calgary does with what goes on in the Little Bow riding. I'll use education for an example, just the issue of small schools. It's the life and breath of rural Alberta. You put a hundred kids in a school in the city of Calgary – well, there's no such thing.

MR. GRBAVAC: So are you suggesting that a `rurban' riding in this part of Alberta is not a plausible alternative?

MR. HOFMAN: I would not support it.

MR. GRBAVAC: Okay. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe?

MR. LEHANE: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: John?

MR. McCARTHY: I want to thank you for coming, Mr. Hofman, and making your views known.

MR. HOFMAN: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Next is Randy Smith on behalf of the town of Cardston.

MR. R. SMITH: Your Honour, members of the commission, and ladies and gentlemen, I'm here tonight at the request of Cardston's mayor, Thelma Milne, to make sure that Cardston's opinion is felt, that the municipality's opinion is felt at your hearings. She is attending the AUMA convention in Edmonton at the present time. Our council did review this issue at an October 24 meeting. We recognize the complexity of the issues placed on your head and the differing points of view. While we believe this review will provide for additional opportunity for input and public comment on services provided by the MLAs of Alberta, it was the council's position that consensus on the matter of redrawing boundaries will never occur. I'll just repeat the general sentiment I've heard here: this seems to be

an exercise that we'll never really come to a united consensus on. We thus feel the commission must return to the considerations listed in the terms of reference, and specific to Cardston, which is important to us, is that representation is of primary importance.

In the case of Cardston and district in terms of could representation be enhanced by modifying the boundaries, we felt the answer was a clear no. It is our opinion that all Albertans should have an opportunity to participate in government and have a voice in the decision-making process. We fail to see how citizens from our constituency could adequately be represented by an MLA who must travel an even larger geographic area to meet with his or her public. We are already at some disadvantage because of our distance from Edmonton. With numerous local governments and quasi-government organizations for our MLA to work with, the volume of work coupled with travel and available time does not compute. Any expansion of constituency boundaries in gross area would simply give priority to population over effective representation, and representation was of paramount importance to the council of the town of Cardston.

Your other question: would common community interests and organizations benefit by redrawing boundaries? Again, Cardston's council felt the answer would be no. In general terms we believe that the current boundaries respect historical and settlement considerations and align with natural boundaries common to our peoples. The only exception might be to extend the Cardston-Chief Mountain boundary farther to the east to include the area north of Highway 52 and west of Highway 4, thus adding to the constituency Stirling and the Wilson Siding area. If needed, this boundary could also extend northward to the southern limits of the city of Lethbridge.

We believe that effective representation for all Albertans should be the most important purpose of any electoral boundary change. We thus ask you to encourage the Legislature to reaffirm its commitment to section 17 of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, providing criteria for those areas warranting special consideration beyond the 25 percent variance rule.

I am here to answer any questions that you might have with regards to Cardston's position.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Smith. We'll start with John.

MR. McCARTHY: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe? Robert?

MR. WORTH: You mentioned the possibility of extending the boundaries northward, and certainly I realize this is not a preference. How far north would you be prepared to go? Would you be prepared to go to the Oldman River on the north and to the boundary of county 26 on the east?

MR. R. SMITH: I don't think the Oldman River runs in an east-west direction at the north of this constituency, so I'm not sure what you're referring to. We did a little bit of a map, which I failed to attach to your document, and I'll provide it to you as I leave here. Basically we would suggest that you go eastward to Highway 4 and north at least to the Wilson Siding area south of the city here.

There was some reference a minute ago to this `rurban' situation. We feel that there is some affiliation between the people that reside

immediately south of Lethbridge in that triangle and to the balance of the constituency farther south.

MR. WORTH: What I was just asking was: how would you react to an extension of the east side of the city of Lethbridge to the Oldman River? It would take in Coaldale.

MR. R. SMITH: Our council didn't discuss that, so I don't think it would be fair for me to express an opinion on that.

MR. WORTH: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I want to thank you, Mr. Smith, for attending this evening. The weather's not the nicest. You've made the point of view known of the town of Cardston.

MR. R. SMITH: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next presenter is Broyce Jacobs, MD of Cardston.

MR. JACOBS: Thank you, gentlemen, for this opportunity to represent the council of the MD of Cardston, which, as you know, lies within the Chief Mountain constituency, which constituency, it has already been noted tonight, is one of the four exceptions in the province. I am here tonight to request that the electoral boundaries in Alberta remain as they are and that especially the boundaries of Cardston-Chief Mountain stay as they now exist.

I believe that there are some very good reasons to justify the above-mentioned request. Number one, Alberta's electoral boundaries were redrawn just before the last election, and they will be redrawn again in the year 2001. Number two, this is the fourth political commission studying this problem in the last six years. Number three, four court decisions, including the 1994 Alberta Court of Appeal case, have also studied the matter. Each one found that the current electoral boundaries meet all legal and constitutional tests. Number four, the population variances between urban and rural ridings in Alberta are well within acceptable limits. The courts allow a 25 percent variation from the provincial average and 50 percent for special consideration ridings. Five, voters in Calgary, Edmonton, and Red Deer are almost perfectly represented. Those ridings are only 11.6 percent above average population. This is certainly well within the limits prescribed by the courts. Number six, rural ridings require special consideration due to large geography, transportation barriers, and widely varying industrial and cultural demographics.

The Cardston-Chief Mountain constituency is unique in several areas. It is situated in the southern tip of the province. It is a large rural riding consisting of farms and ranches and limited population. It is basically agricultural. We have the U.S. boundary on the south, the Rocky Mountains and Waterton park on the west, and it also includes a large Indian reserve with over 6,000 residents on the north. To the east of our constituency lie more agricultural land, more farms and ranches, and sparse population.

I'm going to skip a couple of paragraphs as those points have already been mentioned by some of those who have preceded me. Going down to the bottom of that page, rural Alberta is unique. We do not have a large population with similar interests and concerns. We have a diversified population with many different problems. Rural Alberta makes a significant contribution to the economic well-

being of this province. Equal representation does not necessarily mean fair representation. Therefore, in the interest of fair representation I encourage you to leave Cardston-Chief Mountain boundaries as they now exist.

Thank you.

8:22

THE CHAIRMAN: Fine.

Wally, do you have any questions?

MR. WORTH: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Robert? Joe? John?

Well, I want to thank you, Mr. Jacobs, for coming and making the views of the MD of Cardston known to the commission.

MR. JACOBS: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next speaker is Mick Barnett, Westwind school division.

MR. BARNETT: Thank you, gentlemen. I wish to tell you that I'm in support of the Cardston-Chief Mountain constituency boundaries remaining the same. I have a background which I will read.

The Westwind regional division No. 9 was formed September 1, 1994, as a newly regionalized division made up of the former Cardston school division, the Stirling school district, and the northwest portion of the county of Warner No. 5 board of education. The region stretches for approximately 115 kilometres from the Waterton park boundary on the west to approximately New Dayton in the east and from the U.S. border 65 kilometres north to the county of Lethbridge boundary. This area includes the towns of Cardston, Raymond, and Magrath along with the villages and hamlets of Glenwood, Hill Spring, Mountain View, Del Bonita, Spring Coulee, Aetna, Stirling, and Welling.

This jurisdiction is divided into seven electoral divisions with a total of nine elected trustees plus one elected trustee from the Blood reserve. The regional office is located in Cardston and oversees the education of approximately 4,650 students from ECS to grade 12. The region operates 13 regular schools plus 17 colony schools and employs approximately 240 teachers plus support staff. Our regional schools vary in size between 800 to 34 students, adding both character and continuing challenges to our ability to provide equal opportunities for all our students. Included in our enrollment are also 525 native students from the Blood Indian reserve that find it advantageous to attend Westwind schools.

In addition to offering the regular educational programs, the region offers a variety of specialized programs to those students with exceptional needs. These programs include an integrated occupational program, pullout programs for special-needs students, resource rooms for mildly to moderately learning disabled students, and an emphasis on integration for those with severe problems and disabilities. We also provide for speech and language services as well as psychoeducational assessments and consultative services.

The Westwind regional division has noticed a number of trends developing within the division, including increased parental demands, the changing role of board governance, increased accountability to Alberta Education as well as demands for allowing various cultures to retain their diversity. All of these areas increase

the need for improved communication between school boards in the province both within and outside the Department of Education.

Presentation. The board of the Westwind regional division No. 9 discussed the issue of MLA representation at their board meeting. The Westwind board feels very strongly about the method and level of representation presently provided by the provincial government. Currently the Westwind regional division is represented by two MLAs: the Hon. Jack Ady, Cardston-Chief Mountain, and Mr. Ron Hierath, Taber-Warner. Both of these individuals were instrumental in providing for the current regionalized division and have been very helpful in dealing with any new areas of concern.

One area that may possibly warrant some consideration and realignment is the boundary between the Taber-Warner and Cardston-Chief Mountain divisions to include the village of Stirling and surrounding area into Cardston-Chief Mountain electoral division. There is a certain community of interest that may be better served by the realignment, including the same school division and similar cultural interests.

As we have stated earlier, the Westwind regional division is a large, mostly rural school board. In order for rural Alberta to be properly represented, it is necessary to continue to provide for exceptions to the 25 percent variance rule regarding MLA boundaries. When Members of the Legislative Assembly represent strictly an urban area, they're usually acting as one of several liaisons between municipal authorities, usually one city and possibly two school districts, separate and public. As well as a small number of municipalities that urban MLAs are responsible for, they have a relatively small area with a large concentration of residents. It's not unusual for a city MLA to only have a few miles to travel in order to cover their entire division. Rural MLAs are encumbered by large areas, slowing travel and making it more difficult to liaise with constituents and municipalities. As you can see by looking at our demographics, there are a number of different municipal governments that our MLAs work with as well as a significantly large area over which each representative must traverse.

For these reasons we would ask the committee to continue to allow the current level of representation provided for by legislation. We believe that the province should reaffirm its commitment outlined in section 17 of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act providing criteria for these areas warranting special consideration.

"Equal" and "equitable" are two terms that have been bandied about with increasing regularity throughout this round of government restructuring, yet in order to provide fair and effective representation to all areas of the province, it is imperative that rural Alberta be allowed to maintain its current level of representation.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Barnett.

John, do you have any questions of Mr. Barnett?

MR. McCARTHY: Just one question for clarification. You refer to the schools in the area. You've got 13 regular schools plus 17 colony schools. What do you mean by 17 colony schools?

MR. BARNETT: These are schools that are maintained within the colony.

MR. McCARTHY: Are those the Hutterite colonies?

MR. BARNETT: Yes. That's what I meant: Hutterite colonies, yes.

MR. McCARTHY: Thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe?

MR. GRBAVAC: I think the only observation I would make is the same one I made to an earlier presenter. I can certainly appreciate why you would want Stirling and that area that Randy referred to as well, Highway 4 up to Wilson Siding, included in the – shall I call it the Chief Mountain constituency? But that does present us with a problem in Taber-Warner. It puts it that two are over the threshold of the 25 percent. I would appreciate it if you could address your mind to that problem – because we're going to be back here again – and if there's a way of solving that problem. I propose that maybe we want to look at the urban centre of Lethbridge as an alternative, but I don't think that has a lot of support here. I wonder if your school board wouldn't mind trying to address your mind to that particular problem, because we can't have two special-consideration ridings adjoining each other. As a matter of fact, Cypress-Medicine Hat would like that distinction, and we heard this afternoon that Pincher Creek-Macleod would also like that distinction. So if you would maybe consider that for us in our next round.

MR. BARNETT: Thank you for your advice. I will.

THE CHAIRMAN: Wally?

We want to thank you for coming, Mick, and making your views known to us.

MR. BARNETT: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next presenter is Ms Marjorie Little of the Lethbridge-East Progressive Conservative Association.

8:32

MS LITTLE: Your Honour, members of the commission, ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for giving us the opportunity for public submission at this time. I think that you gentlemen have been hearing lots here tonight, that you've got lots to think about, so I'm not going to rehash an old kettle of fish.

I will conclude by saying that in reviewing and studying the electoral division boundaries within the province of Alberta and in giving consideration to the history and the practices that have been examined on a number of previous occasions, we as members of the Lethbridge-East Progressive Conservative Constituency Association have concluded that it would be prudent and wise to recommend that electoral boundaries remain as they presently exist. A tendency to various transiciencies in business and population in certain regions presently strengthens the argument for boundaries remaining status quo. Hospital and school district issues are being well served by our government MLA in this area.

Further, the costs that would be incurred to make changes in these times of economic restraint would not be exemplatory or justified. It is reasonable to allow the existing boundaries to remain in fact and intact until the review in or about the year 2001.

I respectfully submit this on behalf of the board and the members as their secretary from Lethbridge-East PC constituency. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

John, do you have any questions?

MR. McCARTHY: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe?

MR. LEHANE: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Robert?

MR. GRBAVAC: No.

MR. WORTH: I assume that you're speaking with respect to the boundaries of the Lethbridge-East constituency remaining unchanged rather than all electoral boundaries being unchanged.

MS LITTLE: Sir, that's a good question. At first, when we were addressing the whole process of responding here, we took a look at a number of the situations that did exist in Alberta. We also took a look at the number of situations that are presently existing in Alberta as far as new industry coming into certain areas, new populations moving, and we know that these things could affect and impact the whole of the province, not just Lethbridge-East.

As far as Lethbridge-East is concerned, we are not with a sitting MLA in the government at this point in time. We have respect for the MLA who is sitting from Lethbridge-West, and we have respect for the MLA sitting from Lethbridge-East. We also appreciate that these two gentlemen have a great deal of travel to serve their constituents, but their problems for serving their constituents do not compare to those in the Cardston area and in Cypress and in some of the other areas.

So what we're saying is that there are needs perhaps, but they're not a major need for Lethbridge-East at this time. We are happy with what we have and how it exists. We certainly respect the fact that you need to do this review because it was impressed on you to do so, but we're also suggesting that because of some of the changes and because of the many reviews that have occurred over the last few years, namely four and six years I believe, it would be prudent and it would be wise and it would be exemplary to stop: let's leave things status quo. I think we can all live with them. The rural areas are indeed a distinct society, to use a quote from a federal issue, and certainly I think we need to respect that as Lethbridge-East people.

We are definitely committed to the rural communities, and we are definitely committed to the Alberta concept. Therefore, respecting the needs of the rural, we believe their representation is fair.

MR. WORTH: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: I want to thank you for coming and making the views of the Lethbridge-East Progressive Conservative Association known to our panel here.

MS LITTLE: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next presenter is Mrs. Margaret Cherneski.

MRS. CHERNESKI: I'm here tonight, gentlemen, presenting John Voorhorst's submission as he could not be here.

I would like to begin by drawing your attention to a quotation by the late Grant Notley, the former leader of the New Democratic Party of Alberta and a former MLA for a rural Alberta constituency as found in Hansard of May 12, 1977 which reads as follows:

"If one had come to me seven or eight years ago and said we should provide some sort of special consideration for rural constituencies, I wouldn't have been very sympathetic. As a matter of fact in 1970, I recall making some rather harsh statements outside the House about the recommendations of the Electoral Boundaries Commission at the time and the fact that there was not rigid representation by population. But in the last six years there is no doubt in my mind that there are some very real problems in representing rural Alberta, which must lead us to the conclusion that rigid application . . . by population is not fair. It may be fair in an abstract, philosophical sense, but in my judgment it is not fair in terms of providing access by the electorate to their member of the Legislature. . . . I think it just happens to be a fact that rural MLAs have a higher volume of constituency business, because there's a greater interest, a perception of the MLA as a representative of people which is more clearly understood and, somehow, defined in the rural area than in the average urban constituency."

Now, I don't want to leave the impression that I personally have any experience as to the amount and type of work which is expected of an MLA. However, I do know and have experienced, that when a constituent who lives in an urban center requires the assistance of an MLA, he or she can always find at least one of several MLA's to come to his or her assistance. This also holds true for problems being faced by the general population of an urban setting. If the City of Edmonton or Calgary wish to make representation to the Legislative Assembly they can easily have as many as 18 MLA's in Calgary or 20 MLA's in Edmonton attend a meeting, each of whom represents the same City. As a matter of fact, the Mayor of either one of those two Cities could likely get a hearing with the Premier or at least with the appropriate Cabinet Minister if that was found to be beneficial.

However, in rural Alberta, and specifically in Taber/Warner, each community must work hard just to book even one hour with the single MLA who represents them. In this constituency we have at least five municipal councils and two County or M.D. Councils. Then there is the Regional Health Authority and the Regional School Board. If either one of these Boards wishes to make representation to the Government, they have to set a meeting date and time which is convenient for six MLA's, all but two of whom represent different Towns and Villages, and therefore have different concerns.

The same can be said about any other body which concerns itself with governance. I am a member of the Chinook Regional Health Authority and know from experience that the Rural Constituent is feeling left out of the decision making process. The fact that the Regional Health Authorities in Edmonton and Calgary have direct access to the Minister of Health while we have access to the Department through our MLA has left some feeling of disenfranchisement with our Board already. If any changes to the Electoral Boundaries must be made the Committee must keep in mind that any further distance placed between the power in Edmonton and the Rural Constituent would be detrimental to the Rural Constituent's continued faith in the system. These few examples should be more than sufficient to illustrate the differences between the representation or access Rural Albertans have to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta as compared to the Urban representation.

To attempt to put this into some perspective, it may be advisable to look at the success of the Federal Reform Party in the last Federal election. One of the main points in the Reform Party platform was the inequity of the current Federal System. Here in the West, we felt and many of us have not changed our opinion, that the power in our Country is centred in Central Canada. The people of

Central Canada have much greater access to the Government. We are all aware of at least one example of how this loss of representation has hurt and or cost the Western Provinces. How anyone could expect that a similar dilution of the power and access of Rural Albertans would be a palatable choice is unimaginable.

The Alberta Court of Appeal endorsed a population variance of 25% above or below the average per constituency. In fact a variance greater than 25% was accepted in the Report of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries as established by Motion 24 on July 2, 1992. The current Committee should work closely with the previous Committee's report.

Having said all this and assuming that some changes are required, the following guidelines should be kept in mind:

Use existing constituency lines as much as possible.

When change must be made, follow county and municipal lines as much as possible

An individual's access to a Member of the Assembly is very important.

In conclusion I can only reiterate two important concepts in my mind. Do not make change for the sake of change and keep in mind that even though representation by population is a wonderful and enviable theory, access to the decision making process is very important and that access cannot be jeopardized in any way.

Thank you very much for allowing me the opportunity of presenting these concerns to you.

8:42

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mrs. Cherneski.

Wally, do you have any questions?

MR. WORTH: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Robert? Joe? John?

Thank you for making Mr. Voorhorst's views known to us.

The next presenter is Mrs. Christine Audet. [interjection] It's Christina; is it?

MRS. AUDET: It is.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry. My instructions were different.

MRS. AUDET: That's okay. I don't think you guys have a copy of this either. She said that there have been some problems.

THE CHAIRMAN: Go ahead; we can listen.

MRS. AUDET: Good. Thank you for this opportunity. Electoral boundaries have been traditionally determined according to the democratic principle of representation by population. In its purest form this is a democratic ideal, one person equals one vote. This system would work well if the populations were distributed evenly throughout our province, but as you are well aware, this is not the case. The demographics of our population are constantly shifting between and amongst both rural and urban communities. Complete representation by population is a philosophical ideal at best and a model that is simply not realistic in a province as large, as diverse, and as sparsely populated as Alberta.

We are not the only province to experience these difficulties. Both B.C. and Saskatchewan have experienced challenges based on the Charter of Rights, and as a result the courts have acknowledged the need for up to a 25 percent variance when determining the

population in constituencies. As I see it, by allowing this flexibility in the courts, they're acknowledging that the overriding principle when determining boundaries is not in fact population.

The question that needs to be asked when considering boundaries should be: will the legislative member of this constituency be able to adequately represent all the people in the riding? Effective representation cannot be determined by numbers alone. The 25 percent variance is necessary in order to maintain the democratic process, not to dilute it. All people must feel that they have access to their elected representatives. Accessibility has been the battle cry of this government, and it's essential to the democratic process.

Just as an elected representative can only adequately represent a maximum number of people effectively, it follows that the same member can only adequately represent a maximum area. Consider the MLA for Taber-Warner. Ron Hierath is responsible for three villages, four towns – that's seven councils in total – two counties, one MD, and four different school divisions. Compare this, of course, to the MLA in Calgary, as you've heard before, who has 19 other people to help him with one council and two school districts.

It's my contention that if a population falls within the 25 percent prescribed by the courts, then other factors must clearly determine whether a boundary change is in order. I'd like to quote from the electoral division statutes amendment Act of 1993: the natural concern of an elected official for the comfort zone of a local portion of the electorate is not a valid Charter consideration; the essence of a constitutionally entrenched right is that it permits an individual to stand against even a majority of people.

The Taber-Warner constituency works well at present. Historically we have established a pattern of geographic trade, which continues to thrive. In fact, the recent restructuring of school districts has been a very positive experience, especially from the standpoint of the staff and students. In part, the division of the old county and the subsequent amalgamations into two other districts emphasized our willingness to conform to the already established patterns of trade and community lines. Further, this experience also reinforced the willingness of our community to respond positively to change. We are not opposed to change for its own sake here in southern Alberta, but we do insist that changes be made for valid reasons. The Taber-Warner boundaries should remain as they were drawn by the recent Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries because historically there's been a well-defined pattern of trade within these boundaries. Community lines are similar in the existing boundaries, especially with respect to geographic, economic, and cultural ties. Constituency boundaries closely follow existing municipal boundaries, counties, school districts, and the new RHA. Any changes, therefore, would threaten to disrupt an already existing community.

In an area as large and as diverse as Alberta it is especially important that we continue to hear the voices of all Albertans. This province was built on the ideals of a large rural population. It is largely the rural perspective that identifies Alberta to the rest of the world and is essential to our unique character. Representation is about hearing each and every Albertan. Representation is allowing the MLAs to hear those concerns. Representation is not a numbers game. People are not just population to be counted; they are voices to be heard.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I just want to ask one question. Did you give a copy of that report to the lady at the desk?

MRS. AUDET: Yes. Actually, it was faxed yesterday, but there was some mix-up.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's fine. We will get it. I just wanted to make sure.

MR. McCARTHY: Where do you live?

MRS. AUDET: I live by Writing-on-Stone park, which is in the Taber-Warner constituency.

THE CHAIRMAN: I missed the name.

MRS. AUDET: Christina Audet.

THE CHAIRMAN: No, no. The park.

MRS. AUDET: Oh. Writing-on-Stone park.

THE CHAIRMAN: Writing-on-Stone park.

MRS. AUDET: Yeah. It's in the Taber-Warner constituency.

THE CHAIRMAN: I've heard of it. I'm sorry. Joe?

MR. LEHANE: No questions to ask.

THE CHAIRMAN: Robert?

MR. GRBAVAC: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Wally?

Well, we wish to thank you for coming and making the views of your constituency known.

MRS. AUDET: You're welcome.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next presenter is Marvin Dahl, reeve of the village of Warner.

MR. GRBAVAC: County.

THE CHAIRMAN: County of Warner?

MR. GRBAVAC: Yeah.

THE CHAIRMAN: I have Mr. Grbavac here, who corrects my mistakes.

MR. DAHL: If anybody should know, it should be him.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm glad to hear something positive said about him.

MR. DAHL: I don't know what's happened to this chair, but I've got to change it. Somebody's worn it out.

MRS. AUDET: That was me fidgeting.

MR. DAHL: Were you that nervous, Christina?

MRS. AUDET: Yeah, I was.

MR. DAHL: Thank you, Your Honour and fellow commission members. I feel this is an honour to be here tonight to make a presentation in relation to the electoral boundaries.

The council of the county of Warner No. 5 reviewed the current electoral boundaries and wished to confirm our general acceptance of their current makeup. The county of Warner No. 5 covers a portion of the Taber-Warner and the Cardston-Chief Mountain ridings. After considering the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act and with respect to sections 16 and 17, we feel the previous Electoral Boundaries Committee researched the issue adequately and made reasonable judgments in establishing the boundaries as they did.

The county would, however, recommend that in consideration of common community interests and associations the area of Stirling should be incorporated into the Cardston-Chief Mountain riding rather than the Taber-Warner riding. Many Stirling area residents have expressed concern with being included in an area that does not reflect their education or trading area.

It is the feeling of this council that effective representation does not necessarily mean one vote for one person. Effective representation goes further. It must take into account workload. One must agree that it takes additional time and resources to work with an electoral area which deals with 11 different municipal governments, four different school boards, numerous recreation, ag societies, and library boards, rather than one of each as may be the situation in larger urban areas.

Another important consideration in effective representation is allowing sufficient time to meet and discuss residents' concerns. If a considerable portion of your time is taken up by travel between destinations, accessibility to the public is limited. Electoral boundaries must not be so large as to hamper visits and communication. In the larger, sparsely populated ridings with many local governments, finding time to meet with residents and councils does present an obstacle. If rural boundaries with sparse populations continue to become larger, the problem of ineffective representation at the grassroots level continues to grow, leaving the electorate feeling alienated.

With the present system of determining electoral boundaries, governments can and must continue to be sensitive to rural concerns. Rural areas have different needs and problems and attract people with different values and preferences. Landmasses also have different values placed upon them and attract different people. Values such as aesthetics and economic, recreational, and environmental needs must be recognized. Landmasses need a voice to ensure that their value, beauty, and importance is duly appreciated and recognized. Effective representation of rural people should not be diluted any further by decreasing the number of rural ridings. Rural concerns need representation and should not be weakened any further by having their voice drowned out by the much larger urban majority.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice our concerns.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Dahl.

MR. WORTH: Mr. Dahl, the county of Warner has added its support to the view that Stirling should be incorporated into the Cardston-Chief Mountain constituency. I have to ask you the question that my

colleague asked another presenter earlier. If we acceded to that request, it would push the Taber-Warner constituency beyond the minus 25 percent threshold. Therefore, I'm wondering what you would put back into the area to bring it up to a satisfactory size.

8:52

MR. DAHL: I believe the figures that were quoted previously – and I don't know what the exact figure would be, because I haven't figured it right down to the exact percentage point. But I think the general assumption is that there are approximately a thousand people in the Stirling area that we are talking about. When we considered this, the figure we had was less than 900, 865 or 880 or somewhere close to that. What percentage it is I don't know, but it would be close to the 25 percent, I understand and realize that, but I think it's close enough to 25 percent that it wouldn't be much of a variation. Our council discussed that issue, and because of the concerns of the people of that area, which were always included in the Cardston area previously, and because of our school board situation, of which I'm also a member, we felt that consideration should be given so that we work with one MLA instead of with two.

MR. GRBAVAC: Marvin, I want to put to you a proposition that was put to us in Edmonton a few days ago. It was kind of a novel observation, and with your 20-some years in municipal politics I want to get your perspective on this. One individual suggested to us that in many of these rural ridings there may be upward of a hundred elected officials. There may be four or five villages, two or three towns, a school board, maybe two school boards, on and on, maybe four or five municipal councils at seven or eight elected members apiece. So they're suggesting that with a hundred elected officials for 25,000 people maybe that would compensate for the fact that the MLA had to cover a lot more ground. I want to hear what your observation to that proposition would be.

MR. DAHL: Well, it's true that there are lots of people that are involved in municipal government and all these boards in the various communities, but each community is unique and is a community of their own. I think those people in those communities would be very offended and hurt if they didn't have the representation that they felt they deserved. Whether they need a full five or 10 or whatever on their board is a different question that they should address on their own. I don't think it should be one that we should do otherwise.

I've even heard the comment made that maybe the truest form of government is really the local government, not the provincial government. Maybe we could do that kind of an observation as well, and I think maybe we could work better on a municipal level and serve the people better from that perspective.

MR. GRBAVAC: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe, any questions?

MR. LEHANE: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: John?

MR. McCARTHY: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, Mr. Dahl, I wish to thank you for coming and making your position known as the reeve of your area.

MR. DAHL: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next presenter is Wayne Davey, vice-chairman of the Palliser regional division No. 26.

MR. DAVEY: Good evening, gentlemen. I thank you for the opportunity to make this presentation to the commission on behalf of Palliser regional schools. As representatives of a regionalized school jurisdiction situated in rural Alberta, the board of trustees for Palliser regional division No. 26 is concerned over the direction implied in the preliminary information circulated by the commission to the extent that less populated districts may be merged and additional districts created in Calgary and Edmonton. It is our view that to adopt a process of establishing districts based solely on population is flawed as doing so discriminates against residents of rural Alberta on the basis of their geographic location.

Our legislative system is based on the ability of elected officials to represent the views of the residents of their constituency. When the boundaries of that constituency become so geographically large as to make it extremely difficult for an MLA to maintain contact with those residents, it means that the constituency is disadvantaged when compared with urban areas, which are considerably more compact. Very simply, equal representation based on population is not possible in this province given our large rural areas, which are very sparsely populated.

Rather than equal representation we should be striving for equitable representation, a term we've heard many times this evening, where a test of fairness is used to ensure all residents have the opportunity to be in contact with a representative to the same degree. For example, rural residents must believe that it is possible for their MLA to represent them without constraints on their ability to physically cover the geographic area. It is far more difficult for a rural MLA to visit communities in his or her area in order to assess perceptions of their electorate. An urban MLA can simply walk down the street and obtain the same analysis.

In addition it is our belief that issues related to rural education are different than those in urban centres, particularly those related to topics such as transportation of students, survival of small schools, and the provision of technological infrastructure. To further combine electoral divisions is to severely reduce the voice of rural Alberta and the ability of the Alberta government to gain the understanding needed to deal with these issues.

It is our suggestion that no change be made in the ratio of rural electoral divisions to urban electoral divisions. While the number and the distribution of the present electoral districts is not a perfect arrangement, we feel that retaining the status quo is preferable to any further erosion of representation in government for rural Alberta.

Thank you. If I could just make one comment.

THE CHAIRMAN: Go ahead.

MR. DAVEY: Mr. McCarthy, I do have concerns with your health after your analogy about the dentist earlier.

MR. WORTH: I have a question.

THE CHAIRMAN: Wally has a question.

MR. WORTH: If the Palliser regional district works for schools, would it work as an electoral division?



MR. DAVEY: That's very interesting. In our particular area we have two regional health authorities, two MLAs. The overlap consists of two regional divisions of school boards. I guess I would have some reservation about saying that I would like to see it in that manner. I think constituencies at this point in time had better be left where they're at.

MR. WORTH: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Robert?

MR. GRBAVAC: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe?

MR. LEHANE: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: John, do you want to explain your health?

MR. McCARTHY: When you talk about the Palliser regional schools, what area are you talking about, or did I not get that?

MR. DAVEY: I'm talking about a regionalization between the county of Vulcan, the county of Lethbridge, and the consolidated school district of Barons.

MR. McCARTHY: Thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I wish to thank you, Mr. Davey, for coming and making the views of the Palliser regional school division known.

MR. DAVEY: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next speakers are Murray Brown and Don Johnson, representing the MD of Taber No. 14.

Is Mr. Brown not with you?

MR. BROWN: I'm Mr. Brown.

THE CHAIRMAN: Pardon me; I'm sorry. Don Johnson.

MR. BROWN: Don's right here. I'm not sure whether he'll join me or not.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. BROWN: Well, first of all, I'd like to thank you gentlemen for having us here tonight. The council of the MD of Taber No. 14 would also like to thank you for giving us this opportunity to address the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

9:02

I believe you have a small written report there. Instead of reading it, I'd like to expand on some of the ideas within it.

We feel the rural ridings do require some special considerations. Although Little Bow and Taber-Warner, which are both within our boundaries, are 21.5 percent below the population average, they are geographically large constituencies. Little Bow includes five rural municipalities, one Indian reserve, 13 towns and villages, and

numerous hamlets. Taber-Warner includes three rural municipalities, eight towns and villages, and hamlets there also. Because of the geography it is difficult to commute around the constituency, and more time is required to meet with all of the municipalities, school and hospital boards, and interest groups within.

When our MLAs are required to perform their duties at functions, oftentimes they cannot be there due to a number of functions held simultaneously across the constituency. It's nearly impossible to be home weeks when the Legislature is in session due to the distance from Edmonton to the constituency.

We would like you to recognize the difficulty rural citizens have accessing their MLAs. We feel that the rights of rural citizens must be recognized and protected to ensure proper representation in the Legislature. Forcing every riding to be exactly the same on a population basis would ignore a lot of the other concerns. We would like Little Bow and Taber-Warner constituencies to remain the same.

As to this commission, electoral boundaries were redrawn before the last election and will be redrawn again in the year 2001. I believe you explained the reason for this commission before, so I won't go on on that anymore. This is the fourth political commission in six years, and along with them, there have been four court decisions, including an Alberta Court of Appeal decision that said that electoral boundary laws meet all legal and constitutional tests. But as you've said before, if it comes in front of the courts again, then things have to be relooked into.

We would hope that the formation of this commission was not politically motivated by groups in or around government. We also hope the commission has come here with open minds, willing to listen to our concerns.

Thank you very much, gentlemen.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, thank you, Mr. Brown.

Wally, do you have any questions? Robert? Joe? John?

MR. BROWN: Okay. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you for coming.

The next presenters are Don Nilsson and Richard Sharp. That's the mayor of the village of Stirling and councillor.

MR. NILSSON: Richard's my bodyguard.

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, I see. He's just to support you if you need help.

MR. NILSSON: Support staff.

Thank you, Your Honour and members of the commission. I'm with the village of Stirling, that you've been listening to a lot about tonight. The brief that I'm going to give you is going to be shorter than the one you have. There are going to be a few things maybe added but a lot of it deleted.

The village of Stirling would like to see a change in our electoral boundary. This change would see Stirling included in and returned to the Cardston-Chief Mountain constituency. Stirling has been designated a national historical site by Parks Canada and by the national historic foundation. The designation is based on the unique prairie settlement pattern and the utilization of irrigation. This unique architecture is found in Stirling, Raymond, Magrath, and Cardston.

The village of Stirling has a number of other important relationships with the Cardston-Chief Mountain constituency and its people which would be facilitated by our inclusion into the boundaries. We are now members of the Westwind regional division of education. We are an active participant in the Chief Mountain solid waste authority. We are in the districts of the Raymond general hospital, the Raymond health care centre, and the Ridgeview Lodge. The town of Raymond provides Stirling with administrative services. Not only that, but we want to be in the same constituency as Bob Grbavac.

MR. GRBAVAC: Well, thank you, Don.

THE CHAIRMAN: I have trouble understanding that argument.

MR. GRBAVAC: So did the people in Pincher Creek.

MR. NILSSON: We would therefore like to make the recommendation that the village of Stirling be included in the Cardston-Chief Mountain constituency.

Just a footnote. We have been well represented by both MLAs that we have been in with.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Nilsson.

Wally, do you have any question? Robert? Joe? John?

MR. NILSSON: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you for coming and making the village of Stirling's views known to us.

The next presenter is Roelof Heinen.

MR. HEINEN: Thank you, Your Honour and committee members. I'm here today as the president of the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties representing all of the 66 incorporated rural municipalities in this province. Indirectly, I represent almost all the rural citizens within Alberta.

The task you have been charged with, the establishment of electoral boundaries for Alberta, is of critical importance for rural Albertans. Although Canadian courts have consistently recognized the importance of effective representation for less populated areas, we continue to face pressure for a move to representation by population. This would effectively disenfranchise most citizens living outside of the major population centres. Rural constituencies could become so large as to make meaningful communication with one's MLA almost impossible. Provincial policy could be completely directed by populations concentrated in three or four locations. This would reflect representation by population, but citizens in the vast majority of Alberta's geographic area would be marginalized. How can citizens of Edmonton or Calgary possibly hope to understand issues like agriculture or the implications of forestry or oil and gas development as well as the people who actually live where the development is occurring?

This issue is not a new one to Alberta. In the past five years alone our association has participated in two court references and appeared before two previous boundary commissions. The case for effective representation as opposed to representation by population has been clearly made and has been recognized by the courts. I won't bore you this evening by repeating those arguments again. Instead, I'd like to share with you one quotation that I will be reading and the

other one, of course, has been heard in a previous brief from two Canadians who previously pondered this issue at length. Not only are their insights particularly keen, but perhaps their stations in life may help to dispel the popular notion that this issue is somehow a matter of partisan political interest.

I was pleased to note that Mr. McCarthy also quoted Madam Justice Beverley McLachlin of the Supreme Court of Canada. I'm also going to quote her.

Before examining the electoral boundaries to determine if they are justified, it may be useful to mention some of the factors other than equality of voting power which figure in the analysis. One of the most important is the fact that it is more difficult to represent rural ridings than urban. The material before us suggests that not only are rural ridings harder to serve because of difficulty in transport and communications, but that rural voters make greater demands on their elected representatives, whether because of the absence of alternative resources to be found in urban centres or for other reasons. Thus the goal of effective representation may justify somewhat lower voter populations in rural areas.

I won't read you the second quote because it's in the brief that's in front of you and has been referred to earlier.

It's this kind of testimony which has led Alberta and Canadian courts to clearly and strongly endorse the concept of effective representation. The only question, the really difficult one is how you are to apply this concept as you develop practical recommendations for Alberta's electoral boundaries.

We would encourage you to adopt the following four principles in your deliberations.

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

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

#### 9:12

Three, minimize disruption to the existing system. Albertans have barely adjusted to the existing boundaries since the most recent review. Another review is mandated within six years. Although some minor shifting may be necessary, we would encourage the commission to avoid major upheavals of the existing boundaries.

Four, avoid 'urban' combinations. Consistent with maintaining the community of interest principle, we would urge the commission to avoid lumping urban and rural areas together unless there is a clear shared interest. By and large, rural and urban communities still have substantially differing interests, and having off parts of each just to meet some population quota distracts from the rights of both urban and rural citizens to effective representation.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I will conclude my remarks and thank you for allowing me this opportunity to share our association's perspective on this issue. I wish you well in the difficult challenge ahead of you. Remember – it's been said before – if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I want to thank you for your very effective presentation, I want to say, in respect to what our problems are and the difficulty of our problems.

MR. WORTH: Just one question. You refer to the quotation from Justice Beverley McLachlin that "rural voters make greater demands on their elected representatives," and we have heard in our hearings thus far a litany of activities that elected representatives participate in. I guess my question is: are all of these expectations that rural people have for their legislators, for their representatives, really related to effective representation? Let me push it a little further. How does riding in a parade, appearing at a golden wedding anniversary, selling cards at a bingo, you know, those sorts of things relate to effective representation?

MR. HEINEN: Sir, that gives you an indication of the mosaic of life in rural Alberta. That's what people in those areas expect. I'm certainly pleased that Mr. Grbavac is on the commission, because as a local councillor I think he's probably had to participate in a whole host of those things. That, sir, in rural Alberta is what constituents expect.

MR. WORTH: I know they expect it. I guess I was wondering if you thought it was a reasonable expectation related to the concept of effective representation.

MR. HEINEN: I would tend to think yes, because it would also, then, for them give the opportunity to represent the lifestyle that's out there to their urban counterparts.

MR. WORTH: Okay. Thank you.

MR. GRBAVAC: Well, a bit of a supplement to that, Roelof. Maybe we ought to let the urban MLAs ride in half a dozen parades instead of the rural MLA having to give up his entire weekends for the whole summer riding in what we've heard are 15 to 16 parades. That's why I would question to some extent your position on 'rurban' ridings. Medicine Hat tells us that it works fairly well. It gives the rural people an opportunity to enlighten their urban counterparts. John might want to comment on what happens to people who are crowded into urban settings, as was alluded to in an earlier brief.

You know, it seems to me that in some instances, in a city like Lethbridge, there may be some opportunity for a slight blending, if you will. It may give both constituents a better understanding of what the other's needs are, and I would hope that you would open the door a little bit to that option. I appreciate that you do, to some extent.

MR. HEINEN: Yes. First of all, though, we are suggesting that we maintain the status quo. That's what we are suggesting. Further than this, I think if you're looking at a tinkering, which we hope you are not, we are opposed to the 'rurban' concept.

MR. GRBAVAC: Okay.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'd like to just comment on the 'rurban' concept. Your brief I basically felt was well prepared, and I agreed with it, not that we're going to follow it. In respect to 'rurban', let me put it this way. Grande Prairie was 'rurbanized' last time, cut down basically in the middle between the east and west. Half of Grande

Prairie and everything west of there to the B.C. border is a 'rurban' constituency, and the east part of Grande Prairie and some distance east is another constituency. We have the Medicine Hat 'rurbanization' with Cypress. Apparently 60 percent of the people in that constituency come from Medicine Hat and 40 percent from Cypress. We dealt with this yesterday. Everybody said that that was fine, but at the same time everybody said they didn't want it 'rurbanized' any more. So I'm trying to be fair here.

I have this concept of 'rurbanizing.' I think that if you try to 'rurbanize' a constituency with Edmonton and Calgary, over the years there's sort of a feeling of animosity or whatever you want to call it. They don't want any part of one another. But if you try to 'rurbanize' a constituency with places like Lethbridge, Red Deer, Medicine Hat, Grande Prairie, this might be workable. Let's say that the people in the west part of Grande Prairie maybe farmed in the towns west of there, and they still have a common interest even though they're in the city. I was wondering whether I could move your association to accepting 'rurbanization' in the smaller cities.

MR. HEINEN: Well, sir, I think that in your observation on the 60-40, therein maybe lies part of the answer. I want to impress upon you that if that percentage moves much more the other way, then of course I would tend to think that the rurals are going to feel alienated. If the balance is fairly close, it may be a possible solution.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Joe, do you have any questions?

MR. LEHANE: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: John?

MR. McCARTHY: Yeah. I just want to make sure that I am clear. You indicate that you're the president of the AAMDC and that this position does represent the position of that organization as well as yours personally?

MR. HEINEN: Yes. We've been fairly consistent in our presentations on the matter.

MR. McCARTHY: Just a couple of points of interest following Mr. Grbavac's comments. For the interest of those in the audience, we received a submission from Chinook constituency from Mr. Eugene Kush, QC. You'll have to remember as I read this that I'm from the city of Calgary. He says in part:

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.

He also made a couple of radical proposals, including just a couple that I'll mention. A vote "should be allotted to each person as follows," and I'm just going to summarize some of them:

- a) One extra vote for those that are over 60 years of age . . .
- f) One extra vote for every 20 years that you have not been in jail, and a deduction of one vote for every year that you were in jail.

MR. HEINEN: Well, Mr. McCarthy, all I can say is that I sympathize with those of you that come from large urban centres.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Roelof.

The next presenter is George Bohne, town of Raymond. I might add that in the last paragraph of the town of Raymond's letter to us there was a complaint about the fact that we were scheduling this when the AUMA conference was on. We were aware of this, and we did make some changes to try and accommodate this conference and another one that are following one another, but we just had to hold these hearings in November if we're going to do a report for the end of January.

MR. BOHNE: Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity of being here tonight to address you on behalf of the town of Raymond. I do not intend to reiterate all the items in the brief. You've heard them expressed in many different ways tonight. There are just a couple of items that I think the town of Raymond would like to make known.

One, we believe that the status quo, as has been expressed many times tonight already, should remain in effect. Secondly, if there are changes, they should be minor ones. We would like to put our support behind that change regarding the current boundaries of the Cardston-Chief Mountain constituency. That would be that the boundaries are extended farther to the east to include the area north of Highway 52, as has been expressed before. That would incorporate the village of Stirling into the constituency.

This change would respect historical and settlement considerations and align with natural boundaries common to the culture of the constituency. Presently the town of Raymond is handling administrative services for the village of Stirling. It would be beneficial to have Stirling in the same constituency. You've also heard that the schools are the same. That's the only item that I would like to make known on behalf of the town of Raymond tonight in conjunction with all the other things that have been expressed.

Thank you very much.

9:22

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Bohne.

Wally, do you have any questions? Robert?

MR. GRBACAVAC: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe?

MR. LEHANE: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: John?

MR. McCARTHY: No, thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The next presenter is Barry Allen.

MR. ALLEN: Thank you. I feel a bit intimidated following all these excellent presentations. I think the theme is that we don't want change in rural Alberta, and if you don't have that message, I don't think you're listening. I'm not too well organized, so please bear with me. I guess everything I have to say has been said already, but I'd still like to get in my two cents worth.

The city of Calgary covers just under 700 square kilometres with 20 MLAs. Little Bow covers just under 13,000 square kilometres with one MLA. Little Bow has 26 different municipalities to deal with – that's hamlets, villages, towns – three public school boards,

two separate school boards, three health boards, and a couple of private school boards. How many has Calgary got? One council, one public board, one separate board, one health board, 20 MLAs. I use Calgary because it's the closest to Little Bow. Edmonton is very similar.

Calgary is very well represented. Calgary has 14 aldermen, 20 MLAs. I hear on talk shows almost daily that there are too many aldermen in Calgary. What does that say about the MLAs? The Calgary aldermen are just as effective. Mayor Al Duerr is listened to in the Legislature. He likely has more power than three-quarters of the MLAs in Alberta, and I don't think that's an exaggeration. When Mayor Al Duerr speaks, the Legislature listens because he represents 700,000 people. He's a very powerful man.

Who knows the mayor of Carmangay or the mayor of Barons or the mayor of Hays? How powerful are they? Mr. Grbacavac suggested that those hundred other elected officials that we have in Little Bow represent us very well. Well, who knows the mayor of Carmangay here? Nobody. Who knows the mayor of Calgary? Those 14 aldermen and the mayor of Calgary are very powerful individuals, and they also have another 20 MLAs. They're very well represented.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms says that I have a right to effective representation, and in order to achieve this, the Supreme Court has ruled that populations may vary up to 25 percent from the average and to 50 percent under special consideration. Do you really feel that making Little Bow larger will allow me effective representation with my fellow Albertans in Calgary and Edmonton? I have one MLA spread that thin. You make a joke about the parades, but how about the 26 villages and councils and county councils and the hamlets that he has to deal with? That's no joking matter, people. I tell you: please be serious about this. These guys are spread very thin. It's damned hard to see my MLA.

I just told you what the size of Little Bow constituency is. It's 13,000 square kilometres. That's 100 by 130 kilometres. It's tough for our people to look our MLA in the eye. In the city of Calgary the people put on their running shoes and can be there in 15 to 20 minutes max. You suggest that you should make Little Bow bigger? I find that atrocious: a \$600,000 commission coming around Alberta again to water down my representation in the Legislature. I think it's atrocious. It's not fair. Rural Alberta deserves and expects better treatment. They expect and deserve effective representation, and that's critical. The true urban people of Calgary and Edmonton are very well represented.

These boundaries have been reviewed four times in the last six years. They meet all legal requirements; they meet the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Now, why are you messing with them? Please go back and tell Mr. Klein that everything's okay. We're the envy of the world. Do you really realize that? I've heard that before. You know, we have a helluva system here, and you're trying to fix it. You're going to break it. I tell you, you keep screwing with it, and you're going to mess it up. It was fixed just before the last election. People are just becoming accustomed to who their MLA is. You know, I just don't understand.

Regarding Mr. Grbacavac's comments and implications that there's really no difference between urban and rural because the urban people farm in the rural area and the rural people work in the city, well, it's certainly not the case in my area, and it's certainly not the case in Hays or Lomond or Enchant. I think you're out of touch or have tunnel vision for one little part of Alberta south of Lethbridge here. It's not fair to make comments like that to suggest or imply

that that is the general rule. It is not the general rule, Mr. Grbavac, and please realize that. Maybe for one little segment of southern Alberta here that could be partially true, but it's not the general rule. I take offence at comments like that coming from a board that's supposed to be listening to the people. You've already made up your mind. What is this? What are we considering? Why are you considering anything before you listen to all these fine presentations? You should be considering what these people are telling you. This should not even be in your flyer. I take offence at that. You shouldn't consider anything until you hear from the fine citizens of Alberta.

It is unreasonable to suggest that rural representation can continue to be effective if watered down again. It's a never ending battle, and I can't stress it firmly enough. The people of the city of Calgary and the city of Edmonton use their aldermen way more than their MLA. If I have any dealings with Edmonton, who do I go to, the mayor of Carmangay or Barons? What a suggestion that those officials have any influence or any connection up there. I have to go to Mr. McFarland. I'm glad he's here tonight. He's spread so damned thin that he is hard to get hold of. If he wasn't such a dedicated MLA, God, I'd hate to think what would happen to our so-called effective representation.

You know, why are we trying to fix something that meets the legal requirements and Charter requirements? Thank you. Enough yelling. But I take this very seriously, and please don't take it so lightly, like joking about our MLAs riding in the bloody parades. Commend them for being out talking to the people. The parade ride likely takes 10 minutes. What do you think they're doing the rest of the time? They're trying to talk to the people. Maybe you don't realize what it's like in Little Bow. Maybe the parade in Nanton is at 9 in the morning and at 2 in the afternoon in Hays. Now, that's a damn big commitment: to go from the parade in Nanton to Hays, Alberta. Do you have any idea how far that is? It's likely over 100 miles. Our constituency goes from Hays, Alberta, if you know where Hays is, to Chain Lakes, right to the forest reserve, and you're considering changes. Oh, shame on you.

Thank you very much.

9:32

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Allen. Just a second. Somebody may want to ask you a question, or do you want to leave?

MR. ALLEN: Well, I likely should leave.

THE CHAIRMAN: John, do you have any questions?

MR. McCARTHY: Where do you live?

MR. ALLEN: Barons.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe?

MR. LEHANE: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Wally? Robert?

MR. GRBAVAC: Well, Mr. Allen, I was just trying to impress upon you the divergence of view that has been represented to us, and unfortunately you misconstrued that to infer that that was in fact my position. I apologize for my inability to communicate, but I'm just

reflecting to you some of the positions that were taken by our urban representations. I haven't even alluded to the fact that a great majority of them suggested that we reduce the number of MLAs from 83 to something in the order of 30, 20, or 60. I hadn't even referred to that. We have a number of submissions that speak to that as well, and I'm just trying to give you an idea of the breadth and width of the kinds of representations we receive. I want to assure you that I don't take lightly the views of rural Alberta. I've been re-elected on six occasions to a rural municipality, and I don't need to be reminded of the needs of rural Alberta. I think I've had ample opportunity to experience them, but I do appreciate the emotion and the sincerity with which you made your presentation.

Thank you.

MR. ALLEN: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next presenter is Barry McFarland, MLA. You've got a tough act to follow. I don't know if I should make that remark.

MR. LEHANE: He comes well recommended though.

MR. McFARLAND: Good evening, and good evening everyone else. I don't quite know what to say. I had hoped that everyone here would have had their chance. I believe maybe I am the last one, and I admire your power of retention in more ways than in thought.

I just wanted to express a personal point of view as a relatively new MLA, Your Honour and board commissioners, I guess for the record more than anything. The past experience that I've had on county council along with Mr. Grbavac – we had some good times, and I think all of us have grown in the experiences we've had being able to serve people in our locally elected municipalities and now in my case in a provincial riding. I'm very proud of the riding, and as some of the people who've addressed the travel distances before have indicated, it does take an awful lot of time. I don't say it with any political motivation. I'm trying to look at the future regardless of what political power is representing our riding or at what point in time that ever occurs. All I was wanting to impress upon you was the real importance of effective representation for all the areas.

Our riding grew by about 25 percent between 1992 and 1993. We absorbed some of the former Pincher-Macleod riding, and to be honest, after that point we did have in the constituency office some calls about the size of ridings and, of course: how are you going to effectively get around to all of these people? The other thing that's an honest statement, Your Honour, is since that time I haven't had – out of all the types of calls you get in a constituency office the one with the big zero beside it is the size of the riding. It's not an issue in our constituency that I'm aware of.

I can put it in perspective. If you were to flip our riding at its longest point from the city of Calgary north towards Edmonton, the point would come out in the Wetaskiwin-Leduc riding. So it's not a stretch of the imagination. It comes from 35 miles this side of Medicine Hat, which is southeast of Hays, out against the Rockies west of Chain Lakes, as Mr. Allen had previously indicated, and it goes from the city of Lethbridge here on the north shore of the Oldman up to the Bow River south and east of Calgary.

I guess that raises maybe one of the last points that I'd like to draw to your attention. As far as Little Bow is concerned, it's pretty much defined by natural boundaries already. To the east and to the south by the Bow River it's a natural curve that swings out behind

Vauxhall and Hays where it joins up with the Oldman, and our southern boundary is the Oldman River itself. That in itself may not be too unique, but there are only four bridge crossings for traffic between the Carseland point and down southeast of Hays. One is on a primary highway and three are on secondaries. On the Oldman we have three river crossings from west of Peers out towards Macleod to a point north of Taber, and two of those are on primary highways and one is on a secondary. So it does inhibit natural travel, in my mind, and natural trading areas between the two constituencies. I've been able to work very well with colleagues both in Taber-Warner and Pincher Creek-Macleod, and I'm proud to do that, but it means that we've already split existing geographic boundaries for two of the MDs and two of the counties that are involved as well as the Siksika Nation to the north.

I think that was the gist of my comments, other than ease of returning home if you are in two of the major cities. As you're aware, there's 35-minute flight service on almost an hourly basis between the two major centres, but for many of us it's a five-hour drive home. I envy my city colleagues because they are able to get home during the week and visit with their constituents and host their town hall meetings and so on, whereas many of us in the rural areas have to work our schedules mainly around the weekends. We'll spend anywhere from five to six months in session, and many of our rural town, village, MD, and country councils meet on the same nights, so you're almost limited. It will take me over the course of a year, nearly the full year, just to meet once with all the councils when you work in the times that are available.

The last thing that I just point out of interest to your commission is that it's one thing to visualize something on a map and quite another to drive it. When I enter the very northwest part of the riding, if I could drive nonstop to the southeast, it'd take me over two and a half hours. My closest bulk dealer – I was a farmer before I became a politician – is farther away than crossing the city of Calgary or the city of Edmonton. So there are a lot of convenience factors for my constituents, whether it's schooling, hospitalization, or anything that might be taken for granted and worked upon within the cities. I think my biggest challenge is not to pick apart numbers with colleagues in the Legislature on the size or the number of people they represent but rather to try to impress on them the challenges that we've got trying to understand each other's differences within the province. It's not strictly rural or urban. It's north and south. It's irrigation, dryland ranching, heavy industry, and the whole works.

Thank you for listening to me, and good luck. I don't envy you all the travel that you have to do. Have a safe trip.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, thanks, Mr. McFarland. Just a second. There may be some intelligent questions coming.

MR. WORTH: Mr. McFarland, at one of our other hearings we heard from one of your fellow MLAs. He drew our attention to a view that he held. In addition to his ability to provide effective representation, being a function of the landmass that he represented and the distribution of the population within that landmass, the question of resources available to him was a very key component in relation to his ability to provide effective representation. His position was that one of the things this commission ought to do is recommend that additional resources be provided to the rural MLAs who are some distance from the Legislature to enable them to perform their representative function more effectively, such as being

able to perhaps open more than one constituency office in different sections or parts of the constituency, have additional help, and so on. I'd like your comments on that proposition, please.

9:42

MR. McFARLAND: I guess that comes down to a dollar question, and that's probably better addressed by the Members' Services Committee, which is an all-party committee. The fact is that each of the MLAs is allotted the same number of dollars for a constituency allowance, and that \$43,000 to an MLA in a large centre probably can be used more effectively than that same \$43,000 in our case, where we have 13 towns and villages.

A bulk mail-out is a big item. If I were to do a mail-out to every household in our constituency, that cost is \$6,500. I can't do bulk mail-outs because part of the postal service would be in Mr. Coutts' riding, part would be in my riding, going the other way it could be in Mr. Hierath's, and you can kind of follow from there. You do one mail-out, and you've taken care of one-seventh of the constituency allowance.

You can imagine what it would cost for the power and the utilities to have a very spartan constituency office in two or three locations. I contemplated it when I was first elected in 1992, and I found just getting home on the weekends was going to be more of a disadvantage to the constituents. They would see that you had an office but that you were never able to be there. They don't want to talk to a constituency assistant. They don't want to talk to another secretary. They can do that on the phone. They want to talk to you.

MR. WORTH: Thank you.

MR. GRBAVAC: Barry, can I put a proposition to you? We've had access to one of the government aircraft to travel these vast distances we have to cover in a very short period of time. It seems to me that the government has that investment sitting there on the tarmac in Edmonton. I don't know how heavily it's utilized. In 20 minutes we were in St. Paul, in another 20 minutes we were in Wainwright, 20 minutes later we were in Drumheller, and about half an hour later we were in Medicine Hat. It seems to me that when we met in all of those areas virtually every MLA told us they drove almost exclusively to Edmonton. As a matter of fact, one of the MLAs told us last night that they spent the equivalent of three and a half months on the road driving, something in the order of 35,000 or 40,000 kilometres. Is it not possible to arrange your schedules to take advantage of a more efficient means of transportation than having to drive from Medicine Hat all the way to Edmonton twice a week, which was in fact what it worked out to in his case?

MR. McFARLAND: I think that would be an ideal situation. On an average year I will put on between 75,000 and 90,000 kilometres. Part of it is the function that you're with.

MR. GRBAVAC: Oh, I'm sorry. I stand corrected. They said 78,000 to 80,000 kilometres. That was miles. We got in a debate about kilometres and miles.

MR. McFARLAND: Yeah, our vehicles are all in kilometres.

Ideally, yes, it would work. There's the public perception of government MLAs flying in taxpayer-paid aircraft which won't go away. I believe the fact of the matter is that the King Air costs in the neighbourhood of 15 cents a mile to fly. They're in excess of 20

years old, but they're excellent aircraft. I do not think you could do a route, except perhaps during session, that could accommodate the MLAs with their various duties, because the standing policy committees, for instance, all meet on alternate days so that MLAs can try to attend all the meetings if they so desire. So the aircraft would be in the air virtually nonstop. Constituency matters would have to be dealt with that some MLAs would choose to drive home for. It may become very awkward to deal with because you would have somebody saying, "Well, why should the aircraft head down south when it should be out northwest?" It might be a logistical thing more than anything. I agree that there might be some times when the government aircraft could be used to pick up all MLAs. If it was once a week service, fine and dandy, but then I guess you face that same old thing: you've got 18 MLAs in Calgary who have to get back quite often and do so probably on a more frequent basis than many of the other MLAs.

MR. GRBAVAC: It just seems to me that if you consider the MLA's time of any value – and we've heard time and time again that it's been taken from the constituents that they represent, so obviously it has considerable value – at 25 cents a kilometre to drive a vehicle, that is a fairly expensive option as well, and that's why I propose it. You know, I just wonder if there aren't alternative options to help rural MLAs make more time available to spend with their rural constituencies. I certainly appreciate that I don't understand all the subtleties. I just propose a proposition to you.

MR. McFARLAND: And I'm not totally conversant with the abilities of all the airstrips that we have throughout the province. I do know this: the government employs some very cautious and, you'll be happy to know, some very excellent pilots. They're not ones that would take a chance and land on, I'll call it, a rural airstrip in anything less than ideal conditions if it's going to jeopardize passengers or the aircraft. So that might present a problem as well.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe, any questions?

MR. LEHANE: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: John?

MR. McCARTHY: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Barry, for coming. We're not privileged with all of the MLAs showing up at our hearings, but we appreciate the MLAs coming, because they have a very good knowledge of what goes on.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, that concludes our evening in respect to the scheduled speakers. I notice that it's 10 to 10. If anybody wants to speak for the next 10 minutes, we'll let them speak.

Thank you for coming. This hearing is now . . . [interjection] Oh, I think it is just the media man.

MR. FORSYTH: No. If I could just ask a question of you. I don't mean to interrupt.

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, okay.

MR. GRBAVAC: There was a gentleman over here.

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, I'm sorry.

MR. DICK: Well, it doesn't matter.

THE CHAIRMAN: Go ahead. What's your name, first?

MR. DICK: I'm Henry Dick. I farmed for 50-some years in Little Bow.

THE CHAIRMAN: In Little Bow?

MR. DICK: Right. I live in Lethbridge now.

THE CHAIRMAN: You're one of these 'rurban' people.

MR. DICK: Oh, I'm one of these guys that got converted. I came to town and thought it was a lot easier to make a living here than out there.

THE CHAIRMAN: Don't let me distract your thinking. Go ahead with what you wanted to say.

MR. DICK: I didn't bring a written submission. Allan Dudley expressed himself with just about my feelings on the rural areas not being represented properly. I don't think they should be enlarged so that there are more rural area members of parliament taken out and turned over to the urban area.

Also, Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West and John Gogo as representatives brought some good reports, and I would go along with them. Now that I've lived in Lethbridge for eight years, I've found that the people in Lethbridge that I associate with really haven't got a clue how we make a living out there. They think, well, if you've got an irrigation farm, you're rolling in money from beets and cattle, and if you've got a dry farm, you're living off subsidies from the government and everything is just hunky-dory out there.

As a farmer of around 50 years I find that we in the rural areas are not represented properly in Edmonton even with the members of parliament we do have because we're scattered too far away. I was chairman of Bow River Gas Co-op in Little Bow. I had 2,300 square miles of easement to get my gas lines across. I had 700 customers, and I didn't even see those customers, except when they didn't pay their bills. That's the only time I really got to see them. So I would urge you to leave the rural areas the way they are. Don't cut them down any.

I know you people are doing an excellent job. You've got a big headache here actually. Like you said, you're volunteering for a dental job that you don't need. I think I'm a pretty good friend of Bob Grbavac here, and I don't take offence to his remarks. I didn't think he meant it the way it came out.

I would like to thank you for this opportunity of being able to present my short brief. Thank you.

9:52

THE CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Mr. Dick. Does anybody wish to ask Mr. Dick a question?

Well, thank you for making your views known.  
Do you wish to go there?

MR. FORSYTH: Well, it might be of general interest. I'm Howard Forsyth of Magrath, *Westwinds Community News*.

THE CHAIRMAN: Howard Forsyth.

MR. FORSYTH: Right. It was my impression that when you came to Lethbridge, you were expecting testimony from everywhere around Lethbridge including the city?

THE CHAIRMAN: Correct.

MR. FORSYTH: Is it a surprise to you that nearly all of the comments came from the rural and very little from the city as compared to elsewhere in the province? Is that something that startles you, or is that routine and understandable?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I want to put it this way, Mr. Forsyth. This is just our first week of traveling around the province. We're traveling for two more weeks. When we go to places like Red Deer and Peace River and Grande Prairie, we will see whether those people attend. But basically the two constituencies of Lethbridge did not appear tonight.

MR. FORSYTH: You haven't visited enough of the moderately sized cities to have a comparison.

THE CHAIRMAN: This is the first one.

MR. FORSYTH: Well, Medicine Hat.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, Medicine Hat. We had a very interesting exchange yesterday with those people and a very good exchange, but basically the constituency of the greater part of Medicine Hat did not appear to any great extent.

MR. FORSYTH: I think that was the answer to my question. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. The proceedings are adjourned. Thanks for coming.

[The hearing adjourned at 9:54 p.m.]