

**Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings
Wetaskiwin**

1:00 p.m.

[Chairman: Chief Judge Edward R. Wachowich]

THE CHAIRMAN: Could you please be seated. I want to welcome you to the public hearings of the Electoral Boundaries Commission, and before we start I'd like to make lengthy introductory remarks.

Good afternoon. 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: Robert Grbavac of Raymond on my far left, Joe Lehane of Innisfail on my immediate right, John McCarthy of Calgary on my far right, and Wally Worth of Edmonton on my immediate left. 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 in respect to our duties.

The commission is holding public hearings here in Wetaskiwin to receive and to consider your arguments and points of view with respect to the areas, the boundaries, and the names of 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, we 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 put before you for your consideration the following summary of the law of Alberta with respect to electoral boundaries. One, our function is to review the existing electoral boundaries and to make proposals to the Legislative Assembly about the areas, the boundaries, and the names of the electoral divisions in Alberta.

Two, 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 the 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 proposal to the Speaker. The second set of hearings will be held in 1996, probably in March, after our report to the Speaker has been made public. We are required to hold public hearings to enable representations to be made to us by any person or organization in Alberta about the areas, the boundaries, and the names of 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. 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 in Alberta in accordance with the resolution. This law will come into force when proclaimed before the holding of the next general election.

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

Number of electoral divisions. The second rule is that the commission is required to divide Alberta into 83 proposed electoral divisions. The commission may take into consideration any factors it considers appropriate. But it must and shall take into consideration the following: one, the requirement for effective representation as guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; two, sparsity and density of population; three, common community interests and community organizations including those of Indian reserves and Métis settlements; four, whenever possible the existing community boundaries within the cities of Edmonton and Calgary; five, the existing municipal boundaries; six, the number of municipalities and other local authorities; seven, geographical features including existing road systems; eight, the desirability of understandable and clear boundaries.

The population rule is that the proposed electoral division must be not 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 the boundary of the province of Alberta.

This is a very general overview of the legislation, but we must now also turn to the guidance that has been provided by the Supreme Court of Canada and the Supreme Court of Alberta. 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 a vote of an elector cast not unduly diluted; three, the right to give effective representation; four, the right to have the parity of votes of others diluted but not unduly in order to gain effective representation 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 we make to the Legislature.

The commission in its public advertising has clearly stated that it is considering after 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 revision 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, 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 reasoning of all organizations and individuals in Alberta with respect to the areas, boundaries, and names of all electoral divisions.

We will now start our hearings by calling upon the first presenter: Frank Coutney, the administrator of the county of Wetaskiwin. We're also going to have Alderman Lloyd Johnston join him, as I understand they have to leave early.

1:10

MR. JOHNSTON: Thank you very much, Judge Wachowich. We're going to make a joint submission here. In fact, it involves more than the city of Wetaskiwin and the county of Wetaskiwin. We have consulted and have the support of our Chamber of Economic Development and Tourism, the downtown . . . Do you have copies provided to you?

THE CHAIRMAN: They're being photocopied right now. Go ahead.

MR. JOHNSTON: Okay. . . . business revitalization zone, the town of Millet, and specifically the county and the city of Wetaskiwin. We've solicited and had the support of the West Central Planning Agency in the development of this paper, providing some of the background to it.

I guess I can say that we do have a number of objections to the existing electoral boundaries, and we'll describe those to you later. Our important point we want you to accept is that there have really been four boundary reviews or changes in the last five elections, and we believe that the expense and the dislocation caused by another boundary review are not justified at this time. Every time something like this happens we have municipalities, school boards, health authorities, other local agencies that interact with government that have to build new relationships with new MLAs. That's inefficient and wasteful in our opinion. We've certainly learned to live with the boundaries that we have now and our present MLAs, and they, too, have learned to work with us in what I would say is a very good relationship at this time. So with the increased costs and savings in

mind we would ask that these boundaries be continued in the manner that they are.

If, however, those boundaries have to be redrawn, we would recommend that they be redrawn or reviewed not after every election but every 10 years after the Canada census figures are available. The present boundaries used the 1991 census figures, and following that recommendation the next review should be made after the 2001 census data is available.

Now, we certainly appreciate the pressure the commission is under from the recent court decisions that may cause us to redraw those boundaries. So if in fact that's true, we'd ask that we seriously consider boundaries that make up and support the community of interest, reflect those trading areas, and not violate municipal boundaries to the extent that the county of Wetaskiwin and the county of Camrose are represented by fewer MLAs than the current three that are involved in those two respective counties today.

It's worth repeating, commission members, those of you from the urban areas, why it's so important to have municipal boundaries the same as the riding boundaries. When you have municipalities, school boards, health authorities, and other groups conferring constantly with MLAs about things like secondary road priorities, school building programs, roles of hospitals, health centres, senior citizens' centres, the assessment system, and other services, it's important that we're dealing with as few people as possible both locally and regionally. For example, take the MLA for Ponoka-Rimbey, who's got 27,810 constituents living in three separate school divisions, or the county of Wetaskiwin, that has to convince three MLAs about its secondary road priorities, or even think about the time it takes to arrange meetings with three MLAs and their obvious divided loyalties, because they also have to represent other groups maybe with competing interests. So for those reasons and others, that's why in rural Alberta it's so necessary to have constituency boundaries that respect the municipal boundaries.

However, it's not enough just to respect municipal boundaries. We've got increasing government services provided on a regional basis. We've got health authorities and we've got school authorities, two of the most common, I guess, in our society. There will be certainly more. There's an increasing number of voluntary organizations that have intermunicipal service providers, assessment services, the safety code inspections that are necessary in our communities, library service, and planning advice. As far as possible, those constituency boundaries should be coterminous with those regional authorities.

The electoral boundaries in Wetaskiwin: if they must be redrawn, we ask you to remember that our linkages and our business are first to the north and west of Wetaskiwin, secondly to the south, and thirdly to the east. We've attached some maps that illustrate that point.

In conclusion, we repeat that although the present constituency boundaries in this province aren't perfect and in some places may violate the guidelines, we believe that the cost and the dislocation caused by new boundaries would certainly outweigh any benefits there might be from changing them and recommend no change at this time.

I want to emphasize again that it's important that your commission find the necessary justifications to support those existing boundaries. I'm sure as you go across this province you're going to find people that are going to tell you why a rural MLA has a lot more difficult job in covering his territory than somebody in an urban centre. However, if the commission does see fit to start redrawing these

boundaries, we ask that they follow municipal and other service boundaries to the greatest extent possible.

Mr. Wilson, the reeve of the county of Wetaskiwin, is certainly here so that if you have some questions, he'd be pleased to try and answer.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Wilson, do you want to make a presentation at all?

MR. WILSON: No, thanks. I think Lloyd has covered it quite well.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, then we'll see if any members of the commission want to ask you any questions.

MR. WORTH: Mr. Johnston and Mr. Wilson, I'm pleased to hear that you acknowledge the dilemma we face in terms of trying to acknowledge or recognize county boundaries, let's say, or municipal boundaries at the same time as trying to get a manageable number of people in a constituency for an MLA to work with.

We have received from the county of Camrose a very similar proposal to the one you're making. Currently that county is divided up so that they're in three different electoral divisions. The problem becomes, I think, how we cope with that kind of aspiration of having county boundaries and electoral division boundaries coterminous and then the other expectation that we provide a manageable number of people in a manageable-sized area for an MLA to work in. My question, I guess, is one that concerns the extent to which it might be feasible to try to work out something approximating two urban/rural constituencies in this area in the sense that some of the submissions we'll be hearing today refer to this area as a rural/urban area. I'm wondering whether it would be at all feasible to have two constituencies, one with a hub around Camrose and the other with a hub around Wetaskiwin. Do you have any comment on that?

MR. JOHNSTON: I would only say this. When we were associated with the city of Leduc, in Wetaskiwin we had an excellent working relationship. I can say the same thing for Camrose, albeit you have to recognize that those have to be secondary communities to Wetaskiwin, but set that aside.

I quite frankly think that if you focus on the trading area and those relationships you have with the other agencies, that can work quite well. However, we would be the first to recognize that you're going to have parts of some communities that are going to be cut off and represented otherwise. But I think if you can get the bulk of the community served by one MLA, that would be the most desirable objective.

MR. WILSON: I would have to concur with that. I don't think it's unworkable. I think it could be worked. In this case I think it may not be all that bad, but I think it'll depend, across the province, on just what you have for numbers in communities such as this. It would be the factor.

1:20

THE CHAIRMAN: Robert?

MR. GRBAVAC: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe?

MR. LEHANE: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: John?

MR. McCARTHY: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I guess there are no further questions, gentlemen. I want to thank you for coming here and making your views known, and I wish to apologize for not introducing you correctly. I was trying to change my notes here, and I'm a slow learner I guess.

Thanks.

MR. JOHNSTON: Well, thank you for the opportunity. We will have a signed copy with the county reeve and the mayor of Wetaskiwin in your possession.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you very much.

Now, the next presenter. I'm not sure. Is Frank Coutney here? Courtney, is it? Well, it's C-o-u-t on my sheet. That's okay.

The next presenter then. Is Neal Campbell here?

Then we'll go to Hayward Dow, Drayton Valley-Calmar PC Constituency Association.

MR. DOW: Mr. Chairman, sir, I'm Hayward Dow. We now have our copies that they had taken away from us all.

I'm from Calmar. I'm here today on behalf of the Drayton Valley-Calmar constituency. Our association has submitted a letter, and I won't bother to waste your time reading it because I'm sure the letter is on record here. I'll only refer to certain parts of the letter: most important, the rural areas and the larger and most difficult areas to access.

I'm aware that your commission is charged with reviewing the legality of the present electoral boundaries and making a recommendation to the Legislative Assembly by certain dates set out in your directive.

We have 83 seats in Alberta. If you divide the population by 83, then we would have approximately 31,000 per seat. This would be fine and it would be fair if our population was all in a rural area or an urban area, but we have some great variances in our province. We have Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, and Red Deer with two or more seats, Edmonton with 18, Calgary with 20. These areas have very concentrated population. There are other constituencies worth mentioning, like Wetaskiwin, Camrose, Sherwood Park, St. Albert, Leduc, Banff-Cochrane. Every one of these I've just listed has a good road system and is confined to a small area where an MLA can cross his entire area in anywhere from 10 minutes to an hour.

Then we have areas like Athabasca-Wabasca, Chinook, Lesser Slave Lake, Cypress-Medicine Hat, Peace River, and Drayton Valley, where it takes the best part of a day just to reach these areas, not to mention the great number of miles between different towns or villages or hamlets or the diverse lifestyles of these areas.

In Drayton Valley alone there are nine local municipal councils, four of which are rural and five from small urban centres. The three school boards which are part of the public and separate school systems must also be considered when the commission examines our boundaries. As well, there are two regional health authorities, numerous summer villages, hamlets, recreational organizations, societies, and service groups who demand the attention of the

provincial government representative. Therefore, to be an effective representative as a Member of the Legislative Assembly in Drayton Valley-Calmar constituency, one must be familiar with and able to respond to the diverse needs of the organizations within the boundaries of the constituency. This same situation exists in all rural constituencies in the province.

In contrast, the areas of greater Edmonton and Calgary have 18 to 20 MLAs respectively. However, these constituencies comprise only one incorporated municipality. Also, the urban representatives have only two school boards and one regional health authority to serve. Evidently, intergovernmental politics in urban areas is far less extensive than in rural areas.

In 1991-92 the boundaries commission recommended and I believe in 1993 the Legislative Assembly passed a law that allowed the plus or minus 25 percent variance in the population of any constituency, with four others allowed to go to a maximum of minus 50 percent.

I believe that section 17 of the boundaries commission Act must be acknowledged so that all rural areas of Alberta can be fully represented. Our economy in Alberta is too diversified to have a larger number of MLAs from the urban areas making the decisions for rural Alberta. We have far too many different lifestyles, such as oil, farming, fishing, mining, lumbering, and a good number of other lifestyles that only the people from those areas can fully comprehend.

Please let me assure you that I do not believe that the urban areas are not concerned, nor do I think they wouldn't represent the rural areas well. I just don't believe they have the firsthand knowledge that comes from living in these remote areas.

I feel and we in Drayton Valley-Calmar feel that our present boundaries are legal for one more provincial election and up to six more years before the law requires a review. Therefore, your decision may be just to leave the present boundaries as they are. But if you decide to recommend change, then I hope you will consider the maximum of the plus 25 percent for the urban areas and the minus 25 for the rural areas.

In making your recommendations to the Legislative Assembly, I would ask that you take into consideration the following. Governments are downloading on municipal governments, therefore creating a greater need for the area's MLA to have time to spend with each community and yet be able to devote time to individuals that have special needs. Quite often we find our MLAs with a cabinet position, which greatly reduces the time available to spend in his local constituency. Therefore, should we find the area of any constituency larger, I feel this would be in direct contrast to our democratic society, which guarantees equal representation for all people.

Gentlemen, in closing, we in Drayton Valley constituency feel you have been given a very difficult job and hope that in your decision you will seriously consider the effect that more urban MLAs would have on rural Alberta. We ask only that we have equal representation, and equal representation can only come from the time our MLAs have to spend in actual contact with the people in any area.

Thank you for your consideration and allowing me to come here. If you have any questions, I'll be glad to try to answer them.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'll start with you, John, this time.

MR. McCARTHY: No questions.

MR. LEHANE: Hayward, where is the present constituency office located for the MLA?

MR. DOW: In Drayton Valley.

MR. LEHANE: What would the time and distance be from Edmonton?

MR. DOW: Probably to get to the constituency office in Drayton Valley itself is about two hours.

MR. LEHANE: Thank you, sir.

MR. WORTH: Hayward, are you from Drayton Valley?

MR. DOW: No, I'm from Calmar.

MR. WORTH: What's the marriage like between Drayton Valley and Calmar in the sense that they appear on the surface to be two quite different communities and areas?

MR. DOW: Quite frankly, we can sleep in the same bed every night. It's quite a good marriage.

THE CHAIRMAN: Robert?

MR. GRBAVAC: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I guess that's all the questions, Hayward. I want to thank you for coming and making your association's views known.

MR. DOW: Thank you for giving me the time.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next presenter is Albert Klapstein, the reeve of the county of Leduc. Go ahead.

MR. KLAPSTEIN: Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on electoral boundary review with you.

The county of Leduc supports the status quo. We experienced substantial change in our constituency boundaries prior to the last election. According to the Election Act the boundaries will be subject to review after the next provincial election. To provide a responsible level of continuity for the electorate, we think it is preferable to have the boundaries remain unaltered at this time. It is our understanding that the current electoral boundaries meet all legal and constitutional tests. If this is so, we believe that the review of this matter at this time is unwarranted. This is the fourth political commission studying this matter in six years. The political voice of the county of Leduc is already split into two constituencies, Leduc and Drayton Valley-Calmar. We hope that any recommendation this commission may make will not further divide the community of interest that is the county of Leduc. The population of our present constituency is just slightly below the average constituency population provincially. However, we are well within the 25 percent allowable variance based on the 1991-92 final report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

1:30

We ask that special attention be given to the needs and concerns of rural areas. Due to large geographic areas, transportation barriers, the number of communities and local governments, it is more difficult for a rural MLA to provide effective representation. Equal population per constituency may well not be equitable in terms of being able to achieve effective representation. At the provincial level there is no second legislative body to accommodate minority interests as the Senate at the federal level provides.

Earlier, on October 13, 1995, we made a written submission to the hon. chairman, Mr. Wachowich, in support of the status quo. We now include a copy of that letter for easy reference, and we are grateful for this additional opportunity to share our thoughts and concerns.

THE CHAIRMAN: John, I think Mr. Johnston brought up this matter as to why we're doing all these reviews. I see that Mr. Johnston is still here. We have a specialist on our panel who answers this question, because we're being asked this no matter where we go. Maybe you can explain why we're doing this again.

MR. McCARTHY: Well, I'll try. There are two cases, legal decisions, one by the Supreme Court of Canada and one by the Alberta Court of Appeal, that may help explain why the Legislature reacted and created this commission by way of an amendment to the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act which I think came into force in May of this year.

The Supreme Court of Canada in 1991 came out with a decision called the Carter case. If I can summarize what the Supreme Court of Canada was dealing with, it was dealing with the Saskatchewan boundaries question and the difference in the relative voting powers of the urban and rural voters and hence the disproportionate number of rural constituencies versus urban constituencies when you divide it on strict population terms. They call the average the population quotient. If you divide 83 constituencies into the population of Alberta, you'd come up with just under 31,000 voters per constituency.

In Saskatchewan a similar problem was encountered, and the Supreme Court of Canada considered this issue. In summary what the Supreme Court of Canada said was:

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.

So those were kind of the marching orders that the Supreme Court of Canada came up with.

Then we had our boundaries revised as a result of the Legislature acting on the recommendations of the legislative committee, and those are the boundaries that are presently in force. Those boundaries, as they were set up, were referred to the Alberta Court of Appeal. They were asked to determine whether they were in

conformance with the Charter of Rights. The Alberta Court of Appeal was aware of that Supreme Court of Canada decision when it made its decision. I will read the concluding remarks. I can read other parts if we get into a discussion and deem that we have to. Basically what the Court of Appeal said is as follows, and this I think explains the dilemma that we're faced with.

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

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

THE CHAIRMAN: John, did you have a question also?

MR. McCARTHY: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe?

MR. LEHANE: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Robert?

MR. GRBAVAC: Yes. Albert, I'd like to pose to you an observation that I have had the opportunity of hearing during the course of this process, and I'd like you to respond to that. Some of the people in the urban areas – I'll call them urban for lack of a better word – have suggested to us that the representation in rural Alberta has lots of support in that maybe some of these larger rural ridings may have three or four villages, a couple of towns, maybe one or two school boards, and part of a regional hospital district. They're suggesting that maybe some of these larger rural constituencies may have upwards of 50 to 100 elected officials, and those officials have an opportunity to meet with various government officials and departments and cabinet ministers. They're suggesting that maybe that in itself makes representation of a rural constituency easier.

We had the other school of thought where the people who live in those constituencies are saying that that makes it much more difficult for a rural MLA, because they have to be acquainted with all of these various municipal levels of government and school boards and hospital boards, et cetera. I just wonder if you could comment on that as a reeve of the county?

MR. KLAPSTEIN: Well, I think we were looking at it from the point of view of an MLA having to deal with, you know, a large number of jurisdictions, be they municipal or health or school, whatever. I think maybe what you're doing is you're weighing the volume of contact against, I'd say, the frequency of contact in terms of how good communication happens.

MR. GRBAVAC: Well, I'm just trying to give you two different perspectives of the same thing.

MR. KLAPSTEIN: I don't think we'd be having any of this discussion if there wasn't a diversity of opinion on the matter.

MR. GRBAVAC: You're suggesting that it makes rural representation more difficult?

MR. KLAPSTEIN: Yes. That's our position.

Mr. Chairman, if I might ask a further question on the Alberta Court of Appeal's ruling.

THE CHAIRMAN: Go ahead.

MR. KLAPSTEIN: You said that they would not countenance not having a review done prior to the next election. Are there reasons given for that?

1:40

MR. McCARTHY: Yeah. It's a fairly lengthy decision, but I can read a few further passages for you. They get into some specifics. I'll just read two more paragraphs to you that again kind of highlight the concern that the court came out with. Understand, please, that these aren't my words; these are the court's words. The chairman of the committee that decided this was Mr. Bogle, who's now a retired MLA. He was the member for Taber-Warner in southern Alberta. The court referred to him, and they said:

The Chairman added that ". . . the first priority would be to respect existing constituency boundaries, if possible . . .". This is, of course, a simple way to assuage the concern of some voters.

The new electoral map clearly shows the result of that approach. For example, it was common ground before us that the population figures indicated the need, in the absence of any special considerations, to reduce the number of divisions in southern Alberta by two. Mr. Bogle acknowledged this in his affidavit . . . but explained that the committee chose instead to reduce the number of divisions by one, despite the fact that a further reduction would eliminate one of the smallest divisions in the province, which, by happenstance, was that for which he was then the sitting member. One reason he gives in his affidavit for this decision was that a further reduction "would have meant a sudden and substantial reduction in the level of representation." That is, we observe, exactly the concern of some electors. The concern, we feel constrained to add, of other electors, those in Metropolitan Alberta, was that their existing inadequate level of representation would remain reduced.

Now, the court then went on to make this comment, which was reported, I think, in the *Edmonton Journal*:

As we have said, the origin of the problem before the Legislature is the historic imbalance in the level of representation between agrarian and non-agrarian populations in Alberta. Each year this problem worsens, because each year urban populations increase and non-urban populations decrease. We call this a problem because it impacts significantly on the right to vote of urban Albertans. This cannot be permitted to continue if Alberta wishes to call itself a democracy. The courts, and the people, have rejected the notion of mechanical one-person, one-vote equality. That does not mean we can or should accept significant disparities without reasoned justification just because some members of the population resist change.

That's kind of the thread of what the court is coming out with throughout its judgments. So that, I think, explains probably the reason why we're here and the dilemma we face. The court seems to take a different approach than a lot of the people who are making submissions to us.

MR. KLAPSTEIN: Yeah. Yet I understood the comments earlier about the Supreme Court of Canada decision being that effective representation was as much a concern as equality of numbers.

With that, I'll just thank you for the opportunity to appear before you.

THE CHAIRMAN: And our problem is determining what's fair between effective and equality.

Okay. The next presenter is Shirley Cripps. I would like to add that the last time around on the Electoral Boundaries Commission Shirley Cripps was sitting up here as one of the members of the commission. I'm very glad that she as a former commission member has agreed to come before our commission to give her views, because I think she has a lot of experience in this field. Welcome.

MRS. CRIPPS: Your Honour, members, as a former member of the commission I don't envy you your task, but I can tell you one thing, that if you listen carefully and get out and talk to these people who are here making presentations, this will be the most enjoyable part of your task, the hearings.

I also note that 50 percent of the voters are women. Looking around, I'd say that we're very underrepresented both on the commission and in the hall.

THE CHAIRMAN: I want to comment that that's not our fault.

MRS. CRIPPS: And there's nothing you can do about it.

MR. GRBAVAC: We've had a number of submissions that spoke to that problem.

MR. McCARTHY: Actually, Mrs. Cripps, if you wouldn't mind suggesting that I be replaced by someone else of a different gender, I'd volunteer.

MRS. CRIPPS: I guess the crux of this matter is effective representation. I was concerned – and I wrote to you with that concern – when I read your newspaper article. It appeared to me that you had already made a determination that absolute voter parity was essential. That really concerned me because, in the first place, I think it's impossible; in the second place, I think it's very undesirable.

I recognize that you're going on a census, but in the first place you don't know how many of those people on the census are voters. They may vary by district and by city and by ability to be on a voters list. You know, the census is the number of people in a town, but they aren't always the same in terms of the number of people who can actually vote because they are eligible. There's a wide disparity there, and I think if we look at some of the areas in some of the towns and cities, you'll find that to be so. P.E.I. even, in the federal constituencies, has far more representatives than they're eligible to have because the federal government believes they need that in order to have effective representation.

One of the things that the last commission looked at, unfortunately, was 'rurban', or the inclusion of rural areas into the cities of Edmonton and Calgary. If there was one area that we got substantive, repetitive submissions on, it was from the people who did not want the people in Edmonton and Calgary included in the surrounding areas. There was a fear of it, a fear that they would not be represented, a fear that there would be interests which were very divergent in terms of the people surrounding the cities and the people in the cities. Those voices came not only from the rural areas, which I expected, but in very concert numbers from the urban

areas. Even though in many cases they had 3 to 1 voters, they were still violently opposed to such a concept.

In the rural areas such as around Red Deer, Lethbridge, and Medicine Hat, which I think have split constituencies, there isn't the same concern, because the people in Medicine Hat and in Red Deer and in Lethbridge are part and parcel of the community. They depend for their very existence on the rural area surrounding the centre, so they have an affinity, an affiliation, and an understanding of the area around them. A lot of the people that live in the urban centre are retired from the rural areas and maintain those rural roots. That is not true of Edmonton and Calgary.

Democracy, as you said earlier, is based on effective representation. In Hon. Justice McLachlin's Supreme Court decision she said: ours is the right to a representative democracy; the right to vote is the right to effective representation; the MLA functions in two roles, legislative and ombudsman. I just want to touch briefly on that, having served not only as a commission member but as a MLA for 10 years.

The MLAs outside the major cities are liaisons to the government. Most government services are available in Edmonton and Calgary. They are also probably available in Lethbridge, Grande Prairie, or Peace River, but they are not available on a general basis in the other towns and cities in this province to the same degree: employment offices, social services offices, sometimes no hospitals. There is not a government facility or a government service that can be quickly and easily and readily accessed by a citizen in the outlying communities around Alberta. Therefore they go to their MLA. That's the government contact. A lot of an MLA's time is spent directing them to the right government service. It's an ombudsman role, but it means that people must have access to their MLA and be able to contact him.

Also, having served in that role, I find that you have many days out of the constituency. You're in the Legislature for weeks at a time when the House is in session, and then you're up there usually two or three times a week for meetings. You spend weekends trying to catch up. I've talked to Edmonton MLAs, and they don't work on weekends. They have a five-day workweek.

THE CHAIRMAN: They're lazy.

MRS. CRIPPS: Well, no, I didn't say that. But they are able to do it.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm being facetious.

MRS. CRIPPS: Edmonton MLAs can go home at night. They can have meetings in the evening. They can drop out of the House when the House is in session to see a constituent for a few minutes. Our constituents don't have that same kind of access to their MLA. In fact, you can even run for mayor while being a full-time MLA in Edmonton. I certainly wouldn't want to try to run for mayor in Wetaskiwin and be a full-time MLA. Many Calgary MLAs fly home.

I remember sitting beside Neil Crawford one time, and I said: how big is your constituency? Oh, he said, about two square miles. Mine was 3,888 square miles. Peace River is 25,272 square miles. I calculated it last night. There are six councils and a dozen reserves and school boards, and those are just the ones I counted.

1:50

The difference between the workload of an MLA in a city and an MLA in a rural area is incredible, but the difference in being able to give effective representation is also something that must be considered. In Edmonton you have 18 MLAs speaking with one voice. Now, can you imagine the impact that 18 people talking about the sale of Edmonton Telephones has on the caucus and on the government? I mean, you're talking about a major effect. You've probably got at least five of those in cabinet, the same from Calgary, or more. Those people meet with one council, one health authority, and two school boards. Bob, I can tell you that the effectiveness of the MLAs throughout the province, while they may all be representing the same interest in the longer term, the variance from the different areas of the province puts a different spin on it. In Edmonton and Calgary you've got 18 and 20 MLAs representing the same point of view. You know, I can go back to dozens of examples where all of a sudden you hear a howl from Calgary, and when it's a howl from Calgary, it's a major, major howl.

So the voter power – and that's what we're talking about now; in parity of votes we're talking about the voter power – in terms of representation is far greater in the two cities than in the rest of the province. I believe there are three solitudes in this province. There's Edmonton, there's Calgary, and there's the rest of the province. The constituencies immediately adjacent to the city – St. Albert, Sherwood Park – have a good number of their people working in the city. Therefore their interests are also very contingent on what's best for the city in many cases.

In the rest of Alberta the MLAs meet with multiple councils, and I won't go over that because it's already been covered. But I can tell you from experience that it's true: the time that you have to take to spend meeting with your constituents is considerable.

Then there's a difference from southern Alberta and northern Alberta. You know, southern Alberta's got irrigation. Northern Alberta's got too damn much rain. They're totally different problems. Unless you get down there, you don't have the foggiest notion about irrigation or some of the problems in southern Alberta.

The hearings outside of Edmonton and Calgary are an example of Albertans, or voters, who supposedly have equal access to this commission. I think most of the people here have driven a substantial distance to get to this meeting. If somebody in Drayton Valley, which is a hundred and some miles away, wants to get to a meeting, they either have to come to Wetaskiwin, Edmonton, or Edson. I mean, it doesn't matter what kind of a meeting is set up provincewide, whether it's a cattle commission, a commission on this, a health commission meeting to find out what the pulse is of Alberta, everybody outside of the Highway 2 line has to drive to get to it basically, some people hundreds of miles, whereas in Edmonton and Calgary you've got a whole day where you're 15 to 20 miles from a meeting, three meetings actually. You have three in Edmonton and you have three in Calgary; do you not?

So one of my suggestions is that maybe you should drive to your meetings. Maybe you should drive to Peace River and Grande Prairie and Pincher Creek and just get a true effect. Find out how many meetings you can attend in a day and drive down there to do it. You know, MLAs don't have access to planes, government aircraft.

Now the map. As I said earlier, I did some work on the map because, well, first I wanted to know just exactly what you were facing this time. You have three advantages that we did not have. You have an extra MLA in Edmonton and Calgary, and last time there was really a wide divergence not in terms of the 1986 census

but in terms of the 1991 census, and we knew what it was going to be. Your report is judged in 1991, not in 1986. The native reserves were not counted. There were substantial numbers of people. In Hobbema there were 10,000, and they were not counted in the census, so they could not be counted in the constituency numbers.

If you look at the total population of Alberta, which is 2,554,779, Edmonton and Calgary in 1991 were 1,327,414, divided by 39 gives you 34,036 average for the 39 constituencies, which is 10.5 percent above the average. Very reasonable. If you look at the rest of Alberta, which is 1,227,361, divided by 44 constituencies, you have 27,894, which is 10.62 percent below the average, which again is not unreasonable. It's not anywhere near the 25 percent which is allowable in terms of your legislation.

So if the constituencies were left as is, it would not be unreasonable, except that in the major cities you have to take a look at the growth areas. It's not bad this time. I looked at them; they're not too bad. But last time there was one constituency in Edmonton which was 50 percent below the provincial average even within the city. So what I'm saying is that within the three areas – Edmonton, Calgary, and the rest of Alberta – it's important to look at the demographics to make sure that they are fairly distributed. The distribution between those areas is not unfair, but in some cases the distribution between those areas may be.

I believe one area that is underrepresented is northern Alberta. I believe one area that is overrepresented is southern Alberta. If you look at the area south, including Highwood, from the Elbow River then over to the Red Deer River and south, you have 10 constituencies. Seven of those are rural. The average is 23,906, which is 22 percent below the provincial average. If you look at northern Alberta, you have the seven northern constituencies including Fort McMurray, which has 34,000 – well above average – an average of 25,611, or 17 percent below the provincial average, which means that southern Alberta is 5 percent lower than northern Alberta.

If you look at northern Alberta – what did I say? – Peace River has 25,000 constituents. If you look at the fifth parallel, there are more people up there, or as many almost, probably more now, than there are in the Cardston–Chief Mountain constituency. Take a look at the size and the diversity and the area that an MLA must cover north of the fifth, and it's obvious that they are underrepresented. I think Albertans would see that it was fair to put a constituency of Wood Buffalo or whatever in northern Alberta. I believe that if they're going to have the concerns that they need to have addressed in northern Alberta, they definitely need to be well represented. Just given the distance, the weather, for goodness sakes, the roads, or lack thereof, and the diversity of the area, northern Alberta has always been, in my mind, underrepresented.

2:00

There are really five areas that you can look at in looking at the map: southern Alberta, central-west, central-east, and northern. I've covered two of them. The central west is very near the average. It would probably be right on the average if you took in the area surrounding Edmonton.

The central-east is a difficult one because of the sparsity of population, and it's probably the one that we had the most difficulty with in terms of Chinook, which is way below average. It's going to be very difficult for both you and Albertans in general to deal with. In looking at the 1993 census for Edmonton – that's the city census – even with the 1993 census they're still only 13.1 percent above the

average. So there's really no need for another constituency in Edmonton, particularly given that they're right there at the seat of government. That's a major factor.

Calgary in April of 1995 was 749,000, so it's growing faster than Edmonton, and with the 20 seats it would be 20 percent above. Medicine Hat has grown, though, from 42,000 to 43,000 and Lethbridge from 59,000 to 64,000 in the latest census. So the growth is not only in the cities; the growth is all over the province. I think you'll find that Grande Prairie probably has grown more than almost any rural city in the province.

I guess my main point, though, is that it is not an unrealistic division between urban constituencies in Edmonton and Calgary and the rest of Alberta. I'm doing this from a pragmatic point of view of the voter.

Effective representation. The last time one of the constituents from southern Alberta, I think it was, said that our MLA loses 50 days a year driving back and forth to the constituency. You know, that's almost two months. In fact, if you take working days, that's three months. An MLA or a constituent must drive long distances to see each other. That's imperative in thinking about effective representation.

Accessibility, the distance of the MLA to the centre of government, the size of the constituency, the deviation from relative equity of voters. The Charter says that it can only be justified if the deviation serves a purpose of achieving more effective representation. I frankly can't see that going to a closer voter parity would give better or more effective representation.

The number of municipalities and local authorities: we've dealt with that.

The key, I think, is the availability of government services. You'll be told by some lawyer that you have faxes and telephones and all this stuff. Did you ever try to get anything really accomplished through a fax or a telephone, particularly when it's a difficult problem? Maybe businesses do it, but it's on a straight fact-fact business basis. They're all working on it, so they have to make it work.

This whole exercise is about people and representation, not just voting. There's no question that the right to vote is paramount in a democracy. There is also no question that that means a right to effective representation, and the Supreme Court clarified that and said that the dilution of the vote can be justified if it gives effective representation. Ensuring citizens have accessible and effective representation has to be a key consideration in determining electoral boundaries. The spirit and the intent of effective representation must be met.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Fine.

John, go ahead.

MR. McCARTHY: I have a couple of maybe comments. If you saw our ad in the paper here – you indicated, I think, when you did your divisions that there were 20 and 19.

MRS. CRIPPS: No.

MR. McCARTHY: I thought I heard you say . . .

MRS. CRIPPS: Eighteen.

MR. McCARTHY: Yeah, okay. So Calgary is 15 percent above the quotient, or the average, and Edmonton is 11 percent. That's on the back of our newspaper flyer.

I read your submission with interest and maybe a little more interest than normal because of your background as an MLA and as a commission member and as a rural member. I found your comments interesting. You indicate that "it may be possible to lose 2 or 3 rural constituencies and still maintain a manageable workload along with effective representation." You indicated the area of southern Alberta, which I noted. You indicated the area of east-central Alberta, which I noted. I see Rocky Mountain House is 24 and a half percent below the average, according to our statistics. Are there any other areas, if you had to reduce the rural area, you would have any comments on or assistance for us?

MRS. CRIPPS: Well, in the first place when I wrote the letter, I didn't have the figures in front of me. I was in Ontario. When I looked at the figures, I found that there certainly wasn't a variance. Calgary and Edmonton each got one more constituency in the last go-round. Even in my own private report I recommended that. I believed that the variances were wide enough that that had to be done. That is not the case this time. I do not believe that the variances are wide enough to change the representation. Calgary has substantial growth, no question, but Edmonton's is minimal in comparison.

MR. McCARTHY: Okay. So just for the record, because you do have a written submission on the record as well as your verbal submission, is it fair to say that . . .

MRS. CRIPPS: No. I don't agree that there should be any more. At the very most – the very most – one in Calgary. I really believe, in terms of the development of northern Alberta and the importance of northern Alberta to the total Alberta economy, you should take a careful look at it.

From the point of view of the ag society they do not believe – and I concur with that, except I was doing it more pragmatically – and from my own point of view, there should be no change.

MR. McCARTHY: Okay. Then just one final. I don't know whether it's a question or a comment. You indicated that some lawyer would discuss faxes and telephones. I'm a lawyer, and I'm going to discuss faxes and telephones with you for a minute.

MRS. CRIPPS: I thought that's how you got out of giving answers.

MR. McCARTHY: I guess what I've been hearing – and I think it's the point you're making – is that faxes and car phones and telephones and computers, these new kinds of communication devices, assist in making representation more effective, but the most effective representation is still the personal contact.

MRS. CRIPPS: Definitely.

MR. McCARTHY: Thank you. Those are all the questions I have.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe?

MR. LEHANE: Just to follow up on that. Another observation that we heard, I believe out in the Wainwright or Drumheller area, was

that often the personal contact in a constituency comes from somebody of an older generation, perhaps a senior who isn't comfortable with some of the new electronic wizardry that we might have for communication. Would you find that was so in your experience?

2:10

MRS. CRIPPS: A hundred percent. In fact, I almost started to sell insurance so that people would make wills. You don't know how many times – and you don't have that. These urban MLAs told me that they never had anybody come in with a problem of that nature. I had all kinds of them come in. You know, "Joe said that this farm was mine and there was no problem." But the fact of the matter is that in law it's different. All kinds of things like that. So what you do is direct them to somebody that can help them.

MR. LEHANE: You've indicated, Shirley – and I don't want to put words in your mouth – that perhaps one constituency at the most might go.

MRS. CRIPPS: Absolute maximum.

MR. LEHANE: If there were a particular area in the province that you felt could still be effectively represented with the loss of one constituency, what area in terms of geography do you see?

MRS. CRIPPS: In my calculations the one is southern Alberta because they are 22 percent below the average. Even if you take one constituency away, they'd still be . . . Now I'm going to the 10 because there's Lethbridge, 2, and Medicine Hat, 2. I was just using the rural originally, but at 9 they would still be 7 percent below. The reason I say that is because they can fly to Lethbridge and Medicine Hat, as opposed to a lot of areas in the rest of the province. You can't fly to Hanna; you can't fly to Wainwright.

MR. GRBAVAC: Joe, can I ask a supplementary to your question?

MR. LEHANE: Go ahead.

MR. GRBAVAC: Shirley, as you know, I'm from south of Lethbridge.

MRS. CRIPPS: Oh, I knew that.

MR. GRBAVAC: Thanks for making my job a whole lot . . .

MRS. CRIPPS: Tougher.

MR. GRBAVAC: Yeah, really. Frankly, I've been driving to Edmonton for close to 15 years now because in all honesty it's quicker. The connections are such that oftentimes by the time your meeting ends in Edmonton, you could be south of Calgary before you catch a flight out of the Edmonton municipal.

I'm curious. I'd like you to answer one question specifically. There are 16 rural constituencies that qualify under the broad criteria for special consideration constituencies. Your commission, or select committee, to be more specific, in the last go-round chose Cardston to be one of your special consideration areas in the province. I would like you to comment specifically as to why you chose Cardston as opposed to the other 15 rural constituencies.

MRS. CRIPPS: Well, in the first place we didn't choose Cardston. That was the government committee. I assume the reason it was chosen was because Taber-Warner was below the average, and Bob was chairman of the committee and he couldn't do that.

MR. GRBAVAC: I appreciate your frank answer.

MRS. CRIPPS: Pincher Creek in my mind would have been a fairer one to put below the average because you have the Peigan reserve down there with either 5,000 or 6,000 people who were not counted. Now, I don't know whether you're counting them in this census or not.

MR. GRBAVAC: We are, yes.

MRS. CRIPPS: You are counting them?

MR. GRBAVAC: My understanding is that we are, yes.

MRS. CRIPPS: Okay.

MR. GRBAVAC: I'm just curious because we've had numerous representations from constituencies in southern Alberta that they ought to be given special consideration. They're all fighting over it, Shirley.

MRS. CRIPPS: Well, if you eliminate one and make nine constituencies south of the Bow, the Elbow, and the Red, you won't have that worry.

MR. GRBAVAC: That's right. That's what prompted the question.

MRS. CRIPPS: Just looking at it from a pragmatic evaluation of numbers and area, you can put that whole area south of those rivers into the Athabasca constituency or the Peace River constituency or the Lesser Slave Lake constituency and you have 10 members. That's effective representation.

MR. GRBAVAC: Yeah. But to use the counterargument that we've heard, there are all kinds of municipalities that must be represented.

MRS. CRIPPS: Oh, I know.

MR. GRBAVAC: That area has a sparse population, but it's quite evenly distributed throughout all southern Alberta. When you go to the more northerly constituencies, you usually fly into an isolated pocket of population, and the rest is in fact simply not populated. But I can appreciate your argument.

MRS. CRIPPS: About the only one you can fly into is Fort Chip. You cannot fly into any of these unless you have a private plane. You can fly to Peace River and drive up from there, and from Fort McMurray the general way to get in is to fly in. No question about that.

MR. McCARTHY: You can fly into High Level and Peace River.

MRS. CRIPPS: Not on scheduled aircraft.

MR. McCARTHY: Yes, to High Level you can.

MRS. CRIPPS: Can you now?

MR. McCARTHY: Yes, you can.

MRS. CRIPPS: Oh, I'm sorry. That's new then.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe, you said you had another question.

MR. LEHANE: Shirley, Chinook has a negative population variance of 48.6 percent, which is significant, and it brings it not only into a special consideration area, which it is, but it's almost beyond what's even allowed for that. It certainly does not have the geography that the two northern special consideration constituencies have, although it's got significantly more geography than the Cardston-Chief Mountain constituency. Do you think Chinook is a constituency that should stay a special consideration area?

MR. GRBAVAC: Your comments will be forwarded to Shirley McClellan, by the way.

MRS. CRIPPS: I don't care whom they're forwarded to. I'm not asking for anything.

Having driven this province many, many times and driven into and around every constituency in the province, I would say that if there's a constituency south of Edmonton that should have special consideration, it would be Chinook.

MR. LEHANE: Thank you. One other question. First of all, I'd like to give a couple of observations that I've made from the hearings to date. In terms of what we call the 'urban' constituencies, it would appear that they're probably not popular either with Edmonton or Calgary or the surrounding areas but that they may work in some other urban centres such as Medicine Hat, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Red Deer, or somewhere like that because there is more of an affinity between the surrounding community and the urban area in terms of the surrounding agricultural community typically.

The second observation, which came out of Medicine Hat-Cypress, was that while that constituency appears to be working, they wouldn't want to see an imbalance in terms of the urban and the rural split. It's sort of like, I guess, sleeping with one eye open. It can work, and it seems to be working. There's probably maybe a 60-40 split between rural and urban at this time, but they wouldn't like to see it vary much more from a 50-50 split.

Could you give us your comments on those observations with respect to 'urban' constituencies?

MRS. CRIPPS: Well, I think if you look at Grande Prairie-Wapiti and Grande Prairie-Smoky and Cypress-Medicine Hat – and I'm not sure what they ended up doing in Red Deer – given the numbers I don't think they took in much of the rural area around them at all. It must be just about the cities. I don't think in most of those areas you're going to have a 50-50 split. Even in the Wetaskiwin constituency, if there was a constituency of Wetaskiwin county and Wetaskiwin city, as proposed – there are 15,000 people in Wetaskiwin, and there are about 8,000 or 10,000 in the county, and then there are the reserves, which would make up a major portion of that kind of a constituency. You don't have an even split.

I think your first comment is the key. Those areas have a direct affinity and recognize that they rely heavily on the people surrounding the area for their very existence. If you come into

Wetaskiwin on a good haying day, you can shoot a cannon down the street, but just let it rain and see what happens. I mean, you can't hardly find driving space let along parking space in this town. It's the same in almost any other rural town in the province. So I think you have to be cognizant of that. Big `rurbans' are the ones that are – and frankly that term never did come up in terms of Grande Prairie-Smoky or Grand Prairie-Wapiti or Medicine Hat-Cypress. People recognize that if they're going to have representation, they almost have to have a huge area. From what I know of the Cypress area around Medicine Hat, it has far more of an affinity towards Medicine Hat than it would have to Taber-Warner and Cardston. I think that would be accurate; wouldn't it, Bob?

2:20

MR. GRBAVAC: Yes, it would be, but it doesn't make it any easier.

MR. WORTH: Shirley, I'd like to ask you one question about something you haven't commented on at all. As you're aware, one of our responsibilities is to deal with the names of constituencies.

MRS. CRIPPS: Yes.

MR. WORTH: We've had a few people submit briefs in that connection. We've been admonished by some to avoid using the names of any cities, towns, or villages because that leaves somebody out and creates some friction. We've been admonished by others not to use historical names like Manning. We were asked: is that after Preston? We've had a number of suggestions. My question to you is: what advice do you have for us in terms of trying to come up with names?

MRS. CRIPPS: The first piece is: be wary. I guess we struggled with the same thing, and that's why you have Vermilion-Lloydminster and Drayton Valley-Calmar. The problem is that the people identify with the name of their towns and areas. They're readily identifiable if you use the names of the towns. Wetaskiwin-Camrose: you know, everybody knows where it is. I would say that probably 75 percent of the people of the province wouldn't have a clue where Chinook was, yet there's really nothing else you can use to describe that. They may not have any idea where Bow Valley is, although it's been a long-term name. I would say that if the name is long term and recognized by the people of the constituency in the area, leave it alone. Only change it if there's some benefit to doing so.

MR. WORTH: Well, we've had some proposals which would give us, you know, a name like Cold Lake-Grand Centre-Bonnyville, or you'd end up adding several different towns and villages. I think we'll take your advice.

MRS. CRIPPS: Well, they did that to Drayton Valley-Calmar.

THE CHAIRMAN: I just want to make a few comments in respect of your presentation. I'm not sure if I have any questions. After traveling southern Alberta last week – you told us that when you sat on this commission, they told you it was as much as three months in traveling time. Well, I want you to know that they've been able to up that figure to four to five months now by stating that six hours to drive to Edmonton from that area in eight-hour days averages from

four and a half to five months out of the year. So I just wanted to comment on that.

You said that you'd like us to drive around Alberta. I have no quarrel with that in respect to learning Alberta better and understanding Alberta better and understanding what the MLAs have to put up with, but this job is difficult enough as it is without spending all of the extra time driving. I think most of us know Alberta quite well and can appreciate what an MLA has to put up with when he drives from southern Alberta, from the Peace River area.

The other part of your presentation is that I've reached the conclusion that you have come here today stating, first of all, to make no change. Your second position is possibly one change out of southern Alberta and putting that in Calgary.

MRS. CRIPPS: No, my recommendation will be to put it in northern.

THE CHAIRMAN: Northern Alberta; okay.

MRS. CRIPPS: If you've got to do Calgary, you'd better get it someplace else.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay; that's fine. I liked your position that you had put in your letter to us . . .

MRS. CRIPPS: No, it's wrong. I hadn't looked at the figures.

THE CHAIRMAN: . . . because that would, I think, make our job easier. I want you to know that so far, as we've traveled the province, there's nobody prepared to give up their constituency.

MRS. CRIPPS: If I just might respond. It might make your job easier, but I don't think it would make representative democracy any better or as good. Any MLA worth his salt doesn't work eight hours; he works 14.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you for coming.

MRS. CRIPPS: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Sorry we kept you so long, but you're a special presenter.

MRS. CRIPPS: No. These people are just as important, believe me.

THE CHAIRMAN: I agree with that. You have a lot of experience.

MR. GRBAVAC: You're still a politician, Shirley, a good one by the way.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next presenter is Warna Moore from the Wetaskiwin-Camrose Progressive Conservative Association.

MRS. MOORE: Well, thank you very much for being given the opportunity to be here this afternoon. I'm coming sort of more from the point of view of protecting our constituency, not so much what your job is in looking at the whole ballpark. One of the things that I've observed over the last 15, possibly 20 years is that every time there is a change to the boundaries, we in central Alberta seem to

really notice it the most but not as much as we did the last time the boundaries were redrawn. So on that, I'll make my submission.

This submission to the Electoral Boundaries Commission is being made by the Wetaskiwin-Camrose Progressive Conservative Association. It was the unanimous decision of our board of directors to support the boundaries presently in place. Our position is supported by the following points. The expense of another readjustment of our boundaries is not only a tremendous cost to the taxpayers but has ramifications on organization accounts and restructuring of associations. While many constituencies were redrawn for the last election and some affected communities opposed or disliked the changes, constituencies such as ours are just starting to reap the benefits of working together with the new partnerships. We are seeing commonalities rather than differences. Divisive or return to the old way groups will always be visible, but we want the opportunity to build on the teamwork that has been started, the effort of the last three or four years, and we do not want to have to start over again with new partners.

Our population requirements are very close to the target size with the 3.7 percent plus variation, well within the 25 percent requirement by the Supreme Court of Canada. Leave things as they are, as we understand there will be a review after the next election. We support the possibility of fewer reviews and to consider reviewing after the next 2001 census.

Urban centres anchor a rectangular constituency. We have well-maintained highways that join these urban anchors, making easy access to all areas. The MLA, whether a resident of Wetaskiwin or Camrose or respective counties, is within a compacted area and is able to reach all constituents easily. Appearances can be made in many locations and communities for political events. There is generally quick access to and from Edmonton for the MLA. There are no natural barriers within our constituency. We are an urban/rural riding. Youthful, elderly, and native populations provide a tremendous sounding board, and our communities are well complemented for size and have a similar need for development.

In summary, with the difficulties of reorganization we are working well together. It is our belief that the boundaries are fair to all, have built goodwill and better friendships, and are beneficial to all concerned. We do not feel that there should be any change at this time.

Perhaps you might want to look at concentrating representation in the major urban areas. Do there need to be more MLAs than there are aldermen? Concentrating on the major urban areas should be more achievable, as an MLA has a smaller area to cover, which is much more easy to service. Should the commission feel that it is necessary to redraw the boundaries, I guess we would ask that we be invited for further input into your deliberations.

On behalf of the Wetaskiwin-Camrose Provincial Progressive Conservative Association, thank you.

2:30

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I want you to know that if we do change the boundaries, there's another set of hearings, so you'll have an opportunity for further representation if we suggest that in our preliminary report.

MRS. MOORE: Okay.

THE CHAIRMAN: John, do you have any questions?

MR. McCARTHY: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe? Robert? Wally?

MR. WORTH: I don't think so.

MRS. MOORE: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: I want to thank you for coming.

MRS. MOORE: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Our next presenter is Neil Durrant, president of the chamber of commerce of Breton.

MR. DURRANT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the commission. A lot of the things that'll be in my presentation you've likely already heard before, but I still would like to repeat them because the more times they're repeated, the more it might get remembered when it comes to making deliberations.

The Breton and District Chamber of Commerce would like to take this opportunity to present this brief at the public hearing of the boundaries commission, although it is starting to become a regular occurrence. It was just three years ago we attended a meeting such as this regarding the same subject; that is, the size and boundaries of electoral divisions. Now we're going through the same process again at considerable cost to the taxpayer, which we feel could be put to better use in education or health systems. However, the purpose this time is much more fundamentally drastic; that is, the reduction of rural constituencies in the Legislature.

We understand the need for proportional representation. However, we feel this cannot be tied down to hard numbers without seriously considering the many other factors surrounding the responsibilities of each MLA.

Breton is in the Drayton Valley-Calmor constituency, so I would like to compare some of the considerations the commission are directed to review as they relate to our particular area.

Sparsity and density of population. In an urban constituency one can drive from one side to the other in half an hour. Our MLA needs three hours to traverse the same boundaries.

One of our concerns is that you are basing population figures on information that we feel is now out of date. There have been significant population changes in this area during the past few years. Calmar has grown by 30 percent. We're seeing more and more acreages being constructed in our area. In fact, a local landowner has received approval to develop more than 70 large residential lots. Private enterprise does not make this type of investment unless they see a need. They are simply following the trends already in existence. People are moving out of cities wherever possible. The advent of computers and fax machines has allowed many enterprises to move into rural areas. We're talking about business here, not government. The increase in youth crime in the cities encourages families to leave. Look further afield and the trend is the same. Strathmore is increasing in size, Canmore cannot build enough houses, and Cochrane is now one of the fastest growing communities in Canada. With these types of trends the 1991 census figures do not really reflect what is happening in Alberta.

The number of municipalities and local authorities. Following is a list of the types of organizations within this constituency: municipalities, eight; school boards, three; regional health

authorities, two. Could you change the figures on your thing? There was a typo there; it should read "two." Agricultural societies, eight; community associations, too numerous to count. These are the organizations the majority of the residents use to communicate with or lobby their MLA. Now, compare these to the number of organizations an urban member has to be involved with: one school board, one municipal council, one or two community associations, one health authority. That's it. Thus, when these numbers are compared, we feel our MLA has too many organizations to be involved with. He or she certainly does not need more, as you are presently proposing if the size of the constituencies is increased. This situation is certainly not unique to this area. It would be common in all rural constituencies.

Next one: common community interest. Some of the issues the local member will be involved with, because the communities are interested, relate to the agricultural industry, the oil and gas industry, the forestry industry, environmental protection issues, priorities related to road paving, and water management issues. The latter item will be a matter that will require a great deal of time and energy in the future.

In comparison, members in urban constituencies do not have to contend with such a diverse range of issues. He or she certainly would not get involved with road paving and water management.

In conclusion, the Breton and District Chamber of Commerce strongly protests any proposal to reduce the number of rural constituencies. We feel this will reduce our access to proper representation. It will reduce the effectiveness of our representation, considering the number of organizations our member needs to be involved with, and does not accurately reflect the current demographic trends. We urge the commission to seriously consider all the ramifications resulting from such a course of action. It would be much more profound than simply balancing the numbers game.

Thank you very much, gentlemen.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Durrant.

MR. DURRANT: Before answering any questions, maybe before I forget, I could answer the question that Mr. Grbavec asked one of the preceding presenters with regards to which is harder: for the MLA to deal with that number of different types of organizations, or is it related to the fact there are fewer organizations and therefore the representation in urban areas is diluted? From an MLA's perspective and also from a person who has to get access to our local member, I feel that a person who has an urban MLA really has better representation. They have more access to him, because he has fewer organizations taking away from his time. There is no doubt that when I try to get hold of my member, lots of times it's a matter of having to wait because he's got other people to contend with too. So we feel that our member has more than enough to deal with now without increasing his or her workload.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any questions? I'll start with you, Robert.

MR. GRBAVAC: No.

MR. WORTH: I notice in your submission that you referred to the extensive growth in the Calmar area, and I'm assuming that this reflects the fact that this is becoming a bit of a bedroom community for Edmonton, I would suspect – perhaps Leduc but primarily Edmonton. Is that correct?

MR. DURRANT: Yes, that is correct to a certain degree. Breton is an hour away by car from Edmonton. If you drive on Highway 39 from 7 to 8 o'clock in the morning, it's almost bumper-to-bumper traffic. There has been a tremendous increase over the course of the last five years in the quantity of commuter traffic and the distance the commuter traffic goes. People in my particular area work in Edmonton. People in Edmonton and Leduc come to Breton to work. So there is a tremendous amount of traffic related from work to residence.

A fair number of people I know who are still working in Edmonton have moved further afield to go to Calmar for a couple of reasons. First of all, the cost of accommodation. That's one of the big reasons. Second of all, they don't want to live in a large city if they can get away with it, for obvious reasons.

The other thing that's happening is that there are a lot of people who are moving from Edmonton and Calgary. We're again seeing an influx of population from those particular centres who want to get out of the urban lifestyle. They want to go into the rural lifestyle. So that is why we are seeing what we feel is a fairly dramatic increase in population, which is going to get bigger and bigger as time goes on.

MR. WORTH: Well, it seems on the surface that that kind of growth with those kinds of people sort of detracts from the commonality of interest that you might share with the people in Drayton Valley. So I want to ask you the same question I asked Mr. Dow: how is the marriage working? Can Breton climb into bed with Calmar and Drayton Valley and be happy?

MR. DURRANT: Since time immemorial, considering the population of Breton, Breton has always had to climb into bed with somebody, whether it be Drayton Valley or Leduc, which has happened in the past, or Calmar. In essence, at the present time we are happy with our constituency. We're happy with the size of it. We're happy with the boundaries of it. Our feeling is that we would not like to see it change at the present time.

MR. WORTH: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe, any questions?

MR. LEHANE: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: John?

MR. McCARTHY: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: I want to thank you for coming.

MR. DURRANT: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: That ends our listed presenters. We allow people from the audience to come on as walk-ons if they have any comments that they feel will help this panel, which needs a lot of help. We're prepared to hear from you. Is there anybody here that wants to make any comments?

I'd like to ask you a question, Shirley, that has come to my mind since you left. We had the suggestion from some areas that for effective representation maybe the rural MLA should be given a bigger allowance than urban MLAs. My understanding – and I'm

not sure of this – is that the allowance is really so many dollars per person. That really works out inequitably, because if you follow everything that the urban MLA has to do, which everybody's telling us is a lot less, and they have more than the quotient, they get more money, while the rural MLA who is below the quotient gets less money.

Maybe a solution to this thing would be to give the rural MLA one and a half times what the urban MLA gets so they could run offices in more towns or hire an executive assistant to deal with it. Then other people say that they don't want to deal with the executive assistant; they want to deal with the MLA in person. Have you got any comments in respect to that?

2:40

MRS. CRIPPS: Do you want it on the mike?

THE CHAIRMAN: It doesn't make any difference.

MRS. CRIPPS: We discussed that too, particularly in the north. Actually there is a variation now. MLAs a certain distance from Edmonton are allowed a housing allowance when they're in the city because they maintain a residence and this is another room or whatever. They are also allowed a certain number of miles. I think that kind of balances out. I don't know if you look at public accounts, but the public accounts of the urban MLAs would have very few miles, particularly in Edmonton. Now, Calgary may have many more because a lot of them drive. But I think that makes up for it.

I think you've got to be very, very careful that you don't build in perceived special status for the rural MLAs. I would rather see it equal in terms of benefits. The urban MLAs can get exactly the same benefits if they have them coming. I don't think you want to build in a perceived benefit for being rural. I think it would cause some consternation between the two groups, and to my knowledge there never has been that. I would not want to see it brought into being.

The other point I wanted to make is that if you felt free to make a recommendation – I don't know whether you feel free to – that these boundary commissions be within a year or two after a census, I think you'd be doing a great service to Albertans and to following commissions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Any other comments or questions of anybody? [interjection] Go ahead. Give us your name for the purposes of the *Hansard* reporter.

MRS. CAIL: I'm Hazel Cail, and I'm Ken Rostad's executive assistant. I would just like to speak on that point that you have just raised regarding the problem of a MLA not being able to be in the constituency all the time and having to have an executive assistant do that job for him. That is my particular function for Ken Rostad. With his portfolio of intergovernmental affairs he's out of the province and out of the country a good percentage of the time when he's not sitting in the House, and as a result I am here to answer questions and deal with the constituents' concerns and complaints and bouquets that come in as well. We like those.

So I think your point is a very valid consideration. I'm not sure, as Shirley said, whether it would work or not. I think there is a huge expense for the rural MLAs to try and give the quality of service that they would like to give to their constituents because of their time

commitment away from their constituency. I often get the comment, "You're not the guy I elected. I don't want to speak to you." But it's either me or wait for two months until there's an opportunity to get a hearing with your MLA, and that shouldn't happen.

THE CHAIRMAN: But your MLA's ministry causes special problems.

MRS. CAIL: But there are also 16 other ministers that have similar problems with ministries. They're representing Alberta as well as their constituents. They've got a huge double job to do.

We're very fortunate in our constituency, as Warna did mention, being that we have the two urban centres that are similar in size – 15,000 in Camrose, 15,000 in Wetaskiwin – and a small rural outlying it. We're very fortunate that our riding is 55 miles long and 12 miles wide, so Ken can drive around our riding fairly easily. He's also got two chambers to visit every month. He's got two Rotary clubs. He's got two Lions clubs. He's got all the service clubs, the Legions. Everybody is needing his attention for every function that they have.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any questions?

Well, thanks for your comments.

Anybody else? Well, go ahead.

MR. DURRANT: Neil Durrant from Breton Chamber of Commerce. I just wanted to add one thing with regard to representation. We've talked about representation within the constituency, and Shirley touched on it with regard to representation within the Legislature itself. When you look at the total numbers, Edmonton presently has 18 MLAs, and Calgary has 20. That consists of 38 out of a total of 83. Taking the special considerations aside, presently the other divisions have a total of 41. Now, we've got fairly even representation within the Legislature itself. If you start changing those numbers, then that becomes a little lopsided. When you start dealing with legislative affairs that require everybody's input, if you've got too many urban and not enough rural members, then we start getting a one-sided affair, and I don't believe that our balance of representation would really represent the people of Alberta as a whole.

THE CHAIRMAN: John has a comment.

MR. McCARTHY: It's interesting that you make that point, because the exact process that you went through was dealt with by the Court of Appeal, where, you know, they deducted the four special areas and came with 79 and then had the 41-38 split, 38 being the metropolitan areas, 41 being outside the metropolitan areas. This is the comment they made.

A more equal distribution for 1992 would have reversed the distribution, and offered 41 seats to Edmonton and Calgary and 38 to the remainder of the province.

I just give you that for your information. This is what the opinion of the Court of Appeal was on that issue.

MR. DURRANT: But in actual fact it's already there, gentlemen, if you'd like to look at it very closely. If you take out the two Red Deer constituencies, which really are not that strongly rural in essence – they are somewhere between the two; they lean more towards the urban than the rural – we have a 40 and 39.

THE CHAIRMAN: You can take one Lethbridge out and one Fort McMurray out too.

MR. DURRANT: Well, if you want to go further. I'm just saying that if you're talking about 55,000 population in the middle of the province who in actual fact are more urban in their outlook than they are rural in many ways, in reality we do have 40 and 39.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes?

MR. JOHNSTON: Lloyd Johnston. If I may, I'd like to support Mrs. Cripps' contention about the influence that the MLAs and the elected people in the cities of Edmonton and Calgary add in addition to the MLAs to the Legislature and to the members of government. The mayor of Edmonton or the mayor of Calgary with their councils behind them certainly have a lot more impact than the mayor of Drayton Valley or the mayor of Wetaskiwin or Camrose or Leduc. I think that ought to be taken into consideration.

THE CHAIRMAN: Fine.

Well, we're left with 10 minutes in our schedule, but if everybody has spoken here today, we'll adjourn these proceedings.

[The hearing adjourned at 2:50 p.m.]

