



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Third Session

Select Special
Committee on
Real Property Rights

Public Input Meeting in Medicine Hat

Tuesday, April 12, 2022
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Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights

Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC), Chair
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UC), Deputy Chair

Frey, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC)
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC)
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UC)
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)

Also in Attendance

Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (Ind)
Hunter, Grant R., Taber-Warner (UC)

Support Staff

Shannon Dean, QC	Clerk
Teri Cherkewich	Law Clerk
Trafton Koenig	Senior Parliamentary Counsel
Vani Govindarajan	Parliamentary Counsel
Philip Massolin	Clerk Assistant and Director of House Services
Nancy Robert	Clerk of <i>Journals</i> and Committees
Sarah Amato	Research Officer
Melanie Niemi-Bohun	Research Officer
Warren Huffman	Committee Clerk
Jody Rempel	Committee Clerk
Aaron Roth	Committee Clerk
Rhonda Sorensen	Manager of Corporate Communications
Janet Laurie	Supervisor of Corporate Communications
Jeanette Dotimas	Communications Consultant
Michael Nguyen	Communications Consultant
Tracey Sales	Communications Consultant
Janet Schwegel	Director of Parliamentary Programs
Amanda LeBlanc	Deputy Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights

Participants

Ross Ford
Ronald Huvenaars
Joyce Stuber
Robert Wanner

9 a.m.

Tuesday, April 12, 2022

[Mr. Sigurdson in the chair]

The Chair: Hello, everyone. I'd like to call this meeting of the Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights to order and welcome everyone in attendance. We are meeting today in Medicine Hat, Alberta.

My name is R.J. Sigurdson, MLA for Highwood and chair of this committee. Now I'd ask that the committee members introduce themselves for the record. I will start to my left, then work to my right.

Ms Sweet: Good morning. Heather Sweet, MLA for Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Hanson: Good morning. David Hanson, MLA for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

Mr. Rowswell: Garth Rowswell, MLA, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

Mr. Milliken: Nicholas Milliken, MLA, Calgary-Currie.

The Chair: Now we'll move on to just a few housekeeping items to address before we turn to the business at hand. The audio of today's meeting is being live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. The audiostream and transcripts of meetings can be accessed via the Legislative Assembly website. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

Just to give a bit of background on the committee, the Legislative Assembly struck this committee on March 22, 2021. The committee's mandate is limited to the consideration of five individual points, starting with, one, whether the legal remedies available to a real property owner who is deprived of the use of their real property are adequate; number two, whether the real property rights should be expanded or, in the case of an individual, constitutionally protected; number three, whether the law of adverse possession should be abolished; number four, whether the expropriation processes provided under the Expropriation Act are adequate; and last, any other matter that the committee decides is necessary to ensure the completeness of its review.

The committee may review as a part of its mandate any part of the following statutes, including the Alberta Bill of Rights, the Alberta Land Stewardship Act, the Expropriation Act, the Land Titles Act, the Law of Property Act, the Limitations Act, and the Responsible Energy Development Act, and a review of any other act that the committee determines is necessary to ensure the completeness of its review.

So far the committee has received technical briefings from government ministries and has also received written submissions and oral presentations from identified stakeholders.

We will now turn our attention to hearing presentations from members of the public. We have had three meetings so far. The first was a virtual meeting hosted in Edmonton last month. Then we had meetings in Edson and St. Paul. Today's meeting is the third of six in-person public meetings planned in locations around the province. Information about these meetings can be found on the committee's website. Those interested in presenting to the committee this morning were to preregister with the committee clerk just outside the door.

Presenters at this point in time, due to the short list that we have, will have an unlimited time to be able to present. At the end of the meeting, if there's any time remaining after hearing from the presenters, we will also maybe move to a little bit of questions from

the committee members to the presenters, just on points of clarification. Before you speak, when you approach the mic, please ensure to state your name before you move on to your presentation.

With that, we will move on to our first presenter. We have Ross Ford. Ross Ford, if you'd like to step up to the mic, state your name, and then proceed.

Mr. Ford: Good morning, committee members and Mr. Chairman. First, my name is Ross Ford. I farm in southern Alberta along the Alberta-Montana border just east of Coutts. I'm also involved and have been for many years in serving as a municipal councillor for the village of Coutts and now the county of Warner. I have occupied the positions of mayor, reeve, and now planning chair for the county of Warner. Just as a little background for you guys so you know kind of where I'm coming from, my family has farmed in the Coutts area for well over a hundred years. I'm privileged, too, in that I own that land now along with other land that I've purchased over the years from neighbours, so property rights are, you know, a personal thing for me as well as the people that I represent.

Where I farm, my neighbours are Americans. They have property rights. I don't know if we want to go that far, because they can actually shoot somebody if they don't like what they're doing on their land. But I think we need as property owners to have much better protection for what we do and also from, you know, the overreach of – unfortunately, from what I've seen, most of the overreach comes from government.

I will address each item. There are the five items that you guys are working on, and then I've got a few extra comments and would be pleased to try and answer any questions. I wasn't quite sure what to expect today, so I'm a bit nervous.

Anyhow, I shall begin. I thank the committee for allowing me to present and express my viewpoints. We'll start with the first one: are the legal remedies available to a real property owner who is deprived of the use of their property adequate? In my opinion, I would say that much more needs to be done, so no. I do fully support the changes requiring the Alberta Energy Regulator to notify those affected by development, and I feel that this should be expanded to all government acts and regulations where real property is involved.

In many cases landowners don't even know, you know, if there are plans to run an energy corridor or a highway or something. We had an individual that wanted to build a house, and it was along highway 4. Everything was acceptable, all the setbacks and everything, but Alberta Transportation came back and said: no; we're going to put an overpass there in maybe 20 years. Well, he was denied the ability to build a home, with no form of compensation. That's just one example. I have several.

Alberta Health Services do a lot of the same. The county of Warner has a number of parks in the county, and one park is run by a society. We're very pleased that they do a great job. A few years back they put in showers, and the water supply is from a water co-op. They have their own little treatment system there. They do their best, but Alberta Health informed them: you will not open your park next year until you get potable water. Because it's on county land, we were basically forced to put water in there and at a great cost. Number one, they had fully intended on putting potable water down there. There was a regional line that went from Milk River to Coutts, and we put a junction box close to where the park entrance is so that they could connect.

The park had arranged to get mostly volunteer work to run a line down the road, where the road goes into the park. It already had been developed. They had to go through an environmental assessment, all the stuff. It ended up costing – it was going to cost around \$4,000 or \$5,000 to get hooked up. About \$30,000 later they've finally got water in there.

These are some of the things when I talk about government acts and regulations. It's become so cumbersome to do anything now. It's kind of like: stop; no, you can't. To me, in my mind, that needs to change. It affects property owners, whether it's a county, you know, a landowner, a leaseholder. The number of things that they have to go through is just getting – it's onerous, and it's almost to the point where you just say, "No, we're not going to bother."

9:10

What else? Some landowners have actually had caveats imposed on them without knowledge or consultation. The Historical Resources Act is a good example. I myself have a piece of property that I got in looking – well, this came up when we were looking. I also am a member of the Milk River Watershed Council Canada and the Milk River water users group. I'm not an irrigator, but there are irrigators on the Milk River. We definitely have water security issues down there, so we're looking to build some kind of a reservoir off stream just to keep – irrigators keep getting shut off every year because of the water-sharing agreement, so they're trying to remedy that by, you know, getting a supply of water and then releasing it later in the year so they can keep irrigating. Probably 3 in 5 years they're shut off in late June, July, of course the worst time of the year in southern Alberta to be shut off from water.

Anyhow, in researching this, we find that some of this land is on the map for the Historical Resources Act. The county of Warner has experienced this as well. We recently purchased a piece of land from a landowner that supplied gravel to the county of Warner. He was getting older, so he said, "I want to sell to you guys because you treated me well" and so on and so forth. So we went ahead and bought this. We were getting ready to strip some topsoil off it, and lo and behold: "Oh, you're under the sort of resource area, so you've got to do a study. You've got to do an assessment." Sure enough, they found something. Basically, the land has been seized. An area in that quarter section has basically been seized until we do a study and see if there is anything there.

We've engaged in that process; the tab is already \$40,000. Plus, we can't touch it. And that doesn't just affect municipalities. That applies to private landowners, and we didn't even know that that was there. Nobody told us. The same with – we're looking at some private land to build a reservoir, and we hear, "Oh, you've got this on here." The landowner said, "Well, I didn't know that was there." And the same in my case: I had no idea that that was there. To me, the first thing that should have happened was that they should have come to the landowner and said, "Hey, we think there's some significance here." Most landowners are fine with it, but in many cases they're not told.

There are a number of other acts and regulations in place, the MGA. I'm a landowner; I pay taxes every year. If I don't pay those taxes, I say goodbye to my land in three years. You know, everybody needs to pay their taxes. I feel that I've been on the other side, too, and I know how that is. We're trying to run an operation, and when people don't pay their taxes, that's hard, and it makes it worse for the other people that are paying because now you've got to raise taxes.

Oil and gas: you've heard lots about this. If I don't pay my taxes, you guys take my land away. If they don't pay, it's really nothing. There's no recourse other than that now, you know, we can put on a lien, but that means a lawyer, and that doesn't mean you're going to get paid ever. I don't know what to do about that, but that's something that I think should be considered.

Then there's the Land Stewardship Act, the Water Act. There are a number of acts in place that are conservation directives. Again, you may have some significant feature on your land, but the consultation needs to happen. While in the Land Stewardship Act there are, you know, means for compensation, who decides that

that's a special area? You can't just have a bunch of activists get together and say: oh, we like this land; we should set it aside. That part of the consultation process should include the landowner all the time.

In many of these cases, and we've seen it with – what was the program called? Special Places 2000, I believe it was, where a group of people could say: "Yeah. This land is significant, we think, and we should set it aside or give it some special designation." One individual in my area had to fight it on his own in court. You know, landowners, individual landowners, like, don't have the means to take on a government. Whether it's right or wrong or whatever, it's just not in their ability to do so. I've probably said enough about that.

The second one was: should real property rights be expanded or, in the case of the individual, constitutionally protected? I think you're pretty clear on what I'm going to say: absolutely, yes. This was made very clear in the Property Rights Task Force initiated by the Redford government a number of years ago. I was part of that whole process. I attended a lot of those meetings, and I was very clear that the government should constitutionally enshrine both federally and provincially, and I know we're here provincially. What the federal government does: I don't know how much control you have over them. We'd like to have more, but that's for another day, I think. So, instead, they created the Property Rights Advocate office, which is now gone. To me, it was a bit redundant. It was more of a counselling service than anything else.

The third one: should the law of adverse possession be abolished? Again, I feel that, yes, it should be. If you own it and you have title to it, you should own it, and you should also be able to defend that right if necessary. If somebody occupies a piece of your land without your knowledge for a time, it shouldn't give them the right to just take it from you, especially if it's needed.

The fourth one: are the expropriation processes provided under the Expropriation Act adequate? Land-use planning is important, but it should have limits, and I guess I come back to who determines if it's in the public good. That's a big one. Is it really in the public good? In some cases you can see a highway or perhaps a utility corridor, but some utility corridors are privately owned, and they shouldn't just be able to come in and do what they want. In fact, I think most of our corridors are now privately owned. I mean, they're companies, but they're not government owned. They're not owned by the people, so to speak. Again, how is an individual property owner able to take on a government or a big corporation? I think, you know, what lawyers charge nowadays is upwards of \$500, \$600 an hour.

9:20

The final one: are there any matters necessary to complete the committee's review of the Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act? I think one thing that I would like to see is the province determine the jurisdictional authority of land. Is it the province's responsibility? If it is, then we're always seeing the federal government reach in and do things that, you know, are questionable. The Species at Risk Act is a good example. I'm not sure if you're aware of what went on south of here, the sage grouse. I don't want to bring up old issues, but it was a big eye-opener for a lot of people. There were armed marshals on some of the roads out there. Like, it was absolutely ridiculous. Didn't happen for very long, but at one point – and it was just so people wouldn't drive, make too much noise for the sage grouse so they could, you know, do their nesting thing.

The problem with a lot of this regulation, the Species at Risk Act, for example: a lot of the species that are listed on the act – and I've done a lot of research on this, the county has – the only way to get

funding to study an animal is to get them listed, and they may not be endangered at all. You know, they may be significant, it might be the extent of their range, but in a lot of cases the populations are quite large in some areas. It may be that in a particular area they struggle to survive, and it's more because of the climate we live in. I don't know if you know: it's damn cold sometimes. It's just not real hospitable even for us trying to grow crops and stuff and try and raise cattle and that kind of thing.

I guess just on a final note, you know, acts, regulations, orders, et cetera, whether they're provincial, federal, once they're in place, they're extremely difficult to get changed or reversed. It seems like we've got more and more and more coming all the time. Most landowners – like, this isn't just a rural issue. I guess we're the ones that maybe experience the hurt or the adverse effects of it first, but this really does apply to anybody that owns property. It's just that once these get in place, it's so difficult to get them removed. Like, how long have you guys been working on this? A couple of years? You know, government just moves slow. Seems like once they're in place, then how do you get them changed? Well, it's a process.

I've always said that I think, when it comes to rules and regulations, it seems to me, in my experience – I've been a councillor for over 20 years – like the more you can do closer to where life happens, the better. The people that are there just kind of know better what's going on. Plus, like me as a councillor, if my council does something stupid, then it can be changed. People come and say that this is kind of ridiculous, and: "Oh, yeah. Well, we never thought of that." You know, it's easier to change, but again, municipalities are basically a creation of the province, so we're limited in what we can do.

I think I'll finish up with that. There are perhaps other people that have some things to say. If there are any questions, I'll be here, or if you want to ask now, that's fine, too.

The Chair: Well, I think we're all here. I'll just open it up to the committee quickly while we have you on the link right now and just see if there are any clarifying questions from any committee members. I see MLA Milliken.

Mr. Milliken: Yeah. Some of this, I'm sure, I could just go into the acts and find out for myself, but since I've got you here, I may as well ask. First and foremost, though, I just want to make mention that we've got Drew Barnes and Grant Hunter here as well, and I also want to thank you for all your service, too, because it sounds like, from your introduction, there are a lot of things that you've done within the community, so thank you very much for all of that during this.

Mr. Ford: Ross.

Mr. Milliken: It is Ross Ford, right.

Okay. Having a legal background myself, one of the things that you mentioned that really kind of came top of mind is this whole idea of when landowners get put in a position where they have to sort of take on the government. I know from old litigation days, being a litigator, a lot of the time people would come into the office and they don't have an extra 40 grand kicking around to deal with redealing with the roof that was supposed to be put on their house nice and all that, so I totally get where you're coming from. Any time there's an opportunity, I think, for us to look to a way to ensure that landowners almost get a bit of the benefit of the doubt with regard to regulations, I think that that's an opportunity where we could probably make some changes that would be better for the people that do not have the resources to really fight.

A couple of quick questions, though. With regard to the Historical Resources Act you've got some land that's effectively

seized, in your words. If hypothetically it is effectively seized for good, is there compensation for that?

Mr. Ford: Actually, no. The county of Warner, that gravel pit I was talking about, the parcel is not that large – it's 12 acres – but basically they've fenced it off, and we can't touch it. I mean, we can go in there, but we can't disturb anything. So as far as compensation, like, it's up to us. We're having to pay for that and any assessment that . . .

Mr. Milliken: I think you mentioned that you're already, like, 40 grand deep.

Mr. Ford: Yeah. Willow Creek: talk to them. They may be in Fort Macleod tonight.

Mr. Milliken: Then another one that's not directly related would be going back to – you mentioned that there was one example where an individual, I think, had a development permit process land-use redesignation for a house or something along those lines and there was some sort of plan by the government, I guess, to have an overpass there potentially in 20 years. "We're not quite sure, but we're thinking that that's probably going to be safe there" and that there was no compensation on that.

Do you know what the notification – like, I'm from the city, right? When we have new DPs going up, it'll go for, you know, a couple of hundred yards in every direction, and everybody gets notices. What's it like with the highway?

Mr. Ford: In this particular case, when there's an application for development, of course, if in our land-use bylaws they're allowed, then our development officer just gives them a permit and away they go, but in the process we send out notification to a number of agencies, you know, some utilities. It depends on what it is. This was just housing, just a single dwelling, that was to be built. But Alberta Transportation is notified, the Chinook health region, and all the utility companies, and they'll oftentimes send back comments on: you shouldn't or you should do this. In this case Alberta Transportation said, "No, we can't allow this" because it was in their plan to build an overpass there. I can get the documentation for you if you wish. This is a number of years ago that this happened, and the landowner just kind of said: what am I going to do? He just said: well, I guess I'm not going to build a house.

The same goes for, you know, areas like sewer lagoons, for example. Like, the area that you were limited to develop has been expanded, and a lot of the landowners around these areas didn't – it was just done. I know we had one individual that applied. He wanted to build a house as well: nope; sorry; you can't because you're too close to the drain and sewer lagoon. I don't know what he ended up doing. He had a shop there, so I think he just put a couple of extra rooms in the shop. I don't know. But it's, you know, these kinds of things that – and what's the landowner going to do? Again, I think it should be in every act and regulation that the province has.

Thanks, Chair.

9:30

Mr. Milliken: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Sorry. I just have one supplemental question from MLA Hanson.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah, if I could. A couple of things there. That parcel of land that you have, those 12 acres that are basically seized and you can't really operate on it: I know what that would be worth if it was taken up as a lease by an oil and gas company, so there should

be some sort of compensation. But I guess my second question is: do you still get taxed on that 12 acres?

Mr. Ford: Well, the county owns it, so we can't really tax ourselves.

Mr. Hanson: Oh. Okay.

Mr. Ford: But in the case . . .

Mr. Hanson: I thought it was your private land.

Mr. Ford: Well, I do have some private land, but currently I farm it. If I was to develop or want to do some kind of a development on there, then I would have to, and if they found anything then, the study would begin. Like, as far as I know, there are no means of compensation for that. Like I say, I didn't even know. The only reason I found it is because I was looking for the guy that we're looking at building a reservoir on. I got looking at this map, and it's like: well, I didn't know this map was here. And then: oh, that's some of my land. You need to let people know, and then I think that if the government imposes something on you – and it may be totally reasonable; it may make a lot of sense – they should cover the cost and not be borne by the landowner. It could put them out of business, basically.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Then the next one is basically on the transportation issue and when you're talking about the guy that put the application in. We hear about this a lot. One of the regulations under the transportation act is: anything that's within 800 metres of the centre line of a provincial highway you need a permit from Transportation. A lot of folks don't even realize it affects some entire small towns, like some of my towns. The town of St. Paul: there isn't any property in town that isn't within 800 metres of that centre line of the highway, so even if you want to build a fence or a garden shed, you actually have to go through a process legally of getting a permit. We've had some businesses that were changing the operation on main street – the only thing that they were changing was the sign on the front of the building – and were going to be held up for eight months before they could open up because of Transportation.

We're actually working on trying to get that change, at least on the municipal level where it goes through small towns, but that's unfortunately where a lot of people – that regulation has been on the books for a very, very long time, but until you actually put in an application for a permit to build a house or something, that's when you find out that, oops, you're too close to the centre line of the highway. That's a big one, but definitely legal representation is a big thing.

Then you also talked about government overreach in different levels of government. So you think it's more provincial, or is it federal? Or is it sometimes municipal or a combination of those?

Mr. Ford: Well, I think it can be a combination of all three, but in my experience, of course, we deal with the province through the county considerably. You know, it's mostly province, but we're seeing more and more federal government overreach, and it comes back to – well, for example, the policing costs that now we're responsible for. What does the landowner do if – they understand that if you guys, our county, or our municipality have costs imposed on them, then what are you supposed to do? All you can do is pass them on. But if we're levied some kind of new tax and then our taxes double, what recourse does an individual have? It may be something that's just totally ridiculous, like the carbon tax – you didn't hear me say that – or it may be something that makes total sense.

Education taxes, for example: in my mind, you know, if you're an individual farmer and you operate lots of land for whatever reason, you bear more of that cost than other people do. To me, it's a people service. Yeah, society benefits from intelligent individuals or whatever, but I'm not so sure that just because you own property you should be covering the majority of that expense. That applies to any kind of – whether it's something in your land-use bylaw or a provincial statute or anything, there's little recourse for individual property owners. I don't know if that answered your question, hopefully.

The Chair: Just before you go, Mr. Ford, we do have MLA Hunter here from Taber-Warner, and he did have a quick question. If you're to answer his question as well, I think he was looking for clarification.

Please proceed, MLA Hunter.

Mr. Hunter: Can you hear me? Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to ask Mr. Ford: the cost to sterilize the land, you know, basically the sterilization of the land. You have talked about the fair compensation of this question MLA Milliken asked. In your situation with the county for that sterilization of that land, what is the full cost that's going to be – first of all, you can't use it, but second of all, it's the loss of the revenue or whatever you could actually glean from that land. That sterilization cost in your land, in your county versus how much is being done because of a policy decision that was made by the government across the province: this is what I'm more interested in and, I think, maybe the committee is interested in.

Mr. Ford: Okay. Well, the county has a number of gravel pits, not that we own but we do – you know, of course, we have 2,400 kilometres of roads, so we need some gravel. In this particular situation there's gravel under there, so to put a value on that: like, we don't know how deep it goes because we can't get on there just yet. We have probed around. I think we just crushed 200,000 yards, in that area, of gravel just recently, so what's the value of a yard of gravel? It's anywhere from \$5 to \$40 a metric tonne. There are 12 acres; you might have 50,000 tonnes, maybe, plus the costs, the actual costs that we're having to pay the – and I kind of get a kick out of these guys that come and do assessments. Well, of course, they're going to find something. It's job creation, I guess. Yeah. As far as actual costs, we haven't really added that up, I guess, but all we know is what we paid out, and it's in excess of \$40,000.

The Chair: Sorry. I do have one more from MLA Rowswell. Please go ahead.

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you, Ross. A couple of quick ones. In St. Paul I had a reeve, and he asked with regard to development and the value of land that's adjacent to it and how it might be impacted – his concern from a councillor's perspective was: how far does that go and who pays for it and whether it's provincial or municipal. He was concerned that that might create a problem. Given your council experience, like, how do you feel about that? Or how do you manage it?

9:40

Mr. Ford: Yeah. I mean, the people that are directly – like, take a power line, for example. If, you know, you've got a place that you've built up and then all of a sudden there's a power line that comes right beside you and it's not your land: yeah, it's, like, the old not-in-my-backyard kind of thing. I think we all realize as landowners that development is going to happen, but is it really in the public interest? The one I'm thinking about is a private line that

goes from Lethbridge to Great Falls, Montana. When they started out, they were pretty good, but there were a lot of games that were played as to where to put the line. Some people were adversely affected, but it wasn't their property, so it was like: too bad, so sad.

Yeah, there need to be limits, but I think – there need to be limits, and you need to get stuff done. Like, you know, this can take forever to go through. I understand that, but as far as: how far do you go? Well, I think at least the adjacent landowners. I don't think you need to go two or three miles out, but you should be able to look at a map and see who's going to be most affected. It's kind of common sense, I would say. Yeah.

Mr. Rowswell: Last question: have you ever had to deal with adverse possession, or are you aware of a situation where it was enacted?

Mr. Ford: Well, the sage grouse issue: I didn't have to deal with that personally, but I was involved because it does – you know, there are some landowners in the county that have land in Forty Mile as well, so we thought: well, we'd better pay attention to this. It limits what you can do on your land and for some can be a totally ridiculous thing.

Mr. Rowswell: I was thinking along the lines of squatters' rights.

Mr. Ford: No, I haven't been, personally.

We do have issues in the county with some of our parks where people will come and just basically camp out there, and we have to keep them moving. You've got to move to the next camp spot, because I'm pretty sure they would try and do this adverse – yeah. Yeah, it's an issue. It's more around Ridge reservoir. I would say that we've got a number of areas that are really good camping spots, and traditionally people in the area have gone there. You know, there are basically no rules or regulations, I guess. We've kind of clamped down, or we have clamped down on a lot of that. We've actually made it better for them in the fact that they can actually go there, and there's a road in there, and they can actually go and have a nice weekend there without kind of digging a big hole and having mud-bog competitions and so on and so on and so forth. We have experienced that.

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you.

The Chair: At this time we have no further questions from the committee, but the engagement we have from the committee just shows the depth and knowledge that you've provided, so I'd really like to thank you for your presentation today. I know that you said that you stepped up and you were feeling a little nervous to do your presentation, but you touched on every part of the committee's mandate and provided some great solution and depth there, so, Mr. Ford, I know – on behalf of all committee members thank you for your presentation today.

Mr. Ford: And thank you. Some of you've come a long ways to be here, so thanks.

The Chair: Next for presentations I have Joyce Stuber.

Mrs. Stuber: I didn't know I'd registered, but I'd love to talk.

The Chair: Excellent. Yeah. Just once you get to the mic, before you present, please state your name for the record, and then if you'd like to proceed with your presentation, we're all ears. Thank you.

Mrs. Stuber: My name is Joyce Stuber, and I'm a rancher south of Medicine Hat, north of Redcliff. I just want to make some

comments about this meeting. First of all, I found it really poorly advertised, and if you need a response from the farmers, ranchers in our area and in Alberta, I think this needed to be put out there a little bit different. This is how it started: I shared your post of the poster to some local ranchers. I didn't get a response back, but I did get a neighbour saying, "Are you going?" I went: "I don't know. I don't really understand what it's about." So I did some searching on what it was about. No one else is here, and I'm quite surprised because this is important to us as farmers, ranchers in Alberta. Like, it's huge.

Again, our government – I feel like we're hiding it under the table, letting things pass, not really knowing, not knowing what's happening as owners, and it frustrates me. Now, we've had a lot of bills that have been passed by our government, again, slid under – and I'm talking federal at this time – the table by the politicians. Other politicians don't even know about it, and for sure we don't know about it. Some of the things that I as a rancher, as a landowner would like to see addressed – and I don't know if this is for you guys. We purchased land. It's taken a wait. We still don't own it legally. Our taxes are not going through the same place. This was back in 2019.

Lease land is the most difficult to transfer. It's a problem. We still are clarifying a railway act, which would be classified as a special area. It wasn't a railway back in, I want to say, the '30s. They started building it. They didn't continue with it, so it was built up with not a track on it. It's hard to get that put into our name. It's put in as a different part of the quarter. It's not even associated with the quarter that we own. I don't get it. Like, it should be cancelled out as a special area.

We also have some, I want to call it, slough land. Years ago, back in the '30s, there must have been some kind of an opening or – what do you call it? – a ditch, dike that opened up. Again, we had difficulties getting that land transferred over to our name. So something needs to be done for landowners. Let's get this going a little bit faster.

Another problem with this one was transferring a generational farm, ranch over from one to the other. The expense was going to cost us \$50,000, transferring it from my brother-in-law to our family. There's a loophole there, which, again, doesn't make any sense. If my brother-in-law transferred it over to his brother, it cost a dollar. If they put my name on this, it was going to cost us – and it was a large amount of land – \$50,000. Why would it make a difference when you have families together? It's for my kids. It's not really for my husband, myself. We're buying this land for future generations. It almost cost us \$50,000. We found a city lawyer. We started with a city lawyer that was – and that was our mistake – dealing with city property. When you're talking about quite a large area of land, it's important that you have a land guy, not a city property guy. We learned that the hard way. So we've had two lawyers that are dealing with this land property transfer. That's one thing that I would like to put on there.

The one about the house and building it on, trying to put it on your property. We have also reached that stumbling block because we own land that has a lot of gas well revenue, gas wells in that area. When you look at the map – we had no idea – the underground map of this quarter that we would like to place a house on, there's not much area that we can do it. We did not know that there were this many pipelines underneath the ground with all the rules and regulations. And I get the rules and regulations, but, again, as a landowner we don't usually see all the mapping for the underground because – wait – we don't own our property underground. It should be our property.

Lease land is another problem. You know, I've been on a farm all my life. I've been farming, ranching all my life. The lease land: our southern Alberta has probably the most lease land in the area.

We pay big money for that lease land. Yes, it's a risk, but – wait – farming is a risk. We pay huge money for that lease land – it's not little – because there's gas well revenue off it, and we know that. So our price tag is way up here.

9:50

If the government – and we are threatened every time there's a new election. The NDP got in there, and we were scared. We were scared. What are they going to do with the gas well revenue? Are they going to take it away from us? If they take gas well revenue away from ranchers, from farmers, we are not going to make it. First of all, we're not going to make our land payments. We know that. Secondly, we are not going to be able to feed our cows. Our cows this year cost us so much money because of drought. We're changing our operation because (a) it's a hard life, okay? I'm looking at myself this morning going: "Jeez, I'm really tired. How come I'm so tired?" We're up, right? It's calving season. We're up four times in the middle of the night. We're up all day long. It's not a picnic right now. It's fun for us because we love our job, but it's hard.

I look at the next generation and I think: "Wow. We're sliding. We're slipping." Our little guys, our little farmers and ranchers, are going to be gone. They're not going to be able to afford this. I can tell you that much. My family: I look at it. I've got a son that works in the oil field. I have another son that works off the farm. Between my husband and I we had five jobs. Obviously, I'm retired now, but we still are working hard to support this farm, this ranch. It's quite a large ranch, but it still needs other support, so we're working around the clock. We don't holiday. I look at my kids and I'm going, "What do they do for entertainment?" Yeah, they rodeo a little bit. It costs a little bit of money, but that's their entertainment. I look at this and I think: it's going to go by the wayside.

Who's buying up our land all around this area? Hutterites. Hutterites have bought a lot of land. They're benefiting now because guess what's coming in to southern Alberta? Green energy. Oh, wow. I know Hutterite colonies that are getting 50 wind towers. They just purchased this land. Do you think they knew about it before it happened? I don't know. I'm just saying that comment. Our green energy: we hate it. We love our land. We are stewards of our land. We're going to be putting solar panels up on land. Hate it. But why wouldn't we get into this? We cannot – we cannot – raise that much money on our farm if we didn't do the solar panels.

Another comment. They come in and they're offering us big money. They're offering our neighbours big money. If we say no: "It's okay. We'll just get some more land." So how can we say no when we're going to be looking out our door at another solar panel, not getting any of the benefits of it? I feel like I've sold my soul to the devil putting solar panels on a quarter, on two quarters. I hate it.

Another problem with this one. Guess what kind of land that is? It's deeded land; it's not lease land. There's a regulation maybe out there saying that we cannot put solar panels on lease land. I don't know. I think there must be. We've gone to lawyers. We've had different lawyers setting up to make sure that we're getting a fair deal out of this. It's not financial that I'm worried about. I'm worried about the future. Where are we going to be putting these solar panels that aren't going to be effective in 10 years? Where are we going to put these wind towers that might not be working because we live in a pretty cold climate? We saw what happened in Texas. I am not for green energy, that it's pushing down our throats, because I can't see it working on farming, the diesel we need. We don't need an electric track to feed our cows. It's not going to work. So it's something that we need to address. I don't know if that's your guys' panel, but that's one of the things that I'd like to bring up.

I giggle about the grouse because I saw that. I saw that big time. As a farm owner do you think we tell anybody if we see an

endangered species out there? No way in hell. My husband won't even tell me if he sees it because I do a little bit too much of this. So, no, we're not going to do that. But, yeah, they'll seize your land. They'll fence it off. They make more activity than we do. The cows don't hurt them.

We did have an instance once when we wanted to put in a waterline in the spring on our deeded property. A quarter mile down the road there was a nest in a tree. I've seen that nest quite a few years in a row. I didn't think there was any activity. We had to pay for the environmental study to make sure that hawk would put its eggs in there, hatch its eggs. I'm just going: why is that up to us? We did not get to put in the waterline until after the eggs were hatched and she flew away. I just go: why is that our problem when it's the Greenpeace that want this? Yes, we love our birds, we love all this, but it's infringing on the next step for agriculture. We need to be helping agriculture out more here, not hindering us.

What else? CEBA. That's federal. I'm a little worried about it. We were not going to participate in CEBA. How do you turn away a \$60,000 loan, free for two years? Wait. If we use that – and we needed it this year because of the cost of hay – what if we can't pay it back? Yes, you've got the interest. If you don't get it back, is it going to be a \$20,000 free gift to us? I don't get that. But that's what they say: if you apply. The federal government put this out, and they're hiding something, I feel. What does "if you apply" mean? So many of my farmer-rancher friends did not see that: if you – it's not "if you apply." What's the word I want? If you need this or if you – I can't think of the word right now. I look at that and I think: okay; there are going to be a lot of small farmer-ranchers that will be put out of business because they got \$40,000, \$60,000. That might just push them over the edge, so I'm worried about that one.

Education taxes. I've always thought that if you've got a lot of land, you're paying a lot of money in education even if you don't have kids. I did have kids. I put them through the education, so I'm kind of okay with it, but it's steep. It's a lot.

Oh, the water well grants. I look at CAP. I look at that grant site quite a bit, and I've been looking for different things. We have a co-op grazing out in the Suffield Block, and we needed to put up some solar panels because it wasn't working out there. We first had our stumbling block dealing with the grant with the army. We have to make sure everything is kosher, and that's worse than government, but it is government. So I looked at the CAP grants, and you know a couple of years ago there were solar panel grants available for farmers. There aren't any longer. I'm just going: they're killing us on things. They're letting the money go to places that it sure hurts us. Like, it's not for us.

If you did a water well, a new one, you can get \$5,000 in a grant. Do you know how much it costs to drill a water well? It could be over \$20,000. That is a lot of money to put out for a water well. You really need that water well. It's a drought out there. We're worried. First of all, our Suffield grazing: are we even going to get out there? There's no water, so I'm not sure what we're doing there. We're worried about our own. Yes, I got a dugout filled out. I'm just ecstatic about a dugout filled out in our area, but we still need grass. Hopefully, it's going to rain for us. The things that they came out with – they were talking about fencing off areas. They were talking about water wells. It wasn't enough money to help us out. We couldn't do it. You can't go ahead if you don't have the money.

The power lines: I've got to talk about them because that's another bad one in my mouth. The power lines came in, and the one I'm talking about is from Brooks all the way across the Komati area across the river. They came in, and they first sent some young little guys out of university to try to convince us that this is a good thing. I hate them. I don't even think this one has any power on it yet. I don't hear it buzzing. It's on our land. We had no choice to put this

on our land. This is deeded land I'm talking about. Yes, it went across some of our lease land, too. No choice.

Another problem: it doesn't pay half as good as a gas well. Why would I want this huge structure that I have had problems with people climbing up because, "Hey, that looks like a fun thing to do"? It's on our land, and it's our property, so are we responsible for that? I don't know. I hope not, but I think we would be. That whole power line was crooked in my mind. The compensation is less than a gas well, which shocks me. I look at the power line that went out on the 120 highway, and I'm sad for those guys because, number one, they don't even own a quarter of land, most of those guys. They own acres. They have devalued that land severely by putting the power lines up along that highway. Then they put it in the ditch. They didn't put that power line on the property of the people so that they could maybe compensate a little bit of money; they put it in the ditch.

10:00

We had a situation in our county where they plowed down trees because it was not good if somebody were to run into those. It would be the county's fault, so they plowed down the trees. The trees were beautiful. We don't have very many trees around this area. I don't know if you noticed that. This was a big contention between the farmers that this happened with because they were a beautiful fence line. They cut them down. Guess what? They're growing back. Nobody is saying anything. So it's not an issue with the government right now, and I'm talking municipal at this point in time.

But I just shake my head at some of the things that they come up with. Whether it's city people that are doing the planning and not talking to the ranchers, the farmers, you need to have a little bit more of an open book for us. It's interesting.

I think that's all I have to say. I don't know if it was all about what you guys are doing. I tried to read up on it; I didn't find a whole lot. Yeah.

The Chair: Mrs. Stuber, absolutely, there was a lot in there, for sure. We appreciate your input. You touched on some land issues. Definitely, that needs some consideration, so we appreciate that.

I'll just briefly pause right now and see if we have any questions from our committee members. Yes, MLA Rowswell, please go ahead.

Mr. Rowswell: I've heard this a few times now, that no one knows what restrictions or things are attached to the land. Like, I'm not a big landowner, but, I mean, like, aren't there liens or, like, isn't it listed on the property? Like, how can you find that out?

Mrs. Stuber: Well, there are some things going around right now in southern Alberta about allodial title. I don't know enough about it, but I'm investigating it. Way back when, when the settlers came in here, there was allodial title. As it's changed through the generations, I don't think it's allodial title anymore. Allodial title means that you own your land all the way down. Generations: yes, if they're a hundred years back, they may have allodial title. Leased lands we will never have allodial title on; it would only be deeded land.

But you know what? With Trudeau coming in and making all these different bills that have been passing, we do not own our land anymore. We own our land; we don't have the rights to our land at all. They could come in and say: we're taking it, and we fear about the leased land.

My dad just passed away last year at 97 years old, and when I was a little girl – I hardly remember it – he had some leased land that was titled to us for 99 years. Those were the titles back then.

Now they're 10 years, I believe. One day a politician must have come in and said: "You know what? That would be a really good community pasture." They took away two quarters from my dad. We were small, out by Seven Persons irrigation. It was a hard life. They took the land away from him and put it into an irrigation community pasture. My dad at 97 still cried about that, still talked about that, and was angry about that.

Back then you didn't have machinery or whatever; they offered for him to take down his fence and he could take his fence and wire away. I'm thinking: back then, yeah, it was leased land – I get it – but he did have a lease agreement for 99 years.

I look at our lease, and I'm going: okay; what would the government do with our land, our leased land? We are stewards of the land. We love the land. We take care of the land. We go after the gas well companies if they open a fence or leave some crap out there or dig a ditch and then a cow dies in it. You know, it's a problem. But we don't have a guarantee of even 10, 15 years, truly, on this leased land. We don't have a guarantee of that income, of revenue. Let me tell you that we have debt, and we're hoping that we have a lengthy period of time on it, but do we have that? It fears us. It stresses us.

The Chair: Thank you.

MLA Rowswell, do you have a follow-up?

Mr. Rowswell: No. That's good. Thank you.

The Chair: Good. Anyone else? MLA Milliken, please go ahead.

Mr. Milliken: Thank you, Mrs. Stuber. I super appreciate the presentation. There was a lot in there, more comments than anything else. I think we've got your contact information, and that's going to lead to you and I probably having to have a conversation, because you mentioned something – every time I hear of something where regulations or something along those lines where the same result or the same service is inequitably valued, and what I mean by that is that if you go down one path that leads to the same effective result, it costs X, and if you go down a different path, it can cost you, in this case, 50,000 times as much, and the effective result is still the same. I think it was brother-in-law to brother versus brother-in-law to yourself, or something similar to that.

Then you also mentioned that you had two lawyers working on it in order to fix it or at least to get around it or whatever – I'm not judging on that one – but that's cost-prohibitive to a lot of people. All I can see is that there are people who are getting dinged in a way that maybe they shouldn't be, and then it reminds me of, like, tax law or whatever, where once you find out later, you have to go back cap in hand and be, like: but it's only a mistake because we didn't know, you know? So those kinds of things. I'll have to talk to you about that.

The other thing. Really, I mean, you talked a lot about various things, but you did hit some of our mandate really kind of head-on. On one of them, which we've talked about and heard about from lots of people in similar situations, not necessarily the exact same one, you were talking about the power lines going down the highway and how in this area you've got, you know, people who might only have acres, not quarters, so any kind of devaluation to their land can affect them, relatively, really heavily. That's just a comment, though. That's something that we're looking at, for sure. So thank you.

Mrs. Stuber: I'm just sad that the power poles weren't put on their land so at least they would have gotten a little bit of . . .

Mr. Milliken: They would have gotten some cash flow.

Mrs. Stuber: Yeah. I just found that ridiculous when I saw that.

Mr. Milliken: Yeah. No. I appreciate it.

Mrs. Stuber: I looked at that and I thought: okay; a tree I could have hit, but now I've got a bigger power pole that's a little bit more of a brick wall that I could hit. That doesn't matter because government ran that. It's not right.

Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Milliken: Thanks.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you.

We are a little over halfway through our time allowed here, but we don't have any additional speakers registered to speak at this time. If anybody does wish to be on the record to the committee and would like to speak at this time, if they just want to approach the mic and state their name, they can go ahead with a presentation. If not, being that it's halfway through, we will take a break, but I'll just briefly pause to see if there's anybody wishing to speak at this time. We have one.

Please go ahead.

Mr. Hunter: I'm not sure if as an MLA it's inappropriate for me to do this, but I did want to bring to the committee this issue that was brought to me . . .

The Chair: Before you start – I apologize – please just state your name and title and then proceed with the presentation.

Mr. Hunter: Oh, sorry. Grant Hunter, MLA for Taber-Warner.

I've always been concerned about, you know, when someone takes their own money to buy land and then it's sterilized or some policy decision that a government made or a bureaucrat made affects their ability to earn a living on that land, which is really a constitutional right, but someone says no or even neighbours determining what you can do and what you can't do. I get that if you are downwind from a hog farm, that's going to have a material effect on someone.

I was introduced to a guy, not in my riding, when I was Red Tape Reduction minister, and he was telling me about how he had bought this land, and it was up in – actually, I probably won't say where. He was saying how his neighbours were complaining about the noise that he was creating. He wanted to have a place where people could come from the city of Calgary, come out and learn about farming. He had, you know, certain animals that kids from schools could come out and learn about; you know, animal husbandry. He had garden plots where they could learn what, you know, certain types of things are growing in different soils, and it was such a fantastic thing in terms of being able to teach kids and teach people from the city what rural Alberta offers and what farming offers, and he was driven out.

10:10

He was an entrepreneur. He was really interested in different ideas. One of the things he wanted to do was that he had this really beautiful barn, that he had reconditioned, and he wanted to have events in there. His neighbours – you know, there were a bunch of acreages and stuff a little bit further from him. Because of the law, if he wanted to have the ability to have corporate parties and stuff like that in there, he had to get the permission of the neighbours. What happened was that they'd have to kind of drive by their neighbour's place to get down to his place, and the neighbours said: no, we don't want the noise; we don't want to have vehicles coming by; if it's at night, then it's shining on us. They made all sorts of excuses.

Here's a guy that was an entrepreneur. He was trying to do something or work the land. I thought they were really creative ideas that he had, and he ended up selling his land and moving back to Toronto or Ontario somewhere. I just thought: what a shame that we had a very strong entrepreneurial guy who came here, was actually creating commerce, was also helping to educate people from the city about what farming life is like, and because of the way that we have our property laws, he wasn't able to work his land. He was actually driven, literally driven out.

I wanted to put that on the record so that you knew that I really believe strongly that the constitutional right to be able to buy, own, and work land is so critical to a prosperous nation and a prosperous people. Without that ability, we will sterilize not only the land, but we'll sterilize the initiative of our people. I hope that you will be able to take that back and that that will be part of your deliberations as you think about the importance of, you know, what you're doing here. I could go on about other experiences that were presented to me as well, but I just wanted to present that here today.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Hunter.

I'll briefly pause again. If anybody else would like to come forward and be on the record for the committee, there is time to do so right now. Please go ahead.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My name is Drew Barnes, MLA, Cypress-Medicine Hat. I want to thank each and every one of you for your work and coming to Medicine Hat and hearing about this very important issue.

That's where I want to start: how important it is. Deep down, people understand that property rights are one of the pillars of building wealth, creating wealth, transferring our hard work and our wealth to the next generation. What I want to talk about today is that in this very room in 2011 there were probably 400 local people here, alarmed about what the current – at that time – PC government was doing with the Alberta Land Stewardship Act, Bill 36, which was a planning mechanism to direct some planning and some water but at the time had some draconian facts, including being able to take away a title or a covenant attached to that title without full and fair access to courts and appeal and without full and fair compensation.

The importance to landowners was expressed very well by Joyce and Ross. When we talk about how much of people's heart and how much of people's effort is put into their land holdings, we're talking in southern Alberta about a lot of farms and ranches that are well past a hundred years in the same family. I know of some ranches that are in the sixth generation. This is what, of course, people have used to store their wealth and pass on their hard work and make our economy strong, but it's also important in situations for water rights, for those kinds of things, particularly important in southern Alberta, where I think up to 85 per cent of our land is lease owned, not deeded. A lot of this land has never ever been deeded, never ever put to a title by a government. So it makes it all the more important for these good stewards to take care of and make it important, important in a bigger way. A census just came out for the city of Medicine Hat, about two months ago, saying that in the last five years our population has only increased by 11 people. How directly that is related to the government overreach – and both Ross and Joyce talked about the sage grouse protection order from the federal government and the federal Species at Risk Act. But, also, the fact that a lot of these opportunities have been challenged down here.

I want to back up to the federal Species at Risk Act and what it did with the sage grouse for a second. Historically there were lots of sage grouse here. A lot of sage grouse were here when there were a lot of ranchers and farmers in southern Alberta protecting and

developing opportunities for their habitat. Because of West Nile, because of drought, because of fewer and fewer people numbers plummeted dramatically. And when the federal government, about 10 years ago, put in the environmental protection order to protect the sage grouse, what it did do was a regulatory taking that, as Joyce mentioned, meant people had to change their grazing habits.

The city of Medicine Hat at that time was in partnership in the area called the Manyberries oil and gas field. Them and another – the city of Medicine Hat didn't go broke, but a company they were partnered with did go broke in their oil and gas exploration, costing local people a tremendous number of jobs, costing the people of Medicine Hat tremendous wealth in the creation of this, and I believe to this day the city of Medicine Hat oil and gas is still suing the federal government over the implementation of the sage grouse protection order.

Why mention these things in this order? It's from the UCP platform from three years ago in the election, a commitment to fix Bill 36 and a commitment to look at compensation for landowners who are affected by regulatory takings, like the sage grouse protection order was. Again, I know that it's been – my involvement – over 10 years of talking about these things. I think a lot of Albertans, particularly in southern Alberta, where our economy has been a bit challenged, would like to see these things actually happen.

I want to talk about the second part of this as well, the squatters part, the adverse possession. I believe what has been talked about and what has been recommended is a situation where a squatter may have recourse in the courts but not the opportunity to take the title. I wish I had more examples of this, but I know of one example where for many, many years – decades – two neighbours on a farm: driveways were accidentally on each other's land. Adverse effects, but if they can't work it out amongst themselves, maybe they need the help of our court system. But, again, I see no reason why that should ever have an effect on title. I would encourage this committee to work towards that and give people the full opportunity for those situations that may arise innocently, accidentally, not deliberately. Again, the fact of where that does happen deliberately and it is the title that's in play, I think it would be wrong to allow that to happen, and I think this committee needs to look at making sure that doesn't happen.

Again, I'll sum up this way. Over 10 years ago I believe 17 Wildrosers were elected principally because of property rights, from what the PC government was doing with the Alberta Land Stewardship Act, with Bill 50, the transmission lines that we're all paying the price for now. Joyce talked lots about the cost of green energy and how we're all paying for that now. I think it's crucial on the wealth creation and the future of Alberta to enhance property rights, give individuals the opportunity to create wealth, to store that wealth, and then to sell it to another Albertan.

Thank you again for your work. Thanks for listening to me.

10:20

The Chair: Thank you for that.

At this time I'll just briefly pause to see if anybody else wants to approach the mic and speak at this time.

Seeing that we have no other speakers – but before we do break, I would just like to briefly comment that we also have in the room a former Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, Robert Wanner. I want to thank you for showing up today and thank you for being here. I just wanted to recognize you. As I saw, you had registered and come into the room. I appreciate you being here today.

At this time, as we have no further speakers, I'm going to pause, but anybody wishing to speak, please approach the clerk and/or a committee member. We will convene the committee at any given point in order to make sure that everybody has the opportunity to

adequately get on record to this committee, but at this time we will breathe until that point.

Thank you.

[The committee adjourned from 10:21 a.m. to 10:48 a.m.]

The Chair: Thank you, everyone. We're going to reconvene here. I do believe we have one additional speaker that would like to come and be on record to the Real Property Rights Committee. At this time we will open up the mic.

Please state your name, and then proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Huvenaars: Ronald Huvenaars. I'm a farmer in Hays, Alberta. I am also a member of the Action Surface Rights Association. We do have a member presenting this evening. Daryl will be much better at the details and any questions you might have, but at the same time I just thought I should mention that I do appreciate the committee coming out like this. We have been more of an online world these last two years, and the province has reached out to our group for consultation on a few of the bills such as the geothermal bill, and we do appreciate that.

I'm a little concerned that it almost seemed like a bit of a bait-and-switch kind of a thing. I know that when we were consulting on the geothermal bill, we mentioned that when these licences were going to be transferred, we didn't see anywhere where the property owner would be notified, and we found that concerning. They said that that would be put in, and it seemed to be, but at the same time Bill 82 was coming through the works. That came through, and there is no notification of a property owner when this lease, this licence is on his land and it's transferred to another company. You're not even notified about this.

That's also somewhat in effect here on all energy leases. They can be transferred from one company to the next through the AER. I believe it would be, at the very least, a courtesy to notify that you have a new renter on your land. Anyways, I find that somewhat concerning.

I know that in the MD of Taber there are some leases applying to be transferred through the AER from one operator to the next, and the operator that was looking to take over these leases has not paid his MD taxes in the last two years. The farmer was not notified. He just happened to see some people driving around checking out certain wells. He thought that something was up, and he started looking into it. Anyways, I find things like that concerning.

Also, the AER website: when you're trying to search on certain leases and certain decisions that have been made, I have to say that it's quite a frustrating website. Now, at this time I believe the train of thought is: well, you should be checking to see what's going on with the licences on your land. You do go onto that website and start searching things. I've entered the same words or the same names – I don't know if I actually punched in the actual well site location – 15 minutes apart, and I will not get the same results from the AER website. I will not be able to find that licence 15 minutes later by punching in almost the identical words, and I find that somewhat concerning. It's almost like – would you call that trying to hide something? I don't know. Anyways, just a few concerns I have.

Another thing to keep in mind when you are dealing federally, like with the Species at Risk Act: generally I would have to say, you know, like everything else, that 99 per cent of the people are doing their best. We are caretakers of the land, but when you see the potential – you see something. It was the same thing last year. When I was a kid growing up – I've lived on the same farm my whole life – maybe once in 10 years you'd see a moose come burning through or something like that travelling through to Elkwater. Now we see them almost every other year. Last year there was a cow that had a calf. She raised it around our

farm, through our fields. I would be driving by – and it would take me, like, 30 seconds – but you know they'd put a run on them, running through a field to get up to a check to clean the screens for my pivot. Well, I'll stop, back around, and drive five miles around just to leave them alone so that I don't put a run on them, that kind of thing. We basically care about the nature that we see around our places and minimal damage. I don't think anybody blinks an eye, because we're always losing money somewhere, so five bucks here or there isn't going to kill us.

And for the greater damages, there is a process. I never ever went through it. I don't know how full it is or not, but I guess, getting back to – you have to watch. When I start talking, I do tend to ramble on. Anyways, the Species at Risk Act: we do worry about these things; we care about these things. But all of a sudden you see something you haven't seen in a long time. Do you think there's a chance in hell you're going to mention it? It's not going to happen. We may go out of our way to protect them, but we're not going to mention it publicly because things are going to disappear, things are going to be taken away from you, and we won't be compensated. Anyways, that part is a great concern. Other than that, yeah, I think that's about all I have at this time.

Once again, thank you for coming out. I really appreciate that. Thank you.

The Chair: As a committee we appreciate your presentation.

We have a few minutes here, not a whole bunch of time. Does the committee have any clarifying questions?

I don't see any at this time, so I will – oh, sorry. I see in the back **10:55**

Mr. Wanner: Not a question; I was going to ask for the opportunity to say a few words.

The Chair: Absolutely. Thank you so much.

Just in the interest of that, we roughly have about just five minutes before the conclusion of this meeting. Just in the interests of time, so that we don't have to interrupt the next speaker, I will just ask the committee if anybody objects to a 10-minute extension to this committee meeting. I'll only ask one question. Does anybody object to extending the meeting for an additional 20 minutes?

Seeing none, we'll extend the meeting, then, to 11:10.

To the next presenter, Mr. Robert Wanner, if you'd please approach the mic, state your name, and then proceed. Thank you.

Mr. Wanner: Yes. My apologies. I wasn't sure if I should say my name. Robert Wanner. I'm a resident of Medicine Hat, Alberta. I will be brief although Speakers don't get much of an opportunity to speak, so one does take opportunities when they do arise.

I, too, would like to thank you for coming here. I've noticed, by listening to the people that have presented today, that communication is really a very critical part of the relationship between residents and the representatives that represent them in that collective group called our Legislature. I must tell you that particularly with the advertisement, the communication around the hearings, et cetera – I think my former peer may have made reference to that – I want to emphasize to the committee again the importance of letting the residents know.

I have a feeling that there is – and I recognize that I'm going to be touching on issues that probably go beyond this committee, but I believe that indirectly they tie back to this committee in so many ways. This is, I think, shared by even my former peer and myself and many, many others. This is the forgotten corner of the province. The people down here believe that we don't sometimes get our fair due of attention, and I want this committee and other MLAs to

really appreciate that point. Don't leave our area without believing that that's real. When you are from an area of the province that is less populated, has fewer political seats than most other areas of the province, whether it's caused or is consequential, it causes a sense of limited communication, which I believe cultivates a sense of mistrust that is sometimes unnecessary.

It's the age-old story I'm sure we've all heard: communication, communication, communication. There's never enough communication. We want to speak to the importance of good public policy that represents all of our province. Don't underestimate the importance of good communication with the people, particularly the people of this section of the province. Property for agriculture, for living, both for urban and rural, is a means of creating a living for all of us, not just the property owners and the managers of the land. It's a means of production of food and the essentials that every society needs. In this particular area – I recognize that it goes beyond the mandate of your particular committee – our section of this province has been facing and will most probably face severe drought. When you live in this area as long as I have and many of the people who have presented to you today – drought is going to hurt this area in a big, big way, and that is going to impact the supply of food products, not only the livelihoods of people down here but the food products, and that infamous new language of the supply chain limitations, which are going to cause supply and demand problems and consequential costs.

Finally, I would just leave with more of a – when I was elected as the MLA for this area and had the great privilege of trying to contain comments that were unnecessary in the House where I couldn't identify quite who they were, although I recognize at least one face up here that may have been part of that, on both sides of the House, by the way, I didn't know what Treaty 7 was. I didn't know what Treaty 6 is. That was very transformative. I still keep that picture, Dave – it's hanging in our family room – of the Indigenous history of our province and our country. Across this province it's deeply rooted.

So I leave you with this concept and thought: when you're talking about property rights, I want you to reflect if you can and read back about the history of our area. I have 11 grandchildren, and I tell every one of them – they tell me that I tell them more than a 100 times the same story, but it's this: if you want to know where you're going, it's important to know where you have been and where we have been in this province and where we are in this particular section of the province. This land has a thousand years of Indigenous people settled, who've travelled this land, and their sense of property was different than ours, not necessarily right or wrong from ours. It was different. So when you're talking about property and you want to develop policy into the future, I think there are insights that can be earned by listening. I know that several of you come from areas where Indigenous people are a significant portion of the population, and I urge you to not forget that component of the policy formulation process that you're looking at. I think that will add insight and added value to a policy direction that goes beyond today.

I'm very brief, and I don't think you'll need those other five minutes, but thank you for the opportunity to speak. Thank you for being here. I urge you and your peers, whichever government is going to be in power in the future, to do more of this outreach because it's not just about the policy and the subject matter; it's about the communication and the relationship that you have with the people you represent. Don't ever, ever underestimate them.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: On behalf of myself and the committee, Mr. Wanner, thank you for your comments and your highlights there today.

On behalf of this committee we also recognize the importance of being down here in Medicine Hat. We want you to know that it was very important for us as a committee to get down to Medicine Hat, to be in this part of the province, to be able to have this engagement portion. We definitely understand and want to make sure that Medicine Hat and area do not feel like a forgotten part of this province, and this is why we're doing this public in-person engagement and trying to get out to all of these areas. Thank you again today.

At this point in time, if there's nothing further, are there any additional comments from committee members?

Thank you. Seeing that there's nothing else, I'll leave one – I'll actually pause briefly here. We do have a limited amount of time, less than five minutes, but I'll briefly pause to see if there are any further speakers.

11:05

Seeing none, I'd like to thank everyone that came out today to Medicine Hat to speak to our committee. A lot of great input today highlighting issues that we will take back for deliberation and consideration as we move towards our report. I'd like to let everybody know that our next meeting will be tonight at Fort Macleod from 7 until 9 this evening. As well, we have Hanna tomorrow at 1:30 to 3:30 and Eckville the day following from 10:30 to 12:30.

At this point in time I will call for a motion to adjourn. Moved by MLA Hanson that the meeting be adjourned. All those in favour, please say aye. All those opposed, please say nay. Hearing none, that motion is carried. Thank you, everyone. This meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 11:06 a.m.]

