

[Chairman: Mr. Bogle]

[7:08 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries, I'm pleased to welcome you to this our second hearing in the city of Edmonton.

The process we'll follow this evening will be as follows. I'm going to introduce the members of the committee who are present this evening. We'll then go around the room and ask each of you to introduce yourself. We'll then go through an opening presentation of why we're here, what we're attempting to achieve, and the numbers we have to work with. Once that's been completed, we'll receive either written prepared briefs or oral briefs that any of you may have.

While this is a select special committee and the meetings are recorded, we try to keep the procedure as informal as possible. So once we've completed our introductions, for instance, I'll ask if there are any questions that any of you have either for clarification or explanation. After each brief has been given, there'll be an opportunity, first, for committee members to ask questions, and secondly, for those of you in the room to raise questions or supplement or take issue with, as you see fit, matters which have been raised. That's intended to ensure that we all come out of this process a little more knowledgeable about the challenging task ahead of us.

I'd like to introduce the committee members. Starting at my far right, Pam Barrett. Pam is currently in her second term as a member for the Edmonton-Highlands constituency. She is the opposition House leader for the New Democratic Party, the Official Opposition. If you're wondering why the eye contact there and the smiles, I've had difficulty introducing Pam on the past two occasions, referring to her as a two-time member. But you'll note I didn't do that tonight.

MS BARRETT: And I've always had to clarify that I'm single.

MR. DAY: I thought the difficult part was saying she was to your right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next, I'd like to introduce Stockwell Day. Stockwell is the MLA for Red Deer-North. This is his second term as the member for the constituency. He is the vice-chairman of this committee and serves as the government Whip for the government caucus. On my far left is Mike Cardinal. Mike was first elected on March 20 of this year. He represents the constituency of Athabasca-Lac La Biche, and he's a very busy member of our team. Tom Sigurdson. Tom represents Edmonton-Belmont. He was first elected in 1986, having been re-elected this year. Tom has the distinction of having served as Grant Notley's executive assistant when the last Electoral Boundaries Commission held its meetings. Therefore, he's got a knowledge base, from a slightly different perspective but certainly a knowledge base, of what it is the commission will eventually go through in this process. My name is Bob Bogle, and I'm the MLA for Taber-Warner.

Others who are here tonight in terms of our back-up team I'd like to introduce. Bob Pritchard is the administrative arm of our team, and some of you have spoken or corresponded with Bob. Also, from *Hansard* we have Doug Jeneroux and Kate Lamont who are here.

We do have a couple of special guests that I would like to introduce tonight. The first is our colleague from the West Yellowhead constituency. Jerry, we're pleased to have you here.

You were with us today when we were out in your constituency meeting constituents, and we're pleased that you saw fit to come in and join us tonight. The second distinguished visitor we have is Patrick Ledgerwood. Patrick is the Chief Electoral Officer for the province of Alberta. Once a commission is struck, it's expected that Mr. Ledgerwood will be serving on the commission as has been the practice in the past. So we're pleased to have Patrick out. Robin Wortman is also with us. He tries to ensure we have our luggage where it's supposed to be and the overheads are set up and gives Bob a hand in keeping us on track. That's Robin Wortman.

I'd like to pause now and ask those of you present who have not been introduced to introduce yourselves. David, could we start with you?

MR. BURGHARDT: Okay. My name is David Burghardt. I'm a citizen of Edmonton here. I'm coming as a private individual.

DR. CREECHAN: My name is Jim Creechan. I'm a sociologist at the University of Alberta. I'm also a past president of the Learning Disabilities Association of Edmonton. I'm an Alberta council representative to the Canadian Council on Children and Youth. I am a New Democrat by affiliation.

MR. HUTCHINSON: Brian Hutchinson, *Alberta Report*.

MR. STEPHENSON: Bill Stephenson, Edmonton and District Labour Council.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.

If a number of others come partway through our meeting this evening, we may go through this presentation again for their benefit. So if we do that, please bear with us.

I guess the first question to address is why we're going through this process. As some or all of you may be aware, by Alberta statute we are required to have a general redistribution of our electoral boundaries after every second general election. We had our last redistribution in 1983-84. We had a general election in 1986 and a general election earlier this year, 1989. Therefore, while a relatively short period of time has elapsed in terms of the last redistribution, we have gone through two general elections. If conditions had been normal, a commission would have been struck sometime this summer and the commission would be out doing its work at this point in time. But due to the events which have unfolded in British Columbia, these aren't normal times.

To put it in a nutshell, the British Columbia government established a boundaries commission; the commission reported its findings; the government wasn't satisfied with the recommendations and chose not to follow them. An individual took the government to court using the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as the basis of the challenge. The presiding judge, who was the Chief Justice of the province, Justice McLachlin, in her findings sided with the individual who took the government to court and indicated that indeed there was far too much variance between the largest riding in the province and the smallest riding in terms of population and that indeed the commission . . . I've just forgotten the name of the commission.

MS BARRETT: Fisher.

MR. CHAIRMAN: . . . the Fisher commission's recommendation of plus or minus 25 percent from a mean population figure,

a provincial mean figure, was more accurate. She made reference to extraordinary circumstances that could allow for further deviation in sparsely populated remote areas but didn't go on to describe what those circumstances might be.

It's important to recognize that the federal government and, I believe, six provincial jurisdictions currently follow the plus or minus 25 percent rule. Alberta's not been one in the past that has done so. While it's fair to say we set a plus or minus 25 percent figure for urban ridings, we also prescribed in our last legislation the number of ridings which would be deemed to be rural. The commission therefore went out and drew boundaries based on the guidelines we gave them through our legislation, 41 and 42 sets of ridings respectively.

Therefore, with the decision in British Columbia the three political parties represented in the Alberta Legislature decided, through their House leaders, that prior to establishing an Electoral Boundaries Commission, we should do some work to examine the implications of the Charter of Rights – i.e., the B.C. decision – to look at historical ramifications in our province as they have affected boundaries in the past, and other matters, all of which are indicated in the letter which was forwarded to you. Each of the parties selected members to sit on this committee, and through the passage of legislation the committee was struck.

Now, it is our mandate and responsibility to report back to the Legislature sometime during the spring sitting. In order to meet that goal, we've set a rather ambitious task in terms of holding hearings around the province and meeting with constitutional and legal experts and others so that we may make recommendations back. The recommendations we give the Legislature will be our recommendations as to the parameters to be followed by the Electoral Boundaries Commission. In short, we will not be drawing lines as a committee; that is not our job. We will be recommending to our colleagues in the Assembly the parameters that should be used. From the makeup of the commission . . . Historically we've had active provincial MLAs sitting on the commission, and some people have advised us that's wrong, that you shouldn't have people sitting on the commission who are currently serving as MLAs. That's something that will be considered.

I should also mention we visited both Regina and Winnipeg to see how they've dealt with the issue because both provinces have recently gone through electoral redistribution, and we're going to visit Victoria to see the current status in that province. The entire intent is in this learning process to help us so that we can come back with the recommendations to our colleagues.

I'll just pause for a moment to see if any of my colleagues would like to supplement anything I've said. Okay, then I think we can go ahead with the transparencies. Stockwell, would you like to lead us through this portion, please?

MR. DAY: Sure. Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Just to give you an idea of what we're looking at and some of the implications, we'll put these up for you, though most of what you'll see here you have included in your package.

This is just an alphabetical list of the constituencies and an eligible voters list. There is a notation at the bottom that raised a question. In terms of Cardston – and you can see it up here on the list – having 8,105 electors, there are also 1,800 potential electors in that constituency who chose not to be enumerated at the last election. Mentally you can factor that in. It does alter Cardston a little bit. But that's the list for you right there.

I'd like you to see what it looks like in terms of the order in magnitude of electors. This gives you an idea of the spread in

terms of numbers. You'll see Edmonton-Whitemud with some 31,000 electors, going down to Cypress-Redcliff and Cardston in the 8,000, 9,000 range. So you can see there is a considerable difference, if you will, and spread in numbers. When we look at how we get an average here, this is just straight math; no magic involved. We have in our province 1,550,000 on the list of electors and 83 constituencies, so when you divide that 83 into the 1,550,000, you see that we have an average number of electors per constituency of approximately 18,000 people: 18,685. So when you factor in 25 percent above that, you get 23,000, and 25 percent less gives you 14,000. So the 23,000 and the 14,000 just gives you an idea of what a 25 percent variance up and down would look like.

Now, when we take that and apply that to the eligible voters list – this is the one you saw two slides ago, showing the range – the ones that are blocked in yellow are constituencies which, if you apply the 25 percent factor, exceed the 25 percent maximum variance; all those ones in yellow. All the ones in pink: those constituencies are less than the minimum that would be allowed with the variance of 25 percent less than the 18,000. So you can see that's a significant number of constituencies in the province that are either above or below that variance factor.

Here's what it looks like on a map. The ones you see in pink are the ones which fall below the 25 percent factor. So that gives you a snapshot right there of what it looks like in the province in terms of constituencies which are less than the 25 percent minimum variance from the average. Okay? This one: when you look at the city of Calgary, the ones in yellow, these constituencies presently are in excess of that 25 percent maximum. So as you can see, a pretty fair number of the constituencies in Calgary have more than that 23,000. In Edmonton here's what it looks like. Again a number of constituencies there with more than the 23,000. It gives you a quick look. The city of Lethbridge: divided into two constituencies – this is just the cities that we're looking at right now – east and west. Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West fall within a 25 percent variance. The city of Medicine Hat is an interesting one, because in total, if you were to refer back to that list of electors, you would see that Medicine Hat, as a city of one constituency, is in excess of the 25 percent maximum.

Red Deer is a unique situation, as I constantly am trying to remind people, and a wonderful place to visit if you're driving down Highway 2. Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South. Red Deer was a very large constituency numerically prior to the last redistribution. When the redistribution took place, what happened in Red Deer to make it unique is that the provincial electoral boundaries actually exceed the municipal boundaries. So Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South comprise urban and rural in terms of being looked at as an urban or a city riding. Both Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South are within the guidelines; as a matter of fact, just a few hundred off the 18,000 actually. So that's what Red Deer looks like.

St. Albert, as you can see, is again in excess of that variance. That's what it looks like.

Now, in this particular case here, what we've done is shown in purple the constituencies that are not just 25 percent less than the minimum, but in fact they are at least 35 percent below that mean of 18,000. That's what that looks like throughout the province. Here, taking it a step further, are constituencies that are in fact a 50 percent variance off the mean. You can see them located as such.

The blue dots on this map show the locations of the public hearings, one of which we are involved in at this moment.

We've tried to spread them throughout the province, especially concentrating on those constituencies that are outside that mean and that may result in some implications to the constituency. You can see we've got a number of meetings planned, and we've tried to spread it throughout the province as well as possible. Just for interest's sake, you can look at the list we have here. These are the various locations where meetings will be taking place. You can see we've got a compacted time schedule. We're trying to cover as much territory as we can and still be in time for whenever the spring session starts, also allowing for our own individual schedules. These are the locations that, to this point, we've identified as places where we're going to be having hearings. This again gives you a picture in terms of constituencies affected, with the meeting locations superimposed on the area. You can see that we're trying especially to hit the areas that could be impacted by the 25 percent factor.

That gives you a pictorial snapshot of what we're looking at in general terms.

Back to you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much, Stock.

Just before going on to any questions, we've had two other gentlemen join us. Could I ask you to introduce yourselves?

MR. PROCHASKA: Steve Prochaska.

MR. CHAIRMAN: David.

MR. CROWELL: I'm Jim Crowell.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Jim. Welcome.

Robin is circulating a sheet. If you would like us to send you a copy of our report once it is tabled in the Assembly, we'll be pleased to do so, so sign your name and give us an address. If you're not interested, then just ignore it.

Let me start by asking if there are any questions on the background information which we've given you today.

MR. HUTCHINSON: I'd like to know one thing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes?

MR. HUTCHINSON: It's just concerning the McLachlin decision against British Columbia. Were they using eligible voters?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I believe they were using eligible voters in British Columbia. It varies across Canada. Some jurisdictions use total population; some use eligible voters. In British Columbia I believe they use eligible voters.

Any other questions? Yes, David.

MR. PROCHASKA: I was wondering. Say you did redistribute and give more seats to both Calgary and Edmonton. Since these municipalities have urban needs like more police force and more infrastructure like roads and sewage, they might use up more of the income produced from taxes and royalties on the rural areas which produce grain, coal, oil and gas, timber, lumber, and so on. Under this system we've got now where you have 50-50, half and half, there's a chance that half of the money can go to the rural parts and half can go to the urban. But if you do it the other way, the urban members might decide to vote to have this money spent inside the cities instead of in the countryside. The

rural members might not have enough members to vote to get their Bills passed to get funding.

MR. CHAIRMAN: David, it's, I think, almost a quirk . . . [interjection] Oh, is it Steven? Pardon me.

MR. PROCHASKA: Right; Steve.

MR. CHAIRMAN: . . . a quirk that we're basically at 50-50 right now. I've been a member of the Assembly since 1975, and at that time there were 75 seats. Today there are 83. The growth has occurred in the urban areas. All right? Since 1975, when there were 75 seats, we've lost one rural constituency. The 83 seats we have today reflect the growth in population in larger centres. A fairly steady number of seats are at a static number in the rural areas. So I don't think we should get too hung up on the fact that we currently are at a balance of 41 and 42 seats. Because if we were going through a normal redistribution - for instance, when we last had redistribution, there were four new seats added. Patrick, there were two in Calgary, one in Edmonton, and one in Red Deer? Is that right?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Well, two in Calgary, one in Red Deer, and the new Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. PROCHASKA: Well, I was just interested in how you would kind of keep the equilibrium so you can have enough money for these rural areas not only to have support for the industry infrastructure but the social infrastructure. Because while the urban areas, say 10 or 15 years from now, might vote enough funds to keep up a proper industry infrastructure, they might allow things like rinks and association funds, et cetera, for the social [inaudible] to slide.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, please, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: I think you may be confusing the two different styles of government: the Canadian style of government where we have party lines and caucuses and where there is support for programs that come from the caucuses, whereas in the United States they have a system more like you describe where a number of areas in the hinterland have to go out and seek votes to ensure passage of legislation that will benefit peripheral areas. So it's a very, very different system that we have. Our style of government is quite a bit different than that system you're describing.

MR. PROCHASKA: It could still happen.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could we stop for a sec? I'd rather get back to our agenda and see if there are any questions on the presentation we've given. Then we'll go to the briefs, and there will be an opportunity for more general kinds of comments.

Well, if there are no further questions, I think we're ready to go right to the briefs.

MR. CROWELL: Actually, I have one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Jim, yes.

MR. CROWELL: Perhaps I've come in late and missed a part of the presentation. I'm just wondering if anybody has done any of the history on where we got the fact that in one section of the

Act you set up how many urban divisions there will be and in another section of the Act you set up how many rural. There's obviously been someplace in the history a division in people's minds between urban and rural. Where did that come from?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's been in our redistribution process for many, many years, and it was to build in a factor recognizing distances, communities, and historical representation in rural areas. So there was a factor of roughly four rural votes equating to seven urban votes. Now, you can't find that in the legislation. In the last commission's mandate they were given a specific number of urban seats and a specific number of rural seats and a plus or minus 25 percent on the urban seats but no such factor on the rural seats. My understanding, from speaking with several former members and others, is that it's been in place for a good number of years in a historical pattern to recognize the geography and distance factors in the communities in the rural areas.

MR. CROWELL: So we don't know when it came; it just sort of came, and it's always been 4 to 7 roughly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sure we could do more research on the matter, and we are in fact hearing from other experts in the field. That may well come out before we're finished. In fact, some may wish to shed light on it tonight if they know. Okay?

I think we'll then go on to the briefs. David, as you were first here and I think you have one you'd like to give, we'll start with you.

MR. BURGHARDT: Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman and members of the select committee and other ladies and gentlemen here tonight, I'd like to thank the committee and whoever else is responsible for the opportunity to speak to you this evening. I very much appreciate it. As a politically nonaligned Albertan, I come here to speak only on my own behalf, and I purport to speak for no one else.

I recognize the onerous task in which you are involved. I've had a little bit of experience with that in another rather small organization, but I do know that it is a complex task to draw boundaries. I also recognize your busy schedules, and I'm not one of those who when I hear a seat's empty in the Legislature or the House of Commons think they're sloughing off. I think I know better than that. I feel that your task is a very important one, and I regard democracy and the democratic process as very, very important to me. Family, relatives of mine were involved in defending that for this country a number of years ago.

I believe that under the current situation in Alberta, as I understand it to be from this very informative document Mr. Pritchard's office prepared – the current situation I regard to be very, very unhealthy. I am personally not very surprised about the individual challenge in the province of British Columbia. In fact, prior to the last provincial election I had considered such a challenge myself, as an individual. I really feel that 42 urban seats – whatever an urban seat is too; I'm not quite sure whether we can break them along those lines, maybe, as clearly as we think. Forty-two urban, 41 rural is very, very unacceptable to me as a Canadian citizen, as an Albertan. I believe that resources and things, objects, are one thing, but in a democratic society people are what count and people are the only basis upon which boundaries can be drawn. I think people are people, and that is what is important in this whole thing.

I also haven't had much time to prepare for this presentation,

having only found out about it reading the *Journal* a couple of days late on the weekend and then receiving a letter Monday. But I'm also of the opinion that a lot of learned preparation for a test like this is maybe not as essential as we'd like to believe. I think there are some basic tenets of the democratic process that come into play, and I believe they are really what count. I don't think a lot of numbers and number crunching are really the answer to the question. I think it boils down to a belief in the importance of individual people. So I'm very much a rep by pop thing. I think that's one we've heard about. I'm not quite as militant maybe as William Lyon Mackenzie was in previous Canadian history, but I have some pretty strong feelings about this.

I think urban Albertans are becoming increasingly alienated from government. I think the concern in drawing maps is that rural Albertans were afraid they were going to become alienated. Well, ladies and gentlemen, I believe urban Albertans – and I live in Edmonton west, or Jasper Place – are becoming very alienated from the legislative process. I feel that situations where a rural vote counts for four and an urban one counts for one is grossly unacceptable.

I look even at numbers like Little Bow out of Calgary. It's just on the doorstep of Calgary really. I look at Edmonton-Whitemud. And I find the balance . . . That great imbalance cannot have occurred since the last sitting of a body like this. It cannot have occurred since the 1982 election or whatever. That kind of imbalance has existed for a long time. I really think that has to be seriously addressed, not a little bit of patchwork like probably happened before two elections ago. I don't think I stated that quite correctly. I think there has to be more than patchwork. I think I'm very underrepresented, and I think other urban dwellers are underrepresented. We're all Canadians. We're all citizens. We deserve representation.

I know there is the belief that rural areas have it so difficult to communicate. I'm not sure the problem is as great . . . I grew up in a small town in the south, and I know about blizzards and things like that. We experience those things in the city. We have hardships getting around every day in a city, which people in rural areas don't experience so much unless they choose to live a long way from work. I'm as close as I can get to my work. It's 20 minutes, if I'm lucky, each way, every day. For some people it's much further. I think we've got satellite television in our society. We've got radios. Alberta has excellent roads. People think nothing of getting in their cars and coming to West Edmonton Mall or to the city to go shopping. Telephone communication is excellent and cheap. There is good access to MLAs, I feel, if people want that.

The geography I don't think is a big challenge, as it is in British Columbia especially in the wintertime, getting over mountain passes and things like that with snowslides and whatnot. I don't think we're quite in the same ball game, generally, in Alberta with geography.

I'm one of those people who's never missed voting in an election in this country, and I was born here. I think educated voters are looking not to the hype at election time; they're looking for long-term sustained records of politicians and of governments. So I don't really believe this imbalance is at all justified.

I would make four very, very simple and sincere recommendations to you. One of those recommendations is that the number of constituencies in the province of Alberta should be frozen at 83. That's what I believe. I don't think we need more people to represent 8,000 or 9,000 or 12,000 individuals. I really believe

that 83 is very adequate, from where I sit. I've not sat as a member of the Legislature, nor have I talked to any member of the Legislature about their feelings about that. But as a citizen who pays taxes, who sits out there and watches TV and tries to be quite informed about what's going on, I just believe the number of 83 should be frozen.

I further believe that if we're going to consider – and I think you could tie this number that I'm going to use to the number of citizens, if you want to count kids and other people who don't vote – or if you want to just count electors. I'm going to use the electors. I think one can be related to the other with some factor. But until Alberta's number of registered voters exceeds 2 million, I cannot see the need for increasing the number of seats or constituencies from 83. I think it's time to bite the bullet, face the facts, make some decisions, really fight this thing and deal with it. I think 83 is plenty. One member for about 25,000 citizens – it would be 24,000 to 2 million – is adequate and highly acceptable.

The factor of 25 percent, plus or minus, was addressed. I think that would be some improvement, but for me that would be unacceptable. The committee should look at something like 15 percent. I did some calculations with plus or minus 10 percent, and the numbers I got were 20,554 for a max and 16,817 for a minimum. That's almost 4,000 voters even different there. That's at a 10 percent factor. I think a 25 percent factor is very unacceptable – not grossly but very unacceptable.

I also think that in the redistribution, if the first two recommendations are not accepted . . . I believe that if you're going to do some kind of redistribution and maybe increase the number of seats, which I hope you don't, maybe it's time to leave some of these rural seats alone. This is a kind of poor case scenario, but maybe look at some of the urban constituencies. I look at Edmonton-Whitemud. That's the number that caught my eye in the figures – for no other reason. Maybe it's time that constituency was cut into three. It'll grow. It's got a little bit out there, I think, as I remember the map of Edmonton, to grow to the west. I may be wrong about that. Yes, it's got to the south. It'll grow. If we cut it in three, it would be about 11,000 for each of the three constituencies. It'll grow to 15,000. I think it's time that some of the urban voters got the break. Don't be afraid to cut it into four, if you're going to increase the number of seats. I think that's a step in the wrong direction. Certainly I think this has got to change, to please me, and this is my recommendation. I'm only one citizen, and pleasing me may not be that important, but I think that's what I would recommend.

I'd also like to address the situation and recommend something on the method of setting boundaries. I don't know the terminology that's used by legislators and lawyers; I'm not a lawyer. I may use some of the terminology incorrectly. I believe that one of the tenets of setting the boundaries should be a lack of political interference. I respect politicians a great deal and what they do, no matter whether I like leaders of provincial or municipal or federal governments in Canada. I think respect is very, very important to them. There is a proper way of opposing them or countering them. I respect what they do, but I think there should be no interference from those people in any way. I believe they should not even be involved in appointing people to set boundaries. You know, it's kind of like myself setting my own paycheque or something, setting a contract for myself. I'm a great guy and I think you could trust me, but I'm not sure I could trust me kind of thing. I think maybe it's the same for political people.

I was going to say something about the frequency of revisions, and I think current practice in Alberta is very good: after every second election.

The people whom I would recommend to make such moves would be judicial people, preferably federally appointed. I think it's important that the legislators of the province set some parameters and set some limits as to numbers, a basic overall method or format, and then leave the implementation and the setting up to impartial people who are well respected.

I know it's a very busy committee, and I'm just delighted that as an Albertan I've had the opportunity to come here and speak to you. I would like to thank you very much for that opportunity.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the committee, thank you for giving us your views in a very succinct way.

Questions by committee members of David? Pam.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, I'll start. On the appointment of people who set the boundaries – this is a hotly contested issue – do you think there is really such a thing as getting partisanship out of any appointments if you used, for instance, people who were appointed already by a political party?

MR. BURGHARDT: I really don't think so. There's not that perception anyway. I think legislators are very, very caught up, and I suppose – no criticism to the people across the table from me, but I think there's this kind of feeling that if we have three from this party and two from that, there'll be a kind of balance and everything will be checked. As a fairly informed elector, I don't buy that. I think there are times when the interests of both are together. I think the need for just non politically-aligned people to look at the numbers and the facts and just draw something up for the good of the people is much more acceptable to me. Even with the judiciary at times, as a citizen I start to wonder whether there's maybe a little more politics involved there than I think. But I think it's much more palatable to me than this one from that party and this one and getting the balance in of the political people.

I think that once you set the parameters, you let somebody set up the boundaries. Then when election time comes, you go at it. That's playing ball by the fair rules, I think.

MS BARRETT: You cited federally appointed judges, for example. Can you think of some other examples of people who generally would tend to be impartial or would try to be impartial?

MR. BURGHARDT: Offhand I can't. I've not had nearly as much time to prepare for this presentation this evening as I would have liked. I actually had approximately 15 minutes today and 15 minutes yesterday. There's been a lot of thought go on in the past about the topic. But to actually sit down and write a few ideas and think about it, I can't offer you any more than that. There may be others. Maybe some other people here have those ideas.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Anyone else from the committee?

MR. DAY: Dave, let me ask you a question. I appreciate the time crunch you've been under. You mentioned you haven't talked to other MLAs. We've just come through a swing of meetings in the northern rural area. I'm saying this from the

point of view of advice seeking. You talk about one factor should be people; that should be the factor.

We've just heard from constituents in a number of the rural areas who talked about the fact that whereas in many urban ridings an MLA might have to represent one public school board, one separate school board, one city council, one hospital board, in fact the rural areas could be dealing with numerous town councils, city councils, hospital boards. Add that to the distance factor. I think you had some good comments on communications, and where we're at today in technology helps to reduce that, but going from one meeting to another, travel time could be five hours, whereas in the extremity of the constituency I represent, I'm looking at maybe five minutes, depending if the radar is out or not.

So they're talking about representation in terms of people orientation also. Then they couple that with the fact that if you take the landmass of Calgary and the landmass - I'm just looking at this map - of Dunvegan, Dunvegan might be 20 times the size, with one vote in the Legislature, one MLA. Whereas in Calgary with an issue that's important to the whole city - obviously political delineations aren't going to be a factor if it's important to the whole city - there'd be 17 votes. How do you balance those two out?

MR. BURGHARDT: Okay. Well, I guess the way I balance them out - I don't think they are balanced. I really believe that - and I wasn't going to address the municipal situation - many of those people in rural areas are far overrepresented as it is. You know, if what you're saying is the case, maybe there are far too many hospital boards that MLAs are having to deal with. We don't want to get into that. Maybe that's part of the problem. The fact that we have one city council in Edmonton: maybe the meetings of MLAs with those people should be far more frequent. We must remember that although an MLA may be one of a group who would like to meet with the city of Edmonton, that is a very large entity and there must be many, many more concerns and the issues must be quite a bit more complex in terms of the needs. We're looking at purely a geographical area, you know. Maybe we're a little underrepresented in terms of these other bodies, for want of a better word, that make representations to MLAs. Maybe we're underrepresented in the urban areas, and maybe the rural folks are overrepresented. I would contend that that's my impression.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Just one point. Do you have the package in front of you?

MR. BURGHARDT: I have part of it here. I only photocopied some.

MR. SIGURDSON: Just the Alberta map. You can see that the constituencies of Peace River and Fort McMurray are very large. Yet given their voter population, they fall within that acceptable range of 25 percent proposed by Justice McLachlin.

When we were in Winnipeg, we did have the opportunity to meet with the Chief Electoral Officer and a few of the members of the Legislature. They've just undergone redistribution. In order for them to get to their 10 percent bearings, they created one constituency, an incredibly large area that went from the middle of Lake Winnipeg to the border of the Northwest Territories. Indeed, the actual size was 1,060 miles by 230 miles.

Would you think that a bit extreme? Is there room in your argument for some consideration of a variance?

MR. BURGHARDT: Not too much. What is really the problem, that the elector cannot communicate with the Member of the Legislative Assembly? Or is the problem perceived from your side to be that you have trouble - you people and your opponents in an election, the candidates - have difficulty getting through the constituency in the time before the election? Is that really what the problem is with distance?

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, to some degree. You know, I come from an urban constituency. I have no problem getting through the constituency. I certainly can't knock on 12,000 doors as quickly as I could knock on a few hundred. But I also happen to be one of those politicians that likes face-to-face encounters with as many constituents as possible. Again, coming from an urban constituency, when I look at the size that was created in Manitoba, I'd be frightened by it. So that's why I asked the question.

MR. BURGHARDT: I suppose I wouldn't want to see a constituency of a thousand kilometres across. But you know, I have taken the map of Alberta, and I look at Fort McMurray. I have 20.4, so it must be around 20,400 in that constituency. What is that? One-eighth of the province almost. Then I look at some of the more southern areas where obviously people are much more entrenched and ethnically quite different. I might add that I think the minority people in the Fort McMurray constituency maybe haven't squawked very much. But you know, I think they're coping. I think the southern part of the province as well has to be really looked at, because that's where I think there's a lot of democratic injustice.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Anything else from the committee? Steve, you have a question you wanted to ask briefly?

MR. PROCHASKA: Yes. I was wondering: since a province like ours, particularly Alberta, is built on different geographic zones, there are different geographic needs because of - like in the southern part you have mostly prairie, and it's mostly of an agricultural, livestock nature. Toward the north, around Peace River, Fort McMurray, Whitecourt, et cetera, you have a more timber-based resource. Toward the centre you have more of a cereal grain production zone. In the rural parts and Calgary, you have more of a commercial . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Can you come to the point, Steve, please?

MR. PROCHASKA: What I'm trying to say is that you have different wants and needs. As I was trying to say before with these wants and needs, if some areas have less than others on a more permanent basis, where I see it, three out of two zones would be underrepresented.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Anyone else? Okay, we'll move on to the next brief. Jim, I think you were here next, and then Jim. Jim and Jim. All right.

DR. CREECHAN: Mr. Chairman and committee members, like David I must apologize for doing an oral presentation rather than a written one.

I'd like to make observations in three areas. The first area

I'd like to make observations in is just general philosophical kinds of issues; the second area, the variance and the range I think the ridings should try to represent; and the third one, the composition of the committee and the process for making recommendations. Let me start with general observations and philosophical arguments.

I am an urban person. I must admit that one of my proudest possessions is a Busby Blazers hockey jacket. I am urban by nature. But at the same time, as a sociologist, I'd like to second David's observation that urban/rural differences are much less than we might think. As a sociologist who's familiar with crime rates and suicide rates and other kinds of problems we traditionally have thought to be urban issues, I can assure you – and those of you from rural ridings will second me – they are not exclusively urban. The massification of technology has extended urban problems and awareness of these kinds of problems into rural areas, and we're a lot more similar than we would like to think. The only place in Alberta I've ever seen Triple X television has been in Slave Lake. The differences are minimal. The sociological evidence on that would tend to support me, and your own observations, I'm sure, do as well.

To follow up just very briefly on that, in my dealings with learning disabilities and people who have concerns about children, quite often I find that the concerns of rural people, people I've met from Ponoka or Red Deer county, are exactly the same kinds of problems parents in Edmonton are facing. Those differences are not as large as we would think. Actually, there is very interesting historical literature there. Much of sociology and theoretical approaches to society is based on creating what we now think of as an artificial separation between urban and rural differences. Okay? The city represented everything that was bad, and everything that was good was found in the country. It came as a shock to a number of sociologists to discover that in fact some things like suicide could be higher in rural areas.

Anyway, to move on from that, another observation I would like to make is that I really think the most important document guiding anybody who wants to make legislative decisions in Canada is the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is a tremendous document that puts the protection of the individual above all else. I think it's an articulate statement of great ideals that we should follow and try and live up to. Whether or not we're going to be forced to is a separate issue. I think it's a wonderful statement of respect for other people.

I would like to point out that this respect for individuals built into the Charter also takes into account that there are times when we must also protect the group. We can do things to protect people who find themselves a member of some sort of grouping in society through section 1 or section 33. Those are there to be used judiciously. I think this protection of the group has a place. If it can be defended and justified on reasoned grounds, then there is a place for building in special privileges. But we have to look at that very cautiously.

Anyway, I do respect the Charter. It's a magnificent document. I think adhering to its principles will bring Canada to the forefront of admiration around the world in terms of protecting people. Now, having said that, I'd like to actually move on to a couple of very specific kinds of recommendations.

I do realize that due to population shifts, economics, changes in mortality rates, migration rates, there are going to be times when ridings get sadly out of whack. That does happen. I could live with 25 percent as an outside limit to recognize that there are differences. However, I would have a great deal of concern

about starting to build ridings with a 25 percent difference. I really think we have to aim for something a lot smaller than the 25 percent, because in fact these migration shifts, population shifts, and economic shifts are going to distort it over time, as in fact has happened. The graphs that were up there and that are here very clearly show that, you know, in the south and the west part of Edmonton, for instance, where people have been moving, we've created enormous discrepancies. I would just caution whoever is making the decision to realize that if you start with a 25 percent difference, pretty soon it could spread up to 50, 75 percent. So 10 percent might be a good place to aim as an ideal. In terms of the variance, the observation I've just made here is that I could live with 25 percent and I still think it would meet the principles established within the Charter, but I do think it's dangerous to start there.

I'm not sure and, to be honest about it, have not given a great deal of thought to what the ideal number an MLA can represent is. I'm not sure whether it's 20,000 or 25,000 or 30,000. I could live with equality across the board and live with the impressions and the observations of the representatives of the people in telling us whether it's possible to do the job. But I do think we have to aim for equality of representation with the 10 percent.

In the third observation, to try and make it fairly quickly, I think the process for hearings and making decisions does have to be open. You've got a number of meetings that have been scheduled around the province. I would suggest there is a great deal of merit in doing it almost in a two-tiered kind of stage, where there is a preliminary draft of recommendations that come forward before all the hearings have been finalized. If the committee and the representation of the committee is in any way unfair, at least it gets to go back before the public for further input. We might get away from some of the bias if, after the committee has been struck, there is a set of hearings part way through to review those recommendations in public and to hold those conditions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's done.

DR. CREECHAN: Okay.

As far as the composition, I have no really strong commitment to whether they should be elected members deciding or individual members deciding, but I do think that obviously the Chief Electoral Officer, who has the information at hand, should be a member. I also think the Premier should have the right to make an appointment to it. Whether that's an MLA or a person of his choice, I can live with it. Likewise, I would think the Leader of the Opposition should have that right as well.

So, in brief, I think there are important principles at hand and social observations the committee does have to look at and take into account. I like the 10 percent variance as an ideal, and I think the composition of the committee, whatever it is, should go through a two-tier kind of stage. That is a relatively brief presentation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much.  
Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: When we worked in the past with the Learning Disabilities Association and there was any number of youth groups, one of the things we looked at – we saw the mathematical equation up there showing the number of constituencies divided into the voters. I personally sometimes worry about just having voter population. I'm wondering if you would

comment on whether or not you think it's important to have the entire population included in a constituency so that we're taking up our population by approximately a million people. Do MLAs represent only voters, or do we represent those under 18, landed immigrants, et cetera?

DR. CREECHAN: To be honest, Tom, it's not something I've thought a great deal about. I think that if I were on the committee, I would just compute a very simple little statistic. I would compute not only the number of eligible voters, but I would look at that as a percentage of the population just to see what kind of variance there is on that. I'd be very surprised if there was a great deal – and I'm guessing, Tom – of difference beyond the number of eligible voters. I do think the forces at play causing people to make sure they are on the voting list are probably equally distributed around the province. I could be wrong on that. But I think it's worth taking a look at what that ratio of voters to population is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.

Anyone else on the committee? Yes, Pam. I'm sorry; you were next.

MS BARRETT: Thank you.

Jim, you mentioned that you thought 10 percent would be a good way to start but you wouldn't discount the need for 25 percent. We had a paper given to us a couple of weeks ago by a lawyer who made a different argument that I want to run by you and just see what you think. He said something like what you've said, but he said that you should tell the commission to start by assuming it should go for equality, period, and allow variances only under exceptional, extraordinary circumstances. Are you making the same argument? If you are, would you agree with his argument that you start with the assumption of zero percent variance?

DR. CREECHAN: Yeah, I agree with his argument, but I think things like geographical reality – mainly geographical reality – get in the way. I do live in the west end of the city. Federally my riding, Edmonton Southwest, is a very strange riding. I find myself in a corner that's very close to Edmonton centre, yet I am linked to people down to the far south of Whitemud, because there's a little corner there that's grouped in. I'm not sure what I actually have in common with them.

What I'm saying, I think, Pam, is that if you aim for zero, pragmatically, I'm not sure how you can actually achieve it realistically if you try. But you can justify 10 percent; I can live with that.

MS BARRETT: Okay. One more question then?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure. Go ahead.

MS BARRETT: I asked absolutely everybody this question. Oh, no, I didn't ask you this question. Sorry, David; I didn't ask you this question.

On the pink map: there's a real concern expressed, especially from people in these very large geographical areas. Right? Are you saying that if you were trying to deal with this issue, you probably wouldn't adjust any of these large ones? They fall outside the 25 percent range. Would you target to have these large ones going closer to the 25 percent range?

DR. CREECHAN: I don't think I would target to start them outside the 25 . . .

MS BARRETT: What I'm asking is: would you target them to the 10 percent range?

DR. CREECHAN: I would try to target them to the 10 percent range.

But let me go back to the Charter. The Charter, again, does specify mainly individual rights, but there are times in which in a very explicit case – I'm not a lawyer; I'm a sociologist by training – you can override this by making very open and logical and, you know, compelling reasons by presenting them in the public domain. If in fact there are reasons within there that it should be 25 percent, for instance . . . I'll throw a hypothetical out. It's easier to do it with the one that's lower. I mean, if you know an area is 25 percent low but there's going to be an oil upgrader coming into the area and it's definite and there's going to be a predicted population shift within the next couple of years, then maybe that might be a compelling reason to say, "This is coming on line, so for now we can go outside it because it's going to ease towards the middle." Going the other way, I have a little harder time, but then again, I am urban.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just to piggyback on that, I believe when our last commission met, the Dixon commission, they did have input from city planners in Calgary and Edmonton as well as other areas, so they could look at where there was anticipated growth and try to make some adjustments for that. That point has come out in other hearings we've held, and we think it's valid.

Stock?

MR. DAY: Jim, I appreciate your presentation and thoughts. I'd like to ask you a similar question that I asked Dave, and it is one I'm asking regularly because it would be good to get some insights. I think there are insights out there; I just haven't been able to tap into all of them yet.

A hypothetical situation: the city of Edmonton needs a water treatment facility and therefore is seeking provincial dollars for it. Given the situation that it's accepted, automatically there are 17 advocates within the Legislature and any other MLAs they can pull in and convince. The city of Grande Prairie needs a water treatment plant at the same time. It needs provincial dollars. One MLA in the Legislature and however many he or she can pull in. Is there a way to balance that off?

DR. CREECHAN: I am not sure, other than hoping that everybody in the Legislature is reasonable and cares for the individual and is above party politics. Seventeen votes are 17 out of 83. I mean, if it's a bad proposal, even though there are 17 advocates, there are . . . My math just failed me.

AN HON. MEMBER: Fifty-six.

DR. CREECHAN: Whatever. You know, they can oppose it. I would actually argue that in fact there are many cases in education where there are what I would consider to be very reasoned proposals in the case of learning disabilities coming from the cities that are overturned. Even though you can have a group of strong trustees and strong representation from MLAs within the cities, it's too hard a problem to convince the rural MLAs to get on board with, and it gets defeated or gets



modified and the problem doesn't get solved even though, you know, I may have considered it to be legitimate. That's the democratic process. I'm not sure there is a way, but 17 is not the majority.

In the case of one person trying to argue, one person with a reasoned voice can have a major impact. Look at Clyde Wells and the impact he is having. You listen to somebody who can make a reasoned argument. I think you start by having one person represented; you aim at that. If coalitions form beyond that, then they do. But it's got to be on the basis of reason.

MR. DAY: I appreciate your faith in the reasoned abilities of legislators.

DR. CREECHAN: Can I go back to comment? The demographic predictions and, you know, the pyramidal populations: I make a living and have been trained at doing that, and I don't have a lot of faith in those a lot of the time either. There's room for error.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other panel questions? From the public?

Okay, the next presenter is Jim.

MR. CROWELL: Hi. Like the others, I don't have a written brief. I have part of a written brief sitting on the word processor at home, but it ain't done yet. I may finish it off and send it to you folks.

MS BARRETT: We can keep taking them.

MR. CROWELL: Sure. What the heck. I might even amend it after I listen to your questions.

MR. DAY: We've got reasoned questions.

MR. CROWELL: Sure. Exactly. It's a good thing to submit a written brief after the fact.

I'm Jim Crowell, and I'm here on behalf of the Alberta Federation of Labour. I'm speaking on behalf of the executive council of the fed and as chair of the standing committee on political education of the Alberta Federation of Labour. I'll run through the numbers. You've probably heard them in other presentations. We have 112,000 members or affiliates. They are scattered throughout the province, rural and urban. On my committee I have people from the deep south, from the Peace River constituency, from Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer, West Yellowhead and, I think, Athabasca-Lac La Biche. On the executive council we're spread out as well.

I note with some interest that

the overall purpose of the . . . Special Committee . . . is to establish a basis on which the citizens of Alberta may best be represented by their Members of the Legislative Assembly.

I think that's an amazingly broad and onerous task you have. I think you've narrowed it down; you're basically dealing with boundaries and how we get those boundaries. Am I correct? And the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries goes down and talks about a number of things.

I've got sort of three areas I'd like to talk about. One is what considerations you should consider primarily to get the boundaries. The next one is: by what mechanism should the commission be struck, or how should it be formed, to make those decisions? The last one is some comments on the process that the commission might use, which actually is not unlike the

process followed by the previous two people.

First off, I think the fed's position is clear. The principle and primary consideration is that each person's vote should have the same weight. That four rural votes equals seven urban votes is, we believe, wrong. That's not just and not fair. I think we're supported in this by the B.C. court decision that brought about this whole process in Alberta. The Charter ruling there, I think, you could see as part of an historical process expanding and increasing the fairness of the way we exercise our democratic franchise. Other milestones along that way would perhaps be the removal of the property criterion – to have so much property before you could vote – expanding the franchise to give women the vote or native people the vote, this kind of thing. I think if you do get that historical work done that we talked about, you'll find, whatever the rationale that was given, the major reason for weighting the votes the way it was done was to defend the Socred hegemony that existed from '35 until the Tories took over. They basically shifted a whole pile of things towards the rural, partially because of their ideological commitment but also because that's where they always got most of their votes. There's a fair amount of argument given saying that, well, you know, we have to balance rep by pop, as the single most important principle, by other considerations. How do we represent people in very large constituencies, the rural travel: this kind of consideration? I would suggest that there are other, very reasonable ways to do that, to make the person who has a rural riding's job more effective, that doesn't have to say that a rural person's vote is weighted almost twice as much an urban person's vote: things like giving them additional finances so they could have more staff and more offices in smaller areas; perhaps making the MLA a full-time position. Now, I know a number of people treat it like a full-time job, but it's not set that way. There's no obligation to be full-time. Lots of MLAs run farms or do other kinds of business on the side. Perhaps the time has come, if people are having a difficult time representing their constituents because of the size of the riding, to say that this is a full-time job. We'll pay it as a full-time job. We'll give you the staff as a full-time job and do it full-time. You know, I've just jotted down some notes: additional offices, staff. You could even give them a car phone so that when they're spending that time driving across their constituency, they could do some work as well. I mean, there are other ways to solve the problems of distance.

I'm the secretary-treasurer of a local. I just drew a circle on this map for the boundaries of my local, and I take in the boundaries of 14 rural constituencies and all of the ridings in metro Edmonton. I can tell you how difficult it is to drive from one to the other when you've got votes and this kind of thing, but it's not impossible. I wouldn't dare argue to my members that members in my union who live in rural areas should get twice the voting weight that members of my union who live in urban areas get. I would not be secretary-treasurer for very long, and I probably wouldn't get out of the meeting in one piece. So, you know, I don't see that type of argument being a big enough defense to skew the proportional representation. That's amazing. I didn't know it was 47. I knew it was skewed, but that really sort of set me back on my heels when you said that.

Even if you divided everybody up perfectly – you know, a hundred percent – the odds are you'd be one person out here and two people out there and this kind of thing. I mean, you'd have to split households to get it equal. How do you do this, and what do you do? I guess what I'm in favour of and what

our committee has talked about and is in favour of is that you aim for equality, that you see it as the overriding goal, and you are forced to defend publicly reasons why you didn't achieve it, because you're not going to. I mean, there will be skews. There will be, you know, a certain percentage out here or a certain percentage out there. It might be that you're not going to cut a household in half. Okay, I mean, that's reasonable. It might be that you probably might not cut a small town in half either. You might put it all in the riding, but when you make those kinds of decision, I think you should have to explain them and defend them in the process.

Okay. I'll leave the rest for questions except to go into the discussion about the commission. The composition of the commission is a bit of a conundrum. As I see it, you've got sort of three choices. You either recognize that it's an overtly partisan, political kind of process that affects very fundamentally the lives of every MLA. You're not going to get away from that, so you set up the system that puts politicians on there, realizing that this is a political choice. This is one of the tough situations, like voting on your own salary, that maybe politicians have to make. But make it, you know, overt. It's aboveboard; everybody knows it's political. You balance the various political forces, the opposition and the government, in the committee. You have hearings like this so that when you make the political choice, you'll be accountable for it. If you make a lousy choice, you'll get the strips torn off you in the media and, you know, that kind of thing.

The other one is to be what I see as covertly political, and I dislike this the most. This is where the commission is composed of less obviously political people appointed by order in council. You take a judge who holds his job - that's a politically partisan decision. People who get to be judges are appointed in this country. They're not elected; God didn't ordain them, as much as some of them might think so. You know, they're appointed, and as they are appointed by the party in power, when the party has been in power a long time, they have a tendency - not always; there are some notable exceptions - to reflect that political milieu of the party in power. I don't think that covertly partisan appointments are a good way to go.

The other option is to say: "Okay, we are truly going to make this nonpartisan, so we're not going to be involved in appointing these people at all. What we will do is give groups that represent various sectors of society the right to appoint somebody." You might go to Unifarm or some other farm body and say, "Okay, you have one appointment, given that you speak broadly for rural." Or you might go to the urban municipalities body and say, "Okay, you're elected, but you're elected at a different level, and you might appoint somebody." Or to the chamber of commerce, you know. Or to the Alberta Federation of Labour and say: "Okay, we will do away with our choice. We won't appoint anybody. We will just choose groups of people, some who are removed from the political process who represent broad sectors, and say okay, appoint some people." I think that's difficult because I don't know what sectors you would choose, and I think that might get you into maybe choosing the wrong farm group. Who knows? I mean, you end up in a struggle there. Or, heaven forbid, the wrong labour group. So that is one way to go.

I think after weighing this and talking back and forth and back and forth, we finally came to the idea that let's acknowledge this is a political question. Let's make it overtly political. Let's say that we will make it a small committee, one appointed by the government, one appointed by the Leader of the Opposition,

and have the Chief Electoral Officer. I think that makes more sense.

The process by which the commission, however appointed, goes through: I'm really pleased that you're holding public hearings, and I'm really pleased that you're traveling. I think that is an excellent way to get input. I don't know what success you've had in getting people before you. People don't necessarily understand how important this question is, so you may not have gotten lots; I don't know. But I do think that once the other commission starts actually setting boundaries and looking at that question, you will find a fairly hefty interest. Now, maybe I'm wrong. I don't know what the process was two elections ago, but I think there was a fair amount of people making . . . Were you on that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. Maybe just quickly . . . Well, the Chief Electoral Officer.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: There was a fair amount of public interest in that the commission advertised in the paper and requested submissions from interested individuals, parties, et cetera. They received 71 submissions for recommendation to the current boundaries. Once they established 83 electoral divisions, they published that information, disseminated it widely throughout the province, and then held public hearings. As a result of those public hearings, there were significant changes made to the initial recommendations. In the final report there were no changes made to the boundaries by the government. The only change the government made to the recommendations by the commission was the change in name of two electoral divisions. They changed Sturgeon to Westlock-Sturgeon, and they changed Cypress to Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. CROWELL: So that process, I think, is a useful process, obviously, and I wouldn't change it. That is, you have hearings prior. Then you go in and you do the work that you have to do. Then you have hearings subsequently, and if the hearings make enough sense, you go back and redo some work. I think that's a useful process, and I would like to see that continue.

Did they travel?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Yes, they traveled extensively in that the commission made arrangements to visit communities and receive briefings from town planners as to what the plans were for development in the various areas, both in some of the urban centres and some of the rural centres. As I say, there were 71 submissions from interested individuals that the commission dealt with directly and incorporated many of those recommendations into the boundaries that they proposed. They acknowledged each and every letter that they received.

MR. CROWELL: That process meets quite well with the process that we had in mind: that there's sort of a two-stage hearing with travel on both and the opportunity to take briefings on that.

That's it. I'll take questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thanks very much.  
Pam.

MS BARRETT: Well, I'm really curious about one thing. If you would divulge to me - or us; I guess it'll be a matter of public record. When you batted around the idea in committee

of overt versus covert political, partisan participation in the commission, you acknowledged that it's going to be partisan in your final recommendation after you outlined the possibilities. If it's going to be partisan, why would you have the designates of a couple of partisan people instead of the partisans themselves or, say, a committee – I don't remember who suggested this earlier, maybe you; yeah, it was you – comprised actually of MLAs themselves?

MR. CROWELL: I'm sorry if I led you to believe that I was suggesting that. What I said is someone appointed by the government; i.e., I would suggest that they would appoint one of themselves, an MLA.

MS BARRETT: Oh, I see. Okay.

MR. CROWELL: Someone appointed by the Leader of the Opposition; i.e., an MLA.

You know, order-in-council appointments often do wonderful things, okay? They often try and get beyond that, but on this question, which is so fundamental to who gets elected and who doesn't – I mean, it really is a big part of it. That's why we invented a word in the English language: gerrymandering. It's there. It's so fundamental to how parties stay in power, whether they stay in power, whether they don't stay in power, what kind of representation they have – this kind of thing – that I think you should acknowledge that that is what's happening. That's the discussion; that's what's happening. You know, to go back to something I said at the very beginning, I think the overriding consideration should be that every vote is weighted equally.

MS BARRETT: Okay. One more question. Did you have a sense of what sort of variation, minimum and maximum? Did the committee recommend on that?

MR. CROWELL: We talked about that. When I go into negotiations and we sit down and we say, "Well, this is what we want to achieve, but we'll acknowledge that there'll be a variation," what we get is the variation. Okay? I think there's a problem with walking in, saying, "We want to achieve this, but we'll accept something that's 25 percent or 10 percent or whatever percent outside of that," because what you'll get is the percentage because you'll have special-interest cases. You'll have special pleadings on a whole pile of things, and what you're going to be doing if you follow the B.C. decision is changing this map fairly substantially.

I don't care what party you're from. People from Edmonton-Highlands – I think you've been elected twice in Edmonton-Highlands. My guess is that you like the boundaries; it's worked twice. If they were going to change the boundaries fundamentally in Edmonton-Highlands so that you and – who's next to you? – Ray Martin and some of the others all of a sudden had to have a big to-do over where you're going to sit, there are going to be problems. That's going to happen to everybody right now. So if you put in 25 percent, my guess is you're going to shoehorn Edmonton-Highlands into that 25 percent, and please don't touch it; leave it alone. We'll get the 25 percent. So I would suggest that you go with the goal of equality.

MS BARRETT: Not even specify what sort of variance could be allowed?

MR. CROWELL: No. Give the commission the guidance to

work towards equality, period, and force them to justify each and every case where it isn't, and then go from there.

MS BARRETT: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Others from the committee? Anyone else?

MR. CARDINAL: I just have a quick question. As Albertans, you know, we hear in the past number of years always complaining that there is not equal representation with central Canada, that Albertans are getting beat. What is your feeling on that?

MR. CROWELL: That Albertans are getting . . .

MR. CARDINAL: Shortchanged, because the majority of the population in Canada is in central Canada and a lot of decisions, of course . . .

MR. CROWELL: Are made with that in mind.

MR. CARDINAL: Exactly.

MR. CROWELL: I think that's often true. Within my union I think that's often true too. It's a national union, and often we feel that they spend more time considering the interests of the majority of members, who are in central Canada. Having said that, the truth of the matter is that the majority of members are in central Canada.

The same thing with this situation that we've got, to go to Mr. Day's sewage plant proposal or suggestion. The reason that there are 17 people pleading for that sewage plant is because that sewage plant is going to serve probably 17 times the population as a sewage plant in Grande Prairie. That's the truth of the matter. It's a bigger plant, it's a bigger situation, it involves more people, it affects more people's lives, and it will spend more money. It has more people concerned with it. That happens. I don't see that the people in Grande Prairie are necessarily going to be hurt by that. My mom and dad came off a farm. I spent a good chunk of my life living in Spruce Grove. My mom comes out of Peers, my dad southern Alberta. They spent a lot of time being concerned about rural Alberta because that's where their history is. I don't think that rural Alberta is going to get shortchanged with this.

Now, I'm taking your question a long way, but you were drawing a parallel between Alberta's interests – i.e., being a hinterland and rural Alberta being a hinterland, and trying to draw the parallel. I think you don't solve that problem by saying that Albertans get two votes for every one vote in Ontario.

MR. CARDINAL: No. I guess what I'm getting at: as a rural representative I kind of try to compare that, because I think our goal should be to have not only one person, one vote. That would be the ideal situation, to have one person, one vote across Canada, to have fair representation. But I guess I look at some of the discrepancies and regional disparities that exist. I would feel more comfortable if we could have effective representation for the voters of Alberta.

The reason I say that and use central Canada in relation to the western provinces and Alberta in specific is that in a lot of instances we have those regional disparities within Alberta, where Edmonton and Calgary may enjoy a higher standard of living than rural Alberta. That alone would indicate that the representation is not effective the way it is; therefore, we need

to retain at least what we have, if not increase it. Because we do have a lot of areas – in my riding, for an example, and that's the same with the majority of northern ridings – where the unemployment is running 80, 90 percent. The average in my riding is 17 percent.

Services; for an example, shopping. You know, if we want to shop for the better things, we have to drive to Edmonton or Calgary from rural Alberta, which means a couple hours' driving. Recreational facilities: if you want to go to a hockey game, you have to drive hours. Cultural facilities, activities, medical services, higher education, TV – you know, CBC is all we get generally in rural parts of Alberta. It's a good station; we enjoy it because that's what we live with. You're happy with it. But if you really look at it, the majority of the services are in the major centres, and if you look at how they got there, the services that are provided in these cities are living off resources that come from rural parts of Alberta; for example, agriculture, forestry, oil and gas activities.

Basically, the city dwellers – and I have relatives in the city too, so I'm not against city dwellers; you know, I've lived in the city myself in various urban centres – enjoy a considerably higher standard of living, I feel, and better access to services, utilizing our overall provincial tax dollar for those services. Because if you really look at it, the plants that are situated around Edmonton, the resources they utilize to create the jobs – therefore, to have the higher standard of living, higher education, better facilities – are resources that come from rural Alberta. Therefore, I feel there should be some serious consideration given to address that issue.

The geographic area, of course, of rural ridings: you know, you're dealing in my case with seven municipalities, a lot of school boards, Indian reserves, Metis settlements, a whole pile of summer villages. It takes two, three hours to cross my riding if I drive fast enough. I do have a telephone in it, so I can catch up with a lot of phone calls between distances, and that's a real saviour. The economic issues alone: I'm dealing with forestry; marginal agriculture because of weather, soil conditions; oil and gas industry; tourism; trapping; commercial fishing; and hunting. So the issues I deal with are so varied that effective representation is tough to achieve. You have to work like hell. I agree with you that . . . I am a full-time MLA. If I wasn't, there's no possible way I could effectively serve my constituents.

I just thought I'd share that with you and bring it forward.

MR. CROWELL: There certainly is an economic hinterland in this province the same way as there is in this country. You know, the social services and the benefits are not equally spread throughout the province; neither is the population. That's not a justification; that's just, I think, an explanation. I don't mean this at all lightly, but it stuns me that people think that a weighted vote will solve the economic and social problems of the hinterland in Alberta. We've had a weighted vote towards the rural area since we don't know when, but for a long, long time, and I don't think that's solved the problem. As a matter of fact, I think what you've seen – I'm not saying it's because of this, but to be totally honest, having another MLA in a rural area isn't going to solve the social and economic problems of that area. I mean, that doesn't do it. It increases the salary a little bit in that area, you may have two more offices, but you're not going to solve the problem by electing another MLA. I mean, that's not going to do it. It's a whole pile of other questions to do it.

Your argument or suggestion that urban Alberta is living off the resources of rural Alberta depends on the economics you

use. I could toss it back and say that rural Alberta is living off the labour of urban Alberta because those resources have to be turned into something useful before they can have any value. And you know, the slaughterhouses and the mills and the rest of it are where the people live in urban areas. I'm not sure that those divisions in either case are useful to this argument. I do know that every MLA worth their salt is run off their feet. Okay? They all wouldn't get elected again if they didn't bust their buns working hard, and anybody who holds an elected position – and I do; in a different grouping, but I do – knows that if you want to get elected again you'd better produce. You'd better work like crazy. The situations may be different, but I would suggest that – I don't know, the unemployment problems, the immigration problems that even provincial people get, the social service calls, the calls about workers' compensation, the calls about pensions. Take a look at that, and my guess is that the urban MLAs get their fair share and their office staff are as overworked as yours are.

You talk about having a whole pile of summer villages; well, they're another level of government. But if urban MLAs are doing they're job properly, my guess is that they're spending a fair amount of time dealing with community leagues, which is perhaps not a level of government, but certainly they meet on a regular basis. They often deal with issues that have as big a dollar value as summer villages have, and they have more members.

Okay, I'm going on too long, but that's . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, no. There's been a good exchange between the two of you.

MR. CROWELL: You know, the balance before, I mean it's . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thanks.

MR. CROWELL: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Stockwell.

MR. DAY: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Jim, when you said – and I appreciate your saying either go overtly political or totally nonpolitical, but basically what you're saying: call a spade a spade?

MR. CROWELL: Uh huh.

MR. DAY: When you suggest the Premier appoints one, the Leader of the Opposition appoints one, and Chief Electoral Officer, is that what you mean by overtly political?

MR. CROWELL: I think that's about as overt as you can get.

MR. DAY: That would be an analogy.

MR. CROWELL: It's very clear what's happening there. You know, he's appointed, but I've got a feeling that he's the most nonpartisan political appointment, and he . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just for clarity: there are three officers who report directly to the Legislative Assembly, not to the government.

MR. CROWELL: Does that mean they're appointed by the Legislative Assembly?

MS BARRETT: Correct. They're a committee comprised . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is correct: an all-party committee.

MR. CROWELL: I'm sorry if I insulted you guys.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. It's the Chief Electoral Officer, the Ombudsman, and the Auditor General. To guarantee their independence.

MR. CROWELL: Then that does it. To answer your question, yes.

MR. DAY: In going the other route, totally nonpolitical, and recognizing nothing's ever totally nonpolitical, but searching out groups and asking for representation, how do you get away from the fact - and I'm asking this by way of suggestion if we were to recommend that to the commission - that groups themselves tend to have political leanings?

MR. CROWELL: The chamber or my group, for example.

MR. DAY: Exactly. If we were to go to the executive of the chamber who would tend, let's say - and I'm just saying "tend," not specifically - to be small "c" conservative and may vote Conservative, or if we look at going to the executive of the AFL who tend to lean to the left, therefore they vote Liberal . . . What would you suggest in terms of looking for groups that are nonpolitical when in fact most groups are?

MR. CROWELL: That's the dilemma we tossed around when we sat and chatted about this, and that's why we came back to the other one.

MR. DAY: I see.

MR. CROWELL: What you have to do is almost forget which tendency they are and try and somehow sector society to get some balance in this kind of thing. The difficulty is that you have - in farm groups you have Unifarm which represents a lot, but you also have the NFU, which tends to be a bit more Liberal. So you have those problems. In labour there's our grouping; there's also the confederation of trade unions, the trades groupings. Again you have difficulties. We struggled with that and came back to overtly political.

MR. DAY: Final question again, hopefully to help us with recommendations to the commission.

Let's just take an average; 20,000 is the average. It's 18-something in terms of electors, and we're rapidly, by virtue of growth, moving towards 20,000. So you mentioned have hearings - you're in favour of that, which of course we are - and then to go back after some guidelines are established. So let's assume we're recommending we go to the average 20,000, and then you take that back. You have meetings in Calgary, and they're meetings somewhat like this, with good input from a few individuals. Then you go down - and again this is hypothetical, but Cardston, Taber-Warner, and Cypress-Redcliff are going to have to be amalgamated to one under this hypothetical situation when you look at the numbers. You go down in that area to

hold the hearings, and 2,000 people show up and they're . . .

MR. CROWELL: Madder than hell.

MR. DAY: That's one way of putting it.

The commission is looking for input from the citizens. They've got 2,000 people coming out to a meeting here saying "No," and they've got four or five in Calgary bringing forward some good thoughts. How does the commission handle that?

MR. CROWELL: Good question. I'm not sure I have any great answer. The commission probably recommends that they have to weigh things as best they can. They're getting a sampling of public opinion, but it's not necessarily a vote. An area that is going to see itself hard done by or, another way to look at it, an area that's going to see its privilege removed to redress a wrong - okay? - people are unhappy about that. You know, when you shift power, which is part of what's happening here, the people who gain are pleased and the people who lose sometimes aren't. So you guys have to hold your nose and do it, or what ends up happening is a Charter case happens and holds your nose for you and helps you do it. I mean, that's the conundrum you face. Two thousand people that are madder than hell - I think I'd earn my MLA pay that day. I don't know what else you'd do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks.

Before we proceed any further, I'd like to introduce Gerry and Carole Wright. Gerry is going to be presenting a brief tomorrow morning. We don't have a scheduled hearing tomorrow morning, but there were a couple of presenters who couldn't be with us either last evening or tonight, so we decided to extend the hours, if you will, to tomorrow morning. We'll be hearing three briefs between 10 and noon tomorrow.

So welcome. You're getting an opportunity to see the process.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: Thank you. It was very kind of you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Now, we had a couple of questions from - if there are no more questions from the committee. Bill?

MR. STEPHENSON: Questions or comments?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, question or comment. Bill, and then Steve. Go ahead, Bill.

MR. STEPHENSON: Just to go back to what Mr. Cardinal was saying, I was asked the same question yesterday about the federal system being fair to Alberta and whatnot. I think I even got the same speech. But I've had a day to think about that, and a couple of things came to mind through that day. In fact, for instance, a place like Newfoundland, which is very small and has very few MPs and yet - and Lord knows, nobody disagrees with John Crosbie more than I do, but the man is effective, and he's brought Newfoundland issues to the forefront. Some people might say he's colourful, but either way he has brought Newfoundland issues to the forefront. I look at Alberta with Joe Clark and Don Mazankowski; surely they have a lot to do with the fact that we're keeping the Via Rail system through here, even though a very profitable run through the mountains and Calgary is being cut off. They're effective. I wonder if people aren't complaining about the system too much and not looking

at the people representing them. And that's not to be biased or anything. I think that's the problem: people complain about the system but they're not looking at the people who are representing them for effective leadership.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's your comment.  
Steve?

MR. PROCHASKA: Well, from my point of view and from talking about politics in general from another point of view, this is really a nonissue.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What is a nonissue, Steve?

MR. PROCHASKA: This electoral boundaries. More or less the whole electoral process in general is really a nonissue, because the way they see it, as long as they're getting a wage that meets their demands, as long as the wage is being increased with raises, as long as the laws are more or less just and the system's more or less – they call it a system rather than the government because the government works from 8:30 to 4:30 or 8 to 4:30. It really has nothing to do with that. It's really a nonissue. I took on the job this spring with the city of Edmonton as an enumerator, and I found out that I was paid a dollar a house, and you really move slow – and my point with this: the enumeration allowance.

The next point that's got to do with the enumeration process is that people complain about enumerators. Okay? Well, this may have something to do with the electoral boundaries when people complain about whole sections, or let's say a whole townhouse complex is being missed, and that people are often not home. When you knock on their doors and they're not home – you know, you have to make a paying proposition out of it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Can you wrap up, please, Steve?

MR. PROCHASKA: Okay. What I'm trying to say here is that (a) it's a nonissue with the [inaudible], and (b) the enumeration process itself is designed to more or less not run efficiently because it has no system of telling people that enumerators were there. If they had a system of telling people that the enumerators were there and if they had a central location where they can register instead of having the enumerators walk the beat . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thanks, Steve.  
David.

MR. BURGHARDT: Yes. I'd just like to kind of respond to the gentleman from the labour council, his point about perfect equality and not going to give a percentage. I think the danger in that is that – we heard the four and seven. Nobody quite knows how that happened. Four urban, I think it was – four urban equals seven rural, and nobody quite knows the pattern . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: The other way around.

MR. BURGHARDT: The other way around? Okay, four/seven inequality. And I think if you don't put some kind of cap, plus or minus, out there, there's a danger of it becoming the fact but not being apparent. I think that would have to be [inaudible].

I'd also like to respond about this central Canada stuff that we hear so much about in Alberta. You know, I'm a Canadian first. Far before I'm an Albertan, I'm a Canadian. I have lots of relatives all across Canada, both from the prairies and other parts of Canada, and my children are Canadian. I guess I am a Canadian. I've got some relatives in Prince Edward Island, and I would be – you know, we hear this antagonistic feeling about this disparity with Ontario, and let's pretend that Quebec – you know, you can't even talk about Quebec. I can talk about it. You know, if we had the situation where Prince Edward Island had the same representation as Alberta, people would be up in arms. Yet many people in this province expect the same representation as Ontario. Just the geography – we travel with a tent trailer in the summertime; we can drive across Alberta in a day. In five, we didn't even finish Ontario; it's a big province.

Another thing I could respond to: I was not aware that the Chief Electoral Officer is a nonpartisan person. That's the kind of person I would like to have on a . . . I said a judicial committee. Mind you, that to me is the number one person who should be on that committee. I wasn't aware that this officer was so bias-free – after the appointment, anyway; I don't know about before – and that's what I'm looking for.

I also would like to tell the MLAs that I never once badmouthed your 30 percent increase. I haven't, and I will not do that. I've represented a fairly large group of individuals. I don't want to mention that, because really that's not part of the conversation. But I do know that there's a lot of stuff goes on that's totally unrecognized. Totally unrecognized. I'm sure you people live that in your lives every day, and you sacrifice your family life for that too. I hear people say they're leaving their families. I can understand that.

I think the role of the MLA is really misunderstood. I think it should be regarded as a full-time position. I wouldn't want to have a member from the press here to start saying that, you know – I know it's unpopular in this province – but really, you're not paid enough. I really believe that. A poor person cannot afford to run for elected office if the remuneration is not satisfactory, because that person entering politics, I would believe, would have very high ideals – all of you – and to realize those takes a lot of energy. If you're getting 4,000 bucks a year to do that, how in the dickens do you devote the energy when you haven't got the sort of sustenance?

A Member of Parliament from this city who was once the Speaker in the House of Commons told me he had to maintain two households. Marcel Lambert, some years ago, explained that to me in detail. I was at a nonpartisan meeting. He said, "I've got to keep an office; people expect me here." The demands were very, very heavy on the individual. So I think that's a problem. You've got to educate the community, the people, the electors that this is really a big job and an important job.

I guess the other thing I'd like to talk about a little is this access to services thing, and I agree with Mr. Cardinal quite a bit. The only thing I would respond to is that after an urban dweller buys expensive real estate – and Calgary and Edmonton are pretty expensive places, and probably Red Deer – certainly when you get out of town . . .

MR. DAY: Red Deer is much more reasonable.

MR. BURGHARDT: Okay. Well, you get out of the city 50 or 60 miles – 100 kilometres – your mortgage payments are significantly less.

In the city, too, I'd have to emphasize that after we pay our mortgage costs, because our mortgages have to be much higher, and after we pay our extra transportation costs, and after we are in the car every day, day in and day out – the average of an urban dweller is an hour or half hour each way – we haven't got much time or money for these recreational things. They're there, but we haven't got . . . That's a big problem. The fact that that same house – and I have property in the Lac La Biche constituency, a cottage; that's my recreation. The costs are very, very high in the city. That's the other side of it you need to balance.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. I'm . . . [interjection] No. Sorry, Steve.

MR. PROCHASKA: I just wanted to comment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I appreciate that, but I'm going to ask you to do that after we adjourn, because of the time.

I'm going to ask each of the members if they'd like to sum up or make a closing comment. We'll do that, so we'll start.

Pam, any closing comments you'd like to make?

MS BARRETT: Just exactly what I told the group this afternoon in Edson. I'm really pleased with the level of thought that people have put into this subject and also the extent to which challenges to those thoughts are taken in such good faith and responded to with real and due consideration. It's twice in one day. Thank you.

MR. DAY: Well, I can echo that. I said at the first of these meetings we attended way up in High Level that I learned something at that meeting from comments that came forth that I'd never thought of before. That's occurred at every meeting, and this one's no exception. You've brought some very challenging concepts and thoughts, and I appreciate that.

Just a minor point, Dave. You used the P.E.I./Alberta analogy, saying Albertans would be upset if P.E.I. had more representation. In fact, because of a quirk in the Constitution, P.E.I. in fact does have more representation. They have a level they cannot drop below, which I think it was Sir John A. used to bring them in at one point. That's just a small point, but I appreciate the good comments. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mike.

MR. CARDINAL: Okay, just shortly, I guess. As a member of this committee I feel truly honoured to be part of the group to be involved in the design of maybe a good democratic system in the province in the future. I really appreciate people who come forward and sincerely and openly express themselves as to how they feel we should move forward in the future and have a good democratic system in our province. We would appreciate that, because I'm sure you people are also away from your families to take part in this process, and that's good to see.

MR. SIGURDSON: Jim, when you summed up, you said that some people might view the constituency boundary movement as being a win or a loss. I'm hopeful that whatever the recommendations of this committee are and whenever they go to a commission, Alberta as a whole will be the winner. I want to thank all of you for your presentations and your time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Earlier today, as has been alluded to by Pam and others, we were in the West Yellowhead constituency. While in Edson we met with, I believe, 10 individuals: the chairmen of the two school boards, the mayor of the town, a member from the labour council, and citizens who were interested. It's really fascinating when you look at how different parts of this province view the issue. The primary concern in West Yellowhead was: don't change our boundaries; it's a big enough constituency now, and our MLA is working hard in getting around, but don't change it, don't make it any larger. Here we've heard concerns about getting back to the principle of one person, one vote. That's been the overriding concern.

One of the unique features of Canada is that we're not the pure British or the pure American model. We look at the United States where their House of Representatives goes to extraordinary means to get to a pure one-person, one-vote concept. Yet they have a Senate with equal representation regardless of the size of the state to ensure there's a regional balance and regional representation. We're somewhere in between, in a blending. That's why I think the comments you've all made today have been very important and helpful in balancing to some degree some of the remarks made in other parts of the province. So as we continue this process, I'm sure we're going to hear other divergent points of view. But I want to conclude by making one other remark.

The fact that this committee exists is a quirk in our history, in that never before has a legislative committee been struck to determine the parameters an Electoral Boundaries Commission should follow. In the past the House leaders – the Government House Leader, the Official Opposition House Leader, and if there was a third party, the third party House leader – got together, agreed on certain amendments, and in consultation with the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Premier and the Speaker and a few others, names were put forward and the Act was changed. And that was it.

We're going through an extraordinary exercise. We're doing it because of a B.C. court case. We're going out and meeting with and speaking to, but most importantly listening to what Albertans have to say to us. As mentioned, there isn't a meeting that we don't hear something new or that we don't hear a point that's presented in a slightly different way than it was presented earlier. We know the challenge; it's a huge challenge. But it's also an exciting task force, and with your help and the help of others, we feel confident.

So thanks so very much for coming out and sharing your time with us tonight.

[The committee adjourned at 9:09 p.m.]

