

[Chairman: Mr. Bogle]

[2 p.m.]

MR. DOYLE: I'd like to begin by welcoming the committee to the community of Edson and especially to West Yellowhead. Your Worship, the chairman is going to introduce everybody shortly to familiarize with names and perhaps their ridings. I want to thank those people from the community who have shown up here to make presentations to this committee. Welcome again, everybody.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much, Jerry.

I intend to introduce the members of our committee and would ask each of you to introduce yourself. While our meetings are recorded, as this is a select special committee of the Legislative Assembly, we've attempted in the four hearings held to date to keep the discussions as informal as possible. When we receive a written brief or an oral presentation, we'll first ask if there are any questions or comments from panel members and then invite other members of the constituency to comment on what has been said. Hopefully, we can use the time in the most appropriate way so that we all learn through this process.

I'd like to begin by introducing the committee members who are present today. Starting on my far right is Frank Bruseker. Frank is the Liberal Member of the Legislative Assembly for Calgary-North West. Next to Frank is Tom Sigurdson. Tom represents the Edmonton-Belmont riding. He's a New Democratic member of the Assembly and a second-time member. To my immediate right is Pat Black, who represents the Calgary-Foothills riding. She's a first-time member of our Assembly. And to my immediate left is Pam Barrett. Pam is a New Democratic member of the Legislature, representing the riding of Edmonton-Highlands, and she's a two-time . . .

MS BARRETT: You keep on calling me a two-timer. He did this last night. I want to be on the record: I'm single. You can't two-time when you're single. Okay?

MR. CHAIRMAN: . . . a two-term member of the Assembly, and she serves as the House leader for the Official Opposition party. I should have mentioned with regard to Pat that she's a member of the Progressive Conservative Party. And I'm Bob Bogle. I represent the Taber-Warner constituency, and I'm a member of the Progressive Conservative Party as well.

In addition to the panel members who are here today, Bob Pritchard is with us as our senior administrator. Some of you, I think, have been in contact with Bob relative to arrangements for the meeting or briefs or other such matters. As well, we have two members of *Hansard*, Doug Jeneroux and Vivian Loosemore, who are here with us.

So now if we could begin and just ask you to introduce yourselves and indicate whether you're here as a citizen or representing a group.

MR. STRANG: Okay. I'm Ivan Strang. I'm mayor of Edson, and I'm representing the town of Edson.

MR. ASCHENMEIER: Peter Aschenmeier. I'm an individual.

MRS. GROAT: Susan Groat, *Edson Report*.

MR. PUHLMANN: Klaus Puhlmann, representing the Yellowhead school division.

MR. KRALZEN: Eric Kralzen, of the Whitecourt constituency, as a citizen.

MR. HIERATH: Bret Hierath, chairman of the Edson Roman Catholic separate school district.

MR. COOK: I'm Orville Cook. I'm here as a private citizen, and I'm also an executive member of the United Mine Workers of America.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much. I'd first like to give you a bit of background as to why we're here, then Pam will lead us through some slides we have, and we can then use that as a basis for our discussion today.

By Alberta legislation we are required to go through a general redistribution after every second general election. Our last redistribution process occurred in 1983-84. We had a general election in 1986 and the most recent general election, of course, earlier this year, 1989. Therefore, by our own statute we would normally by this time have struck an Electoral Boundaries Commission, and the commission's task would have been to redraw boundaries based on legislation. In the past the boundaries commission has been chaired by a judge and has had on the panel the Chief Electoral Officer for the province, several Members of the Legislative Assembly, and one or more citizens appointed from the province. The province through its legislation would prescribe the number of seats, both urban and rural, so that the commission's task would primarily be to determine the boundaries between the various constituencies.

The reason we have not gone that route to this point in time centres on a court case in British Columbia. The British Columbia government established a boundaries commission - I won't go through the entire matter, but I will conclude on that part by saying that the government chose not to implement the recommendations of the commission. An individual took the government to court, citing the Charter as the prime example and reason. In the decision brought down by the then Chief Justice for the province, Justice McLachlin, the ruling went in favour of the individual who took the province to court. Justice McLachlin used as her basis that there should be a provincial mean set for a riding's population and that there could be a variation of plus/minus 25 percent. She went on to say, although she didn't elaborate how, that there could be some exceptions made where there are some extreme circumstances to warrant a constituency with a lesser population. The British Columbia government did not appeal the decision, although in a subsequent decision made by Justice Meredith, the decision was that while the McLachlin ruling was correct, the courts could not impose a strict time line on the government. In other words, the government had some time to implement or to redraw boundaries to conform to those as stated by McLachlin and the previous commission.

Therefore, in Alberta it was decided by all three political parties that we should develop a committee with representatives from the three political parties and that the committee should take into consideration the Charter of Rights, historical practices in the province, and other matters as outlined in the correspondence which I believe all of you have, and that we should hold hearings around the province so that we can get input from Albertans. So we've determined that we would meet with Albertans in 17 centres across the province and give them an opportunity to tell us what they think, to give us some guidance.

I want to conclude my opening remarks by saying that the

Charter is fundamental in our constitutional process today and cannot be ignored. Having said that, it's our intent to ensure that the very special fabric and the historical patterns are not ignored and completely rolled into a concept of one person, one vote. So we've got a big challenge as a committee, a very important task in trying to meet the test of the Charter while at the same time recognizing that other factors come into play besides the pure one person, one vote concept.

I'm going to pause for a moment to see if any of the other panel members would like to supplement anything I've said or comment further. Once that's been done, we'll go on with the actual presentation we have for you. Anyone? Okay. Fine. We'll go ahead with the presentation, Jerry, and then you as the MLA for the West Yellowhead riding may have some comments you'd like to make.

MR. DOYLE: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Pam.

MS BARRETT: Can I stand over your shoulder?

MR. PRITCHARD: Sure. Do you want me to sit on the other side?

MS BARRETT: Sure, okay. That way I can have a look and see which one is coming up next.

I believe you were given copies of the letter "Dear Albertan." The information that we're about to show you is actually contained in there, so we'll walk through it simultaneously. You may find having the paper in front of you helps. What you'll see in here is an alphabetical listing of the 83 electoral divisions in Alberta. You'll also see the eligible voters per riding. But it doesn't make too much sense; it's not neatly categorized in this version. So the next slide that we'll show you, I believe . . .

MR. PRITCHARD: This is in order from largest to smallest.

MS BARRETT: This is the largest to smallest population per constituency. What you'll see is that Edmonton-Whitemud tops the polls here at 31,000-plus voters, and Cardston has the smallest population at 8,100. But in the particular instance of Cardston you'll see the note that says that the Blood Indian Band, consisting of about 1,800 members, chose last time not to be enumerated. So, for instance, if they were enumerated, Cardston would not be the smallest; indeed, Cypress-Redcliff would really be the smallest population base riding in the province.

Now, over all, this is based on the enumeration for the last election. We have 1.55 million eligible voters that were enumerated. If you divide that number by 83, you come to a mean average of 18,685 voters. That would be the identical number, for instance, if one were pursuing absolute equality and conformity with the Charter or the implications of the Charter of Rights. If you go for a maximum deviation of 25 percent on that mean average, you'd be adding 4,671, to come to a maximum number of voters per riding of 23,356. Similarly, if you wanted to deviate downwards to a maximum of 25 percent lower than the mean average, you'd be subtracting the same number, and the net line there would be 14,014 voters per electoral riding.

This is a really handy one because this slide shows those ridings that would fall above that 25 percent rule that I de-

scribed, in the upper left-hand corner, and it shows in the lower right-hand corner those which would fall below - that is, which would have a smaller electoral base than the 25 percent variance on the low side of the mean average. So it's a very handy one to have. You see that, in fact, almost exactly half of the ridings in Alberta fall well above or well below that 25 percent variance, and just slightly under half of the ridings fall within that 25 percent rule on either side of the mean.

This is a graphic depiction of those ridings that would fall below the 25 percent of the mean, on the low side of the mean average number of voters. So every one of those ridings that shows up pink has a relatively smaller voter base than would be allowed under strict application of the plus/minus 25 percent rule. You can see that we're dealing with a lot of ridings here and that a number of people would be affected if strict application of that rule were to occur.

Then we get the other side of the story. I don't think it's an accident that you'll see that this tends to happen in city ridings. The ridings here that are coloured in yellow show the ridings that currently are in excess of the high side of the 25 percent rule. It's interesting to note that a couple of them are inner city, but they tend to be at the edge of the city. One assumes that that's because during the last eight, seven years, that's where the population growth occurred, which is why you have this type of skewing.

That's Calgary. This one shows Edmonton, and again you get the same sort of configuration. It's the ridings closer to the outskirts that tend to have the higher voting population. This is the city of Lethbridge, and because of the division in this city, they conform to that middle section we showed earlier, where both ridings fall within the 25 percent rule on either side. The city of Medicine Hat comes up again as being, relative to the other constituencies, oversized in terms of voter population.

This is a funny looking map, but there's a reason that it looks this way. Red Deer, prior to the last Electoral Boundaries Commission, was one riding, but it was a very large riding in terms of voter population. The commission determined that the smart thing to do would be to divide the city, which is depicted by the orange marks there, and accommodate two ridings, each of which is partly urban and partly rural. The municipal line shows you the urban part, and the black line all around there shows you the rural part. They are combination ridings, in other words. That was done to accommodate the fact that if it was left as one riding, it would be too big to handle. The reasonable way to move it, in fact, was to cut the city in two, but if you did that, you wouldn't have quite enough voters to make it worth while, so they combined the two.

Ah, yes, St. Albert. This is another of the biggies. This riding is surrounded by a somewhat rural population, but it is primarily a city riding. It again falls above the 25 percent rule, if applied on the high side.

Now, why are we back on this one?

MR. PRITCHARD: This is the minus 35.

MS BARRETT: Ah, the minus 35. Thank you. These need to have markings; either that or I should have a cheat sheet.

There are some ridings that in fact fall, in terms of voter population per riding, beyond that 25 percent rule. In this instance it would fall beyond the 35 percent mark. Each of these ridings would be smaller by more than 35 percent of the mean average. There are a few, coloured yellow on this map, that indeed would be 50 percent or greater away from that 25

percent rule on the downside. In other words, relatively low voter population, to the magnitude of 50 percent or greater.

Now, these blue spots indicate where we are having our hearings. You can see where we are today, for instance; we're in West Yellowhead. We determined that the fair thing to do would be to go to areas of the province that, first of all, were accessible to people from the surrounding community and, secondly, to make sure that we touched the bases in areas that potentially could be affected when the boundaries are redrawn. Keep in mind that we don't redraw the boundaries. We're only responsible for the legislation that will ultimately advise the commission on what basis or on what principles those boundaries should be redrawn.

I think you've also got this in your handout. This is a schedule of our hearings. You'll see we get to spend the coldest parts of the winter on the road, but we had the feeling that it would be best to report back to the Legislature as soon as possible. While we can't hit every town, we're sure trying to be accessible to virtually every community, as long as people can drive some distance to meet with us as well. So we'll be meeting right through February 13. To the best of our knowledge, that will conclude the public hearing process.

Here's a combination map, with green dots on a purple background, that shows you the proximity of our meetings to the areas that fall below the 35 percent mark. We were particularly concerned that those ridings which have relatively low voter populations, and that are not only lower than the average but below that 25 percent rule on the low side, would be well heard from when we went around on the public hearings. So there's a reason that you'll see a large coincidence between the dots and those coloured ridings.

That's it.

MR. PRITCHARD: That's the last slide.

MS BARRETT: That's the last slide for today. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much.

I wonder if we might pause for just a moment to see if there are any questions that you have relative to the introduction that Pam and I have given you or any of the material that we've circulated. In other words, have we lost anybody with part of the explanation? Is there anything you want further clarification on?

MR. STRANG: So, in other words, you're just making recommendations to the boundary committee on how you feel this pie should be sliced to change your over or under 25.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. Our recommendations as a committee will go back to the Legislature. The Legislature will then set in legislation the parameters to be followed by an Electoral Boundaries Commission.

MR. STRANG: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: In other words, we're going to be coming back and advising on the mix of ridings and so on.

MS BARRETT: I should add that while we're not responsible for the drawing of these boundaries, aside from recommending certain principles, et cetera, we also have the power to recommend, for instance, the composition of the commission, whether

or not it should have public hearings and at what point in the process, that sort of thing. In fact, we have a relatively wide mandate here in terms of the hearings. It'll get narrower after our hearings when we start to focus on our recommendations.

MR. ASCHENMEIER: One other question: how cast in stone is the judgment relative to the Constitution? You know, that in a sense one individual will be the judge in interpretation of the Constitution, is the Constitution actually serving our best interests in that type of judgment? Do we look at that at all?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, Peter, two important points to remember: first of all, the B.C. government did not appeal the ruling by Justice McLachlin, and secondly, Justice McLachlin is now one of the nine members of the Supreme Court of Canada. The federal government appointed Justice McLachlin to the Supreme Court.

I guess another element to recognize is that the federal government and, I believe, six provinces use the plus/minus 25 percent figure now. But it's important as well to recognize – and we're still gathering information on the other jurisdictions – that most make exceptions for remote or sparsely populated areas. For instance, the federal government allows two seats in the Northwest Territories and one seat in the Yukon. We all know that Prince Edward Island has the same number of members in the House of Commons as it does in the Senate, so it has four members, whereas its population would dictate one. So there are exceptions, but there are exceptions with strong reasons.

MR. ASCHENMEIER: Right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone wish to supplement or comment further on that? Because that's really key.

MS BARRETT: I would add that the sense of the ruling in B.C. was serious enough to prompt both Saskatchewan and Manitoba to similarly undertake a redrawing with consideration of the implications of the Charter. So it's . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Although in Saskatchewan it's plus/minus 25 percent, and then they've given their two northern ridings – which are remote; they don't have any large centres like we do in the far north – up to a 50 percent variation away from the mean.

Sorry.

MS BARRETT: That's okay. That's clear enough.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.  
Yes. Go ahead, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Yes, but one point, though, is that the role of this committee is to give certain recommendations to a commission so that whatever the commission determines as the final boundaries, we hope that would withstand a Charter challenge. We are aware that if the boundaries in Alberta have great disparity, we may very well be subject to a challenge as well.

MR. ASCHENMEIER: Well, I guess that's what I was trying to get at. Just where would it lead if there was a challenge? You know, what kind of support would you require? Basically,

you've answered that, I guess, that remote distances and that type of thing would be grounds that you could challenge the ruling to being held to a letter of the law.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. If there are no other questions, I'm going to turn it over to Jerry. Jerry, you'll also introduce the . . .

MR. DOYLE: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I would like to introduce to the panel the two people who have arrived since we introduced everybody, and they are Fiona Cleary from the public school board and Louis Joy, citizen at large. Do you want me to continue, Bob?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, please do, Jerry.

MR. DOYLE: The chairman asked me to make a brief presentation in regards to the West Yellowhead riding. Of course, as most people know, it's approximately 10 miles to the east, goes to Jasper, south to the highway that comes from Rocky Mountain House, and approximately 10 to 15 miles north of Grande Cache. It is approximately the fourth-largest riding in the province. The parameters of the populace are within the boundaries of the minus 25 percent. The main work force, of course, of the West Yellowhead riding is in oil, gas, forestry, and coal, with a climbing trade towards tourism, of course. Tourism, we believe, begins some 10 to 30 miles east of the town of Edson and throughout the West Yellowhead riding.

It would be my feeling that, of course, no changes would be necessary to be made in West Yellowhead. In fact, if there were some made, they could encompass a little larger area; perhaps as far as Niton Junction and north to Shiningbank Lake.

As most people know, the Edson forest boundaries run to Highway 32, up along the McLeod River, and cross country to north of Shiningbank Lake, as does the Evergreen Tourist Association on the north boundary. However, Evergreen runs past Stony Plain. The power companies that work out of Edson go out past Nojack, north approximately 30 kilometres, and go about 15 kilometres north of Shiningbank Lake. So, of course, all those people deal through banks, through other businesses in this community to make sure they're in here for all those types of operations. Mainly the people who work in the coal and forestry industries also live within those boundaries.

However, it's up to this committee to seek and find which way the boundaries will go and how many people will be in them. I know it's going to be a tough decision. I in no way wish to be a part of that committee presently, but in this community I'm pleased to be asked to sit on this panel. I'm looking forward to hearing from other citizens of the West Yellowhead riding and outside the riding.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much, Jerry.

One other individual who came in after the introductions was Robin Wortman, who is with us. Robin's going to pass around a sheet, and the purpose of that is that if you would like a copy of our report when it's tabled, keeping in mind that our mandate is to table a report when the Legislature is in session next spring - we believe the session will go in sometime in mid- to late February. Our hearings run up until and including February 13, so we'll be actually writing our recommendations once we're sitting in the Legislature. It won't be possible to come back and meet with you at that time, but what we would be pleased to do if you would like a copy of the recommendations that are going in: if you would sign your name and give your address, we'll

ensure that you get a copy of the report as it will be tabled in the Assembly.

So I think we're ready for any briefs. Now, if you have a formal brief you'd like to present, we'll certainly accept that. If you have some verbal comments you'd like to make as an oral brief, we'll accept that as well. As I indicated earlier, the process we'll follow is that once the brief has been presented, we'll pause for any questions or comments by committee members and then by those of you who are here in the room. So we'll try to keep the discussions as informal as possible.

Because we received a copy of the Yellowhead school division No. 12 position paper in advance, I know that we do have one. If you'd like to proceed with that, Fiona, we'll certainly be pleased to receive it.

MS CLEARY: The board of trustees for Yellowhead school division No. 12 has grave concerns regarding the deliberation of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries. In our view, the committee faces a very difficult task in striking a balance between a pure representation by population policy and one which will preserve the historical recognition that Alberta's rural population deserves and will demand.

There can be no argument that the problems faced by rural Alberta are different from those which confront the urban populations. This fact alone would indicate that the methods of determining representation in the Legislature for the two groups would be different. The simple application of a plus or minus factor of 25 percent is totally inadequate to reflect this difference.

The issue of service to constituents is also a factor to consider. It is obviously easier for a member of the Legislative Assembly to service a compact, densely populated city riding than a scattered, sparsely populated rural one. Again, the simple application of a plus or minus factor cannot adequately recognize this difference. The committee must not be strictly mathematical in its approach to the boundaries issue. To subject all of Alberta to the simple rule of the majority would be to deny the basic nature of this province.

The provincial government has long recognized that population in and of itself cannot serve as the basis for the distribution of power in the form of elected representation. This position of the government is evident in its attitude to the government of Canada. The province has long suffered the effects of being a part of the underpopulated hinterland of Canada and is trying to address that difficulty through the process of Senate reform. The view of the government of Alberta is that the population representative House of Commons should be balanced by a regionally representative Senate. While the problems associated with representation by population on the provincial level are the same as those at the federal level, the same solution cannot apply since there is no provincial body which corresponds to the Senate. There is no chamber of second thought on the provincial scene to mitigate the tyranny of the majority. It is, therefore, absolutely imperative that the representation in the provincial Legislature be designed to function as both the representative of the majority urban populations and the minority rural populations.

While we do not pretend to have the answers to the dilemma faced by the committee, it is our position that the current balance of power between rural and urban representation in the Legislative Assembly should be maintained. Perhaps a combination of population with an appropriate plus or minus factor and population density could be developed into a formula which

would ensure adequate representation for every Albertan.

We wish the select committee well in its difficult task. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for the brief.

Any questions, first of all, from panel members? Frank, and then Tom.

MR. BRUSEKER: First of all, pardon my ignorance, but I really don't know where this Yellowhead school division really goes. I wonder if you could maybe describe that for me.

MS CLEARY: We go to the Jasper park gate on the west boundary, and on the east boundary we go to Evansburg. We also encompass all the municipalities of Hinton, Edson, Wildwood, Niton Junction, Peers, and Evansburg.

MR. BRUSEKER: Okay. The second question I had. The concept of a provincial Senate is one that's sort of been tossed around before. Has the school board at all or have you personally thought about: should we be creating a provincial Senate? Is that something we should be looking at as a government?

MS CLEARY: We didn't discuss it at all. We didn't get into that part of it.

MR. BRUSEKER: You don't want to throw out your two bits' worth?

MS CLEARY: Not today.

MR. PUHLMANN: The parallel has simply been drawn as the Senate being the second thought at the federal level, but there isn't such a thing at the provincial level.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.  
Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Two points. In your last paragraph you do note that there should be an appropriate plus or minus factor. I'm wondering if you've given consideration to what you would deem appropriate.

MS CLEARY: I think our concern is based on the fact, as Mr. Doyle represented, that we have a large area to service. I don't think that West Yellowhead would be affected that much. But Whitecourt also runs into our boundaries and into our school division, which it doesn't affect, but we had concerns about the eroding of our representation to the Legislature. We didn't come up with an appropriate number on a balance. We want something that is fair and equitable to make sure that our rural ridings are as well represented in the Legislature as they are now, because I understand, if my figures are right, that the rural and urban is about two persons difference in its equation. So the representation is by area in that sense.

Eric, you might have a comment as to what a formula might . . . We didn't discuss one at that board . . .

MR. PUHLMANN: If I may add to it. I've since thought about this whole concept of a purely mathematical formula. I'm speaking as much as a private citizen, perhaps, as well as an employee of Yellowhead school division.

Going by the judgment that has been rendered in B.C., it appears there has to be something mathematical in place on the one hand, yet the judge seems to say she would allow some deviation under extra special circumstances. Given that, then, I think there needs to be some mathematical basis, but I don't believe that plus or minus 25 is the answer. It has to be possibly related to area as well by some means whereby you use the inverse ratio, you know, that can be fairly quickly calculated. For an example, if you had 5,000 people spread all over northern Alberta, it makes sense to me that there better be a representative for these 5,000 people. Compare that to 30,000 in a cluster in the city of Edmonton; that probably makes sense. You know, I'm just making up some figures here to demonstrate my point. So possibly what one has to do is to look to allow that; in other words, the greater the area - I'm talking about sparsity now - the lower the population should be or could be to a level that would still be acceptable that has been rendered in a judge's decision. Do you know what I'm saying? That the deviation may well be 35 percent or something, given that we're talking about a small population in a vastly large area. So this notion of inverse ratio I think is a very important one, if one could calculate the area, and then . . .

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. SIGURDSON: May I follow along?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Sparsity is a consideration that many commissions, not only Alberta commissions, have looked at, but certainly other provincial commissions have looked at as well. I'm sure the commission that's established is going to consider or factor in sparse population.

But let me ask about the ratio of representation. We currently have two-thirds of Albertans residing in urban centres, and they have just over 50 percent of the representation; we have 42 urban members of the Legislature. We have one-third of Albertans residing in rural parts of our province with 41 members. So it's pretty much 50-50. So while we consider sparsity of population a factor, should we be considering ratio as well, maintaining the ratio, you think, as it is?

MR. PUHLMANN: I haven't thought about that part sufficiently, but there needs to be a ratio no doubt.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let's leave that question out there in case someone wants to come back to it later, and get some thought. Anything else, Tom?

MR. SIGURDSON: No, that's fine. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pam.

MS BARRETT: Yes. My question is to you as well. Would you prefer that a commission be told to apply a formula such as what you were suggesting, or would you prefer a commission be told to just keep those in mind? I mean, do you see the difference of the two options? Which would you prefer?

MR. PUHLMANN: I believe a formula is more defensible . . .

MS BARRETT: You do, eh? Okay.

MR. PUHLMANN: . . . in the end, because you can lay down five, six criteria by which you operate. They're very difficult to defend later on in the case of a court case. I mean, if the judge says in B.C. that there ought to be more or less equal representation - you know, each member should have more or less the same population, allowing plus or minus 25 - I think that judge is very strongly suggesting to me that there better be something mathematically in place instead of just a list of vague criteria.

MS BARRETT: Could I have a supplementary, please?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Go ahead.

MS BARRETT: Would you suggest, then, that it not be based on a population density or sparsity concept but rather that if you were going to pursue that formula, you would do it on the basis of the physical boundary as in, you know, X kilometres to the east and west and X kilometres north and south? Would you do it that way, or would you suggest that you do it on the basis of number of persons per square kilometre?

MR. PUHLMANN: Well, one could also limit, for example, the physical size of a constituency by saying "No constituency shall be larger than . . ." in terms of size.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, right.

MR. PUHLMANN: Then whatever population you have in there, I guess, would be representative of that, recognizing that the area factor comes into it again, that inverse ratio that I spoke of.

MS BARRETT: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pat.

MRS. BLACK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Klaus, I was going to ask you - I'm interested in the formula concept, which I keep bringing up.

MS CLEARY: This is our resident mathematician, so . . .

MRS. BLACK: Well, I'm an accountant, so I like things in formulas. I've been looking at trying to factor in a weighted average type concept with different variables such as demographics, geography, population, that sort of thing, and have a weighted average concept on each factoring to go into an overall scheme; have a weighted averaging variance for urban and one for rural, and try and keep a mean within the mean of a weighted average formula. Is that sort of what you're talking about?

MR. PUHLMANN: Yes, more or less.

MRS. BLACK: That's nice to hear. But anyway . . .

I think that's one way, then, that as there are shifts within populations, et cetera, within a formula such as that, it self-adjusts on its own.

MR. PUHLMANN: Precisely.

MRS. BLACK: The other thing I was going to ask both you and . . . Is it Leona?

MS CLEARY: Fiona.

MRS. BLACK: Fiona. Do you think there needs to be a distinction between rural and urban or . . . Could we put the Medicine Hat slide up? No, I mean the one that shows the . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Red Deer.

MRS. BLACK: Oh, is it Red Deer?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Red Deer: urban and rural.

MRS. BLACK: Yeah, Red Deer. Sorry. No, that's not . . . The one with the map that shows it going around.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The large map: minus 35 percent. Okay.

MRS. BLACK: You see down in the little corner there? This is Medicine Hat, and you can see that there are Cypress-Redcliff, Little Bow, and Bow Valley there around it that are under the mean by more than 35 percent. One of the thoughts is: would it be feasible to shift from the urban setting of Medicine Hat out into the rural riding to bring, like, a Bow Valley or a Little Bow riding up within the acceptable range for a rural riding, so it would mean the blending of an urban and rural setting within a riding? I'm wondering, do you see that? I keep hearing urban/rural, urban/rural all the way through. Do you think it's feasible to blend them?

MS CLEARY: Well, I guess I sort of feel that even in Yellowhead we're considered rural, but we have areas that we consider are large towns which are treated in a different respect than our farming or oil/gas, or we have diverse economies around our actual town settings that service those areas. So I think we, in a sense, are blended in many areas of the province already. Although we're referred to as being rural, we view ourselves as being blended to a degree right now. We don't exactly consider Edson or Hinton to be totally rural.

MRS. BLACK: So you wouldn't have a problem, say, with that kind of further blending throughout the province?

MS CLEARY: No, as long as, I think, you take into consideration, too, that again with a bit of the size factor. Because once you start getting into the "rural" part of it, you're taking in diverse economies and situations and things like that and your sparsity and your size and whatever factors you're going to use to make that up.

MRS. BLACK: I guess as an example to changes, I come from an urban setting, and I deal with one city council, two school boards, and I think about five hospital districts . . .

MR. BRUSEKER: You can only count one really, Foothills.

MRS. BLACK: Yeah, but there are five. And there are 18 MLAs within Calgary that deal with the same group.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now let's ask Jerry. For instance, town councils.

MRS. BLACK: How many do you deal with, Jerry? How many councils?

MR. DOYLE: I have three town councils, ID council, Yellowhead school division, one Catholic school board, two school boards, and the school board in Jasper.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And Hinton separate school.

MR. DOYLE: Separate school, yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And hospital boards?

MR. DOYLE: Hospital boards: just one here and one in Grande Cache.

MRS. BLACK: So you're dealing with . . .

MR. DOYLE: Five hospital boards.

MRS. BLACK: Five hospital boards. We have 18 MLAs dealing with five hospital boards.

MR. DOYLE: Five school boards, yes. We have Grande Cache, and because of Jasper, there's a difference.

MRS. BLACK: And we have two school boards.

MR. ASCHENMEIER: Could I ask a question relative to your inquiry as to whether you should have rural/urban?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Go ahead, Peter.

MR. ASCHENMEIER: Now, I think in a small setting, smaller towns, they all relate quite closely to what's around them, but once you get into a larger city, generally speaking, the large populations are basically interested in what brings a job for them, the types of recreation within that city, how to commute back and forth from the recreation and from their jobs, and also how to get out here to have a little recreation outside if that happens to be their situation. Where you get out into the rural setting, there are many other types such as: do we have an industry to get a job by, how is agriculture serviced, how is recreation versus individual rights when it comes to land and tenure, and all that type of thing.

Now, if you have a top-heavy urban population in any particular relationship, democratic procedure indicates that that MLA would have to represent the bulk of his representation or he would no longer be elected to office. Therefore, it would be automatically slanted to the heaviest sector of the population that he was representing. So I think we have to be very careful, in my view, to make sure that the representative for that area isn't automatically forced to take a position that isn't wise over the long haul.

AN HON. MEMBER: Or else the rural area might end up with almost no representation at all.

MR. ASCHENMEIER: And in the ultimate, down the road a way, the city will suffer as well, because it's a little difficult within a small core to recognize long-term effects in the rural area that they aren't associated with from day to day. Therefore, their jobs may disappear simply because of not enough foresight

of what's happening outside.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Peter.

I want to ask if I can get an indication as to how many of you would like to make a presentation today, either a written submission or verbal, in terms of our time lines. We've got one, two, three, four additional? All right. Why don't we move on then. We're here for two hours, so we're not inhibited, but we should possibly proceed. I think this has been a good opening discussion.

Ivan, you have one on behalf of the town?

MR. STRANG: Yeah. I think my main concern is that we're satisfied with the boundaries we have now. I think the first and foremost is of the area, because most of all, our total area - we've all got common goals; we work as a team. In the last four or five years that I've been involved in different facets, it's proven to be very worth while. We foresee, with the changes that transpired last month, that it's going to be that much more positive for our area. So I would strongly suggest that we keep West Yellowhead intact because of tourism and economic development. Just working hand in hand, what we have now is a good marriage, and I would feel very slighted if it were changed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Ivan.

Any questions of Ivan? Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: You say that you're happy with the size of the constituency and the population you've got right now. As Mr. Doyle noted, West Yellowhead is perhaps the fourth-largest constituency - and I'm just referring to this package right here. It's the fourth-largest, and it certainly falls within that allowance as was recommended in British Columbia by Justice McLachlin. So size and population is a good factor here; it has met your needs.

Would you say, then, that it's not too large a constituency with population for one member to handle?

MR. STRANG: Well, not necessarily. I would say it isn't too large for the simple reason that we've got a lot of common denominators we're dealing with, like the forestry and the coal and then with the tourism. I mean, everything sort of complements one another. Sure, you've got the area, but we've all developed sort of a strong working relationship group, and I feel that we just complement one another. With some groups we go as far east as Evansburg, and then on the other hand, in another group that I'm involved in, I go as far as Spruce Grove and over to Mayerthorpe and through that area.

So, sure, you can look at certain aspects and say, yeah, it's too large. But I just feel that with the mix we've got now, it's very common. If we start cutting down, say if we cut out Edson or if we cut out Jasper, then we're not leaving the complement factor. I think, being that we're young and that Edson is basically the oldest community in this constituency, it helps to have the stability of the older ones, and then the younger ones coming around so that we have the rambunctiousness of the younger ones to help the older ones develop a stronger networking through the whole area.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else?

Orville, I think you had your hand up. Do you have a brief?

MR. COOK: Yeah. I'm going to scale this down a little bit here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Orville, you're speaking on behalf of . . .

MR. COOK: A private citizen.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, okay. Thank you.

MR. COOK: Basically, myself personally, I really do like the idea of the plus or minus 25 percent or whatever percentage figure you want to put in there. I think 25 seems to be fairly satisfactory.

Concerning the balance of rural and urban, the 42-41 seats, I hope that everybody in the Legislature is mature enough that this is a province and we have to run it as a province and that the urban has to be concerned for the rural and the rural has to be concerned for the urban. One can't exist without the other; they're both so interdependent on each other. I don't see the necessity myself of having that 50-50 split of seats. Idealistically, I guess, it's all right, but I don't see it as an essential point.

I also like what the other provinces have done with the variances. Under only very special circumstances, as in northern districts or vast areas of land where there is a very small population, should we be considering varying off this plus or minus 25 percent.

A couple of things in the rural communities that I think might be something worth while taking into consideration. Having grown up in a rural situation in Saskatchewan, one thing that is important is the accessibility or the serviceability of the MLA to his region that he has to service, taking hours into consideration. If we were to get out as far as Leyland or something like that, that would not be a major difficulty for Jerry to cover those people, because he drives past them every time he comes out here in his vehicle. Those people also come on a regular basis to the town of Hinton to do their banking or to speak to the school boards or whatever. Jerry has an office here in town, and if they have a problem they can come to his office. It just makes him that much more accessible to those people, because if Edson is the town of their choice where they're doing their major shopping, major banking, their kids go to school, they're going to be in Edson far more often than they're going to be in Whitecourt.

It's a common way of life in a rural setting where one town fosters everybody's attractions. We always used to go to one town to do our shopping. Therefore, your agricultural equipment dealers, the grain elevators: the whole ball of wax when you get into the rural setting evolves around major centres. I think if you had a look at that and did a real study on that, maybe even have to do a survey of the communities before you're finished, to find out what is the town of choice of those rural settings, you might come up with some realistic boundaries that would really enhance your plus or minus 25 percent.

Something else that I think might be a wise decision for you people to recommend to the commission that is actually going to sit down and redraw these boundaries is that this committee come back to the public after they have drawn up their boundaries and go over this process again so that everybody that has been affected can come and say, "Hey, right on; we like what you've done," or "Uh uh." We don't want to talk about the other.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You've used words worse than that, Orville.

MR. COOK: Yeah.

I guess, in a nutshell, I think I've covered everything that I wanted to say to you people. It about covers it all, I think. Yeah. Those are some things for you to bear in mind.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Orville.  
Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Orville, I just wanted to ask you a little bit about the 25 percent plus or minus thing. I agree with you. I think that's the good way to go, and West Yellowhead is kind of unique in that it already falls within the parameters. We really don't have to worry about it too much, shall we say.

But if we look at the rest of the province, and in particular on this map, there's a lot of pink there. A question I have for you is: if the 25 percent plus or minus rule were to be implemented - I'm sort of going to fish for your opinion on this - do you think that what we should be recommending as a committee to the Legislature that we keep the total number of rural seats at 41 and increase the number of urban seats? If we do that - I've done a little arithmetic - it would probably add about 10 or 11 seats to the Legislature. Or should we do a blend of maybe combining a couple of rural constituencies and decreasing some rural constituencies and increasing some urban constituencies to keep the total number around 83?

MR. COOK: Yeah, I wouldn't want to see - I mean, we're taxpayers here. I wouldn't want to see too many more seats put in there, because it's going to get more expensive, obviously.

MR. BRUSEKER: True enough.

MR. COOK: Yeah, I can see areas in the southern part here. I liked Pat's idea of the Medicine Hat area, where you can start to blend maybe some of Medicine Hat with some of those huge, humongous rural areas, so that you don't increase the size although you do increase the population. By taking in a quarter of the city or something, wham; you've bumped them up to their mark already. Some of these, like West Yellowhead . . . If you split up the Whitecourt one - and don't get mad at me over there - there again bearing in mind: where do the people of Whitecourt go most often to shop? Do the people of Whitecourt stay in Whitecourt, or are the rural areas of that place drawn to Barrhead because they're into the farming aspect of the situation? Are there implement dealerships in Whitecourt that they use? I don't know. I don't know anything about Whitecourt.

MR. BRUSEKER: So maybe what we should be trying to do is stay as close as possible to 83, or if we increase the total number of seats, by not very many.

MR. COOK: Yeah. I wouldn't want to see you increase it. Well, you might have to by a couple in the urban areas because there are some pretty big whammies in the cities of Edmonton and Calgary.

MR. BRUSEKER: Yes.

MRS. BLACK: And shift them out as well, maybe.



MR. COOK: Well, I wouldn't have a problem with that, because if you're shifting those out – you're basically shifting them outside of the major cities – what are you incorporating? You're incorporating people who are living on acreages, basically. If you go far beyond, if you get out 50, 60 miles, yeah, then you're starting to hit into some farmland that may not want to be part of an urban riding.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks. Okay, good. Anyone else?

Just before we move on to Peter. Relative to the commission and hearings, their practice in the past has been to sit down and develop an interim report with a map and boundaries, then go out through the hearing process and get input. We received a submission in Peace River, I believe it was, that it would be more practical to have the commission come out, even if it was on a limited basis, and hold some hearings before they sit down to prepare a report and draw boundaries: listen to people and concerns in advance. That's something that we're certainly considering as well.

MR. COOK: I can certainly appreciate that. Yeah. That's a good idea as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.  
Peter.

MR. ASCHENMEIER: Yes, I think math is a great denominator, and I think we certainly have to have it with us, but I don't think that when you're dealing with issues that are going to affect the fibre of life for some foreseeable time, we should be limiting ourselves to a mathematical formula. I think the ability of the representation, the type of interests he has to represent, and the far-reaching impact that will have on the fibre of Alberta as a whole should have a far stronger role to play than some formula that we come up with because, first of all, as we all know, a formula in this province at one time would have seen 99 rural ridings and two, maybe Calgary and Edmonton, would have been urban. Now we see it the other way around. Therefore, I think we should be trying to devise a parameter for setting up representation that reflects the actual fibre of our way of life in this province far greater than plus/minus. Mind you, that's the reason I asked a question prior. We've sort of got a parameter we are forced to have a confirmation with. But I think we should be looking as far as possible to set up a manner in which we can qualify under it and still have lateral movement to actually serve our province's needs. By that I mean, for example, in instances where you're close to Edmonton, say 35 miles in perimeter, the interests of those people in the city of Edmonton generally are not related very much. You more often would have issues that are in conflict in many instances: the type of recreation program amasses into an area where local people might want to use it, this type of thing. You continually have that balance to play. Now, if you have an automatic 40 representatives from a major centre such as Calgary or Edmonton for the entire perimeter with 12, how can you compromise with the system we have and have meaningful decisions made? It's impossible.

Secondly, the situation we have at the present time with hearings on industry in the perimeters of the northern part of the province. We have a lot of people in the cities that really – I'm not suggesting they're ignorant or anything like that – are not in relationship with the actual facts of the day, the need to have a job out in that area where the people are living on about

a third of what the average wage earner in the city is. So the needs of those people are far different than those in the city. They're looking at that as an environmental project or something of that impact, far more than a need to have a job.

Secondly, in relation to agriculture, we had some comments about, you know, where they're going to trade. Certainly we need to recognize that. At the same time, I think our agricultural representation is getting larger in a given area for trade patterns, but they do need to have similar representation in the provincial Legislature that has some semblance of balance in relationship to the needs of the urban centre, for not only the rural community but also the fibre of the province here. Because when you take Calgary and Edmonton, if you didn't have industry in the out areas, the cities would disappear eventually. They couldn't exist on their own. Therefore, I would suggest the 25 or 35 percent plus or minus should be a very loosely related factor and actual needs of representation for the various regions, taking into mind the balance of the democratic system we run our province under, has to be the formula on which we're going to set up representation for this province.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Peter.

Any questions or comments? Yes, go ahead, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: In many of the constituencies, especially the northern constituencies – again, I'll turn the map to you. You can see that Fort McMurray is one of the larger constituencies, but the bulk of the population is certainly contained within the city of Fort McMurray. Very few people live in the rural area. Peace River: the same thing; two major population areas, Peace River and High Level. Dunvegan: again, three areas, Rycroft, Fairview, and Spirit River. When we look at that, should that be a consideration? If we can go from, say, those three centres inside an hour and hit 60 to 70 percent of the constituency's population, is that fair enough then, so that maybe we can include other parts of other constituencies if we're going to try and get those numbers up? I mean, if everybody's living in rural settings or in rural centres where there is a common interest with agriculture, that service agriculture, should that be a consideration? If the MLA is able to get to his people . . .

MR. ASCHENMEIER: Well, I don't think it would be a problem of him being able to represent the area, because of the fact that, generally speaking, as you pointed out, interests are similar. I think the problem you'd run into is that if you would delete the number of rural settings or ridings or representative areas, you would automatically weigh the scales in an unequal manner to their urban area. Because if we're talking 35 in one area and we're going to delete some rural, then automatically you are going to have a Legislature that is not able to make a judgment, simply by sheer numbers, that is in the best interests of the province as a whole. You can have a certain amount of variance, but as soon as you get, say, 40-60, you're in trouble. It's very difficult for that individual to make a judgment that is against the wishes of his representatives in a given area, even though for the province as a whole without a doubt it would be the right decision to make. That's the situation. We are going to see that happen more as cities grow; there's going to be even a greater imbalance. Twenty years down the road we'll have a situation probably where we'll have maybe a 70-30 situation. Then the thing we did today really has no relativity unless we consider that factor in this instance.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks.  
Pam.

MS BARRETT: Well, I'm pretty sure I get the drift of what you're saying, but I would like to ask you if you would look at the page in this package that shows the province with just pink markings on it. This depicts those ridings which would fall outside the low end of the 25 percent rule were it to be applied. Now, one has certainly taken the argument about geography and so forth into account, and Orville's argument about natural commercial centres, et cetera. But are there no ridings on this page that you would expand?

MR. ASCHENMEIER: I'm not suggesting there could be absolutely no adjustment. I'm not suggesting that at all. I would feel we were moving in a direction that would make it impossible to govern the province in a constructive way if we ended up at a 40-60 split, urban/rural. I don't think we'd want to go that far. It would really be impossible to make some of the decisions that . . . For example, if we were trying to put industry in an area where the urban centres feel it is their playground, it'd be pretty hard for them to relate to the idea that this area needs jobs when, really, all they want it for is to get out and have recreation. And I don't blame them; I would want to if I was living there too.

MS BARRETT: Yes, but let me ask you this then. Currently we have approximately 50-50 representation in the Assembly, rural/urban. Currently the voter base shift has gone to - oh, is it 65-35?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, there's one anomaly here. The difficulty is that we're getting into some ridings that are mixed, like Grande Prairie, which is urban and rural, Red Deer, Camrose, Sherwood Park. So I'm just a little uneasy about the percentages on urban/rural.

MS BARRETT: Yes, I understand that. The question I have, though, is more related to an issue of principle as opposed to a technical issue. If, for example, you have approximately one-third of the people in Alberta living in what is described as a rural riding and two-thirds of the people living in what is described as an urban riding, yet the representation in the Assembly is 50-50, are you suggesting that no change should be made? Or are you suggesting a moderation, or a light hand with the ingredients, as some say?

MR. ASCHENMEIER: I never implied there should be no change. I think any rural has to be available to change of reality.

MS BARRETT: Right.

MR. ASCHENMEIER: What I'm suggesting is that that change should be in such a manner that it makes it possible under the parameters the legislation has to work that it can be effective.

MS BARRETT: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What I heard Peter say was: "Use common sense; don't use a pure mathematical formula. You've got to take some factors into account and be reasonable." Now, I hope I'm not putting words into your mouth.

MR. ASCHENMEIER: In a nutshell, that's basically what I'm talking about. Because once you get outside the major metropolitan areas, the interests are very diverse - quite similar in nature, but still each one has its own unique situation. Some are developing, some are already fairly well developed. All these things have to be considered, and they all relate to the overall viability of this province.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks.  
Pat.

MRS. BLACK: Just on that point, Peter. I think Fiona mentioned earlier when I asked her the question about the distinction between urban and rural - I think you made a really valid statement - that we may call Whitecourt a rural riding, but there are urban centres within the rural riding. So we cannot really distinguish that that is strictly a rural riding, because there's urban within the rural. So those are things that I think have to be looked at and factored in as well.

MR. ASCHENMEIER: Right. I think the difference, though, is in a smaller centre of, let's say, 50,000, give or take, or even less. Generally speaking, they are nearly totally dependent upon the industries surrounding them to survive - very meaningfully - where in a larger city they're isolated to some extent of that nature. So that's a difference.

MRS. BLACK: Very much so. Yes. I think those are factors that should come into what you're talking about.

MS BARRETT: Well, if I can just add, Pat, the reason I brought this up. I'm not using my words. I was in fact using the gentleman's words. That's what I was attempting to clarify as well, you see. Because it's pretty clear, even in some of the southern ridings, that in fact you're not talking about a rural riding at all or hardly at all. You know, there's a sequence of towns, in fact, that would constitute as much an urban concept as a rural concept. That's why I was challenging, to see exactly what you were getting at here in terms of the formula or nonformula application and the balance between the "rural and urban."

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.  
Bret, we go on to you.

MR. HIERATH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess at the top I would say that I do support and endorse the position paper by Yellowhead school division and also many of the comments Peter made.

From a pragmatic point of view, I think what we're talking about here is a change in population and representation which is a disruption of the status quo. Usually when that happens there are winners and there are losers. I know it's the job of this committee to minimize the numbers of losers, and hopefully everybody's a winner. I think that's pretty difficult. I think we've got a pretty good system as it currently exists. I think we have a mix of representation by urban and rural, although recognizing there's diversity in urban and rural components in most constituencies anyway. But I hope we don't lose sight of the bottom line, and that's that it all boils down to the effectiveness of the elected official. That's why we have elections. Every riding has diversity in its own right. No system is perfect, but I think the one we've got is pretty good. I think we should be

very careful when we are dealing with something of this nature that has a very reactive component rather than proactive. We're dealing with a court decision, and we should be careful that we don't react just to the court decision, that we're sensible about the wishes of what we want to do. I think we should also again look closely at what concentration of elected power has done at the federal level. I'd hate to see representation based totally on shift of population. I think we should leave well enough alone. We should still be sensitive, though, to sensitive change and little change as it's required.

MR. BRUSEKER: If I could just have you look at this page that has the green and pink blocks there. I hear your arguments about effective representation, and I think they're fairly powerful. Yet I guess I want to throw perhaps the other side of the coin, if I may.

If you look at the top three largest ones - Edmonton-Whitemud, Calgary-Fish Creek, and Calgary-North West - ballpark you're looking at about 92,000 voters or so. If you look at the bottom nine, from Wainwright, Vermilion-Viking, Dunvegan and down, they contain less than 90,000 voters. So I guess the concern I would have and a sort of question I'd throw out to you is: the people in the top three constituencies get to elect three MLAs and get represented by three people in the Legislature, yet the people in the bottom nine get three times as many representatives in the Legislature. To my way of thinking that's a real inequity, that we can't just leave well enough alone. So I guess the question I would have would be: how would you justify to constituents in those top three constituencies that their vote is only equivalent to one-third of the vote of somebody in the bottom nine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before you do that, there's a factor that must be put on the table. The figures that appear, Frank, are figures based on the revised enumerated list of March 20, 1989. They're the most recent figures we have. If it had not been for the B.C. court challenge, we would now be into a redistribution process through our commission because we've gone through two general elections.

MR. BRUSEKER: True.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The true or the fairer comparison would be to go back to the names on the voters list when we had our last revision of boundaries in 1984. In other words, in 1984 when the Dixon commission drew boundaries, I think, for instance, your constituency had about 23,000 electors.

MR. BRUSEKER: Why would they go back to 1984? Would they not use the data that's currently available?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. I'm saying in 1984 when Calgary-North West boundaries were drawn, you had a voter population of 23,000, 24,000.

MR. BRUSEKER: It was about 22,000, I think. Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Twenty-two thousand? You've had dramatic growth, because you're in a growth part of the city.

MRS. BLACK: Same as Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Same with Edmonton . . . That's why we

went through that process. All I'm saying is that to use the population figures as they are today and ask the question is it fair, of course it's not fair. If it were not for the McLachlin decision, we'd be adjusting those boundaries now based, I assume, on the traditional, historical formula in Alberta which in very rough terms saw four rural voters equate to seven urban.

The other factor I want to point out is that there's been a slow, gradual shift. We're not dealing with a stagnant 42-41 split in our Legislature. When I first entered the Legislature in 1975, there were 75 members. We went through redistribution in 1976. One rural seat disappeared; four brand-new seats were created. So there were five seats added to the urban column, if you will. We went to 79 in total. Then in 1984, when we had our last general redistribution, another four seats were created to bring us up to the current 83. I point that out only to say that, you know, to be fair, it's hard looking at these figures. I don't think anybody's going to say that's pure or fair, but it would be helpful, Bob, if we had an overhead that gave us the number of enumerated voters in each of the ridings used by the Dixon commission.

MR. PRITCHARD: That'd be interesting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry. Now go ahead with your exchange.

MR. BRUSEKER: After that little interjection, run that by me again a little bit.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm going back to my days in the classroom, you see, Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: I guess I was sort of reacting to your comment, "Let's leave well enough alone." The concerns obviously are the green ones and the pink ones, and I think we have to find some way of shuffling into the middle. I guess what I'm really asking you is . . . I mean, we have to do something, so I guess I'm sort of asking you: how do you see us getting away from the pink and green and more into the white sections so we have a little bit more equality than we do have?

MR. HIERATH: Well, I think the change should be sensitive and carefully planned. To that end, I guess you would look at the extremes. The pink and green may not be the extremes; it might be the top few ridings and the bottom few ridings. I think we shouldn't isolate ourselves, either, as I am only a member of this constituency. When you vote as a member of Calgary, many of the things you vote on have an effect on me, in the industry I work in, and the rest of my family. There are other considerations we take into account, and that's why I don't have a very serious problem with the way things exist currently. I'd hate to think we'd get into the situation that because someone represents a riding of 29,000 people, they speak with more authority than somebody who represents 10,000. Maintaining the status quo is not totally the answer, but I can't think of anything that solves all the problems.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, I don't think we have all the answers; that's for sure. I don't think we've come up with any answers yet. But I do think we need to make some movement away from what we've got.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Tom, and then Pam.

MR. SIGURDSON: Bret, you spoke of one thing that I think is very important. You talked about the sensitivity of government and the electoral process. We've met before. We've talked about Bill 59 when Bill 59 was a hot and heavy item to discuss in and around the province. I can certainly recall almost without exception every separate school board in the province being opposed to Bill 59, and a good number of the public school boards were as well for a variety of reasons. It wasn't just that those school boards went to their local MLA. They contacted many MLAs. I was one of them. The school boards worked together to try and successfully get changes, and Bill 59 was withdrawn and we had Bill 27, the new School Act. Having gone through that process of seeing an effective opposition without partisan political participation really coming to the head it could have or did, that's a pretty effective system . . .

MR. HIERATH: Yes, it is.

MR. SIGURDSON: . . . that was mounted by local groups, by parents, regardless of the MLA that represented their community. So knowing that can happen, knowing that kind of system can happen, should then the paramount consideration this committee has be numerical, voting population per constituency? There are other avenues outside of just the one MLA representing the area. There are the school boards, the hospital boards, the municipalities. With respect, there's the opposition.

MR. HIERATH: That's just the point. There are common elements that tie people throughout the province to common issues. One would tend to think that often that supersedes the immediate representation of the area in an issue.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I want to give another example just to show you . . . The example you've given is an excellent one. When you're dealing with an issue like the School Act which has an impact across the province, there's no question you get a tremendous amount of involvement and input.

I'll give you another example. We're dealing with the twinning of a highway and it's going through the constituency I represent. Can I call on you for support? You don't know anything about my highway, and with due respect, I don't think you care. You've got enough problems of your own. But if we're dealing with a major thoroughfare through Edmonton, the Yellowhead, you can rally the Edmonton members. I think that was Pat's earlier comment about the 16 members in Calgary who can deal with a specific issue, whereas with a twinned highway that I'm dealing with, I'm there and I'm fighting for those towns and villages that are very concerned about the routing of that highway and what it does. So I just throw it out to give a little balance.

MRS. BLACK: You're there alone.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I think so, because even though I'm dealing with a colleague who happens to be the minister, his department might be looking at it from another point of view. They're sure not in many cases looking at it from the local community's point of view. I think you know that out here in terms of the Yellowhead.

Sorry, I didn't mean to get us off topic.

MR. SIGURDSON: Again, I would hope you would have support from tourism zones, municipal councillors, and safety

people as well that are going to be similarly concerned about the project.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You try, but it takes an enormous amount of time to rally . . .

MR. SIGURDSON: Indeed it does. It's also a lot easier to organize something against. If there is opposition to something, people naturally gravitate to that opposition. If there is something positive to be done, it's sometimes very difficult to try and gather support for it. So I just threw it out.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On this point, Peter.

MR. ASCHENMEIER: In general terms of the discussion that was relative to mathematical numbers and representation, I would be far more comfortable with coming closer in terms of that 90,000 being represented more equally with the bottom. If in fact the Legislature were operating in such a manner that when a decision directly affecting outside would have to have a two-thirds majority or something . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Or a double majority.

MR. ASCHENMEIER: I mean, there are organizations that have that in place to make sure the minority are protected. I think then on issues that were common the numbers would still have their representation but we wouldn't have the majority overpowering the minority.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Fiona briefly on this point and then Pam.

MS CLEARY: I want to comment, just by example, on part of this issue. Where we feel very conscious of the urban/rural split in the Legislature is that even in an association like ASTA, where we are all there for the same purpose, where the voting delegates from urban and rural – if Calgary and Edmonton get together, something that might be vital to rural boards that is an anomaly to their situation can be overpowered by the urban boards.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Through the weighted vote.

MS CLEARY: Through the weighted vote. Those types of things are things I think we were afraid of happening by representation, where our needs might be something that does not even impact on a city situation.

MS BARRETT: I have two questions for you. I suspect by one of your comments that I know the answer to this one, but perhaps you would say so. Do you object to the concept of equality as enunciated by the Charter of Rights, period?

MR. HIERATH: I agree on equality.

MS BARRETT: Okay. But you would object to the concept of equality of vote, the weight of the vote in a democratic system?

MR. HIERATH: I think that should be one factor. I would agree with the terms of the Charter. I'm not totally informed of what the Charter is.

MS BARRETT: But you understand that the question that was

put to the court is: do each of our votes count equally? The court said they should. I can't imagine a judge not saying that, because I think the Charter is quite clear about the concept of equality.

MR. HIERATH: I think we're all in agreement here on equality.

MS BARRETT: Okay. I was just testing. You made a reference to the decision, and I just wanted to see if your objection was with the Charter itself, in which case we're the wrong people to talk to because we can't change it, or if it was an application. I suspect now that I have the answer right. It was with the application.

MR. HIERATH: That's right.

MS BARRETT: Okay. I would ask you the same question, then, that I asked Peter. Would you look at the map that shows the pink ridings? These are the ridings that would fall below the 25 percent rule if it were applied. Are you suggesting to our committee that you would make no changes whatsoever?

MR. HIERATH: Oh, I think some change is necessary. I don't think it means that all the pinks are gone, all turned to white.

MS BARRETT: No? Would you be able to identify any principle upon which you might recommend certain changes to be made by looking at this map?

MR. HIERATH: I think changes should be made geographically to the greatest extent possible. I think that in certain areas where people have things in common, that's what you want to have, people working together in the same riding.

MS BARRETT: Are you implicitly endorsing the concepts Klaus was enunciating?

MR. HIERATH: In that . . . What are you talking about?

MS BARRETT: Well, he suggested that certainly application of a formula is appropriate under some circumstances. Under other circumstances it would not be, and rather than applying strictly at minus or plus 25 percent, you would weight in another factor. For instance, he gave an example of a mean within a mean and also a suggestion of maximum boundary size.

MR. HIERATH: Yes.

MS BARRETT: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Ready to go on to Eric? You've been very patient.

MR. KRALZEN: Mr. Chairman, committee members, I would like to recommend that the present practice of having balanced urban versus rural electoral divisions be maintained for the good of all Albertans.

There have been many changes in our province, and there will continue to be changes to make up this beautiful province. One thing that has stayed the same is the fact that there is a difference between rural and urban Alberta. To say that one group is needed more than the other is only being self-centred. If

population shifted from one extreme to the other in either area, I would still say that an equal balance of representation would be a desirable goal.

I feel that history should indicate to us that acceptable decisions cannot be made unless the decision-makers are in close proximity to the problem. When I look at England as the birthplace of modern democracy, I see what happened to its great empire when it tried to rule distant colonies from London; France and the United States learned the same lesson in Vietnam. If we were to go to a global government, would China have the opportunity to have the majority of representation or power? I do not think it would or should. It is my belief that the environmental issues that are upon us are very real. If any issue will make us understand how dependent we are on each other's actions, I think the environmental issues will be it. With this perception in mind, a balance of representation is essential.

Thanks for the opportunity to address the boundaries issue. I hope nobody underestimates the impact of the decisions you will have to make.

I would just like to add that in all this representation, we've been talking about people. I think the time has come where you don't just represent people any more. When we look at all of northern Alberta, there are not many people, but there's a lot out there, and I think that's coming to bear.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks.

MS BARRETT: By your last comment, are you suggesting that we're also representing natural resources? Is that what you're saying?

MR. KRALZEN: Right. Everything.

MS BARRETT: I think that's a remarkable point.

My question is basically the same that I've been asking. Again, are you suggesting, then, that the Charter should have no bearing on electoral boundaries, or are you suggesting a light hand in the application of rules?

MR. KRALZEN: I don't think the Charter should have an application - one person, one vote. If we were to draw up the country on that, it would fall apart, I'm sure. Being a school trustee, we have the same arguments, and there's just no way it would work.

MS BARRETT: So you're saying everything is fine just the way it is? Or would you make any adjustments?

MR. KRALZEN: Like I say, change is with us, and it'll continue to change, but I think the balance is what I would like to emphasize.

MS BARRETT: So again, looking at this page with the pink drawn on the map, are you saying you would do nothing?

MR. KRALZEN: No. I already recognize that the rules that were used to put that pink in place have already changed in, what? Eight years?

MS BARRETT: Yes, that's right. But this is basically the current status.

MR. KRALZEN: Right.

MS BARRETT: Okay. So are you saying that your recommendation is don't change anything on this map?

MR. KRALZEN: I guess I would tend to follow the same guidelines I'm assuming the people that drew that map used to come up with the balance that was roughly 50-50 between urban and rural Alberta. I think that difference is easy to define. In blending constituencies, half of Medicine Hat and half rural, you would have a problem. If it's quarter/three-quarters, it's easier to accept. If you were to cut into Edmonton – say we cut as a pie and had the thin wedge on the inside and widened it as we went outside; it would be way more acceptable than if it was the reverse.

MS BARRETT: Okay. I may have another one after Pat.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right.  
Go ahead, Pat.

MRS. BLACK: Eric, I think to follow up what Pam is saying, we've heard about maintaining the balance, the almost 50-50 balance between urban and rural. I'm going to ask you for some suggestions. Under the Canadian Constitution we're governed by representation by population, one vote per person. How do you go and justify an equal split between urban and rural if you go back to the people not only of Alberta but the people of Canada?

I'm looking for suggestions. Everybody has talked about maintaining the status quo as far as urban/rural splits right now in Alberta. How would you suggest you go back to Canada as a whole and the province and say that even though there's a smaller population in the area that has been called rural than what has been called urban, we feel there should be a split? Now, what factors for justifying that statement would you use?

MR. KRALZEN: I would go back to my statement that you don't just represent people. I think there's an argument to be made for that, but I don't know whether you recognize it or not.

MRS. BLACK: I'm not disagreeing with you, but I'm looking for help from you . . .

MR. KRALZEN: Right; I appreciate that.

MRS. BLACK: . . . to justify your concerns. And, basically, everyone in here, you can all jump in.

MR. KRALZEN: My example of the pie wedge going out is . . .

MR. COOK: I think one thing that everybody seems to be saying here is that the metropolises, being Calgary and Edmonton, are beasts unto themselves, okay? A city is a city. It's concerned with the city, and the majority of that population is concerned about what's going on in that city and how the government affects that city. How concerned are they with what happens in Oyen, Alberta – in that particular constituency – or in Bob's constituency where there's a two-lane highway going through?

MRS. BLACK: And vice versa.

MR. COOK: Yeah. How concerned am I? I'm very concerned about what you're going to do to Edmonton, because that's the

kind of person I am; I like to see everybody kind of balance out on these things.

One thing that might be – I don't know whether it's a sort of pie in the sky thing. We have a problem everywhere when you start putting in highways or changing roads or whatever happens in a particular set of constituencies. Isn't there some way that we could develop a block parent attitude where you have the block party, so to speak, where you've got numerous members of your constituency who have concerns, whether it's the gas station attendant who's going to be ignored because you're bypassing the town with a two-lane highway and he's going to have to go out of business, or various things like that? You could come up with a game plan that's going to, so to speak, satisfy each particular community and then bring that to government and say: "Hey, this is what the people want. We don't care what the government wants; this is what the people, who are the government, want."

MR. KRALZEN: If the goal of the commission were to come up with a balance between rural and urban constituencies, I think then you'd have to come up with a weighted formula and means in it to establish that.

MRS. BLACK: Of course, let's keep in mind what the goal of this committee is. This committee is there to, first of all, reach out to Albertans and get your input as to how you would like to see this addressed and what type of recommendations could go back to the Legislature. Then after that a commission is struck, and those recommendations are passed on. So we're coming out, I guess, to bring you information, but we're also hoping to gather information back. Your concern with regard to problems: maybe you could request town hall meetings, and then your service station fellow could have his concerns go to Edmonton. That's what you should be doing on your local basis and even with your neighbouring MLAs.

MR. COOK: See, another theory that you could look at: if you're getting larger rural constituencies to bring up your plus/minus figures – to bring your 9,000 members up to, say, 16,000 – you're going to start encompassing a very large piece of property to get those people. You may want to raise the budgets that those particular MLAs have to cover that larger area, so they can put up another office in two or three centres.

MRS. BLACK: You see, that's where Klaus' factor – you would have a factor A. That would be the square mileage of the riding, and that would have a weighted average. Factor B would be the population, and that would have a weighted average. Factor C would be the geography of the riding – can you access the riding; are there bridges, rivers, and mountains that get in the way? – and that would have a weighted average. All of those combined, the sum of those, would be the determination as to the size of bodies within the riding. It would be a different set of factors for rural as opposed to urban.

MR. SIGURDSON: Who's going to write the program to figure that out?

MRS. BLACK: Klaus.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm a little concerned about our time. It was a good exchange.

Pam, you had another question you wanted to get in with, or

a comment.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, it follows on the pie idea. Would you recommend in principle, then, that the committee adopt a notion to pursue diversity of interests and communities when striking the commission itself?

MR. KRALZEN: Most definitely.

MS BARRETT: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? Are there any other briefs to be covered? Yes.

MR. JOY: I was thinking that you're starting with the age-old problem that has faced the whole country, and you've got an almost, I would say, impossible task because you're just dealing in the same circle all the time. You're trying to come up with a solution that we can go by, and there is no solution. That's been proven a thousand times over ever since Confederation started.

It seems to me you have to get some experts to devise a scheme that will work Canada-wide, because the rural areas are just as important to the country as the urban areas even if there are no people there. Now environmental factors have been let in to this thing. You've got interboundary factors being let in to this thing. There's no way that you can sit back here, this board. There's just no way you can sit back and answer all the questions and satisfy anybody. You can't do it. There has to be a way of governing this country. We've got the people. We've got government in place. Something has got to be devised that's going to work. You've got 10 years. The environmental problem alone gives you only 10 years. You've heard that said the same as I have.

Now, we can sit here and we can go to a thousand people who come with a thousand different ideas. We've got to do something concrete. Government has got to do something concrete. They've got to get with the problem. You can't do it . . .

MS BARRETT: Do you have any concrete . . .

MR. JOY: I'm not faulting government. Don't get me wrong. We elect a new bunch of MLAs or a new government. They go back in; they pick up the problems - it's the same civil service that's there - do what they can and carry on. The system keeps perpetuating itself.

You've got a problem. It's a serious problem. It's right across this country. It's not just in Alberta. You've got to find a way. And if we haven't got the education now to do it, I don't know when we ever will.

MS BARRETT: What would your suggestions be?

MR. JOY: Well, you'd better talk to your economists. You'd better talk to your top people and sit down and have a think tank. You've got to do something, and you've got 10 years to do it in.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much, Louis.

MR. JOY: I'm sorry, I didn't mean to get too . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. It's okay. That's why we're here.

Are there any other general comments anyone would like to make? Yes, Fiona.

MS CLEARY: Could I just ask a couple of questions?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure. It's your turn. We've been asking questions, now you.

MS CLEARY: If it hadn't been for this court case, this whole process . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, that's right.

MS CLEARY: We would have considered ourselves well represented the way we were.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm assuming that - well, first of all, we would have struck a commission.

MS CLEARY: Irregardless? Our legislation requests that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Because our legislation requires that after every second general election we strike a commission to look at boundaries. I'll make an assumption that the governing party would have insisted of the other two parties that we follow the same general principles that have been in place in the past, which would have seen several more urban ridings created. Now, I can't speculate whether that would have been at the expense of rural ridings or adding more seats, going from 83 to 84, 85, 86, or whatever, but we would have been going through the process.

I will say this: I suggest that never before in this province's history or, to my knowledge, in any other province's has there been the exhaustive process that we are beginning to go through now to determine what the rules should be for the commission. In other words, in the past the government and opposition House leaders have met, have said, "We've got to get the legislation amended," and they've agreed on certain parameters and that's been it. But we've been going out and listening.

I mentioned earlier the idea of holding hearings before the commission writes an interim report. Now, I don't know that that's been done anyplace else. I don't think it would have been done here. Maybe the members won't believe that should be recommended, but there's a chance that it'll be recommended because it's come forward from people to us. That in itself is really positive. There are no easy answers to this.

MS CLEARY: Right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But at least we're out listening and trying to find help so we can come up with a balance, a mix that's acceptable to the courts and that's workable in Alberta.

MS CLEARY: Pam and Pat have both mentioned numerous times the Charter factor. If it was representation by population, would there be any rural MLAs?

MS BARRETT: Oh, sure.

MS CLEARY: How many?

MRS. BLACK: I don't know how many there'd be.

MS BARRETT: It depends on how you're defining it again, because of course you do get into several ridings that are both industrial and rural. I would assume, if you took a strict application, you'd probably have at least a third of the Assembly that would be described as rural.

MR. BRUSEKER: I've done a little arithmetic on it. If you maintained the 41 rural ridings there are right now and adjusted the urban ridings to balance it out, I think you'd have - you'd keep the 41 rural - about 54 or 55 urban ridings. That, for example, doesn't take into account Grande Prairie. Do you call that an urban or rural riding? The way I figured that out is I simply took the populations of all the ones we now call rural, divided them by 41, and said, "Okay if we stick with those, and then stick . . ."

MR. CHAIRMAN: Frank, did you also do the analysis that if you used a mean population for all 83 ridings, so you didn't increase the number of ridings, how many rural ridings would disappear?

MR. BRUSEKER: I didn't work it that way. Because the feeling I've been getting as we've been going around is, "For God's sake don't make them any bigger, and let's not get rid of any."

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. But if you did that, I think we're looking at - you know, the absolute worst case scenario is up to 12.

MR. ASCHENMEIER: Would disappear?

MS BARRETT: Yup.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. That's the absolute worst case scenario.

MS BARRETT: And that would be with absolutely strict application of . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: With no variation of plus/minus 25 percent.

MS BARRETT: That's right. That would be representation by population, and my figures agree with that.

MR. ASCHENMEIER: But the percentage of representation would all of a sudden change considerably because you'd lose 12 so the ratio of representation could be closer to 60-40.

MS BARRETT: That's right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We've had, as I mentioned before, over time the number of rural ridings maintained fairly constant. We've lost one rural riding in the last 14 years. We've gained eight urban ridings in that same period of time. So none of us are naive enough to believe that it's the status quo - it hasn't been for 14 years - to recognize population growth.

MR. ASCHENMEIER: And it's going to continue.

MR. BRUSEKER: Your analysis of the 12 loss is keeping the number of urban ones constant and then bringing the rurals up?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. I think that's keeping the number of ridings constant at 83 and merely adjusting where the ridings are. So in order to bring the population of your riding down to 18,000 from its current . . . What, 30?

MR. BRUSEKER: Thirty and a half.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You know that's . . .

MR. BRUSEKER: So you're eliminating 12, and I was creating 11. I was going the other way.

MS BARRETT: Yeah.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. Either way you look at it, the two extremes, it's either a much larger House or a much depleted rural vote.

MR. BRUSEKER: Representation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. And that's why we're here, to look at variations and other options. Let's not forget that we've been listening to constitutional experts. A question we're putting to those who come forward is: would the present federal legislation withstand a Charter challenge? Thus far the advice we're being given is yes, it would. Keep in mind that the federal government has made exceptions for the Northwest Territories where there are two ridings, for Yukon where there is one riding. I think they're on much stronger grounds re P.E.I. because of their Senate. So there are exceptions to the rule.

I wonder if we could stop at this point and ask any of the panel members if they have any final concluding comments they'd like to make.

MR. BRUSEKER: I guess sort of what I'm hearing, then, is Bob has presented one side where if we kept it at 83, we'd delete down 12 rural ridings. I've given the other side of the coin where if we keep 41 rurals, we'd add 11 to the House. I guess what I'm hearing - maybe you could just nod your heads or whatever - is we need to do something sort of in between those two extremes. Maybe we need to increase the House a little bit but not a ridiculous amount, yet let's keep as many rural seats as possible. That's sort of all I had in mind.

MR. JOY: We have to adjust the situation as it is. If this board's going to have to do a job and has to bring down a decision, you're going to have to make a decision between one or the other. You haven't got any choice within the system as it is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. JOY: It's not solving any problem, but it's going to have to be a happy medium between that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thanks, Louis.  
Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: I think Eric was going to respond.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, Eric.

MR. KRALZEN: I was just going to make the comment that



it seems our government has fallen into the trap of voting along party lines.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Why do you say that?

MR. KRALZEN: Because it happens.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On this issue? I don't know how you sense that.

MS BARRETT: I don't know what you're talking about at this point.

MR. SIGURDSON: Are you talking about this committee?

MR. KRALZEN: No. By expanding the number of MLAs in the parliament, I don't think we would accomplish that much by increasing the numbers, because parties tend to vote along party lines.

MS BARRETT: Oh, I see.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, let's be clear. I didn't hear Frank put forward that as a suggestion. I certainly am not recommending the loss of 12 rural seats. We're merely giving you what might be described as the extreme examples . . .

MR. BRUSEKER: Possible scenarios.

MR. CHAIRMAN: . . . if you went one way or the other with no variation.

MR. KRALZEN: But increasing the number of MLAs from 83 to 103: I don't see an advantage.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Agreed.

MRS. BLACK: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. SIGURDSON: Neither do I. I only get to speak a half hour at a time as it is right now.

MR. BRUSEKER: Which is too much.

MRS. BLACK: Which is too long.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Groan, groan.

MRS. BLACK: Five times a day.

MR. SIGURDSON: Five times a day.

You can see that we have a difficult task before us and that there are a lot of variables we have to consider. The Chairman has pointed out that this is a first. We are going out and trying to get input. Your input hasn't made our task any easier, but I know I appreciate the input you've provided, and we'll certainly give it all kinds of consideration when we do get to those final deliberations that we must pass on to the Legislature.

I thank you for coming out. Thank you.

MRS. BLACK: I'd also like to thank you for coming out. Again, if you can think of any features that would justify the distinctions between urban and rural and the justification for not having strictly representation by population, if you could mail it in to Bob Pritchard, I'd sure appreciate seeing some of it come in. That would be a big help. As our chairman said, the federal government has been able to justify additional representation where there isn't the population to really warrant it. If we can come up with something along that line, then possibly we can work it into a factoring process. If you can come up with any suggestions, send them in, please.

Thank you for coming.

MS BARRETT: Well, I'd just echo what everybody else has said. One thing I would like to express, though, is a real appreciation for your clarity of thought. I think everybody presenting today had a real understanding of the complexity of the issues, and I appreciate that. So thanks for taking the time to think about it long before you came in here to meet with us.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A very special thanks, first, to your MLA, and, secondly, to all of you for taking time to come out today and share your thoughts and ideas with us. We know it was on short notice. We have 17 locations around the province to get to, and we must conclude this part of the process by the middle of February so we can conclude our report and get it into the Assembly. So a very special thanks to each and every one of you. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 3:57 p.m.]

