

Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings Red Deer

7:03 p.m.

[Chairman: Chief Judge Edward R. Wachowich]

THE CHAIRMAN: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I want to welcome you to the public hearings of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. 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.

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

The commission is holding public hearings here in Red Deer 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 with you.

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.

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 will commence the hearings in the city of Red Deer.

The first presenter we wish to call upon is August Liivam. Is that the correct pronunciation?

7:13

MR. LIIVAM: That's correct, sir.

First of all, gentlemen, it's an honour and a privilege to appear before this commission tonight and express the views of the ratepayers of Lacombe county. I'll thank you in advance for hearing our presentation. I think you have a copy of this presentation before you, so you may follow along or listen to me verbally.

The council of Lacombe county, again, wish to thank you for the opportunity to make representation to the Electoral Boundaries Commission on behalf of the residents of Lacombe county. Council would like to comment on the following issues related to the establishment of electoral boundaries: exclusive use of population as the basis for determining boundaries, recognition of municipal boundaries, and the urban/rural mix.

First of all, representation by population. The driving force behind the electoral boundary review appears to be the perception that representation by population is the primary and perhaps the only means of providing equitable representation in the Legislature. While this may be true in a society where distances and geographical factors do not influence the abilities of an elected official to communicate with electors, this is simply not the case in Alberta. The distinctions between the highly concentrated urban population base along the Highway 2 corridor and the sparsely populated fringe areas cannot be ignored. Rural constituencies are presently handicapped in their ability to organize and communicate as many residents are forced to travel up to two hours round-trip to attend meetings and functions. Even with the current electoral division boundaries, a prerequisite for many rural electors to participate in a local executive or attend community meetings is a willingness to sacrifice a great deal of time and expense to travel to functions. Consolidation and/or expansion of rural constituencies will further alienate rural residents and possibly prohibit rural residents from any meaningful participation in the political process.

Two, recognition of municipal boundaries. Traditional use of municipal boundaries to determine constituency boundaries has been overshadowed by a preoccupation to develop a system that offers absolute representation by population. Municipal boundaries were historically established based on natural divisions in communities and frequently define residents with common interests. The use of municipal boundaries offers a natural and effective means of representation and allows a community to vertically integrate local, provincial, and federal issues. If a rural municipality must be split between electoral divisions, the split should be such that residents of the municipality do not become minor players in three or four electoral divisions.

Three, urban/rural mix. As elected representatives of rural residents we are actually aware of the gradual shift in rural representation to urban representation as agricultural and related activities are rationalized and larger urban centres continue to grow. While many will say that this is simply the price of progress and we must adjust to it, we ask the commission to consider the impact this may have on our agricultural industry. Agriculture and the rural communities that support this industry will play an increasingly vital role in the economy of Alberta. A reduction in the number of Members of the Legislative Assembly with an intricate knowledge of rural communities and the needs of the agricultural industry could have a devastating and lasting impact on rural Alberta. The fine balance between rural and urban representation that has existed in the past should be taken into consideration in the determination of the electoral boundaries.

Thank you again.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Liivam.

We'll start the questioning today with Robert.

MR. GRBAC: August, I'm in concurrence with you with respect to your suggestion that urban centres are continuing to grow. I mean, it's not inconsistent with the way our culture is evolving, the way our society is evolving. It's obviously a North American trend, unlike many European countries where they've taken direct or intervening measures to stem the flow of people to their urban centres. It's only a matter of time until the bulk of the population resides within an urban setting.

Now, we could, you know, debate the definition of what in fact is urban and what is rural, but one of the options that's been proposed to us as an address to this problem has been the creation of `rurban' ridings. They exist in Grande Prairie and they exist in Medicine Hat and to a lesser extent in a couple of other communities in the province. I would like to get your view as a municipal councillor as to the acceptability of a `rurban' riding, and I want to just add a caveat to that. A `rurban' riding, I suggest to you, would consist of roughly a comparable number of urban residents as well as rural residents. Let's say a 50-50 or 60-40 split. I'm just wondering if you see that as a viable option to what is an inevitable shift of population to the urban centres.

MR. LIIVAM: I guess, Mr. Grbac, it would be dependent on the size of the urban centre where that representation was derived from. In our own constituency, Lacombe, with Lacombe having a population of 7,500 and then Stettler in the same constituency, I think we have a `rurban' mix right now, and that seems to work fairly well. When you get larger centres like Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, Edmonton, Calgary, those `rurban' ridings I think become something different.

MR. GRBAVAC: You're suggesting, then, that they're not really a practical solution.

MR. LIIVAM: Not really a practical solution.

MR. GRBAVAC: Okay. Thank you.

MR. WORTH: Mr. Liivam, am I correct in assuming that a part of the county of Lacombe is in the Rocky Mountain House electoral division?

MR. LIIVAM: That is correct.

MR. WORTH: As you're probably aware, the Rocky Mountain House division is perilously close to not falling within the population parameters that we have to work with. One of the options that we have to look at as a commission is what we can do to enlarge the population base in that area. Do you think it's practical to think in terms of moving the boundaries of that constituency farther into the Lacombe county area?

MR. LIIVAM: Well, the practical part of it to me would be to put the whole of Lacombe county in any one constituency. I think dividing a municipality within a number of constituencies is really devastating. It's very hard for municipal councillors to work with that representation and to be effective in that representation.

MR. WORTH: So your preference, instead of moving farther east into the county, would be to acknowledge the county boundaries within the area that's now in the Rocky Mountain constituency.

MR. LIIVAM: That would be one way of doing it, yes.

MR. WORTH: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Would you have any objection to that switch?

MR. LIIVAM: Personally, I wouldn't have any problem with that at all. I think probably Lacombe county has more in common with the western side of the province than the eastern side. Weather conditions are more consistent with that – you know, the same sort of problems.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe?

MR. LEHANE: I have no questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: John?

MR. McCARTHY: No questions. Thanks.

MR. LIIVAM: Thank you very much then, sir.

THE CHAIRMAN: I want to thank you for coming and making the views of the Lacombe county known to this commission. Thank you.

The next presenter is Randy Thorsteinson, representing the Alberta Social Credit Party.

MR. THORSTEINSON: Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to come and make a submission to you today on behalf of the Alberta Social Credit Party.

We have come to the realization that the basic issue here, obviously, as it was just discussed, is: how do we solve the problems within the urban areas where they feel that they're being shortchanged on their votes? As an example, in the Calgary-Egmont riding it takes three of their votes to offset one vote in Cardston-Chief Mountain. At the same time, how do we resolve the problem that exists in the rural areas of lack of representation if we go strictly by the number of constituencies on a per population basis? This is something not unique to Alberta. It happens across the country. It also happens regionally across the country on a federal basis as well. We in Alberta always feel that after Quebec and Ontario have cast their ballots our votes are of little significance. So something has to be changed fundamentally in the way that we operate our parliamentary procedures.

7:23

What we have come up with is just a representation of what we would do on a federal level as well, and that is to implement a provincial Senate in order to resolve the problem. We felt that the constriction you have on this commission as far as 83 constituencies is a bit of a constriction, but working within that framework, we would propose that there be a reduction in the number of MLAs to 63 MLAs, each one representing an equal, by population – we have it by voters, but it could very easily be by population as well – number of people within the constituency. Then establish a provincial Senate, and the provincial Senate would have 20 Senators. Each one of them would represent an equal riding in the sense that there would be five regions in the province: the north, Edmonton, central Alberta, Calgary, and the south, each area having four Senators.

We have made in our proposal, basically, that we would have fixed election dates for the MLAs, and in order to allow for a steady and preferable way of getting our Senators in place, we also feel that Senators should serve a fixed term, where in any given area you would elect two Senators per election. Basically, it is the triple E Senate put on a provincial basis. Albertans are strongly supportive of the whole triple E concept nationally, and we feel that it would be the solution for the provincial dilemma that we're in. Urban dwellers will eventually get the number of seats that they rightly deserve.

As your literature points out, we have a huge variety in the size of ridings. Cardston and Athabasca-Wabasca are tremendously small compared to the Calgary and Edmonton ridings. It's just a matter of time before the urban dwellers rise up in revolt over the whole issue because they're not getting fair and equal treatment within the parliamentary procedures of the province. We feel that this resolves the problem because we have equal representation from elected MLAs, but with the triple E provincial Senate, where we have elected members, who have effective powers and are equal, from different regions of the province, it resolves the concerns of the rural communities as well.

That's it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

We'll start the questioning with John.

MR. McCARTHY: Yes. I just have one comment here, maybe two. You referred to the constituency of Cardston. I have that constituency as having 18,928 constituents, and Calgary-Egmont has 37,689. So it's around 2 to 1.

MR. THORSTEINSON: Well, actually we based our figures on the actual number of voters, which we think is a more indicative way of

actually distributing it rather than population. It is a 3 to 1 differential.

MR. McCARTHY: Okay. I think our mandate is to deal with people rather than voters.

MR. THORSTEINSON: That's fine. The principle would be the same.

MR. McCARTHY: Yes.

Then the only other issue I just wanted to mention before Chief Judge Wachowich does – I might be faster in mentioning this than he would be. Your submission is a creative one, but it's outside the mandate of this commission.

MR. THORSTEINSON: In which way? I've read through the mandate, and I think it does fall within the parameters of what you've been given.

MR. McCARTHY: I disagree with you. I don't think we have the mandate to recommend a provincial Senate. But I do note there's a member of the Legislature here, and he looks pretty interested in your submission. So I'm sure he'll eagerly take it back to the Legislature.

MR. THORSTEINSON: Oh, I'm sure he will. I think, though, as I've read the mandate that you have – and I went through the law today – it did not say that there had to be 83 Members of the Legislative Assembly. Basically, it said 83 electoral districts or divisions, whatever word they used. As I understand that, we have accomplished that with 63 MLAs and 20 senators. That's still 83 elected people within a district or division, and I think it falls well within the parameters you were given.

MR. McCARTHY: Okay. Well, I appreciate your comments, and we'll all re-read the Act here and make sure that – maybe you're within our mandate. I don't know, but we'll consider it.

Thanks.

MR. LEHANE: Well, just one comment, Randy. It's an interesting proposal you have, but I think the proper forum for it is in the Legislature. I agree with John McCarthy. I think it's outside the mandate of this commission.

MR. THORSTEINSON: Well, if I can just respond to that. Under part 2, your redistribution rules, item 13 says that the commission is to “divide Alberta into 83 proposed . . . electoral divisions.” It doesn't say Members of the Legislative Assembly. Clearly, this does fall within your mandate. This is the Electoral Boundaries Commission. There is no other forum for this but the Electoral Boundaries Commission. You're looking for a solution to a problem between urban and rural dwellers: how do they get fair representation from both sides. I believe it is clearly within your mandate. Obviously it's a difference of opinion. I thought the commission represented the Legislature and you were given that task to determine what options were out there.

THE CHAIRMAN: Fine.

MR. WORTH: I think it's a creative proposal, but not being a lawyer – and we have a judge and two lawyers here – I'm going to defer to their expertise in this matter at this stage. I do want to commend

you on the proposal, because we have talked in other hearings about the need to have some other mechanism for giving more effective representation to regional interests and rural interests, and this obviously is one.

MR. GRBAVAC: Well, Randy, I have to concur with the legal expertise that sits at this table in suggesting that electoral division implies the area from which an MLA is to be elected.

However, you strike a chord that is common with much of rural Alberta. We've spent probably a disproportionate amount of our time in rural Alberta, and that's for a reason. Rural Alberta was suggesting to us that there are really two functions to an MLA. One is a service function, and one is that of setting policy. They suggested to us that the huge geographic area of Alberta required a certain level of representation and a certain input at the policy table and the people who lived in the rural community had a different perspective on how rural Alberta ought to be developed and how it ought to be governed and they wanted an equal say. They used the analogy that a team of horses of equal strength might make a lot more sense than one that is stronger than the other.

I suggest to you that in the longer term what you're saying is that we do need some sort of balance between the geographic needs of Alberta versus the population and the population dynamics that are taking place, and I submit to you that over time that's going to, from my perspective, have to happen if we're going to keep a politically harmonious environment in Alberta. I suggest to you that you strongly make those recommendations to the Members of the Legislative Assembly, who have the authority and may in fact have the mandate to create what it is that you're speaking of, because I think in the long term we're on a road that's going to lead to an urban/rural split, if you will, and I don't think that's in the best interests of Alberta.

I commend you on your representation, and I hope you would not conclude your initiative at this level but extend that to the Members of the Legislative Assembly.

MR. THORSTEINSON: Right. I appreciate that very much. We certainly won't stop here. Our proposal is that the MLAs will clearly be on the urban standpoint, more of them urban, and rurally there'll be more Senators.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, Randy, I'm not prepared to answer the legal question without briefing myself. I haven't had a chance, but you do raise an interesting point, and I think we should look at it. I want to thank you for coming and for coming up with this solution. This is the first time we've heard this kind of a solution in respect to our hearings.

MR. THORSTEINSON: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next presenters are Rod McDermid and Mervyn Kurtz, representing the Lacombe-Stettler PC Association.

MR. KURTZ: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, on behalf of the Lacombe-Stettler Progressive Conservative Association we thank you for this opportunity to present our views on constituency boundaries. At the outset let me say that our constituency association strongly supports maintaining the status quo in existing provincial boundaries in general, and specifically we are asking you to retain the existing Lacombe-Stettler constituency boundaries.

Now, to support our request we would like to present the following points. In 1992 the electoral boundaries were changed substantially in the Lacombe-Stettler constituency. While there was opposition to the changes, the Alberta Legislature ultimately approved the proposed changes and we came into being. Since that time our association and the MLA have worked very hard to develop and create constructive relationships within the constituency. We acknowledge that the boundary changes have not been acceptable to all concerned. However, we believe that an effective constituency identity is emerging to which the majority of our constituencies relate. To introduce additional changes to our constituency boundaries would undo our constructive efforts and create a new dislocation of identity.

7:33

Now, in deference to what Mr. Liivam has said – I know that you asked him a question as to whether or not a boundary along county lines would be suitable. I submit to you that previously our constituency was along county boundaries, but it was changed. It was changed in 1992-93. Whereas the county of Lacombe pretty much was the boundary for our constituency, that was changed. I gather your comment was: should we now go back to that? At that time we did not have sufficient population, and I think we would have even less than we have now in our new constituency.

This past year many changes have occurred in rural Alberta, particularly in the areas of local government. As you know, school systems and hospital districts in both Stettler and Lacombe and other areas of the province have changed substantially. They have been amalgamated with other regions to create larger governing areas with fewer elected representatives. Many constituents have not yet identified with these extensive changes. We rural Albertans have been subjected to very significant government changes these past few years. We know that change can be positive, but too much can also create uncertainty and add to the stress in our lives. Our response to excessive change can be negative and disruptive, and it can lead to apathy and withdrawal as we strive to adjust.

Let me give you an example, if I may, in respect to the educational change. This past year, for the first time in my recollection there were a number of areas where school trustees were not even nominated, and the reason for that was because many people didn't know of the changes. They had difficulty identifying with all the changes that had been made. To ask us to change again within our constituency is going to be more than we will be able to endure.

We know that the basis for this boundary review rests with recommendations made in the Alberta Court of Appeal decision. I don't wish to belabour that point, because you know it far better than I do, except to say that we also know that a number of the court rulings would support the retention of our boundaries as they currently are; in other words, we fall within the 25 percent deviation. We are minus 10.4 from the provincial average, and we think that's a sustainable number at this time. That's not to say that it couldn't change in the future, but at this time we think it should be left.

The last point I would like to make, Mr. Chairman, is that rural MLAs have a much greater demand on their time and energy to meet the needs of their constituency simply because of the geography and distance factor. But I think there's another point as well, and that is that rural constituents tend to identify to a greater extent with their MLA. You will find that the MLAs in the rural areas are contacted much more than in the cities. This is what I have been led to believe by my friends and colleagues in the city areas. Currently urban MLAs outnumber their rural counterparts by about 44 to 39. We

recognized the need to maintain a balance in the distribution of population in Alberta ridings, but this, we think, can be achieved more fairly over time. A further review is scheduled for the year 2001 following that census, and at that time further electoral boundary reviews could be considered.

To conclude, we believe that fair and effective representation must be maintained for rural constituencies, that our needs and circumstances and commitments legitimize maintaining our present boundaries. We think that our present boundaries are justifiable and reasonable, and we submit that they are right.

We thank you very much for this opportunity to present our views.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Kurtz.

We'll start the questioning with Robert Grbavac.

MR. GRBAVAC: No questions, Your Honour.

MR. WORTH: Previously we heard that the interests of the people in this area tended to be aligned more with people to the west. Would you concur in that? Would you think that Lacombe-Stettler has more in common with the Rocky Mountain House area or Eckville or whatever we're talking about over there than it would, say, with Castor or Coronation?

MR. KURTZ: Well, that's a very interesting question, and I don't know whether I'm capable of judging that. All I can say to you is that people adjust, and if you were to change those boundaries, we would attempt to adjust. That's what we're attempting to do now. We're attempting to adjust, and we think we need time to establish that identity. If you shifted them the other way, to the west, then we would have to re-establish the identity. I'm afraid that's the best I can do for an answer.

MR. WORTH: Well, thank you. I appreciate very much the concern you have about change and the need to adapt to new boundaries.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe?

MR. LEHANE: No questions.

MR. McCARTHY: You just indicated what you thought were the urban constituencies. I'll just give you some numbers and see if you agree with me. I have 18 in Edmonton and 20 in Calgary at present. Then in the smaller urban centres I come up with two in Lethbridge, two in Red Deer, one in Medicine Hat, one in Fort McMurray, one in Sherwood Park, and one in St. Albert. That gives 46 totally urban constituencies. You had 44; I've got more than you've got.

MR. KURTZ: Well, thank you very much for pointing that out to me.

MR. McCARTHY: For your information and others', I've also got a number of what I call hybrids, which have a majority of urban representation in them: Grande Prairie-Wapiti, Grande Prairie-Smoky, Cypress-Medicine Hat, Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, Stony Plain. So there are a number of hybrids. Actually, those sort of happened as a result of natural growth, but they seem to be working fairly well. My point is in support of yours, that the majority of the ridings right now are urban.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, we want to thank you, Mervyn, for coming and making the views of the Lacombe-Stettler Progressive Conservative Association known to us.

MR. KURTZ: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next presenter is Reeve Maurice Lewis, county of Red Deer.

MR. LEWIS: Good evening, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the future of Alberta's electoral boundaries. As reeve of the county of Red Deer, which is Alberta's fifth largest rural municipality in terms of population, I am here on behalf of county council to express our thoughts on a review.

Let me begin by saying that effective representation may be more the fundamental issue than equal representation, or rep by pop, as it is commonly referred to. I would stress the fact that both urban and rural voters have many interests in common, but there are interests that are unique to the rural areas, and in considering electoral boundaries the objective should be not to provide special representation for rural voters but effective representation.

The issue of provincial electoral boundaries is of great importance to rural Albertans. We have witnessed regionalization and restructuring of the health and education sectors of our communities. These patterns of centralization and the demise of many small towns contribute to complicating access to many amenities. The maintenance of an infrastructure to allow rural Albertans access to health, education, recreational and professional services is a concern not necessarily shared by urban voters. Since many of these services fall to some extent under the jurisdiction of the provincial government, effective political representation at the provincial level is of paramount importance.

Many of the arguments presented to the Alberta electoral boundaries review committee in 1992 are still relevant and worth repeating today. We believe that it is very important for constituency boundaries to follow local interest boundaries. Trading patterns, geographical features, municipal boundaries, et cetera, should be factors taken into consideration when provincial electoral boundaries are drawn.

Where individual municipal districts and counties are divided amongst two or more separate provincial constituencies it creates a barrier for local citizens to speak with one voice to the provincial government. It also increases the workload and effectiveness of the MLAs who may be required to deal with parts of several communities, each of which may have separate and distinct concerns. Rural MLAs have a myriad of organizations, councils, and boards to deal with even though regionalization of hospital and school boards has occurred. These boards and councils are typically scattered all over a very large geographical area. The effectiveness of the MLA, therefore, is somewhat diluted by the distance and travel factor.

7:43

We're also opposed to the melding of urban and rural populations to create the so-called 'rurban' constituencies. Because of the significant differences between urban and rural needs and priorities, it decreases the effectiveness of the MLA in representing his constituents. I would like to qualify that somewhat, that 'rurban' thing. The county of Red Deer actually has four MLAs, with Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South each having a minor piece of the county. It has not been an overwhelming problem in a centre the

size of Red Deer. I think where our council is concerned is where you're dealing with the metropolitan centres of Edmonton and Calgary.

Two economic interests, agriculture and resource development, are unique to rural Alberta. Because rural people are on the front line of these interests, their lives are impacted in a much more direct fashion. These two industries, coupled with tourism development, are the backbone of Alberta's economy, and the electorate directly concerned must be able to access political representation fairly and effectively.

Mr. Chairman, it is our contention that past court decisions have recognized a principle of effective representation and that representation by population is not necessarily fair representation. We feel that the present provision of allowing for a 25 percent variation in constituency population and a 50 percent variation in specific, sparsely populated areas is a viable and satisfactory arrangement. We also hold the view, Mr. Chairman, that the present boundaries and the number of MLAs are adequate and that no change at this time is necessary. I guess I'm concurring with one of the former speakers who was saying let's keep the status quo.

I've also had information that some of the presentations to this review committee by residents of the metropolitan centres of Edmonton and Calgary have indicated that existing boundaries and the number of Members of the Legislative Assembly are satisfactory and viable.

In a restructuring process that has taken place in health and education, very large geographical areas are now under these boards of governance. I think it would be devastating to rural residents at this time if larger constituencies were adopted, and it would be difficult to comprehend how an MLA could effectively represent his constituency in a larger riding. I suppose you could say that I'm using the old cliché: if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

I would like to close by using the quotation from *Hansard* of May 12, 1977, when the late Grant Notley, MLA for Spirit River-Fairview and former leader of the New Democratic Party of Alberta, said:

There is no doubt in my mind that there are some very real problems in representing rural Alberta, which must lead us to the conclusion that rigid application of representation by population is not fair. It may be fair in an abstract, philosophical sense, but in my judgment it is not fair in terms of providing access by the electorate to their member of the Legislature.

I respectfully submit that you have heard or will hear that statement many times, but I impart to you that it is a very realistic challenge facing all MLAs to ensure that rural Albertans have effective and accessible representation.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Lewis.

We'll start the questioning with John McCarthy.

MR. McCARTHY: Yeah, you're right; we have heard that statement by Grant Notley. This is our 17th public hearing, and we've heard it maybe a dozen times, I guess.

Just a comment. I just did my additions again, and I think you're right. These hybrid, if you can call them that, or mutant or 'rurban' ridings: I come up with nine of them. For example, Three Hills-Airdrie. Well, Airdrie is a city, and most of the people in the acreages between Airdrie and Calgary live there and work in the city of Calgary, but, you know, the constituency itself doesn't include part of Calgary. People are relatively comfortable with that. The same thing with Highwood and Banff-Cochrane. Then you go up to

Edmonton and you get into the St. Albert area, Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, and then in the smaller cities you've got the two in Grande Prairie and Cypress-Medicine Hat. Those seem to be working well. So I agree with your point that where it doesn't seem to work well is when you try to leapfrog into the large metropolitan areas, being Calgary and Edmonton.

MR. LEWIS: The county of Red Deer, I may add, Mr. Chairman, is represented, as I said before, by four MLAs. Most of our rural population in the multilot subdivisions is concentrated around the city of Red Deer, and many of these people are represented by the Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South MLAs. We have not had a particular problem with this. I think also it's the quality of the people that are the MLAs, that have been very co-operative with our municipality in dealing with issues. Even though they may be urban MLAs, they have most certainly attempted to be fair and deal with the rural sector that they represent too.

MR. LEHANE: I'd like to begin by thanking Reeve Lewis for his very clear and well-presented argument and presentation this evening, the way it's set out in his paper. I really have no questions. I think your points are well made.

For your information we were in Olds earlier today at another hearing, and there was one of the presenters talking about the multilot subdivisions and the people in the Bears paw area who've moved out. Basically their work and their social life is involved in Calgary. His expression was "hilltoppers," so I just thought we'd pass that along to you in case you were looking for a word to describe them sometime.

MR. WORTH: You mentioned the service function of MLAs. Would it be reasonable to assume for the residents of your county that their services are provided largely within the city of Red Deer and therefore the demand on the MLAs might be less than it would be in other rural constituencies?

MR. LEWIS: No, I wouldn't necessarily say that. We have fairly large urban centres besides the city of Red Deer. We have the town of Innisfail with a population of some 6,000 people and the town of Sylvan Lake with 5,000 people and Bowden with 1,000 and Penhold with 1,800, so we do have some substantially fair-sized urban centres other than the city of Red Deer.

In the regionalization that's now taken place, for example, the boards of education of the county of Red Deer and the county of Mountain View were regionalized, which extends a considerable distance to the south to Carstairs, Cremona, the Olds-Didsbury area, and that's a very big area. The interaction with the school board has to take place now between at least two MLAs. But no, because of the size of some of the other urban centres within our county, it's not always just Red Deer alone.

MR. WORTH: I see. I guess I hadn't quite made my point clear. The point I was making was that many of the government services that would be provided in Red Deer, Innisfail, and Sylvan Lake – one might not necessarily have to call on the MLA to explain them or to offer them.

MR. LEWIS: No. That's true to some extent, but I think the point was made here earlier that rural people have a tendency to want to talk to their MLA I think more so than the urban people, and they become very familiar with their MLA.

MR. WORTH: Thank you.

MR. GRBAVAC: I had a question, but I think Reeve Lewis just answered it in his last two sentences.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Reeve Lewis, as we've been traveling across the province, this kind of a situation has arisen in some areas. It's now in Fort McMurray where the rural area and the city are one constituency, so to speak, or a joint government. Is there any hope of that in the Red Deer area, or do you want nothing to do with the city of Red Deer or vice versa?

MR. LEWIS: I don't know if I really want to open that can of worms or not, Mr. Chairman. I think central Alberta has had a history rather as many other urban/rural centres unfortunately do. There is a distinct difference between the way we operate and the way we think and our communication. However, I may add that since the new MGA was adopted on September 1 and the Planning Act was rolled into it, the city and the county of Red Deer do have a joint general municipal plan in place, and we're hoping that we're looking forward to a new era of co-operation and working together.

THE CHAIRMAN: So what you're telling us is that you're slowly getting together, but at this point there's no hope of a marriage.

MR. LEWIS: I wouldn't say that. I think our rural people would be very much opposed to that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I won't name the area, but one area said: well, the county is too rich and the city's too rich, and therefore they want to go their own separate ways. Is that the situation here?

7:53

MR. LEWIS: I don't think it's a question of economics.

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, okay. Well, I want to thank you for coming and making the views of the county of Red Deer known to the commission.

MR. LEWIS: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next presenter is Gary Severtson, the MLA for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the commission. I appreciate the opportunity to present my thoughts on the difficult task that you have before you. In a decision on October 24, '94, the Alberta Court of Appeal wrote the following:

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees those urban electors the right not to have the political force of their votes unduly diluted. We simply are unable to say, for lack of an explanation for the present boundaries, whether the dilution that exists today is "undue". There can be many valid reasons for disparity.

This evening I'd like to focus on what I believe are valid reasons for disparity in the Innisfail-Sylvan Lake electoral boundary. The number one reason is effective representation. In order to provide effective representation, the representative has to have time to be within his constituency and within Edmonton. I calculated the amount of time it takes me to travel between Innisfail and Edmonton. Considering a 40-hour week, I spend slightly over five

weeks per year traveling between my constituency and Edmonton, and because of the location of my rural riding commercial air travel is not an option. This travel time takes away from MLAs' ability to effectively represent their constituents and precludes the constituents from having access to their MLA.

There's also travel time within the constituency, regardless of whether it's the MLA or the constituent that does the traveling. I know that telephones, letters, and fax can facilitate access to an MLA, but a personal meeting is often what a constituent wishes, and often a personal meeting is the most effective way in dealing with a problem or a concern. I'm sure that this commission can understand the need for face-to-face meetings. For instance, I would suspect that the commission has had more direct meetings than telephone conference call meetings. I estimate that I spend about two to three weeks per year traveling in the constituency based on 40 hours per week. This is time that an urban MLA can spend with his or her constituents rather than on the road. As a consequence the rights of rural constituents to effective representation are curtailed.

Another very important reason for the variance between rural and urban constituencies is the number of elected officials that a rural member has to work with. For instance, the Innisfail-Sylvan Lake constituency encompasses most of the county of Red Deer, four towns, two villages, and two hamlets. I have 42 elected council members in comparison to Edmonton and Calgary which have more MLAs than aldermen. The local school board within this riding has nine trustees with two MLAs in the same area. In contrast, Calgary has 20 MLAs and nine trustees. The regional health authority tells a similar story. The Calgary regional health authority has 15 trustees and 20 MLAs, while the regional health authority in this area has 15 trustees and eight MLAs. The outcome of this diversity: a rural MLA in order to be more effective has to spend a lot more time devoted to meeting with various elected bodies, and an MLA has to spend that time to liaise and work with those organizations.

A further concern I have is that the larger the area a constituency becomes, the wider the diversity of community interests. This has a significant impact on the ability of a member to provide effective representation.

Before I conclude, I would like to say a few words about the present boundaries of the Innisfail-Sylvan Lake riding. One of the considerations the commission listed in the mail-out was the possibility of having boundaries follow, wherever possible, existing municipal boundaries. This riding in large part does exactly that. The county of Red Deer boundary on the east and in the south follow completely the municipal boundaries, and the part along the north and the west partly follow the boundaries of the county of Red Deer.

In conclusion, I'm sure that as this commission has traveled around the province over the last month, you have heard many reasons why there are variances between constituencies. I know that you have given serious consideration to the fact that the courts have recognized that a 25 percent variance from the norm is an acceptable practice in this country. This is not to dilute the vote of an urban constituent, rather it is to give fair and effective representation to all Albertans.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Severtson.

We'll start the questioning with Robert Grbavac.

MR. GRBAVAC: Yes. Gary, we've had numerous presentations that suggested to us that they recognize rural Alberta is probably a much more difficult place to effectuate equal and effective representation, and they suggested that a potential solution to that might be the

application of additional resources, that being maybe some additional funds to open a second constituency office, maybe providing for noncommercial airline service in that in some of the more outlying regions their MLAs are spending upwards of three to four months on the road as opposed to your five weeks. They're suggesting that that may in fact be a more appropriate way to effectuate equal and effective representation. How would you respond to that notion with your experience as an MLA from rural Alberta?

MR. SEVERTSON: Well, to the first part of your question in reference to another office or two offices or three offices, it doesn't alleviate the time problem. It's the time to be able to get to that office and be in the office or to travel to parts of the constituency as it grows larger. With reference to air travel I think that would be very expensive and maybe pretty impractical to implement.

MR. GRBAVAC: Well, I suggest that from the fact that, you know, one of your colleagues suggested that she drove 200,000 kilometres a year. Now, I appreciate the budget only allows for at maximum 65,000 kilometres, but many of the rural MLAs suggested they use every bit of that and more in terms of their time on the road, and if you put a value on the time spent on the road and the associated costs with vehicular travel, maybe the Legislature ought to consider another means of transportation. It may in fact not be all that expensive. You know, it's not my intention to initiate a debate here.

MR. SEVERTSON: No. I would presume it's to a member from northern Alberta that probably has vast distances to travel with no population in between that air travel maybe makes more sense. In this part of Alberta air travel doesn't stop the in-between in constituency travel because our rural area in this part is quite populated.

MR. GRBAVAC: Thank you.

MR. WORTH: I would just like to pick up on my colleague's line of questioning. As we've gone around the province, it seems to be becoming clearer and clearer that the expectations that members of rural communities have for their MLA are quite different from those that many of their urban counterparts hold for their MLAs. It leads me and I think some of my associates here to raise the question: what is the role of an MLA? I wonder if you'd take just a minute or two to share with us what you consider to be the major components in an MLA's role, whether it be urban or rural.

MR. SEVERTSON: Well, the legislative part of an MLA is the same whether you are in urban or rural Alberta: to govern and make policy and rules and regulations for the government in the field of our jurisdiction. In the role of a rural MLA I can relate that I'm called upon to be at many functions throughout the constituency.

As I said in my presentation, along with the county council I have four towns and two villages that have councils. So I have to play a role there to meet with them compared to an urban MLA. In talking to my urban colleagues, I think that I am called on for more social functions as compared to an urban MLA. But the main role, the legislative role, is to make Acts and policies for the government. Also, an important role is to listen to your constituents so that you can bring to the Legislature the views of Albertans.

8:03

MR. WORTH: How important is your role as intervenor or ombudsman? Do you find yourself playing that role often?

MR. SEVERTSON: Yeah, quite often. Yes. Quite often it's conflicting between one part of my riding and the other.

MR. WORTH: Okay. Thank you.

MR. LEHANE: Gary, have you any idea what the present population of the constituency would be? We're using 1991 figures because that was the last decennial census by Stats Canada. We're mandated by the Act to use those population statistics, except to the extent that there were other ones across the province. We used a consistent set of stats. So the ones we're using at this time are the '91 census, and I'm just wondering if you can give us some idea about the growth in the constituency since that time.

MR. SEVERTSON: In actual numbers I don't, but I know that Sylvan Lake has grown considerably and that the town of Innisfail and the county have grown in residency. In fact, I think that percentage-wise Innisfail and Sylvan Lake grew more than Red Deer did last year. Now, in total numbers I don't have that. I think all of the constituencies on the Edmonton-Calgary corridor are probably in a growth area of the province as people are moving to hilltops – to use the expression you used earlier – people coming from the city and living in the country on acreages. I think the population in this corridor is growing in rural Alberta.

MR. LEHANE: The population statistic we have is 26,388.

MR. SEVERTSON: I don't have this for the Innisfail-Sylvan Lake constituency, but it could be maybe more. I would be quite sure that it has grown from that time.

MR. LEHANE: You've indicated in your presentation that you spend a considerable amount of time traveling between your constituency and the Legislature and also traveling within the constituency. What sort of kilometres would you put on in a year?

MR. SEVERTSON: I've been in for a little over six years now, and I probably average between 40,000 and 50,000 clicks a year.

MR. McCARTHY: Gary, just further to Joe's questions. Your constituency surrounds the boundaries of the city of Red Deer. I appreciate that you don't have the numbers, but I'm just curious: do you have any feel percentage-wise how many of your constituents would live in your constituency and work in the city of Red Deer?

MR. SEVERTSON: I would have no idea. I know I have constituents that live in Innisfail and work in Red Deer. I couldn't give you a number.

MR. McCARTHY: Is it fair to say that there's a substantial number of those?

MR. SEVERTSON: Yeah, there'd be a fair number.

MR. McCARTHY: Certainly not a majority.

MR. SEVERTSON: Oh, not the majority, no.

MR. McCARTHY: Okay. Thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Gary, I don't have any questions, but I do have one comment. You told us that you spend five weeks per year traveling to Edmonton. I just want to warn you not to use this as an argument with the MLA for Bow Valley or Cypress-Medicine Hat, because they tell us they spend four to six months a year on the road.

MR. SEVERTSON: I realize that the travel time is tremendous there because they have the problem of air travel. That route is not a good route for air travel.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I want to thank you as an MLA for coming before the commission, because for some reason there's a reluctance of MLAs to attend and make their presentations before the commission. We find that MLAs have a wealth of information. So thanks for coming.

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next presenter is Mayor Dave Sloan of the town of Eckville. Go ahead.

MR. SLOAN: Good evening, Mr. Chairman, members of the board. First of all, on behalf of the town of Eckville I would like to say our thanks for allowing us to come along and make this presentation.

I'm here to make a presentation on behalf of the council of the town of Eckville, a small urban municipality within a large rural constituency. We are concerned that this commission is looking at expanding rural constituencies and by this process eliminating more rural MLAs and increasing urban MLAs, particularly in the two major cities of Edmonton and Calgary. It is ironic that they have more representation provincially and at the local municipal government level. Recognizing that our constituency, Rocky Mountain House, is at a 24.5 percent population variance, it falls within the permissible range of 25 percent as set out in the electoral boundaries Act.

Let me elaborate as to why we feel that rural constituencies should not be enlarged and ask that you put yourselves on our side. Rural MLAs have many more obligations to meet in comparison to their urban counterparts. A major one is the time spent traveling. This includes to and from the Legislature and around the constituency. The constituents are restricted in having access to their member, which affects their representation. In this age of modern technology with fax, phones, Internet, and media it is possible to communicate with the constituents, but it is the face-to-face meeting that assures the electorate that they are getting equitable representation. The electorate has to travel long distances to access constituency offices too.

Our rural MLA has several different areas of interest that he is called upon to effectively represent. These include hospitals and community health centres, schools, senior citizen lodges and self-contained units, all types of farming, ranching, agriculture, forestry, mineral exploration, wilderness, tourism, recreation, oil and gas, environmental issues, native communities and aboriginal rights, service clubs and organizations, and the list goes on.

We must not forget the numerous rural and urban municipalities within the constituency either. The urban MLA's portfolio seems minute in relation. In a rural riding the MLA is most generally contacted to act as a liaison in accessing the government, whereas the urban ridings have offices of basically every department of government to handle their issues and concerns. This along with

geography, travel time, complexity of issues, and the many interests of the constituency only compound the ability of the MLA to adequately provide the effective representation required.

MLAs are called upon to attend ceremonial and social functions as representatives of the government. A rural MLA may have many functions to attend on one day whereas the urban MLA could only have one; for example, the July 1 celebration. In Calgary or Edmonton there is only one official function; in the rural setting there may be three or four, depending on the number of municipalities within the constituency. Another example is attendance at parades, which could use up every weekend of the summer season.

The government members already have a heavy workload, and these rural constraints as presented above affect that workload further. We the town of Eckville want to remain in the Rocky Mountain House constituency and believe that with the current boundaries, the ability of our member to provide effective representation is stretched to the limit. These factors should be considered along with representation by population.

Thank you.

8:13

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

We'll start the questioning with Robert Grbavac.

MR. GRBAVAC: Yes. Dave, in light of the number of elected officials representing our neighbouring provinces, whereby they represent a greater electoral quotient, if you will, it's been suggested to us that Albertans have come to expect somewhat of an unrealistic level of representation from their Member of the Legislative Assembly. Would you concur in that, or would you suggest that that level of representation is necessary?

MR. SLOAN: I think that level is very necessary at this point in time.

MR. GRBAVAC: Okay. Thank you.

MR. WORTH: Mr. Sloan, the last figure I looked at for the population of Eckville according to the '91 census was 899. Are there 900 now or more?

MR. SLOAN: I think there are 902.

MR. WORTH: Nine hundred and two. Well, I hope the three of them are Sloans. I ask that question really just to try to get a handle on what's happening out in that area. If you really were not kidding me in saying that it's 902, that's not a very significant growth rate. Is that what's happening in the area, or is the growth rate beyond that?

MR. SLOAN: I think actually our growth rate has come to a standstill. We gain some; we lose some.

MR. WORTH: So it's fairly stable.

MR. SLOAN: Yeah. It has been very stable. We would be really worried if it started to slide. At this point we think things are doing quite well, and we've been holding that. We've some new properties being built, and we've some new businesses coming into town. So we feel quite confident that things are working well for the town of Eckville.

MR. WORTH: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe?

MR. LEHANE: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: John?

MR. McCARTHY: No questions. Thanks.

MR. SLOAN: Okay. Thank you very much.

THE CHAIRMAN: Who is the mayor of Eckville?

MR. SLOAN: The mayor of Eckville is Helen Posti.

THE CHAIRMAN: Would you apologize to her for me? I introduced you as the mayor, and I didn't realize that you're the deputy mayor. Tell her that I wasn't meaning to take away her job.

MR. SLOAN: Right. Unfortunately, she had to go to another function in Edmonton.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I want to thank you for coming. I just want to ask one question. Eckville is in a constituency at minus 24 percent. Now, in view of what the courts have said, we would somehow maybe like to move Rocky Mountain House to minus 15 percent or something. Where do you think we could steal some constituents for you in the constituency of Rocky Mountain House?

MR. SLOAN: I don't think I should say anything at this point in time. I think maybe our mayor might . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: That's fine. I don't blame you for not wanting to. Well, thanks for coming.

MR. SLOAN: Thank you very much, gentlemen.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next presenter is Stan Swainson, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake Progressive Conservative Association.

MR. SWAINSON: Mr. Chairman, members of the commission, I'm grateful for the opportunity that I have to make a presentation on behalf of myself and the Innisfail-Sylvan Lake constituency. With effective representation being the commission's goal, I feel that there are more criteria to consider than just population. Surely you must consider the workload that enables an MLA to give effective representation. The geographical size of many rural divisions is enormous. In my electoral division of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake there are five towns. Now, Gary told you there were four; one of us is mistaken, I guess. I've got the towns listed as Innisfail, Sylvan Lake, Penhold, Bowden, and Delburne; two villages, Elnora and Spruce View. I trust maybe that Elnora is a hamlet, and Delburne is a village. Then you must consider the hospitals, schools, nursing homes, et cetera.

On top of that, the major portion of the county of Red Deer is within the Innisfail-Sylvan Lake constituency, certainly the heavily populated portions of the county. I ask you: how can an MLA be expected to spread himself or herself any thinner?

The smaller urban centres tend to rely on their MLA far more than the large urban centres. Cities like Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, Red Deer, and Medicine Hat tend to work directly with the

government department that they have business with. Because of their size and the staff they have at the local level, they are able to do this, to go directly to the government department, with limited involvement, if any, from their local MLAs.

In recent years we have seen all forms of government downsizing: federal, provincial, and municipal, both urban and rural. Particularly the provincial governments have cut the size of their cabinets dramatically. Without a doubt, we don't really need 83 MLAs. The number could certainly be cut back.

When we consider the demographics and the geographical size of rural constituencies, there is no justifiable way to even consider merging those rural boundaries and making fewer rural ridings. An urban MLA can announce they will be at a shopping mall on a certain day and have exposure to hundreds of people in just a few hours. Not so with their rural counterpart; they travel hundreds of miles just to see a few people. Remember, please, people are what it's all about, and effective representation is being able to be accessible to them.

Also, I'd like to reaffirm that 83 MLAs are far too many, but we can't justify even considering cutting the number of rural constituents.

I would like to thank the commission for the opportunity to present this brief and wish you well in your most difficult assignment.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

We'll start the questioning with John McCarthy.

MR. McCARTHY: So just to explore your thought a bit, if the number were to be reduced, then you would say they'd come out of Calgary and Edmonton. Is that fair to say?

MR. SWAINSON: Well, yes. They certainly can't come from rural Alberta. I think it's been demonstrated at other hearings that we need fewer ridings in the province. I have a piece of news from your November 6 hearing in Edmonton, where the headline was: Albertans echo calls for less government. Certainly the time spent meeting with the rural constituents, considering travel time and the sparsely populated areas and the numbers of municipal governments that are involved, is just no comparison to the urban ridings. Ninety percent of your rural dwellers are businessmen unto themselves, whereas urban ridings are made up 90 percent, I suppose, of people that work for somebody else and don't really have that much need to rub shoulders with their MLAs.

MR. McCARTHY: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe?

MR. LEHANE: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Wally?

MR. WORTH: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Robert?

MR. GRBAVAC: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I want to thank you, Mr. Swainson, for coming and making the views of the Innisfail-Sylvan Lake PC Association known to us.

MR. SWAINSON: I might say that my recommendation for a reduction in the number of ridings is not a constituency priority. It's my own thinking.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Well, the next presenter is Jim McPherson.

MR. McPHERSON: Mr. Chief Judge, distinguished members of the commission, I appreciate the opportunity of making a very, very brief comment to you. I do so to try to make it clear at the very outset that I am here on my own undertaking. I represent entirely no one except my own views. I'm a former MLA for Red Deer, served in the Legislature from 1982 to 1986, and used to have a very compelling interest in this subject. It was a difficult debate for me tonight to come here and make this small presentation or go to a meeting of freestyle skiing, and I came here because of my deference to the important work that you're doing.

8:23

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. McPHERSON: I guess my comments would just be almost reiterating what I hear to be a very consistent message that's coming to you this evening from people in Alberta outside of the major centres of Edmonton and Calgary, and that is a growing concern of what may be down the road; that is, representation by population only. Now, that is almost unimpeachable, I suppose, in terms of its fairness, but in our society I have a great concern for it. Clearly, there is a very serious dichotomy between the representation of rural MLAs and urban MLAs. They are very, very different jobs; they truly are.

I would like to point out to you that when I served the constituents of Red Deer in the Legislature, I represented I believe just over 50,000 constituents. There is not an MLA on this list that comes within even 10,000 of that number, and I certainly don't feel I was hard pressed or hard done by or worked too hard. I thought I did work hard, but I mean I didn't feel burdened by it all. So if there is a suggestion from urban MLAs, at least from the MLA side and not from the constituent side, that there is a need for more representation in the urban areas, I would refute that frankly.

I also am concerned about the timing of this whole exercise. I just can't recall now, Mr. Chief Judge, but I suppose that your mandate comes to you, gentlemen, as a result of legislation that requires a reconsideration of this Act at a regular period of time. I am concerned with the fundamental restructuring that's going on in our society, the ratcheting down of government in our lives as has been suggested, the important development that is happening vis-à-vis less reliance on government. There's an awful lot of change happening, and I don't think we need a whole heck of a lot more of it right now. We don't need to be more disruptive in our society. It's just becoming very, very disruptive, and I would be concerned about that.

So I guess my comments would be that if it's at all possible, leave it alone. Stay within, if you can, the 25 percent parameters; I think that's fair. Please try to understand – and I know you do; you've heard lots of representation about it; you don't need it from me, an old has-been – that there is a very important distinction between the duties of an urban MLA and a rural MLA. We really cannot lose that perspective in this province.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to be before you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Fine. I see Mr. McCarthy is ready to answer your comment as to why we're here.

MR. McCARTHY: Well, Jim, it's always good to see you, but if I were you, I would've gone to freestyle skiing.

MR. McPHERSON: I was just thinking that after I finished my remarks too.

MR. McCARTHY: I just wanted to explore your comment here, and Gary referred to that particular court case. I think the reason we're here – there have been numerous reviews, and really this isn't the normal course, if I could describe it as that, because in the normal course the review would be after the 2001 census. You're quite correct in saying that, you know, representation by population does not require parity of voting power.

Just to give you a little background here, we've been asked this question many times in our hearings, and I've been designated as the one to explore this.

In 1991 the Supreme Court of Canada through Madam Justice Beverley McLachlin, who, ironically, is from Pincher Creek, Alberta, dealt with this issue, the same issue we're dealing with right now, in the province of Saskatchewan. Their legislation at that time was very comparable to the legislation that we're dealing with right now and that we were dealing with when the boundaries as they presently are were set. Basically, the Supreme Court of Canada said – and I'll summarize what they said very briefly.

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 guidelines that the Supreme Court of Canada set out.

Now, the problem that we here in Alberta were faced with – and I think we have a member of the Legislature here, so I'm sure he'll intervene if I'm speaking out of turn here. From what I can tell, the boundaries as they presently are were presented to the Alberta Court of Appeal after the last election with a request to determine whether or not they were in violation of the Charter of Rights. The concluding remarks – and I'll just summarize a couple of passages. I think it'll indicate perhaps why we're here and why the Legislature responded to this particular decision and created this commission earlier than is normal. Gary has given some remarks that the court made earlier in its decision. The concluding remarks were as follows.

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.

Their concluding remarks kind of tell you what kind of a message they were trying to deliver, and I think the Legislature responded to that.

Just one other passage. As a lawyer I found this decision, the language used in it, fairly harsh. They were aware of Grant Notley's comment; they did consider that. They were aware of the Supreme Court of Canada decision, and they did have the boundaries, as they presently are, in front of them. I'll quote one other passage, and this is just by way of explanation.

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.

So that's just an explanatory note. It's been asked many times when we've been in hearings across Alberta, and we've always tried to explain why we are here.

MR. McPHERSON: I appreciate that. I should also mention that I didn't know Gary had made that comment; I walked out on his speech. Mind you, he's walked out on a few of mine, too, so we're even.

Who brought the appeal then?

8:33

MR. McCARTHY: After the boundaries were set the government of Alberta brought what they call a reference to the Court of Appeal of Alberta and basically said in layman's terms: is what we have done in conformance with the Charter of Rights? As Gary has said, they did say yes. They said: we're not condemning it presently, but we want a new review. They rejected the suggestion, as I say, in their concluding remarks. So that's the dilemma that this commission is faced with. Quite frankly, the legislation as it sits, with the 25 percent variance, and every submission that's been made tonight is illegitimate. We're faced with the dilemma of – I regard it as a conflict between the Legislature and the courts, because it's not a particularly big issue among the general public.

MR. McPHERSON: Well, Mr. Chairman, may I ask a quick question? Are we all wasting our time here then? I mean, is it a fait accompli that it is going to representation by population? Is this just an exercise?

MR. McCARTHY: I would think that eventually the Supreme Court of Canada is going to have to give some specific direction on this issue.

MR. LEHANE: I was just thinking that sometimes being a has-been is not that bad, Jim, you know.

MR. McPHERSON: You would know.

MR. LEHANE: Thanks. For people on the commission who aren't from this area, it was Jim's decision to be a has-been and not the electorate's. I know you're probably thinking, wondering who made that decision.

Anyway, I think it gives us an opportunity here to draw on your experience, because as you said tonight, you come here representing only yourself. You're not a sitting MLA; you don't have a constituency that you're trying to hold together in terms of not having any boundaries changed. I think it gives perhaps a somewhat more independent view, and we can draw on experience that you had when you sat in the Legislature.

I notice that you brought the brochure with you tonight that was sent out, so I assume you've read it. It sets out in it the information on the variances of each constituency from what's known as the population quotient in the province, the population quotient being the 30,000 some odd figure, which is determined by dividing Alberta's 1991 population by the 83 constituencies. So I take it from your submission tonight that you don't find those variances to be a problem. Is that right?

MR. McPHERSON: That's correct, yes.

MR. LEHANE: I take it you're drawing on your experience of watching rural and urban MLAs working and what's required to be an effective representative for the constituency.

MR. McPHERSON: Well, Joe, you've just brought it up and if I may say, Mr. Chairman. When I was in the Legislature, I was an urban MLA in the midst of a totally rural area. Red Deer relied very, very heavily and still does on the rural area around it. When I was first elected, I thought I knew a lot, but I found out three months afterwards that I knew nothing. I certainly realized that I did not have a good handle on rural issues, and I tried to acquaint myself with them. Through all that, though, I realized how important the rural issues were to the urban citizens of Red Deer. I relied on my colleagues in the area, and they also relied a little bit on me because I sort of delved into health care economics and energy issues and those kinds of things. So it was a really good synergy that we had when I was there.

Premier Lougheed never permitted a rural caucus or a central Alberta caucus. There was an Edmonton caucus. There was a Calgary caucus. He would never permit this central Alberta caucus, but we had one anyway, and it was probably more effective in many respects than the formalized urban caucuses from Edmonton and Calgary because, frankly, the MLAs from Edmonton and Calgary weren't there. They went home every night, but the rural MLAs were in Edmonton all the time when we were in session because we couldn't go home. So we would get together informally in somebody's hotel room, and we talked issues all night. We always attended the Legislature; we were the attenders at the Legislature. So we had a caucus.

I'm kind of getting a long way around to your question, Joe. The point is that the urban MLAs did have it a whole lot different. We didn't get an opportunity to discuss issues much with the urban MLAs, even though I was one – but like I said, I was in the middle of a rural area – because they caught an airbus and went home every night. So, yeah, I'm very comfortable with the 25 percent variance one way or the other.

It was said earlier and I fully agree with it: we don't need more representation. We do not need more MLAs, in my judgment. We have enough. I do think of people – and I'll mention names, one that I'm most acquainted with, a fellow like the Hon. Stockwell Day, who represents a constituency of – what? – 30,000. He has cabinet responsibilities, and he must be working incredibly hard. Most of them do, as we all know, work very, very hard. But 30,000 constituents isn't overwhelming, in my opinion, for an MLA.

MR. LEHANE: What if there were only 20,000 and they were out in Chinook? Then it's a different scenario.

MR. McPHERSON: Precisely. But that speaks to the difficulty of a rural MLA covering such large, large areas. It is an awful lot more difficult for them than an urban MLA, an inner-city MLA, with 20,000 constituents.

MR. LEHANE: Did you feel that the rural MLAs were pretty well going full out in terms of the areas that they had to service at the time?

MR. McPHERSON: Yeah; absolutely. When I was there, they were. The rural MLAs were going full out. There was at the time a certain amount of almost, you know, noticeable concern over that, that the rural MLA's job was a tougher job than the inner-city, urban, MLA's. It just was; no question about it. They worked harder. They had to.

MR. LEHANE: Thanks. I don't have any further questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Wally?

MR. WORTH: No questions.

MR. GRBAVAC: My only question was twiggled by your reference to my colleague as a has-been, but I don't think that has particular relevance to this hearing.

MR. McPHERSON: No, no.

MR. GRBAVAC: I might ask you to expand on that later.

MR. McPHERSON: It has nothing to do with law, and it has nothing to do with this commission, sir.

MR. GRBAVAC: Well, that even twigs my interest more.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, Jim, I want to thank you as a former MLA for coming, because it's nice to have people with your background talk to us and give us your frank views. I can appreciate that your views are somewhat unbiased in that you were an MLA and you represented this area and you're no longer an MLA. You're talking very frankly to us.

One of the comments you made is: are the urban MLAs complaining about changing the number of constituencies? I want you to know that we're not getting many MLAs attending our hearings and very few urban MLAs. I think I can safely assume that the urban MLAs are not coming before this commission stating, "Give more constituencies to Edmonton and Calgary," as we had in our focus. I think our focus is dictated more by what the courts have said. If you're going to have a discrepancy, you have to justify it. We either have to change the discrepancy or justify the discrepancy. So that's part of our job as to which way we go.

I want to bring up with you what's now happening, and it's quite controversial, and that's what they call `rurban' or hybrid ridings. It's obvious that when you were an MLA here, you represented the whole city when you said you represented 50,000 people. The last Electoral Boundaries Commission had a lot of trouble with `rurban' ridings and decided to leave them alone, basically, but they did `rurbanize' parts of Alberta.

One place they `rurbanized' is Grande Prairie. They divided it down the middle. Half of the city and half of the rural constituency

all the way to the B.C. border is one constituency. The other half of the city and considerable rural area to the east is another constituency. We were there, and we spoke to the people. Everybody's in favour of what has happened there, even though the urban portion represents about 55 percent, everybody except one person who showed up and said he would like Grande Prairie to go back to the way it was. They have a 'rurban' constituency now also in Cypress-Medicine Hat where about 55 to 60 percent of the people are from Medicine Hat and the rest are from Cypress Hills, and those people are happy. Cypress Hills did make it quite clear they wanted no more of Medicine Hat.

Now, Red Deer and area, to me – and I think the urban and rural people get along here – would be an excellent place to, I think, 'rurbanize.' I think that if you look at the electoral boundaries work today and in the year 2001, as the urban areas are getting larger and the rural areas are getting smaller, which seems to be the trend – and I don't see a change coming – this is maybe the way of ending the rural/urban differences that we presently have. I appreciate this doesn't deal with Edmonton and Calgary, but I want your views on what you think are the possibilities of 'rurbanizing' Red Deer.

8:43

MR. McPHERSON: Oh, sure, Mr. Chief Justice Wachowich, now you're putting me on the spot. The presumption then would be that half of Red Deer would be in one constituency and then would also capture a considerable amount of the surrounding rural area.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think you'd have to maybe divide Red Deer into three.

MR. McPHERSON: Okay; and then go off into spokes.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm just speaking hypothetically. Maybe four; I don't know.

MR. McPHERSON: Yeah. Well, I don't think you're going to get as good a representation under that scenario, frankly, as you do under the existing one. I just don't think it's in the cards. I think that the forces will be very difficult, in my judgment, for that elected representative dealing with, I suppose, parts of a city council and county councils and rural people with rural issues and urban people with urban issues. The people are great. I mean, it's not the people; it's the politicians. I think that the poor fellow or woman that is representing that constituency is going to be torn pretty good trying to properly represent the views of his or her constituents.

THE CHAIRMAN: What you're telling us is that the MLAs can find themselves in a serious conflict?

MR. McPHERSON: Yeah.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think MLAs find themselves in a serious conflict under normal circumstances.

MR. McPHERSON: Yeah, they do.

THE CHAIRMAN: What I'm saying or what maybe you're telling me is that the conflict would be more often or there would be a greater possibility of it existing if you 'rurbanized' this area.

MR. McPHERSON: I believe that, sir – I fear I'm dominating time here – but there may also be conflict that's untenable. I mean there's

conflict, but one does not want to be in a position where the conflict – opinion is one thing, and conflict is one thing. As a representative you're in a pretty tough spot when it's absolutely diametrically opposed and there is no possibility for resolution. That gets tough.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your views. I want to thank you for coming.

MR. McPHERSON: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: The next presenter we want to call is Dale Boddy.

MR. BODDY: Good evening. I'm going to be a little lonely here. I think I'm swimming upstream and I'm all by myself. I'm supposed to look at you people and think that you're naked up there so that I'm not nervous. But I kind of think I'm a little naked here, disagreeing with the way people are going.

With all due respect to how hard MLAs work, I took the position that this was about people and votes and that the people were equal. Let me start off by thanking you for giving me this opportunity to express my concerns about the electoral boundaries. I think it's an issue at the heart of being Canadian and being Albertan. Electoral boundaries undergird our electoral process, and their fairness or lack of fairness affects every Albertan. The present distribution is unfair, and it has been unfair for a number of years.

I've lived in Alberta for all of my 47 years, and for all but two of those years I've lived in rural Alberta. I appreciate rural life and the values that rural Alberta contributes to all of Alberta. Like a good many Albertans my heritage is of the land. I've been fortunate enough to have lived on a farm, and I've worked the land. In many ways agriculture has defined Alberta. So it will and so it should. Rural Albertans need good representation, effective representation and fair representation. So do other Albertans. For the last six months I've lived in Red Deer, and for my full working career I have worked with Albertans from all over this province. Rural Albertans and urban Albertans share the same hopes and dreams for ourselves and for our children. We share the same issues. We benefit from the same social programs. We endure the same social problems. When I see Albertans, and when I talk to Albertans, I can't tell where they live. Alberta is not made up of distinct societies, but some Albertans possess special rights because of where they reside. It's unfair.

Growing up in rural Alberta I learned that Albertans were equal. We may well have different abilities and interests, but we all want to be treated equally. This is not true in Alberta now, and it's not been true for some time. When I lived in Provost, Alberta, and in Sangudo and in Fox Creek and in Valleyview and in Rochfort Bridge, my vote counted more than a vote in our large cities in Alberta, and this was wrong. It was unequal. It goes against the grain of the Alberta I grew up in. It goes against the grain of the province my grandparents resided in when this province became a province. Albertans may have different needs, but these needs do not exist by virtue of where we live.

There is an argument that sparsity and distance require consideration, but the disparity between the weight of a vote in rural Alberta and urban Alberta is too large. It lets – no, it forces politicians to define our needs differently and to treat us differently, and I see the results as regions are pitted against regions and occupations against occupations.

At one time most Albertans were rural and rural Alberta possessed most of the seats. This time has long since passed. Rural Alberta

has fewer voters but more seats, and some people want to ignore this reality. Politicians exploit this desire and tell us rural Alberta is different from urban Alberta, a kind of distinct society. Giving rural Alberta more political weight than deserved builds perceptions of inequity and unfairness. Rural Albertans treated urban Albertans fairly for these past 90 years, and urban Albertans will treat rural Albertans fairly when they get their right to the power that they deserve.

If we maintain a political base that is unfair, perceptions of inequity will grow. The perception becomes a reality, and Albertans really will be different because of where we reside. Such special rights are one source of long-standing grievance and retribution.

Albertans believe in equality and want a political system that is fair to all Albertans. Quash the current practice that decides the power of one vote by the amount of property that separates Albertans from each other. Let us be distinctly Albertan rather than distinctly different. Please change our electoral boundaries so our political representation reflects Albertans equally.

8:53

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
John?

MR. McCARTHY: Thank you. You've put your point of view forward very clearly.

MR. BODDY: Thank you.

MR. McCARTHY: I just want to discuss your position a bit with you for a minute. Were you here at the start of the session when I was discussing the distribution of urban seats versus rural seats?

MR. BODDY: Uh-huh.

MR. McCARTHY: I just want to explore this with you for a minute. We have 38 seats in Edmonton and Calgary, and then we have eight seats distributed among the smaller cities, if I could describe them as that: two in Red Deer, two in Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Fort McMurray, and then immediately adjacent to Edmonton, if you'd look at it – and I don't know whether you'd agree with me – are Sherwood Park and St. Albert, which are totally urban in my view. Then there are another nine. So that brings me to 46 that are urban constituencies. Then I add up another that I call hybrid or 'rurban,' such as the Grande Prairie ones, that the Chief Judge was talking about, and I come up with nine of those. Other than the Cypress-Medicine Hat and Grande Prairie ones they're around the perimeter of both Calgary and Edmonton. Where? For example, Three Hills-Airdrie. Well, with the acreage holders and the city of Airdrie the majority of those constituents live there. It's a bedroom community for Calgary is my point. So it seems to me that if urban Albertans felt severely put upon, they could exercise their legislative clout now in order to correct any disparity that they felt was unduly present. So that's one thing I'd like to explore with you. Do you have any comment on that?

MR. BODDY: I think they could probably express their point of view, yeah.

MR. McCARTHY: With a majority in the Legislature. In other words, they would have control of the Legislature.

MR. BODDY: Does that majority reflect their percent of population?

MR. McCARTHY: It doesn't necessarily reflect their percent of population, but of course it gives them the necessary percentage of votes in the Legislature to deal with any issue they want.

MR. BODDY: That would assume that urban people are different from rural people, and that's the gist of my argument; isn't it? There is no monolithic urban Alberta.

MR. McCARTHY: All right. Okay.

I just want to explore one other point with you. You've indicated that "there is an argument that distance and sparsity require consideration, but the disparity . . . is too large." I just want to explore that with you. What do you think the disparity should be?

MR. BODDY: I was surprised at the court saying 25 percent. I did grow up in rural Alberta, and I do know the rural homily of what's good for the goose is good for the gander. If I looked at Calgary and said, "Well, there are some pluses and minuses there," I'd probably say: "You know, that's good. That's a balance." If I looked at Edmonton and saw more than one minus, I'd say, "That's probably fair." If I looked at rural Alberta and said, "You know, there are some pluses and minuses there," I'd probably say, "You know, that's the kind of balance I'm looking for." Does that answer your question?

MR. McCARTHY: Well, partially. Yeah. Thanks.

MR. BODDY: Good.

MR. McCARTHY: Just let me ask you another question. In your submission you say that "distance and sparsity require consideration." That's the part of your presentation I'm trying to explore.

MR. BODDY: Sure. I guess there's going to be some difference. I can't believe it's 40 percent. I mean, I lived in Provost. When the MLA for Innisfail was driving to Edmonton, I was halfway to Edmonton. But you got there. I've gone across Edmonton in an hour and a half. I've gone to our MLA's constituency office in an hour. People are used to driving in rural Alberta. They drive. You're not going to hit anything because there's not a lot of stuff out there. You know, distance isn't that big a deal. Ten percent? Maybe it should be 25 percent in someplace like Cypress. Maybe it should be 25 percent in La Crête, but it shouldn't be 25 percent, with all due respect, Merv, in Lacombe. You know, it's pretty close to the access of Alberta: Highway 2.

MR. McCARTHY: All right. Thank you for responding to my questions.

MR. LEHANE: How about 10 percent in Lacombe? Would that be okay, Mr. Boddy?

MR. BODDY: Pardon me?

MR. LEHANE: How about a minus 10 percent? Would that be okay in Lacombe?

MR. BODDY: You know, I don't know what the percent should be. I just look at this and say that it's not balanced, it's not fair. I don't

know what the percent should be. You're going to work on that. The courts have given you some guidelines. Use them.

MR. LEHANE: Have you had an opportunity to read the decision of Madam Justice McLachlin in the Supreme Court of Canada case?

MR. BODDY: Gee, I'm sorry. I haven't. But I really appreciated Mr. McCarthy reading some of that. I thought that struck some really sensible points.

MR. LEHANE: Yes. We can get a copy of that to you, and I think you'd find it interesting because that is the leading case in this country in terms of electoral boundaries. She sets out in that decision the 25 percent variances and indicates the importance of representation by population but the fact that in this country that doesn't provide effective representation. So where the variances can be justified, they will not offend the Charter. I guess the issue is finding the fair and equitable balance that will result in that effective representation.

MR. BODDY: Absolutely.

MR. LEHANE: We've heard during these hearings about a native community at Gardiner Lakes in the northern part of the province, for instance, where you have 300 native people in a community that only has access to it part of the year. Many of those people speak Cree; many of those people don't have telephones. To effectively represent those people is something completely different from representing somebody in an urban Calgary riding or an urban Edmonton riding.

MR. BODDY: I'm not sure if you're saying that it's harder to represent the people in the urban area or harder to represent – like, I don't know. I kind of thought we were equal in this province and that the issues were our issues and they were equally hard. You know? I'm not quite understanding that.

MR. LEHANE: Sir, if you're interested in reading the Carter decision and you leave your name and address with our support staff, I think they'd be pleased to send it out to you.

MR. BODDY: I'd really be pleased to do that, and if I were charged with the responsibility you had, I'd probably be doing all of that. In the meantime I'm going to have to do some things for myself as well, so I'm not sure I can do that.

MR. LEHANE: But thanks for coming out and expressing your views.

MR. BODDY: Sure.

MR. WORTH: Dale, your eloquent and passionate statement struck a responsive chord with me.

MR. BODDY: Thank you.

MR. WORTH: I think your message to me is that this commission should not do anything that divides us into urban and rural groups of people or divides us in any other way, that we are first and foremost Albertans and Canadians and that we do share common problems and endure certain problems, as you point out, and that we share a number of common beliefs and so on. So I think your message to us

is one that we ought to ponder and ponder very hard. So thank you very much for delivering it.

MR. BODDY: Thank you very much, Dr. Worth.

THE CHAIRMAN: Robert?

MR. GRBAVAC: Yes. Dale, I'd like to compliment you as well. It takes considerable courage to represent a divergent view as strongly as you have.

I'm here as a representative of rural Alberta, and I'm from real rural Alberta. I wanted to receive your response in terms of these 'rurban' ridings. I live south of Lethbridge in an area where some people have chosen to live as a lifestyle choice. They have acreages, small landholdings, et cetera, usually purchased from farmers who still own the land around them and live in Lethbridge. So when someone talks to me about urban and rural outside the context of the two larger cities, I get a little confused. Sometimes even within the context of the two larger cities I get a little confused, although I appreciate that in parts of Edmonton and Calgary the removal from the land is probably second or third generation. Would you subscribe to the notion of a 'rurban' riding in Alberta if it were in fact to effectuate some limiting of the percentage variance from the electoral quotient? I think in answering John's question you accepted that a certain amount of variation is acceptable, but would you see that as a reasonable solution, if you will, or at least a stopgap measure in the absence of a bicameral House to effectuate fairer equitable representation?

9:03

MR. BODDY: I think it would be the essence of my argument, and I was pleased to hear Mr. McCarthy talk about it working in Grande Prairie. I think the exception Albertans have to that is the little finger drawing that we had – was it Mr. Bogle's commission? – where they kind of gerrymandered it. That would be the word I would use to describe those 'rurban' ridings, whatever the mix was.

MR. GRBAVAC: Well, I can assure you that it's not my intent to gerrymander. My intent is to try and create a boundary system that is fair and equitable and speaks both to representation by population and equality and fairness of representation. We were told in Medicine Hat that it's worked very well because it gave urban people a greater appreciation of rural needs, and it gave rural people maybe a greater appreciation of urban needs. At times it made the MLA dance, but they got pretty fleet of foot when it came to effectuating a solution to a problem in that it was in their best interest and everyone's best interest to come to a compromise as opposed to taking an entrenched rural position versus their city counterpart taking an entrenched so-called urban position. I'm curious if you would accept that as a reasonable compromise: to include both urban and rural areas within one electoral division.

MR. BODDY: Yes. I don't know who said it and how they said it, but isn't the science of politics the art of compromise? It would seem to me a perfect opportunity. Yes.

MR. GRBAVAC: Thank you for your comment.

THE CHAIRMAN: Dale, before you leave, I just want to say that I was very impressed with your positive presentation here today. It makes me want to ask this question: what do you do?

MR. BODDY: I'm going to be a realtor here in Red Deer. I used to be in the public sector; I used to be a school superintendent actually. We were regionalized. I guess I'm looking for new opportunities. So thank you for your interest.

THE CHAIRMAN: I just want to make this comment. We get the presentations that you heard earlier here tonight, and then we get your presentation, and this just shows you what a difficult job we have.

MR. BODDY: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you for coming.

MR. BODDY: I should have danced better on the percents. Thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, the next presenter is Bart Guyon from the MD of Brazeau, I think.

MR. GUYON: Yeah. You pronounced that well.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I've failed French enough times, I want you to know.

MR. GUYON: Well, I'm coming here probably a little threatened, and probably the feeling of our area is that we are a little afraid. Listening to what's gone on here earlier, it seems like a similar argument we had with the group 2000 issue, where we were going to amalgamate the town of Drayton Valley with the MD of Brazeau.

I'm going to give a presentation as was outlined by our council, and if you have any questions, I'll have to answer those personally because I don't know what the council consensus would be. So I'll go through this presentation and answer any questions afterwards.

The council for the MD of Brazeau has in it Drayton Valley in the centre, and we appreciate the opportunity to discuss, you know, our concerns with the commission. Our concerns are as follows. The current makeup of the electoral boundaries already places excessive demands on the MLA serving the rural area. Rather than serving one densely populated community with a single identity and common needs, our MLA must represent a multitude of communities each with different interests.

Our municipal district is located entirely within the Drayton Valley-Calmor constituency, and within it are incorporated urban municipalities, two of them, seven hamlets, and numerous community centres located in the rural area as well as a recreational resort community. Each of these serves as a centre for the community residents which reside within their area, and each is a distinct interest group which the MLA must represent. Additionally, the Drayton Valley-Calmor constituency already takes in portions of the county of Leduc, the county of Wetaskiwin, the county of Parkland, and the MD of Clearwater. These would each have a comparable number of smaller communities within, each requiring representation. Assuming that a similar distribution of communities exists in most rural constituencies, it is clear that the work required of the rural MLAs to effectively represent the areas is already extreme. The workload would be compounded if the geographic area were increased.

The geography of the MD of Brazeau ranges from Crown woodlands on the west to agricultural lands on the east. The economic basis is agriculture, oil and gas exploration, forestry, and tourism. Each of these individual areas of economic activity requires our MLA to develop a detailed understanding of the issues

affecting these industries. This same scenario is likely the case with most rural constituencies. Although they collectively represent a proportionately smaller part of the population, they represent a very large percentage of the resource base which continues to fuel the provincial economy. The understanding required to make effective decisions concerning these areas is enhanced when the MLAs are in touch with those closest to the roots of the industry concerned. As is often said, the best decisions are those made closest to the level affected.

In summary, the MD of Brazeau feels that the existing boundaries provide for a reasonable distribution of the work it takes to effectively represent the residents of the province. Any significant shift will only increase the already heavy workload of the rural MLA, increase the area covered, increase the travel requirements, and decrease their ability to effectively represent their individual communities.

The current boundaries are already within acceptable variances of representation by population, and changing these boundaries to reduce this acceptable variance will create unacceptable differences in the ability of each MLA to provide effective representation of what is already a widely diverse constituency for most rural MLAs.

On behalf of council I thank you for the time to make this presentation.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, we'll start the questioning with Robert.

MR. GRBAVAC: Yeah. I want to preface my remarks with the suggestion that I hoped, Bart, you wouldn't comment on my has-been status, as an earlier presenter did with one of my colleagues. As you know – well, probably no one here knows, but we know – we've been colleagues for a long time in municipal government, and I appreciate the things that you're saying. The council that I represent said very much the same things when they presented their position to us in Lethbridge.

Bart, I'm going to pose to you a dilemma that we face. Folks are moving from the rural areas into the more urban centres of this province. If not this commission subsequent commissions are going to have to deal with that reality. A 25 percent limit may no longer be enough to in fact deal with the issues that you're suggesting need to be dealt with from a rural Alberta perspective. So I'm curious as to what alternatives you may see to continually expanding the envelope in terms of rural versus urban representation. I appreciate that in the central corridor that may not be as significant a problem as it is where I am, where I spent 15 years in municipal politics closing schools and reducing services to an ever diminishing population. So I'm wondering if you see any alternative to what we're presented with here in terms of a variance in population and representation at the provincial legislative level.

MR. GUYON: Well, I think about it in a bigger picture, I guess, Robert. You know, I think about how this whole country was developed, and I think that in the past there were an awful lot of policies encouraged and developed so that western Canada would be developed in the first place. I think we have to maintain that same principle. Because of those concerns that you have because the rural people are moving in, I think we need more and stronger policies, I guess, that will enhance and help develop rural Alberta.

It seems that whenever you get a bunch of bees, they always take all the honey to the nest. That's what seems to happen when you have the strong voice in the urban centres, even though we've got 43. I've heard mention of these 'urban' areas. A lot of those have urban influences already, so that voice for their urban voice is probably a

majority already. So I think somehow we need even more rural MLAs, less urban because of that tendency. I heard mentioned before, too, that it's not the people; it's the politicians. For whatever reason, when you get your hands in the honeypot, you seem to always want to take it home to the bees' nest.

MR. GRBAVAC: Well, historically in Alberta people had a greater level of self-destiny in terms of government than maybe they have now, and I suppose that could be argued. But for the most part when the country was settled, they took control of their own education; they took control of their own health care. Things were not as centralized as they are now.

I'm curious to know if you see that a policy shift decentralizing power, if you will, or control and putting it more in the hands of the local government would be part of a solution to this ongoing struggle between what is rural and what is urban. How will this policy determination exist in the future under the dome, if you will, when we have the mayor of Calgary suggesting to us: if you're going to make those kinds of significant decisions affecting my municipality, I want equal seats or relatively equal seats at the table when you take away my local authority to, for that matter, set the mill rate on schools or in fact tax my recreational facilities? Those are the kinds of things that are facing the urban community as well as the rural community. I'm curious whether you see that as a potential solution. I appreciate this is a bit divergent. It's not within our mandate to suggest to the Legislature that we institute a bicameral House, but we've had that representation made to us earlier tonight. So if you could just briefly comment on that.

9:13

MR. GUYON: I don't know what bicameral is.

MR. GRBAVAC: Well, two Houses, similar to the United States with a Congress and a Senate.

MR. GUYON: Okay. Well, it sounds like we're talking about the argument of centralized and decentralized, Robert, and I'm a firm believer in decentralized. You know, the same argument that the province makes to Ottawa I make for the municipalities. The less power the people that have got their hands in the honey jar have and the more power and the more money that is distributed to those smaller municipalities, I think the better government we will have. We need all three levels of government. We need the municipal, the provincial, and federal, but I think the power has to be shifted down to the municipal level right from Ottawa. The principle is the same, how I'm talking, whether it's provincially or federally or municipally.

MR. GRBAVAC: Thank you, Bart.

THE CHAIRMAN: Wally?

MR. WORTH: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe?

MR. LEHANE: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: John?

MR. McCARTHY: No questions. Thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I want to thank you for coming, Bart. Now, I'm going to ask you a question. If you look at the Drayton Valley-Calmor constituency, there's a part that was taken out and put in Rocky Mountain House. I don't know what towns are in there or why that's in Rocky Mountain House, but I assume that maybe that was in Rocky Mountain House to get it within the under 25 percent. Do you agree with that?

MR. GUYON: No. Actually I'm a landowner out there in that area as well, and the reason that's up in there is there's a large industry base up there. So it's probably more due to revenue. Our boundaries kind of circle around that area, and we have a fairly healthy industry-based area. If we had taken in that area, it might have made us a little too rich maybe.

THE CHAIRMAN: What towns are in that area?

MR. GUYON: Well, Alder Flats is close to that area there. Alder Flats would be just outside that area. There are no hamlets in that area at all. I know the area well because I've got some interests in there. It's not very well populated; it's probably more of an economic circle. I mean, we'd love to have that actually as part of the MD of Brazeau.

THE CHAIRMAN: You're willing to take it then.

MR. GUYON: Absolutely. Yeah.

MR. McCARTHY: Just right near there there's an Indian reserve too. Isn't that just at the boundary?

MR. GUYON: I don't know. Well, there's the . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: O'Chiese.

MR. GUYON: . . . O'Chiese reserve, yeah, south of the MD of Brazeau, if that's the one you're talking about. I thought you were talking about the panhandle.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I want to thank you for coming and making the views of the municipal district of Brazeau No. 77 known to us.

MR. GUYON: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The next presenter is Mayor Charles Budd of the town of Lacombe.

MR. BUDD: Mr. Chairman and members of the commission. Certainly I agreed with your earlier comment, Mr. Chairman, that you have a job cut out to do, and I certainly don't envy the task. It's certainly going to be onerous to come up with a decision after hearing the diverse positions and arguments that have been put forward already.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. BUDD: However, on behalf of the council of the town of Lacombe I'm pleased to have this opportunity to address the commission today and to make this presentation on this very

important matter of ensuring equitable and fair provincial electoral representation.

Currently the town of Lacombe lies within the Lacombe-Stettler electoral division. This constituency was created for the 1993 election by combining much of the area of the previous separate Lacombe and Stettler constituencies into a single riding. We will understand that in order to meet the obligations and fulfill the spirit of the equality of representation rights of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, it will be necessary to change the distribution of seats to reflect the increasing proportion of population in the urban areas of this province. In this sense we use the term "urban" to refer to those constituencies associated with the province's cities and "rural" to refer to the remaining constituencies, notwithstanding the fact that there are urban municipalities such as ourselves included in these rural constituencies.

In our presentation we will suggest to you that rural constituencies have unique representational characteristics and demands and that divisions with populations below the average can be defended. In our own case we believe that our current constituency can be justified in its present form and that there should be no substantive changes made. We would also make an argument that the provincial government should seriously consider reducing the number of constituencies generally.

The Alberta Court of Appeal in their 1994 review of current electoral boundaries stated clearly that there can be no significant variance in the population of an electoral division from the average population per division unless there is specific justification, seemingly on a case-by-case basis, for doing so. In our view, each rural constituency faces a common set of specific characteristics, and we believe that it is incumbent upon the commission to give overall recognition to these characteristics and to the special circumstances and demands that members of the Legislature face in representing these areas.

Beyond the obvious challenges of effectively representing a geographically large area, MLAs must deal with a multiplicity of community interests. Those representing urban ridings have a much smaller area and, we would contend, less diversity in terms of issues faced and interests to be heard and represented. Urban members need only interact with one municipal council, one chamber of commerce, one health region, one or two school boards, and a variety of community and special interest groups. Rural members, however, have to interrelate with up to a dozen municipal councils, two or three health care regions, a number of school boards, and a variety of community groups from each of the distinct communities within the constituency.

There are economies of scale that exist for urban members, as they can often address their entire constituency area in single common activities and events. They are able to set up one constituency office that will effectively serve those whom they represent. Rural members, on the other hand, must attend separate events in each of the community areas throughout. More than one constituency office is often needed, and even then these are not within easy reach of a large number of the citizens. Urban representatives either live within commuting distance of the Legislature or are a quick airbus away. Rural representatives are often several hours away by car or plane.

To observe a strict equal representation by population will in fact penalize rural representation. Rural members must spend more time and energy on constituency work or in travel. This leaves less time in Edmonton and at the Legislature, potentially decreasing the amount of influence and access that can be developed and reducing the opportunities for intervention on behalf of constituents.

These realities should justify rural divisions in having a population of at least 8 percent or 10 percent lower than the provincial average for municipalities, with a greater variation for the ridings that are larger in area and more diverse in makeup.

If the current number of constituencies is to remain unchanged, then the council of the town of Lacombe would strongly favour a retention of the present constituency boundaries; that is, our Lacombe-Stettler constituency. It is only 10 percent below the population average based on the 1991 census level.

9:23

The town of Lacombe and Lacombe community area are in fact growing at a significantly higher average than the province as a whole. The town has grown 12 percent since 1991, while the province has grown only 2.3 percent. The present constituency population is now likely somewhat less than a 10 percent variation, and as we continue to grow, this variation will continue to lessen.

The present constituency is some 100 kilometres from east to west and up to 70 kilometres north to south. It encompasses three towns, nine villages, two counties, two regional health authorities, and two regional school divisions. There is a great socioeconomic diversity, ranging from the Lacombe area, where growth and nonagricultural rural development are issues, to the east, where stagnating economies and population decline are matters of concern.

For the reasons of population growth and geographic size and diversity, we believe the retention of the present constituency can be justified even though the population is somewhat less than the identified population average. As well, the residents of the Lacombe-Stettler constituency faced a very major realignment just three years ago. It takes time for a constituency and its residents to come together as a common unit and to develop an appreciation for the needs of other areas within the riding. Leaving our boundaries unchanged along already established lines would enable our citizens to continue to grow together and to allow whoever is elected as MLA to more effectively represent us.

While we do not support changes to the existing electoral division and we believe the present one is justified, our council has agreed that if significant redistribution in central Alberta is necessary, then we would see as logical a north-south alignment which would see the Lacombe and Ponoka areas being combined. The centre and east side of the Lacombe and Ponoka counties would create a riding of approximately 29,250 population. The Eckville and Rimbey areas of the Lacombe and Ponoka counties respectively would be included in the constituency that would be formed in the Drayton Valley and Rocky Mountain House areas.

We would absolutely oppose any proposal that would include Lacombe within a riding that includes the city of Red Deer. The interests and issues of the cities are significantly different than those of the rural areas. The interests and issues of Lacombe are not necessarily those of Red Deer. At nearly 8,000 population the town of Lacombe is one of Alberta's largest and fastest growing towns. We are a significant enough community to warrant inclusion in a riding where our interests will be addressed and well represented. This would not occur if we were included in a Red Deer dominated riding.

While we recognize that the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act directs the commission to divide the province into 83 constituencies and we realize it is not your mandate to dictate how many constituencies we have in the province, we believe that the commission should consider providing a recommendation to the Legislature that would see a reduction in the number of constituencies in Alberta. The government of Alberta has been

seeking to reduce the role of government in Alberta society. In the past two years we have seen a substantial reduction in the number of school and hospital trustees through regionalization. Some Alberta municipalities have reduced the size of their existing councils, and others are considering dissolution. Others are consolidating their current jurisdictions with other municipalities to form larger, specialized municipalities.

We believe that the same opportunity exists for the government at the provincial level. We would suggest a reduction of about 25 percent in the present number, which would seem to be an appropriate reduction given the province's declining responsibilities. It would also require all MLAs, both urban and rural, to change their responsibilities and their approach to governing and representation.

A reduction would involve the wholesale reconfiguration of electoral divisions, and in such a scheme we would see a north-south alignment as being logical. A Lacombe-Ponoka constituency would be created to include the areas of the Ponoka and Lacombe counties. Based on recent census data this constituency would contain approximately 38,000 persons. We see a distinct advantage to following the existing boundaries of the two rural municipalities. These are already established boundaries, well known to citizens and generally representative of the community areas centred on the included urban municipalities.

Certainly it is equitable to start from a basis of strict representation by population. We have argued, however, that to fashion the electoral map with all divisions of equal population ignores the realities of representing rural constituencies and would put these rural areas at a comparative representational disadvantage. We believe that the population of rural ridings should be lower than the urban ones and that our existing constituency can be justified in its present form. Our position is that the Lacombe-Stettler constituency should remain unaltered or substantially unchanged.

Thank you very much.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mayor Budd, for your presentation. We'll start the questioning with John McCarthy.

MR. McCARTHY: I have no questions, but your position has been very clearly put forward in your submission. Thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe?

MR. LEHANE: I have no questions either. Thank you, sir.

MR. WORTH: I want to echo John's comments about a very good submission. You've told us clearly what you want. You've also told us pretty clearly what you don't want. You've also helped us as well in another way by suggesting some alternatives, not only alternatives to present constituency boundaries but, in the longer run, to the way in which we organize ourselves for the function of governing in the province. I can assure you that we'll give your proposal serious consideration.

THE CHAIRMAN: Robert?

MR. GRBAVAC: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I just want to compliment you on your legal interpretation in respect to what the court case said. That's on the first page, when you say, "unless there is specific justification, seemingly on a case by case basis, for doing so." That is the way I read the judgment, and had the Bogle select committee justified its

boundaries, we wouldn't be here today. A lot of people don't appreciate that when they say, "Well, why are you here, and why are you wasting the money?" I'm glad that you appreciate what the select committee didn't do and why we're back. Thanks for coming.

The next presenter is Maxine O'Riordan.

MRS. O'RIORDAN: Yes. I'm pleased to be with you tonight. I came spontaneously to speak to you. I have nothing prepared. I didn't intend to speak, but I decided, as a summation of the things that I've heard, that I would. I appreciate the wisdom of the group and the complexity of the problem.

I'm going to take a slightly different tack, I guess, on the duties of an MLA. I feel they should have a provincial decision-making bent. They're not just representing their own, but they need to represent the whole province. All MLAs must know urban and rural issues therefore. So when you see that, the proportions then are out of whack, because when the vote comes, you're going to have those total people voting. That is not to diminish the very important function of the MLAs in their own constituency. But I think in these times of technology, help, as was stated before, and transportation – my first function of them should be emphasized. So even if he comes from Calgary, then he must understand irrigation, forestry, rivers, and water allocation.

Yes, it is broke, and it must be fixed. The variances are unacceptable, and perhaps will grow more. The last boundaries we know, just by a set of circumstances, were set politically, so we are looking for fairness.

By the way, I am a Red Deer person, so I guess you might call me "urban," but I have a farm background too.

9:33

We mustn't underestimate the complexity of urban issues. They have all kinds of community centres and functions in this also, and maybe the fact that you don't hear from them as much is that the fellow is too busy to, you know, get around to everybody. So we all really understand that there are great problems both urban and rural, but don't underestimate the urban.

I also agreed with Dale when he said that the distinctions between urban and rural people are greatly reduced now. We all have access to the media – to radio, to television, to everything – so people are informed about many things. Particularly, I think our concerns are much the same, and I think we should celebrate our similarities and not our differences.

In conclusion, I would say that, for instance, many counties, particularly Red Deer, are rapidly industrializing. I'm not sure if they can count themselves really rural or not.

Thank you, gentlemen.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Well, we'll start with Mr. Grbavac this time.

MR. GRBAVAC: I thought your presentation was very thoughtful for not being prepared this evening. I congratulate you on it. Other than that, I have no comment.

MRS. O'RIORDAN: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Wally?

MR. WORTH: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe?

MR. LEHANE: I have no questions. Thank you.

MR. McCARTHY: I think you were prepared; you just didn't have notes, and that's impressive.

I just wanted to ask you one question. What do you think an appropriate variation would be from the quotient? You know, when you divide 83, the number of constituencies, and then you look at the rural component and the concerns that have been expressed tonight, what do you think? You said: yes, it is broke; it should be fixed. How much should it be fixed?

MRS. O'RIORDAN: I think I'm pleased at the selection of the committee on objective grounds. I think, probably, that we've heard tonight from a lot of vested interests. It's always comfortable and it would be awfully nice if we could sort of keep things the same way in all ways, but that's not possible. I think that objectively looking at it then, perhaps a point system such as the selection of immigrants, distances, complexities, population variances: much less than that; I'd say 15 percent.

Good luck with the problem.

MR. McCARTHY: Thank you for your submission.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, just a second. I'm not finished with you.

MRS. O'RIORDAN: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: I want to thank you for coming, and I will accept that you came here unprepared and did a very good job of expressing your views. What intrigues me is: what is your background?

MRS. O'RIORDAN: I'm a retired teacher.

MR. WORTH: He guessed.

MRS. O'RIORDAN: Yeah.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. You did a good job.

MRS. O'RIORDAN: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, the next presenter is Moe Hamdon.

MR. HAMDON: Good evening, and thank you for letting me speak here. I also am here unprepared. I just jotted down a few notes. So forgive me if I jump around a little bit. I'm from the town of Drayton Valley. With the representative from the MD of Brazeau talking about the bees and the honey and the hand in the honeypot, I guess I just wanted to sort of say that we don't all necessarily agree with that logic, but it is there nonetheless.

What I wanted to speak on, in general, was boundaries and the need for them. The general public a lot of times don't understand the boundaries. They're imaginary lines, and when you do the shopping or when you go to service areas, all boundaries do is get in the way. They have a tough time relating to them. I would guess, basically, that boundaries are there, and they're based on politics. They're not based on the community. They're not based on people. They're not based on needs. They're not based on services. But they are, I guess, necessary in order to allow the political machine to carry on.

I would like to see, you know, a little more thought to: what are the needs for boundaries, and what are logical boundaries? Maybe

one approach would be, when you look at what the needs of the people are and the community, to have boundaries maybe based more on trading areas – you know, having the trading centre and saying: okay, this is where the people tend to migrate to, this is where they come for their services, this is where they come for their shopping, for whatever – and use the economic trading areas as centres and go from there.

Like I said, I came unprepared. It's just a thought I wanted to throw out and get your feelings on that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

We'll start the questioning with Robert.

MR. GRBAVAC: Just a comment, Moe. Trading patterns and communities of interest are probably very similar, and that is a very real consideration in our deliberations.

MR. WORTH: Specific to your area: is there a trading pattern between Entwistle, Evansburg, and Drayton Valley?

MR. HAMDON: I think there is very much, yeah. You know, Evansburg, Entwistle, Tomahawk even: there's an area there that sort of tends to relate more to us. When you go further towards Calmar and so on, maybe there's more of a movement towards Leduc. Although the minister does a great job as far as representing the community, there are a lot of different trends within the riding.

MR. WORTH: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Joe?

MR. LEHANE: Do you think that the boundaries of Drayton Valley-Calmar should be changed?

MR. HAMDON: There is perhaps a little bit more towards the northern area, like I say, that does consider Drayton Valley to be their centre, you know, maybe a little more to Drayton. I don't necessarily know if it needs to be changed a whole lot. Like I said, I just wanted to come and pass those views to you. We do seem to be right now fairly well represented, but I just sort of wanted to see that if there was a change in boundaries, it be based more on communities as opposed to politics. The needs of the people come before, say, numbers, or whatever.

MR. LEHANE: You have no specific recommendations you'd like to make on any changes?

MR. HAMDON: No. Like I said, I came tonight mainly to listen and just took the opportunity to express some of my thoughts.

MR. LEHANE: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: John?

MR. McCARTHY: No questions. Thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, Mr. Hamdon, you came here to speak to us, telling us you're from Drayton Valley and to keep in mind what you call trading patterns. I would want to say that we have to keep in mind what you call community interest and trading patterns as part of community interest.

I think you were partly asked this question, but I want to get a little more specific. Is there any part of the Drayton Valley constituency or any part around you that you think should be added because of trading patterns? We might make a deal with you.

MR. HAMDON: Like I mentioned previously, the area seems to be pretty good, but when you go up Highway 22, it sort of follows the MD of Brazeau boundaries, and then maybe you're talking about Tomahawk, which is not there, Entwistle, Evansburg. There's a community there that I think has strong social and economic ties within the community, and there's a strong feeling and a strong relationship built there. I'm not necessarily saying, you know, to add it and give it to us, but there's an area there that has a lot in common based on trading area and community needs because they look to Drayton as a bit of a centre.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I'll accept that Tomahawk trades with Drayton Valley, I think.

MR. HAMDON: Yeah.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think Mr. Worth wants to ask you a question.

MR. WORTH: No. I have a question to ask him after the hearing is over.

MR. HAMDON: Okay.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, we want to thank you for coming, Mr. Hamdon. I appreciate that you came from quite a distance to talk to us today. Thanks very much.

9:43

MR. HAMDON: Thank you. I found it to be quite an educational experience tonight.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, we do our best to try and educate people, but we're not having much luck.

I think we've gone through the list of people who have registered at the desk who wished to present, but we do give an opportunity to people who sat here all night and listened, if they have something that they would like to add, to come forward, or if somebody who has made a presentation has something more they would like to say, to come forward.

Do you wish to come forward? You have to give your name.

MR. BUTLER: Melvin Butler, Rocky Mountain House. Well, it's been quite an education to sit here and listen to this. I know it is not in your mandate, but I think we're trying to fix a dinosaur, because I can see us within a few years going through this whole exercise again. Having lived in Chinook, which has obviously got a special status, and having had a dad who was an MLA when this thing started, I can just see that we're not getting anywhere. I think that it has to be probably fixed for now, but I strongly think that the recommendation should be: let's get on with this thing; let's change the system.

When you've got a state to the south of you that's got 19 or 20 representatives for the whole thing, I think it's time that we had rural MLAs and urban, but let's be big ones and let's just let people represent the areas. We don't need probably one out in Rocky and another one out in Chinook because rural interests are the same regardless of where they are, and I think urban is the same way. I

don't know a thing about the inner city, but a cow in Rocky Mountain House eats the same and does the same things as a cow in Chinook. I think that this whole system is never going to change until the whole thing is changed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I want to thank you.

MR. McCARTHY: I have a question.

MR. GRBAVAC: Yeah, I do too.

THE CHAIRMAN: I just wanted to make this comment. We may put in our report the Melvin Butler cow theory.

MR. BUTLER: You could. Whatever.

THE CHAIRMAN: We'll let Mr. McCarthy ask you . . .

MR. McCARTHY: I'm just curious. Could you just maybe explain a little more how it should be changed? How do you think the whole system should be changed?

MR. BUTLER: I don't know how it should be changed, but I think the time has come that it has to be seriously looked at. This thing has gone on and will go on. You know, younger people will be sitting here doing exactly the same thing. We've outlived our usefulness with ridings the way they are, as I see it.

MR. McCARTHY: Okay. Thanks.

MR. GRBAVAC: Well, Mr. Butler, I've been on this road show now for it seems like an eternity. We've been all over this province, and I've been looking for that particular line, and probably the last presenter at the last session comes forward with a fix-the-dinosaur concept. I've been trying for three months to come up with that line, and I've failed to do so. So thank you.

I'm a municipal councillor, and I live right down by the Montana border, so I'm very familiar with what you're talking about. But you have to appreciate that down there governance is at the county level. They elect their judges down there. They elect their prosecutors. They run their school system. They run their road infrastructure. The whole thing basically is done at the municipal level, and that's a considerable divergence from what we have here. Are you suggesting that we look at the role of municipal government as well as just the provincial government and the powers of the federal government? Are you looking at the whole thing?

MR. BUTLER: Yes, the whole thing. I mean, I think we're at a time when we can't – if we fix one, we've got to fix all at the same time. I see this the same as if you people start cutting one – Rocky's come up a lot of times as being close to the border; eh?

MR. GRBAVAC: It is.

MR. BUTLER: So let's pull that card out of there. What does that do to the other 82? I think that once you start to change, change is inevitable. We're going to do it. Let's be honest about it. We're in change now. Everything you're saying is: let's change. Let's come up with a system that works. If it's Montana, let's go for it. I don't think there's anything wrong with electing a judge. Then if I don't like him, I'll kick him out. That's the way it goes.

MR. GRBAVAC: Well, I suggest that you take your argument to the Members of the Legislative Assembly.

MR. BUTLER: They know what I think about it.

MR. GRBAVAC: Oh, they do?

MR. BUTLER: Yes.

MR. GRBAVAC: Okay. I won't comment on the elected judges position you've taken, in my best interest probably.

MR. McCARTHY: If he were running for office, would you vote for him tonight?

MR. BUTLER: What's he going to give me?

MR. LEHANE: More importantly, would you contribute to his campaign as a good investment for the future?

MR. BUTLER: As I said: what's he going to give me?

THE CHAIRMAN: That's the trouble with electing judges: you want to get something back, and you're not entitled to anything back.

MR. BUTLER: Well, maybe that's going too far, but we do need change.

MR. GRBAVAC: Practical attitude is admirable though.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I want to thank you for coming, Mr. Butler – unless anybody has any more questions – and making your viewpoint known.

MR. BUTLER: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is there anybody else in the audience who's got a better line than the dinosaur line?

Well, I want to thank you all for coming here tonight. We're now going to adjourn the hearings at Red Deer, Alberta.

Thank you.

[The hearing adjourned at 9:49 p.m.]

