

Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Peace River

1:00 p.m.

[Chairman: Chief Judge Edward R. Wachowich]

THE CHAIRMAN: I would like to welcome you to the hearings of the Electoral Boundaries Commission here today. Good afternoon. My name is Edward Wachowich. I am the chairman of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. I am also the Chief Judge of the Provincial Court of Alberta.

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

The commission is holding public hearings here in Peace River 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 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 area, 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 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.

Three, 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.

In respect to 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.

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

The population rule is that a proposed electoral division must not be more than 25 percent above or below the average population for all 83 electoral divisions. There is an exception to the 25 percent rule. In the case of not more than four proposed electoral divisions the commission may have a population that is as much as 50 percent below the average population of the electoral divisions in Alberta if three of the following five criteria are met: one, the area exceeds 20,000 square kilometres or the surveyed area of the proposed electoral division exceeds 15,000 square kilometres; two, the distance from the Legislature Building in Edmonton to the nearest boundary of any proposed electoral division by the most direct highway route is more than 150 kilometres; three, there is no town in the proposed electoral division that has a population exceeding 4,000 people; four, the area of the proposed electoral division contains an Indian reserve or a Métis settlement; five, the proposed electoral division has a portion of its boundary coterminous with a boundary of the province of Alberta.

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

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.

At this point we'll now proceed with the hearings. I would like to call on the first presenter as being Mayor Michael Procter of the town of Peace River. I gather you're also here as chairman of the Mackenzie Municipal Services Agency. I don't know if you wish to break up your presentation into two.

MR. PROCTER: No. I'll speak to both together, if I might.

THE CHAIRMAN: Fine.

MR. PROCTER: On behalf of myself and three other mayors who are with me today, I'd like to welcome the commission to the north Peace and state that we do appreciate your making this opportunity available to us in the north Peace. Sometimes the tendency of some commissions is to consider Grande Prairie the centre of the Peace, and we appreciate your geographical understanding of where we are.

As I stated in both the presentations that were submitted to you in advance of your deliberations, it is not my intent to go through them; it is just my intent to respond to questions.

I guess the one thing I might just say in opening is that we feel very strongly in this part of the world that consideration of population only as the criteria for establishing jurisdictions or constituencies leaves out a great many of the factors that you in fact addressed in your opening remarks, such as distance from and distance within the constituencies, and that we are dealing with in our part of the world. In fact, in the Peace River constituency the distance from one end to the other is in excess of the distance from Edmonton to the constituency, which is 300 miles. We have about 320 miles from one end of the constituency to the other, and of course a number of municipal and school jurisdictions to deal with and a number of health regions. So there are an awful lot of factors that affect the MLA's ability to serve the constituency.

I would invite any questions that you might have.

1:10

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I understand you know Mr. Grbavac, who's on the commission here, so we will give him the first opportunity to ask any questions.

MR. PROCTER: Thank you.

MR. GRBAVAC: Michael, if you had your choice between attaining a special consideration distinction for your riding, which would in fact maybe limit the size of your riding, make it smaller than it currently is, or the retention of the status quo, what would be your preference?

MR. PROCTER: Well, we did state in our presentations that we would like to see the constituencies remain as they are at this time. I know in previous commission reviews there was talk of a split in the Peace River constituency somewhere between here and High Level, which would have produced two still very large constituencies but with obviously much lower population and much wider variances from the 25 percent that we fall within at this time. So I think the point we made was that those not be changed at this time.

MR. GRBAVAC: Okay. So then that's pretty clear. You'd rather retain the status quo than actually it be reduced.

MR. PROCTER: Yes.

MR. GRBAVAC: You know it is within our mandate to allow for four special consideration ridings throughout the province, and certainly the geographic component of the special consideration ridings north makes an obvious strong argument in that respect. I just wondered, when you did mention the fact that the distance was close to 350 miles from one end to the other, if you would have a preference to having the constituency split.

Okay. Thanks.

MR. WORTH: Well, I would just like to pursue Bob's question a little further with you. In the recent reorganization of health units and the establishment of regional authorities there's one that ran across the top of the province which ran sort of counter to the way in which our electoral divisions are set up, which run north-south. I guess my question is: is that a feasible kind of arrangement that might work for a constituency, to have something across the top analogous to the northwestern health region 17?

MR. PROCTER: Well, I'm not entirely familiar with the northwest health region as to extent of its eastern operations.

MR. WORTH: It's that blue one up top.

MR. PROCTER: It does in fact go as far as Fort Chipewyan then?

MR. GRBAVAC: That's correct; it includes Fort Chip.

MR. PROCTER: Okay. It doesn't make sense to me because obviously those people in Fort Chipewyan are not going to be seeking health services on a westerly course to the town of High Level. I would suggest their services would be sought to the south from the city of Fort McMurray.

MR. WORTH: The same thing would apply in terms of an electoral division then.

MR. PROCTER: That's right. Certainly the grouping of people and goods and so on and the economics are in a north-south direction.

MR. WORTH: One other question just for my interest and information. You mention in your submission that a part of the Dunvegan constituency is included in the Mackenzie Municipal Services Agency. My question is: what part isn't included in there?

MR. PROCTER: It's north of the Peace River, from the Dunvegan bridge per se up to and including the border of the town of Peace River. It encompasses the entire municipal district of Peace, which comes right up to and including, for instance, the town of Peace River airport. It does extend south of the river, which is outside the Mackenzie region.

MR. WORTH: One final question, Mr. Chairman, if I may. How would you describe the population characteristics of this region in terms of their age distribution? Are you skewed towards the upper end of the age scale or skewed towards the lower end? Do you have a relatively young population? An aging population? Where are you?

MR. PROCTER: I think we would certainly be younger as an average across the board than older with the youth in our area and some of the growing areas that we have.

MR. WORTH: What is the holding power of the youth in this area? I mean, are we looking to potential voters?

MR. PROCTER: You've touched on something that has been addressed as a concern in the past, and that is the ability to hold the youth. Certainly I think one of the holding areas for the youth is probably agriculture, and as we become more involved with the development of the natural resources, particularly in the forestry sector, it is providing a great deal more opportunity for young people to stay in our region and to work in those sectors of the economy. Probably a growing potential.

MR. WORTH: Okay. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: John?

MR. McCARTHY: No questions, thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe?

MR. LEHANE: I wonder if you could give us some idea whether the present boundaries between Peace River and Dunvegan seem logical in terms of interests or industries that are located in those two constituencies, whether they're pretty similar.

MR. PROCTER: I guess the industries would be similar. The one interesting change in the last review – and Mayor Woodburn from Grimshaw might address this when he speaks – was the fact that the former boundary between the Dunvegan and Peace River constituencies was halfway between Grimshaw and Berwyn. It was subsequently moved to encompass the entire municipal district of Peace, which, as I mentioned, comes right up to the border of the town of Peace River. When you look at some patterns, such as work patterns and economic patterns, Grimshaw might be more allied to Peace River than to the other side of the constituency. In the health regions that's not the case. It's hard to address whether it's pro or con.

The other changes that took place in the last adjustment were some of the native communities on what was the eastern portion of the constituency. I'm talking specifically about east of Fort Vermilion. Jean D'Or, Fox Lake, and so on were moved into the Lesser Slave Lake constituency, and that in some ways didn't make sense because for someone to access those municipalities they have to drive from Peace River to High Level and then easterly.

MR. LEHANE: So in terms of community of interests and trading patterns and so on the fit now is a relatively good one or a comfortable one, do you think?

MR. PROCTER: Except for some of the native communities in the north. It doesn't make sense to me that they would be involved in a constituency that requires enormous travel by road to get to them. They may have a different opinion on that. From my perspective it seems a little strange.

MR. LEHANE: Do you think they'd fit better into a neighbouring constituency?

MR. PROCTER: I would have thought they might have fit better with the Peace River constituency than with Lesser Slave Lake.

MR. McCARTHY: I have a question. There's air service. Is there regular air service between Peace River and High Level?

MR. PROCTER: There is air service. The aircraft in the morning comes into Peace River en route to High Level, and then it goes back out at 1 o'clock in the afternoon. It's a service that is very rarely used by those who are going between those two municipalities.

MR. LEHANE: How do the MLAs travel back and forth to Edmonton? By air from Peace River?

MR. PROCTER: Probably to a great extent by air. I'm sure there's a certain amount of driving done as well, but I would hope most of it by air because it's a very trying and long drive both ways.

MR. LEHANE: Do you have any information or statistics on the number of kilometres that the MLAs in Peace River and Dunvegan might travel during a year back and forth to Edmonton or on constituency business?

MR. PROCTER: No, I don't. I know that Mr. Clegg drives a great deal more than Mr. Friedel, back and forth to Edmonton I'm talking. Mr. Friedel drives an enormous amount within the constituency. He lives in Peace River and travels to such places as Rainbow Lake, La Crête, Fort Vermilion, which are probably 200, 250 miles each way. So it's an awful lot of driving within as well as back and forth to the city of Edmonton.

MR. LEHANE: Where are the constituency offices located?

MR. PROCTER: The town of Peace River is the constituency office for the Peace River constituency, and the town of Fairview is the office for the Dunvegan constituency. Mr. Clegg's travel pattern would be more east-west because of the fact that his constituency extends right over to the town of McLennan, I believe halfway between McLennan and High Prairie.

1:20

MR. LEHANE: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, Mayor Procter, one of the possible changes up here that I've been considering – and I don't know whether these other people have because we haven't reached any decisions yet – is that we could take the town of Peace River and put it into Dunvegan. That would bring the Dunvegan constituency very close or a little above the electoral quotient, and it would then be necessary to make what is north of here all the way to High Level a

special area. Being the mayor of Peace River, would you sooner be part of Dunvegan, or would you sooner be part of the constituency you're in now?

MR. PROCTER: I would suggest that the involvement we have from the town of Peace River is more northerly than it is southerly, with some of the involvement with forestry and oil and gas and so on. I probably would prefer to remain in Peace River. That would be my initial reaction to that question.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, there's no doubt that the highway from High Level to Peace River is the highway, and that's probably the direction people all commute out of there. I'm not familiar. Do the people from Dunvegan also come to Peace River? Is that sort of their main city or town?

MR. PROCTER: I think it would be a split. When one gets to Fairview, one is just about as close to Grande Prairie. When you get south of the river to the Spirit River-Rycroft area, I think the tendency would be definitely to Grande Prairie.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm concluding from what you're telling me that you would sooner have Peace River where it is now rather than in Dunvegan, but your feelings are really not strong.

MR. PROCTER: Oh, I wouldn't say that. My feelings just aren't showing.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, that's what I'm trying to find out.

MR. PROCTER: It's a question that I haven't considered, and it's obviously one that I'm not going to answer on the basis of the constituency without probably addressing it a little bit more in the public forum.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, that's the extent of my questions. I want to thank you for coming and making your views known to this commission. I guess there's nothing much more I can say.

MR. PROCTER: Thank you very much for coming as well. I appreciate it.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next presenter is Mayor Jean Charchuk of the town of Fairview. Go ahead.

MRS. CHARCHUK: I'm a bit new to some of these presentations. In fact, this is my very first one. So I will read it to you, and I hope I can answer your questions.

For the purpose of providing comments on the review of electoral boundaries in the northwest region of Alberta, this submission is presented on behalf of the council of the town of Fairview. The comments are directed with respect to the present constituencies of Dunvegan and Peace River. These two northern constituencies are already very large and sparsely populated. Tremendous distances are involved, requiring extensive travel for the MLAs to meet with their constituents and attend various meetings and functions.

It appears that one of the more prominent guiding criteria in relation to establishment of electoral boundaries is the consideration of population. It is the consensus and opinion of the town of Fairview that boundaries must be based on more than population. Boundaries should reflect the need for effective representation by MLAs. There is a very great fear that in basing the electoral boundaries on the population formula, loss of effective

representation will occur. Most definitely, accessibility of northern residents to their MLA will be limited.

It should be noted that the previous adjustment of boundaries with the 25 percent variance factor for constituency population resulted in major change to the Dunvegan constituency. Any further change at this time could be considered unwarranted and most definitely not necessary.

Members of the commission, during your deliberations for the purpose of submitting your reports, you are urged to strongly consider the municipal/provincial equation. This equation offers a challenge for a rural MLA to effectively represent municipal government and the many agencies within. Contact with the MLA is very, very important, and to erode the opportunity would be wrong. Larger constituencies are not the answer, and to implement same would only afford less opportunity for effective representation. By comparing present ratios, rural and urban, the municipal/provincial equation for Dunvegan and Peace River is now very high. Any thought of expanding the present boundaries would be a disaster.

To conclude, council of the town of Fairview with a degree of input fully support the submission of the Mackenzie Municipal Services Agency. This submission in detail is very worthy of your favoured consideration and support. The recommendations of the agency are concurred with and supported. Most emphatically the council of the town of Fairview recommends that the Dunvegan and Peace River constituencies remain unchanged for the purpose of electoral boundaries.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

We'll start the questioning with John this time.

MR. McCARTHY: What's the population of the town of Fairview?

MRS. CHARCHUK: The town of Fairview is about 3,200.

MR. McCARTHY: Are you able to help me as far as Spirit River goes? Do you know how many they have?

MRS. CHARCHUK: It's slightly less.

MR. McCARTHY: How about Falher?

MRS. CHARCHUK: Slightly less again.

MR. McCARTHY: Slightly less than Spirit River?

MRS. CHARCHUK: Yes.

MR. McCARTHY: Okay. Thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe?

MR. LEHANE: No questions.

MR. WORTH: Well, first, Madam Mayor, I want to commend you on your presentation. This being your first submission of this sort I notice that you haven't pulled any punches in your language. I mean, you've said that things are unwarranted, that things would be a disaster, and that things are very worthy of consideration most emphatically. That's good strong language, and we get the message very clearly as a result of that.

My question relates to the relationship between Fairview and Grande Prairie. Do people from Fairview tend to go to Grande Prairie for various kinds of services, or do they go to Peace River?

MRS. CHARCHUK: They tend to go to Grande Prairie. Like, are you talking about doctors?

MR. WORTH: Yeah.

MRS. CHARCHUK: Yes. Our health region is in that area, so the flow of our health is to Grande Prairie.

MR. WORTH: I seem to recall that years ago there was an attempt to work out some liaison educationally between Fairview College and Grande Prairie Regional College. Did that flourish? Is that still in force?

MRS. CHARCHUK: There is a liaison developing, but it's not flourishing as much as it is in Peace River. In Peace River we have the college working more this way.

MR. WORTH: So what's in Peace River? One of those consortia, I suppose.

MRS. CHARCHUK: Yes. It's Fairview College expanded.

MR. WORTH: I see. Okay. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Robert.

MR. GRBAVAC: Yes. Mayor Jean, it would seem that the status quo is certainly the preferred option across much of the north. You're not unique in your presentation with respect to retaining the current configuration of constituencies. However, for someone like me who likes to make changes, one of our mandates is to review the names of constituencies. Could you give me the history of the name Dunvegan and your comment with respect to its appropriateness for the constituency?

MRS. CHARCHUK: Well, I think the history dates back to Scotland. There was a Dunvegan in Scotland. Therefore, I think the area looks the same as it did there, and it was named Dunvegan. That's the actual site . . .

[The power was out from 1:30 p.m. to 1:36 p.m.]

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, Mr. Grbavac's gone away on us now. When he gets back, you can answer his question about the constituency name if you have any more thoughts about that.

In respect of your presentation, I would like to compliment you on how you set out the fact that we shouldn't only be guided by population and that we should be guided also by effective representation. That's where our problem is. There are the gray areas: when do you start disregarding population in favour of effective representation or vice versa? I thought you put it very well in your presentation. I want to compliment you on that.

You heard my question earlier about trying to move Peace River into Dunvegan. Do you want Peace River in Dunvegan, or do you want no part of it?

MRS. CHARCHUK: I'm just looking for Michael. Has he gone? I wouldn't mind having Peace River in Dunvegan. I've got to qualify that. Right now our education system is in Peace River. Like, we combined our education system into Peace River. Our health is in

Grande Prairie. This is for our area. I would like to see us get it going together. I guess I would say that if you're going to do something, co-ordinate all the services going one way, not one going that way, one going this way, and one going somewhere else. I guess I wouldn't mind having Peace River in the Dunvegan constituency. That would be my personal opinion.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's fine. Where do you think, then, Peace River belongs, having regard to the Dunvegan constituency and the Peace River constituency? It's right in the corner, and it's very easy to change the map.

MRS. CHARCHUK: Yes, it is. I guess Michael's right. Their travel is more to the north because of the forestry. I guess he's right about the situation that not too many people come our way, like, towards our area. So I guess he's right that probably where they're at is the best place for them, but I still wouldn't mind having them.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, Mr. Grbavac is back. I don't know whether you have anything more to add in respect of the name of the constituency, which for some reason seems to concern him.

MRS. CHARCHUK: Leave it at Dunvegan.

MR. GRBAVAC: Why not? Let's be consistent.

THE CHAIRMAN: Does anybody else have any more questions? Well, we want to thank you for coming and making your presentation. For a first presentation you did very well.

MRS. CHARCHUK: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIRMAN: But we don't have the authority to give you a pass or a fail mark.

MRS. CHARCHUK: That's okay. I'm thankful that you allowed us to present.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next presenter is Mayor Ken MacIvor of the town of Manning.

MR. MacVICAR: Actually the name is MacVicar.

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, I'm sorry. That's my mistake.

MR. MacVICAR: Maybe it has something to do with Dunvegan and Scotland; I don't know. Maybe we're in the wrong constituency.

I sent a letter to the commission on October 3. I don't know if you have a copy.

THE CHAIRMAN: We have.

MR. MacVICAR: A number of things. I think you're going to hear the same gist of argument this afternoon from all mayors in the region, so I'll just touch on a couple of the points that I made. First off, the geographic size of our constituency. As Michael pointed out, it's vast and expansive. It's always amazing for me to see how our MLA gets around the constituency and how effective he is. I'm saying he, the current one, as well as the previous MLA that I was associated with. I'm amazed at, I guess, the endurance that these people have. So from our perspective the geographic size should be a major concern along with population. Also, within the constituency we have a multimunicipality situation where – I don't know offhand how many municipalities are represented, but I would

suggest in comparative terms that if you're in an urban constituency dealing with municipal officials as an MLA you have fewer people to deal with, and I think that has to be taken into consideration.

Finally, I guess as a rural constituency and constituents we rely a lot on our MLA in regard to certain services that are not as accessible, whereas if we had access to certain government services by just going down the street, we might not rely so much on the MLA, but in the current situation we do. I think that, too, has to be taken into consideration.

So with that, I'll just move to questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: I should say that we have a constituency in Edmonton called Manning, and one of the presenters in Edmonton doesn't think these kinds of names are correct. He said: the Manning constituency, who does that represent? Preston Manning or Ernest Manning? One of the commissioners here just mentioned something about Manning, Alberta. Which Manning is that? I didn't want to answer his question.

MR. MacVICAR: Ernest Manning.

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, it was after Ernest Manning that the town of Manning was named.

MR. MacVICAR: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: We'll let the questioning start with Robert.

MR. GRBAVAC: Well, I think I've played the name card to its maximum, so beyond that I don't have any questions. I thought your letter was very self-explanatory.

MR. WORTH: Ken, one of the perceptions we're beginning to get is that rural people generally have a different set of expectations for their Member of the Legislative Assembly than do people in urban constituencies, that in a rural constituency or a predominantly rural constituency there are all sorts of additional demands made on the member. On the surface some of them don't appear to be very closely related to the concept of effective representation; you know, like selling bingo cards, being in parades, attending golden wedding anniversaries, and things of this sort. I mean, they have everything to do with getting re-elected; we realize that. What do you think are the major sorts of components of an MLA's role? Obviously, one is the legislative functions, but in rural Alberta there seems to be kind of an information function or responsibility. Do you agree that that's the case? Are there any other responsibilities that they have?

MR. MacVICAR: I think, as I pointed out in my presentation, one of the things that we've gotten used to is access to our MLA. The role of an MLA I guess has been defined by rural and urban constituencies. The history of the MLAs that I've had to deal with over the past 14 years or so is that they are hands-on people, people that you can go to with various concerns, be they, as you say, showing up to be re-elected. But I think that more than that, we're not able to access as readily some government services, so we utilize our MLA. Getting back to your original preamble about the nature of rural and urban, I think it's a matter of anonymity. If you're living in an urban constituency, chances are you're more anonymous than you are if you're in a rural constituency. Everybody in our constituency knows who our MLA is. I would daresay that in some urban constituencies you wouldn't have that same focus.

MR. WORTH: Okay. Thank you.

MR. LEHANE: Perhaps you can tell us from your experience, Ken. I know from my experience that an MLA might well travel to a certain location, particularly in a constituency like this, if he has to go up to Manning or somewhere, for a parade or a high school graduation, but as part of that trip he may very well meet with a number of different constituents to address the issues in that area at the time. Is that your experience as well?

MR. MacVICAR: Certainly. Again, we see our MLA probably once every two months for sure to deal with specific issues. He may be in Manning for any of those particular purposes, but we always try to either corner him or many times he will call on us to find out what in fact is going on in our region. Over the past few years as the resource-based industries have grown, there have been a number of issues that have come up, and I think we're seeing more of our MLA regarding those issues now than we ever have.

THE CHAIRMAN: John?

MR. McCARTHY: No questions. Thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I have no questions, but I want to apologize for mispronouncing your name.

MR. MacVICAR: It's no problem.

THE CHAIRMAN: It was not the secretary's mistake this time. It was my mistake.

MR. MacVICAR: Maybe I could just ask one question. I was assuming I was going to get to question on what happens if Peace River goes into the other constituency.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, you being in Manning, I didn't think it was that relevant, but I'd like to hear your views.

MR. MacVICAR: Well, obviously there is relevancy to that, because if Peace River is not in the northern part of the constituency, it goes back to Mr. Grbavac's first comment with regard to a special area. I have to admit that I was sort of taken aback by that comment. I didn't realize that the commission was even looking toward that kind of a setup.

MR. GRBAVAC: Well, the commission may not but I am. Just by virtue of the vastness of the north all of these ridings in extreme northern Alberta have a very strong case to be given special consideration relative to some of the other constituencies. You know, there are four now: two in the north, Chinook, and Cardston-Chief Mountain. Those are the four that exist now. I was just suggesting to Mike that maybe that option would exist.

MR. MacVICAR: Well, it's certainly an intriguing idea at that. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Just a second. Are you happy to have Peace River, or are you happy to become a special area without Peace River?

MR. MacVICAR: Actually, it was a surprising notion and one that I think I would like to take some more time to consider.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, we come back in March, but it might be too late.

MR. MacVICAR: Oh.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thanks for coming.

MR. MacVICAR: Okay. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, the next presenter is Mayor May Rowe of the village of Berwyn.

MRS. ROWE: Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, members. On behalf of the village of Berwyn it's a great pleasure for me to make the presentation this afternoon. The village appreciates the opportunity to provide the commission members with our comments on this important subject. The village's opinion is that the current electoral boundaries should remain as are due to the fact that the current legislation seems to meet all the legal and constitutional tests. The population variances between constituencies are required to meet the challenge of ensuring effective representation. Special consideration should be given to rural regions of the province where electoral boundaries are established, with such factors as transportation, economic connections, and other municipal government and associated agencies in that constituency being taken into account.

The village of Berwyn is a municipality of 620 persons located in the Dunvegan constituency. The village is located halfway between the towns of Fairview and Peace River. Our member of the Legislature representing the Dunvegan constituency has significant demands on his time in relation to travel. The Dunvegan constituency is a large one covering a vast area. This contributes to the amount of time required by that MLA. The travel time to the capital city is also a factor. In the case of the Dunvegan constituency the travel time to the city of Edmonton is often over five hours. This takes numerous hours of time from a rural-based MLA. The travel time required also adversely impacts on the MLA's ability to effectively represent a large rural constituency such as Dunvegan.

As a municipal council we appreciate the opportunity to meet with our MLA on a regular basis. In many instances this contact can be an important element in the success of one of our initiatives. The number of municipalities, regional health authorities, school boards, and other agencies located in a large rural constituency and the desire of these organizations to meet with their MLA place additional demands on his time and his ability to effectively represent his constituents.

In the Dunvegan constituency our MLA is the main communications link with the provincial government. The MLA provides access to government services and information while acting as a contact person with the provincial government in the area. The municipal government, the village council, relies on their MLA for providing access to the government. There are numerous diverse issues that an MLA representing a large rural constituency must be aware of. It takes time. Addressing these issues requires preparation work, meetings, and follow-up actions. The diversity of these issues greatly adds to his workload.

Based on these considerations as well as others, the village council respectfully recommends that the current electoral boundaries remain as is. The village council is of the opinion that increasing the size of the Dunvegan constituency would seriously compromise our access to effective representation at the provincial government level.

I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to provide you with input this afternoon, and we wish you well and every success in your deliberations. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. You're not offering to pray for us; are you?

MRS. ROWE: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: We may need that. We'll start the questioning with John this time.

MR. McCARTHY: No questions. Thanks.

MR. LEHANE: How long does it take to drive from the constituency office to Edmonton? Do you know?

MRS. ROWE: It takes about five and a half hours as I fly from Berwyn to Edmonton, so probably six hours from Fairview.

MR. LEHANE: Thank you.

MR. WORTH: My wife spent her formative years in Berwyn, and one of the things that she has often told me is that the people in Berwyn didn't like the people in Grimshaw very much. I wonder if you'd like to retain Grimshaw, or would you like to get rid of it?

MRS. ROWE: Before the last set of changes Grimshaw was in the Peace River constituency. They're now in Dunvegan, and we all get along.

THE CHAIRMAN: They're not that bad?

MRS. ROWE: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Glad to hear that.

MR. WORTH: Well, I'll go home and report that.

MRS. ROWE: Okay. After all, we have a lot of joint operations that go on. We have to deal with each other.

MR. GRBAVAC: I assume that you're talking in the commercial sense.

MRS. ROWE: Uh-huh.

THE CHAIRMAN: Robert?

MR. GRBAVAC: No, not really. I think your presentation was quite self-explanatory. We've heard the same sentiment expressed from municipalities right across the north.

1:56

MRS. ROWE: One thing with regard to your question on the name of Dunvegan. Having voted in the Dunvegan constituency all my life and lived in it, Dunvegan was originally the name that was sought by public input. When Spirit River was added, that was when it became Spirit River-Dunvegan.

MR. GRBAVAC: Is that the way it's referred to now?

MRS. ROWE: It's referred to as Dunvegan, but at one time it was. They've shortened it.

MR. GRBAVAC: And then that made Fairview happy, I assume.

MRS. ROWE: It was public input, you know. They asked for names, and that's what they got.

MR. GRBAVAC: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I don't want to miss your voice with respect to the possibility of getting Peace River into your constituency. It might become Peace River-Dunvegan by name.

MRS. ROWE: Well, I do think there's a lot to be said for the fact that the transportation links out of Peace River are north, not so much east and west. Yes, we're in the middle, so we go either way. Peace River's links are north and south.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, thanks for coming and making your views known.

MRS. ROWE: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next presenter is Mayor John Woodburn of the town of Grimshaw.

MR. WOODBURN: Hon. Edward, I'm happy to be here this afternoon to make our presentation on behalf of the town of Grimshaw. I don't think I'll read it. There are a few things that haven't been mentioned here today that I'd like to bring up. It pretty well follows the same line as everybody else. We kind of want to stay with the status quo. We're more concerned about the loss of representation in the north, where some of our rural ridings are reduced to fewer MLAs.

One of the reasons for that, that hasn't been brought up yet this afternoon, is our resource industry. In our area a lot of the provincial finances come from the resources. We've got major oil and gas. We've got pulp mills. We've got power generation. All these sorts of things put a lot of money into provincial coffers. A lot of this takes a lot of work from an MLA as well. If we compare this to, say, an urban municipality, that is straight residential. A provincial MLA doesn't have a whole lot of work to do with straight residential in a high-population area, no travel.

In our area it may be not as high a population, but there is major work. An MLA has lots of work. We've got ferries, we've got bridges, we've got oil field roads that are not really to date looked after by the local municipalities. In the negotiations with some of our Indian bands, in the negotiations with these pulp mills, FMAs and all that, there's a lot of work for an MLA. I have a little bit of a problem if we reduce this. We have lots of transportation areas, vast mileage; that's one thing. Our MLAs are very busy, and to put more workload on fewer MLAs, I feel, would be quite a problem.

As I said, we would like to stay with the status quo. We don't have a problem really with which district we're in, either Peace River or Dunvegan. We would have a problem if we had only MLA for both. That would be a major problem.

So that's about our concerns.

THE CHAIRMAN: You used the initials "FMA."

MR. WOODBURN: Forestry management area.

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, thank you.

Well, we'll start the questioning with John.

MR. McCARTHY: What's your population?

MR. WOODBURN: The population is 2,812.

MR. McCARTHY: Okay. Thanks.

MR. WORTH: You recall my earlier question to one of your associates about the function of an MLA. Assuming that the information function is an important one, what impact on that function do you think modern technology and the media can have? Is it feasible to think that many more of the MLA's communications could be handled through telephone, fax, E-mail, you name it? Is that a feasible option in this area?

MR. WOODBURN: I suppose it is. We have an MLA report all the time in our newspapers, so we get communication there now to know the general goings-on of the provincial government. A lot of our contacts are just direct problems that you wouldn't get by E-mail. It's more personal contact I think – I really do – anytime you have a problem. As one of the members said here before, we all know our MLAs. I know that if you go to a city or a bigger urban area, they don't know their MLAs.

Pretty well most of the people in the north have always dealt directly with their MLA because there are so many problems that the provincial government looks after that the local municipality doesn't. The only things I can think of, like in the urban ones, are health and schooling. You know, that's for everybody. It's changing now because our municipalities have gone to MDs, and the government is getting less involved. Up till then it was the provincial government. The MLA was looking after a lot of it.

MR. WORTH: Yeah. So it's still the same story that we're getting here then: face-to-face contact is what is wanted, not E-mail or fax or telephone.

MR. WOODBURN: I don't think so. That's an added bonus.

MR. WORTH: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Robert?

MR. GRBAVAC: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I gather that when you tell us being in Grimshaw doesn't make any difference to you whether you're in Dunvegan or Peace River, you would say that it doesn't make much difference whether the town of Peace River is in Dunvegan or Peace River.

MR. WOODBURN: That's correct, yeah.

THE CHAIRMAN: But where do you think Peace River should be out of those two?

MR. WOODBURN: I can't really speak for Peace River, but my personal view is that we would like ourselves to be with Peace River. I don't really care where Peace River or we are, whether it's in the Peace River constituency or Dunvegan. To me it doesn't matter that much, but we do have a lot of close ties with Peace River.



THE CHAIRMAN: Fine. I guess that's all the questions. I want to thank you for coming to our hearing today and making the views of Grimshaw known.

MR. WOODBURN: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next presenter is Brian Grant, reeve of the MD of Peace River.

MR. GRANT: Hello.

THE CHAIRMAN: If you'd turn your sign around, it might be easier to see.

MR. GRANT: Oh, yeah. Right; it might be easier to see.

THE CHAIRMAN: Somebody might call you by some other name.

MR. GRANT: I pretty much echo the same concerns as the rest of the towns and villages. I'm a rural municipality representative. I think maybe I see just slightly differently than some of the past speakers have on one question that you keep asking, and that is whether Peace River should be in Dunvegan. I've lived in this country all my life, and the town of Peace River particularly doesn't quite fit into Dunvegan in my opinion. Why my opinion is that is that the rest of the Dunvegan constituency is predominantly agriculture and the town of Peace River is not agriculture. It is oil and gas and pulp, and in that way it doesn't fit in that area. Basically, otherwise I can't see anything.

I know that the Peace River constituency is even bigger than Dunvegan, but I live in Dunvegan. I noticed one thing just before the last election. When the boundaries were changed, the constituency took on a piece of the south side of the Peace River, like High Prairie and Fahler and that area. I mean, maybe they needed the area in order to make a big enough area, but at the same time that's quite a different trading area, I guess would be the best way to explain that. The trading area of Spirit River, Fairview, Grimshaw, Hines Creek, and all that area has always seemed like it was one area. That river was a big barrier over the years.

I would certainly like to see the status quo and not have more added on to the Dunvegan constituency.

THE CHAIRMAN: What you're telling us is that if there's any part that's on waivers, it's Falher and McLennan.

MR. GRANT: Well, they are the ones that just came onstream. Like I say, they definitely were another area, always have been another area. When they were brought in, it was a bit of a transition. I'm sure it's more that they find their representation with, for example, Fairview a little bit cumbersome.

2:06

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I'm glad you make that point, because they're on the east of the Smoky there.

MR. GRANT: Right, and also on the south side of the Peace, which kind of cuts them off in both directions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, we'll start with Robert in questioning this thing.

MR. GRBAVAC: Brian, this is more of a comment than anything else. I can certainly appreciate where you're coming from in that I

have, you know, a rural municipal background as well. I just want to make a suggestion to you. The city of Calgary every two years grows by roughly the population equivalent to Fort McMurray and maybe more, and over time that's a reality that's going to be hard to ignore in terms of retaining what we have come to know as a democratic society. One of the solutions that's been suggested to this with respect to representation for the more outlying areas of the province is to decentralize some of the power that now resides in Edmonton. Then it maybe wouldn't be quite as relevant how many rural MLAs we had as opposed to urban MLAs, and if in fact certain elements of your self-determination were, you know, established by policy or by legislation that gave you greater control over your own destiny, it may not be quite as relevant. I would encourage that over the longer term that may be an option you may want to pursue.

Historically in the evolution of society you've seen a migration to the more urban areas, and I don't mean just specifically the cities of Calgary and Edmonton but that 50- to 70-mile radius around those two cities. It would seem that the population is gravitating to that area, and maybe that's the fault of some of us in the efficiency level that has been obtained in the agricultural community and for that matter many of the natural resource industries. I wonder if you would care to comment on that. Do you in fact see that happening now?

MR. GRANT: Well, I think I see that now. When I go to AAMDC conventions or whatever, I find that a lot of the concerns of what they call rural jurisdictions around Calgary and Edmonton are much the same as the actual metropolitan city people. You know, if you were to try to integrate some of those surrounding areas into the cities, I suppose there'd be some people kind of left out, falling through the cracks, whatever you want to call it, some real rural people that are still there. But I think it's a fact that a lot of the surrounding areas are almost the same as the cities, and probably they could fit together fairly reasonably.

MR. GRBAVAC: Were you an ID recently?

MR. GRANT: No. We've always been an MD.

MR. GRBAVAC: I see. Okay. Because I know a number of the IDs whose status has been changed to that of an MD.

MR. GRANT: Right.

MR. WORTH: Just a quick question of information. Is all of your MD within the Dunvegan constituency?

MR. GRANT: It is now. As the status quo is now, it is all in Dunvegan.

MR. WORTH: Was it split before?

MR. GRANT: It was split before.

MR. WORTH: Along what lines?

MR. GRANT: Well, just kind of almost through the middle, slightly more to the east.

MR. WORTH: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Just to make this conversation a little interesting, what would your reaction be to eliminating the constituency of

Dunvegan and putting part of it into Grande Prairie-Wapiti, Grande Prairie-Smoky, Peace River, and Slave Lake? I want you to know that it's not beyond the realm of possibility and would do great results for getting the population closer to the population quotient, but that would be no more Dunvegan.

MR. GRANT: Well, of course I wouldn't want to see that. You don't even have to ask that. I suppose some of the area that's on the south side of the Peace probably was partly in some of those areas that you're talking about, with Grande Prairie. I don't totally understand it, but I presume that if something like you're just mentioning were to happen, I would think this other area would have to go into a special area, and we'd have to have a real transformation of lines there. It would be a big change, and I don't think the public would be very receptive to it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Fine. Thank you.

Maybe I should ask this question. You're representing the county of Peace River; is that correct?

MR. GRANT: No. It's just a rural MD.

THE CHAIRMAN: A rural MD. This question was proposed last night in respect to Grande Prairie: what's the possibility of the town of Peace River and the rural MD getting together as one government?

MR. GRANT: Well, again, it's the same thing as I mentioned before. I see a large difference between the wants and desires of the people of Peace River and the rural MD. I would think that if there was any combining of MDs, it would be more likely that the Fairview MD and the MD of Peace possibly would be joining, more so than an urban/rural. See, you think of urban as a city, and I think of urban as Peace River.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, that's a different definition of urban, but you're entitled to do that.

Well, I guess those are all the questions. We want to thank you for coming, Brian, and frankly expressing your views.

MR. GRANT: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next presenter is Ronald Faulkner, the mayor of the town of McLennan.

MR. FAULKNER: I'd like to thank you for allowing me to make this presentation. I'm Ron Faulkner. I'm the mayor of the town of McLennan. I'm here to express concerns about the possibility of changing constituency boundaries in northern Alberta.

I foresee a problem with changing to even larger constituencies due to the geographical and unique needs of this area. Geographic concerns related to constituency size and representation should be addressed prior to making any changes to electoral boundaries. Constituency size is a concern in rural Alberta. In urban areas an MLA can walk from one end of the constituency to the other. This allows an urban MLA to easily attend four or five functions within the constituency in a day. The cost of attending these functions is very low. In a rural constituency it may be over 300 kilometres from one end to the other. In many instances a very energetic MLA may be able to attend only three or four functions in one day. Often the MLA may even have to stay overnight to fulfill his or her duties.

Representation is of vital importance in rural areas. It's estimated that the four constituencies – Athabasca-Wabasca, Lesser Slave

Lake, Peace River, and Dunvegan – make up approximately one-third of the province. Access to MLAs is difficult for the people living in these constituencies. It's difficult and costly for these people to impress upon their elected provincial officials their concerns on a constant basis. Although our elected representatives are responsive, lobbying efforts are sometimes essential to assure that the concerns of a group, organization, or community are addressed. When a Dunvegan MLA, for instance, has to deal with five towns, eight villages, 16 schools, and four hospitals, the need for representation is even more important. Urban constituencies tend to be geographically smaller, which leads to generally fewer demands being placed on the MLA.

In rural constituencies the large number of smaller communities with diverse cultures make the constituency rich. The patterns created in Alberta since the early 1900s have been small areas where different nationalities tend to settle. Although people are proud to be Albertans, they also wish to preserve their ethnic association. Organizations have been created to preserve these various cultures. I believe they must be assisted by the MLA to obtain funding to pursue their goals or projects. These demands make the rural MLA's job even more time consuming. When you combine this with a large number of sport and service organizations, a rural MLA's job is much more difficult than their urban counterparts.

Increasing the size of rural constituencies may as a result decrease the number of rural constituencies. Representation of rural areas is very important. In many cases policies are made which address problems or concerns in cities. While a concern may be valid in a large urban area, it may not be applicable in a smaller rural community. The reverse is also true. For example, implementation of a hospital performance index by Alberta Health has caused the downgrading or closure of a hospital. This may actually be warranted in some larger urban areas. However, closure of a hospital in the north may mean residents will have to travel over 40 miles to get to medical care. A policy may work in a city but can be devastating in a rural area. A rural MLA understands these problems and should be bringing this point of view to his colleagues.

#### 2:16

A rural MLA's job is hard enough because of geographic problems and addressing the needs of his or her constituents without constantly changing constituency boundaries. Reducing the number of rural elected representatives in the Legislature by increasing the size of a constituency is not equitable. The people of the north are isolated enough without the provincial government reducing representation and in effect making them second-class citizens. It's my belief that the boundaries should remain as they are in order to address these concerns.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Fine. We'll start the questioning with John.

MR. McCARTHY: I have no questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe?

MR. LEHANE: No questions.

MR. WORTH: Just a question about the interaction patterns of people from McLennan with High Prairie, Peace River, Grande Prairie. What kind of interaction do you have with those three centres?

MR. FAULKNER: McLennan probably has more interaction with Grande Prairie than to the north. During the last round of these electoral boundary changes McLennan and the whole Smoky River district was taken from Smoky and stuck in with Dunvegan. Now we're saying that we'd at least like to stay with Dunvegan so we know where we're at. You know, we keep getting bounced around all the time. It's very difficult.

MR. WORTH: Now, you haven't said anything about High Prairie.

MR. FAULKNER: Okay. We deal also with High Prairie, southerly to High Prairie, probably more. That would be our main trading partner, I guess.

MR. WORTH: Okay. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Robert?

MR. GRBAVAC: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: What you say about McLennan, would that also be true of Falher? I was under the impression Falher comes to Peace River. Am I wrong?

MR. FAULKNER: Yeah, Falher probably would tend to come to Peace River more than to High Prairie. It's equal distance between High Prairie and Peace River from Falher. I think Donnelly Corner is about the centre point.

MR. WORTH: But McLennan and Falher generally have been together in a constituency; have they not?

MR. FAULKNER: Yes, in my time they've been together. I've lived here for 19 years, and in that time they've been together.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I want to thank you for coming, Mr. Faulkner, and making the views of the town of McLennan known to us.

MR. FAULKNER: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Now, these are all of the people that have filed their names with us to make presentations. We also allow for walk-ons. That's anybody in the audience who's been listening here and has heard all of these words of wisdom and would like to add something. Is there anybody here that would like to say something more?

MRS. SOKOLOSKI: I'm Kay Sokoloski, and I'm a returning officer for Peace River. The last time the commission sat there was talk about making a constituency across the northern part of Alberta. Apparently that was abandoned. I kind of thought that was a good idea because those people really have nothing in common with the southern part of the constituency except through industry, but human resources are sort of separated from the rest of the constituency.

Another thing I would hesitate to suggest is that you enlarge these constituencies. As a returning office it takes every bit of time from the time an election is called until election day to organize these constituencies with their vast sizes. Nampa is now in the Peace River constituency; that's 18 miles south of Peace River. Then our farthest north poll is just a few miles south of the Northwest Territories border, so you can imagine the distance a returning officer has to cover. It's probably 500, 600 miles north and south.

Then we have now west to Assumption, Rainbow Lake and that area, and Zama City. In the last change you did take some of the eastern part of our constituency but gave us some of the south. You took some of the east off – little Buffalo and that area you took off – but gave us Nampa and that area. You also took off Grimshaw. It still makes a very large constituency, very difficult to cover in the time that is allowed for a returning officer.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I'd like to make this comment. I would gather you're the returning officer for the constituency of Peace River, from what you've told us. Is that right?

MRS. SOKOLOSKI: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: And really what you're telling us is something that would make your job a lot easier, and I'm not sure that that's a . . .

MRS. SOKOLOSKI: Well, Peace River is the easy one though.

THE CHAIRMAN: No, no. I'm speaking of the whole constituency.

MRS. SOKOLOSKI: When you live at this end, it is the easy one. Why would you think of putting Peace River into Dunvegan when Dunvegan is already very large? And where would you compensate for Peace River? Would you give them Lesser Slave Lake?

THE CHAIRMAN: No, no. There are a thousand manipulations, I want you to know, but if you move Peace River into Dunvegan, Dunvegan would be very close to the population quotient. The constituency of Peace River could then become a special area, where you're allowed 50 percent fewer voters. But we haven't decided this. We're just throwing out to the people here different thoughts and possibilities and wanting to hear what their reaction is to all of these.

MRS. SOKOLOSKI: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Just a second. Just have a seat. Somebody else may have a question.

MR. GRBAVAC: Well, I'm kind of intrigued by your comment that the most northerly portion of the province ought to be given some consideration as a riding. Is that what you're saying?

MRS. SOKOLOSKI: Yes.

MR. GRBAVAC: Extending from Fort Chip on the east and maybe as far as Rainbow Lake right across the province: are you suggesting that?

MRS. SOKOLOSKI: Pardon?

MR. GRBAVAC: Would you suggest that it go the full length of the province east to west?

MRS. SOKOLOSKI: Well, east and west would make it more difficult because of the transportation.

MR. GRBAVAC: Oh, I'm sorry. I misunderstood you. I thought you said that that made some sense. We've been hearing from people in Lesser Slave Lake that culturally people move north and south in those ridings and that putting the Dene with the Cree would not necessarily make a whole lot of sense.

MRS. SOKOLOSKI: Well, you know, if you gave Peace River more rural area, you're making a lot more work for the returning officer, because mainly the population . . .

MR. GRBAVAC: No, I'm not suggesting that. I was just intrigued by your comment about making a constituency of the north so that the constituencies weren't so long from north to south. Were you suggesting that something north of – well, I'm not sure what the parallel is here – but that splitting the Peace River constituency in two made some sense? Is that what you're saying?

I suggested that to the mayor of Peace River, and he didn't seem to be too warm to that idea. Of course, maybe when I offer to give him something, he views that with suspicion. I'm not sure why that would be.

THE CHAIRMAN: Wally, do you have any questions?

MR. WORTH: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe?

MR. LEHANE: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: John?

Well, I want to thank you for coming and making your views known. I guess that's everybody. When Mayor John Woodburn was speaking here, he mentioned that nobody had mentioned the fact that there were three resources that were important in this constituency. Nobody had spoken about that. I want you to know that we were in Grande Prairie last night, and that aspect was quite well discussed and brought to our attention.

I want to thank you all for coming.

[The hearing adjourned at 2:26 p.m.]