

[Chairman: Mr. Bogle]

[10:08 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, we'll officially open the meeting and welcome Jim Heron, former Member of the Legislative Assembly, who's going to present a brief this morning.

You've received the letter, Jim, so you've gone through the material, based on the makeup of the committee and the purpose of the committee and the statistics shown in this document.

MR. HERON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just received the letter a few moments ago. I have skimmed it, and it's just excellent.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would you like us to go through that and give you some . . .

MR. HERON: Oh, no. I have the gist of it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I thought you would.

MR. HERON: The only thing, Mr. Chairman, is that there will be some duplication in my remarks, because I wasn't aware it had been sorted out so succinctly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No problem. If you have no further questions of us, then, we can proceed with your presentation.

MR. HERON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, hon. members, and committee members. I want to thank you at the outset for the opportunity of appearing before you. I'm going to briefly highlight some of the issues pertaining to the electoral boundaries review. My comments will be specific to the Stony Plain constituency. It is my intent that the problems and possible solutions, however, will have broader scope and indeed that there exists some practical remedy for other parts of Alberta.

I would first like to present the Stony Plain constituency, then talk a bit about the democratic representation, and then focus upon some of the problems associated with existing boundaries. As I mentioned at the outset, I was not aware of the research done in this brief, so if you just bear with me for a moment, I'll make some comments which are just applicable to the Stony Plain area and those constituencies surrounding it.

Stony Plain constituency consists of 22,866 registered voters. This figure compares to surrounding constituencies as follows – and I'm going to round these up, if I might, or down in the case of those below the half – Drayton Valley, 18,000; Whitecourt, 14,000; Barrhead, 14,000; and Westlock-Sturgeon, 20,000. Stony Plain constituency is 16 percent larger than the next, Westlock-Sturgeon, and a whopping 66 percent larger than neighbouring Whitecourt. To put this into perspective, consider that Stony Plain, which is classified as a rural constituency, is about 100 percent larger than 20 rural constituencies. Examples are, of course, Bow Valley, Cardston, Chinook, Innisfail, Lacombe, Little Bow, Macleod, Pincher Creek-Crowsnest, St. Paul, Stettler, Vegreville, and Vermilion-Viking. I've tried to pick those to see that there's a good cross section from about Alberta that are half the size. Stony Plain is 182 percent greater than Cardston, the smallest rural constituency. This figure translates to a 2.8 to 1 voter ratio. While this ratio is unacceptable, it is much more democratic than the 4 to 1 experienced in some city ridings. Enough said about the relative voting power between constituencies. Let me turn to what I will entitle "setting commonsense

boundaries."

Prior to 1986 this committee, your predecessors, sharply reduced the size of Stony Plain. It is my understanding they recommended more natural boundaries to the north and west, but citizen input prompted another alternative, an alternative which created voter confusion, voter anger, and voter apathy. My presentation today relates my experience with these unworkable boundaries, gained while campaigning one nomination, two elections, and serving one term as MLA.

The east and south boundaries are in sharp contrast to the north and west boundaries. I will briefly illustrate this point. The east boundary, the Edmonton city limits, and the south, the North Saskatchewan River, create absolutely no problem nor confusion. These are natural or well-defined boundaries. Let me deal with the remaining two boundaries separately. To the north I am identifying the voters who live in the county of Parkland but vote in either Westlock-Sturgeon or Barrhead constituencies. This narrow band of residents live in an area which fluctuates between two and four miles from the county of Parkland boundary, which is to their north. These residents have no natural connection to Barrhead or Westlock. Their work, recreation, and trading patterns are to the south, towards Stony Plain, Spruce Grove, and Edmonton. Committee members, imagine for a moment saying to a voter that the constituency line is not a road but at the edge of some field. If you travel north from Stony Plain on secondary road 779 and you measure, say, from Highway 16X, on the right side you're in Stony Plain for four miles but on the left for two miles. We are still fairly descriptive until we move into a very hilly countryside dotted with lakes and populated with acreages. Move this conversation into kilometres, and believe me, I think you will quickly see what I mean when voter confusion erupts.

Common sense dictates that the boundary be set along the Parkland county line. It would be so much more practical and convenient to say that if you live in Parkland, you vote in Stony Plain constituency. My point here is not to make a case to move the boundary but to make a case for setting boundaries throughout Alberta, wherever possible, to avoid that kind of confusion and that kind of a problem.

The west boundary can be described as follows. If you travel west on Highway 16 to the Darwell corner, it is a north-south line extending from the Saskatchewan River in the south to the Parkland-Lac Ste. Anne county line at the northwest corner. The north-south line runs across Lake Wabamun about the halfway mark and across Low Water Lake. Believe me, this line, taken together with survey correction lines and the lakes, et cetera, is only obvious to the experienced air navigator. It is my understanding that your predecessors on this committee recommended that this boundary be set at the north-south road of secondary 770, which runs into the Alaska Highway, number 43. This road crosses the Saskatchewan River at the Genesee bridge, a well-known highway and clearly defined natural boundary.

There exist other commonsense alternatives to accomplishing the ideal constituency size. If I were on your committee, I would superimpose the federal constituency boundaries to eliminate voter confusion by creating different boundaries in close proximity to one another. Enough said, I think, about establishing the boundary lines.

It is the clearly enunciated role of your committee to examine the urban/rural voting populations and the impact upon the democratic legislative representation. Stony Plain is unique in that it is populated by an urban/rural split, a large urban/rural population which commutes to Edmonton on a fairly regular

basis. Let me illustrate with numbers from the recent electoral list of voters. The city of Spruce Grove has 7,200 voters, the town of Stony Plain 4,000 voters. If one adds these populations to those voters living east of Spruce Grove, the figures add to 17,000. Let us recall the voter ratio of 2.8 to 1 presented earlier and those numbers in the context of your research, which was given to me this morning, in terms of the ideal constituency size.

Let us look at two objectives and two solutions. First, if it is an objective to maintain an urban/rural constituency, then a proportionate voting population and equality of representation can only be accommodated by shifting the boundaries at one end or the other. Secondly, if it is feasible for your committee to examine the possibility of splitting out urban voters from rural voters, Spruce Grove and Stony Plain would be ideal candidates to look at, by taking out two of Alberta's fastest growing communities and creating an entirely new constituency.

It is not my purpose today to make firm recommendations as to where the boundaries should be but to put out some alternatives and some of the problems associated with the setting of the boundaries in the past. It is my recommendation that the problems and examples identified by this presentation be utilized by this committee as a framework in setting criteria for re-establishing boundaries and commonsense voter representation not only in Stony Plain but throughout Alberta.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Jim.
Questions? Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Yes. Jim, you started off talking about population size. Are you, then, advocating that we do in fact move to having constituencies that are fairly equal in terms of voter representation?

MR. HERON: Ideally, yes. In fact, in looking through the research – and this is the first time it was presented – I have trouble with the 25 percent over/25 percent under model. It still means, I think, at the extreme end – that is, the low end – that you'll still have very nearly a 2 to 1 ratio, where someone's vote is twice as important as someone else's in Alberta.

MR. BRUSEKER: The range, I think, would be about from 23,000 to a low of 14,000, assuming we stick with the provincial average, the way it is right now.

MR. HERON: Well, I was thinking more of the 9,000 on the 14,000. If you had someone on the lowest end at 14,000 and someone in a constituency at the high end, you've got very nearly the 2 for 1 split.

MR. BRUSEKER: Almost 2 to 1; yeah, you're right. But I don't think we'll ever get it perfect so that it's one man, one vote kind of thing.

MR. HERON: No, but I think that if I were on the committee, I would have to have given fair satisfaction that you'd reviewed it and that your decisions were deliberate in the face of the contemporary literature and judicial decisions made to date.

MS BARRETT: Jim, a lot of people have mentioned this notion of trying to get conformity between other electoral boundaries. If one had to choose or recommend to a commission a choice between either a federal, a municipal, or a county line, which would be your preference? Which would you think

would be the more appropriate?

MR. HERON: The county line works to the advantage of the provincial scene by far. It's so much easier for rural people to say, "Well, if I pay my taxes and the county grader goes by my road, I'm in this voting area." The federal constituency line is often just as arbitrary and just as vague, really. We have one of those now in our west boundary that I wouldn't recommend to this committee. But I think the committee should be aware of a federal line if they're readjusting a boundary, say, within a mile or two of it. You're going to create mass confusion when you have elections fairly close, as we did in the November/March experience.

MS BARRETT: One other question I have. One of the recommendations we've received suggests that we shouldn't recommend to the commission any margin of variance that would be allowable. He argued that that means that that margin of variance is what inevitably gets targeted. Would you agree with that argument or disagree?

MR. HERON: I'm sorry, Pam. A margin of variance: you're speaking of the 25 percent?

MS BARRETT: The 25 percent or any percent rule. He argued that the instructions to the commission should be to target for equality and make exceptions when necessary, as opposed to telling the commission that it's okay to have 10 percent or 20 percent or what have you.

MR. HERON: Well, I think it would be practical to state your workable objectives. I mean, "That was our objective, and that's what we tried to accomplish, but the commission in its wisdom had in this case or that case deviated from that." But no, I think it would be acceptable to say what your parameters are at the outset. And if you don't agree with 25 percent and it has to be 30 or it has to be 20, it's a conscious decision of this committee to set that as a guideline. "That's our guideline; that's our benchmark." If you don't, I think it's going to be very difficult to justify the exceptions.

MS BARRETT: Okay. Good point.

MR. BRUSEKER: Jim, you've alluded to southern Alberta being very sparsely populated, and you're aware that right now we have 83 MLAs in the Legislature. What's your opinion, Jim, in terms of equalization? Should we look at an increase in the total number of seats by adding extra to the urban areas? Or should we be looking at maintaining the 83 and have that as our sacred number, perhaps combining several of the smaller rural constituencies to keep the number at 83 and then increasing the urban? Which do you think is the better way to go?

MR. HERON: Well, Frank, I think you have to set an objective of where you want to get over a long period of time. I don't think that you can change the fabric of Alberta's representation in one sitting. You have to set some guidelines of where you would like to be in the ideal structure, but I think it would be disruptive to the Alberta voter if you moved to the ideal in one sitting.

MR. BRUSEKER: I see. Okay. So maybe take a step in the direction right now?

MR. HERON: I use as an illustration that when you go through the Peace River country from John D'Or Prairie down to Peace River; you have many, many small communities, sparsely situated communities, and they have accepted over time, I think, their representation in this Legislature. If you were to impose the same kind of representation in, say, southern Alberta, it would be unnecessarily disruptive to the Alberta public over one sitting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pat may be able to help on this. I recall that during one of the federal redistribution exercises, Saskatchewan's population had dropped quite significantly in relation to the number of seats it had, but there was a safeguard in the legislation which gave them some comfort for one more redistribution. So they lost several seats, as I recall, but not as many as they would have had they gone to the pure mathematical formula. You may be able to help us with that, Pat.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: The federal legislation provided a grandfather clause so that no jurisdiction, as a result of redistribution, would have fewer seats at the end of redistribution than they had going into it. Even Quebec, for example, with their 75 seats, under the formula worked out would have only had 74 seats.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But in the following redistribution, did not Saskatchewan lose a number of seats?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No? So no province loses . . .

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Not in the federal system.

MR. CHAIRMAN: . . . in the federal system.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: The grandfather clause covered that aspect.

MR. BRUSEKER: But we have no such grandfather clause in any legislation that would affect Alberta provincially?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Not in provincial legislation.

MR. HERON: I'd like to make a statement then, if I could, and then ask a question of the committee.

Where you have an influx of new people – and Spruce Grove is a good example. In 1971 I think the population was 2,000; it's now at 13,000. In Stony Plain the two years back-to-back are the fastest growing, percentage-wise, of communities measured in terms of building starts and population growth. Is it the wish of this committee to try and sort out populations? I say that because as you travel west from the city limits, you have wealthy acreage owners, traditional farmers from rich farmers to lower income farmers; you have a city, a town, a village, summer villages. You know, the diversity of needs of those people are often in conflict with one another. Is there going to be a serious attempt by the committee to say, "We'd like to sort out the representation of these people," or is it going to be strictly on a population area?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Jim, as you know, we as a committee are not drawing lines. We're not the commission.

MR. HERON: I understand that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What we will be doing, though, is recommending to the Legislature the parameters within which the commission will operate. Your points are certainly in order. I mean, we have a mandate that's quite broad. It's been suggested to us that we should consider recommending greater stimulation by the province in terms of some economic activities in more sparsely populated areas as one way. Now, that's not going to bring short-term results, but it's still within our overall mandate to make such a recommendation if we so choose as a committee. So we have the ability to address the kinds of issues you're discussing in terms of recommendations for parameters, for guidelines.

MR. HERON: I see.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The commission then, of course, will go about its task of actually drawing boundaries and doing what it's been mandated to do.

MR. HERON: I think that's a good concept, but in listening to your presentation, I think in reality it would probably be extremely difficult to do that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I wanted to ask Patrick if he had any questions or comments he would like to make.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: No. When we go off the record, I'll be pleased to share with you some of the unique factors that the last commission faced and why Stony Plain boundaries are as they are now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Good. Was there anything else?

I wanted to ask a question. We have one unique situation in the province, Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South, where the boundaries of the two constituencies go beyond the city boundaries. So the MLA for Red Deer-North, as an example, represents the northern half of the city of Red Deer and also represents acreage owners and farmsteads in the county of Red Deer. The same is true in Red Deer-South.

Some people have suggested that we should consider urban/rural constituencies like, I guess, a wheel – one analogy that was used – where you've got the narrow part of the pie in the urban area and fanning out into a rural area. You represented a constituency with a large number of acreage owners right up against the city boundary and a number of farms, as well as two major growth centres. Do you have any thoughts on the concept of an urban/rural riding?

MR. HERON: The needs and the representation are so different between the urban and the rural that I think it will have to be a deliberate decision and recommendation of this committee. When you mentioned lived "up against the city," I think we have to be aware that Spruce Grove is one of the 17 cities in Alberta. You know, it's a city, as I've mentioned before, with 7,000 voters in it. So the needs are different, and I think in the long term the committee will want to address the differences in the representation required between the urban voter and the rural voter. They're often at conflict with one another in their issues.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. Well, that's valuable input for us.

MR. HERON: I can think of one very simple example. One of

the common complaints was when a neighbouring farmer spread fertilizer and the whole city was up in arms. Clearly the wishes and thoughts of the rural are entirely different from those of the urban dweller.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Anyone else?

All right. We'll take a short break while we go in camera.

[The committee met in camera from 10:31 a.m. to 10:41 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any further questions of Jim or any further comments?

MS BARRETT: I would just observe that it's interesting you did all this homework and came up with so many of the observations the research obviously did. So good for you, Jim. You did good work on it.

MR. HERON: Thanks, Pam.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks for coming out, Jim. We appreciate it.

MR. HERON: Thank you. Nice meeting you, Frank. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Pam.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's a pleasure to have you. As I said, if you'd like to stay, you're more than welcome.

MR. HERON: Is there another presentation?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Gerry Wright is coming in. We expected him at 10:30. We got a note that he won't be here until 11.

MR. HERON: I'd love to stay, if you wouldn't mind.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Why don't we take a short coffee break and then come back? We've also got one written submission from Deborah Miller that we'll read into the record.

[The committee recessed from 10:42 a.m. to 10:52 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, we'll reconvene.

Gerry, welcome to our committee. You've got our background material. Rather than going through the presentation, I might just ask at the outset if there are any questions for clarification you want relative to the role of our committee. You know that we're not the commission. We're not actually drawing boundaries; we're merely looking at the parameters that we believe the committee should be recommending to the Assembly and then, hopefully, incorporated into legislation governing the boundaries commission.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: Yes, it's a several-step process. We're not at the fount of power right now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If there are no other questions, proceed with your brief, please.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: Okay. Let's see. Mr. Chairman, I brought one particularly titled in deference to your role, and some other copies. I took a kind of guess. One, two, three, four . . . I think I kept one here for me. I think I have another

one.

Well, everyone, ladies and gentlemen, I do appreciate an opportunity to be before you, particularly this morning, taking a bit of special time by each of you to do this.

The subject of electoral balance probably has been close to my heart for a good number of years, having grown up in the '30s and '40s in Montreal, where I lived through most of the Duplessis regime, as it's always called – regime – and I really think it was such. In those years there was a kind of Quebec compact, an internal compact between the merchants of Westmount, the church as a kind of oral authority, and the political party as the administrator of power and money throughout the province. It meant in the distribution of seats in Quebec, which was typical of most of Canada, I guess, that there was an enormous imbalance of voting power or voting effectiveness within the rural areas. I'm sure you all know how that picture is because you've been studying it. I don't need to detail it. It's not unlike the kind of thing we're trying to address here in Alberta now.

This dominance in Quebec maintained power, really, over the city of Montreal. In Montreal the English community was too small to have real political clout. Instead, it bought it essentially with money and commerce. There was no middle class in Quebec at the time, so the city was really quite weak in that sense. In particular, there was no French middle class at all. There was some English middle class, very small in number, but really there was absolutely no French middle class. The rural voting power, as I say, was enormous. And not only that – one of the things that always troubled me, I suppose from my moralist precepts of youth and YMCA youth and so on in those days, was that the rural votes were pretty cheap to get. You either bought a road or put out a couple of low-grade contracts for a little graveling or something and you were pretty sure you could stay in power. That always gnawed at me considerably. In other words, the urban votes didn't matter very much. Certainly the English votes didn't matter a damn.

The politics and the culture were also troublesome to me, a bit Klan-like in their kind of religious rage against Jehovah's Witnesses, in their smouldering resentment against the dominant English commercial minority, financial minority, and the English and their wars of empire. So there was a lot of heat in Quebec, certainly not particularly rural oriented or rural based. One would not want to make that accusation. I think the city people of Quebec and the rural people of Quebec, French, lived by much the same tenets, feelings, beliefs, and clerical authorities.

Well, as far as Quebec is concerned, this is now past, as far as I can see. Quebec has a middle class, French, in the towns and cities. The church is viewed from its primacy and its oral authority by the media. The media are now really the information source, the information authority in Quebec. It has moved from a traditional society to a modern media society. The English are certainly reduced in their place by the enormous thrust – and this is the exciting part, I think, of Montreal's and Quebec's history – of French corporate success and mercantile power, newly inherited. As a matter of fact, they're advancing far beyond Ontario and the rest of the provinces insofar as financial legislation is concerned. They're really going to show Toronto their heels, I think, as a city.

Montreal the city has been the locus and the engine of these massive and rapid changes. Without the trade, the culture, the universities, the finance and commerce of Montreal, Quebec would remain less than a Third World economic dependency today, I think, in the 1980s. It's the city that makes the thing.

So my premise, and one I think I've held for all these years, is that the voice of the cities is vital to the well-being of the whole.

If that sets the stage, a sort of preamble, let me talk a little bit about Alberta and how I see things here and the significance of the kinds of considerations you people are being asked to make.

I start with the subhead Cities in the Economy. In a series of works spanning the 1960s to the 1980s, a learned observer and author about our economies has offered a well-wrought theory that cities came before agriculture. I know this grabs the craw of most everyone, whether they're rural or urban, an agriculturalist or merchant, because we've really been taught from the cradle that all of society really was built on the roots of agriculture. This remarkable lady, Jane Jacobs, has spent some years working at the idea, and I think proving it out, that actually cities came before basic agriculture. Now, I'm not trying to point this out for some prideful reason that I happen to come from a city – a large one and one I love, Montreal – and I am truly urban. You'll see, as I develop from her position and observations, a deeper rationale than that. It's not a prejudice or narrow bias. She goes through her look at the cities, from the Indus and Phoenicia to London, New York, and Toronto. Essentially she's a modernist, not an ancient historian, but she does draw from the earliest of times to try and build her theory. We're brought to see the power of great trading cities and how they have brought into being nations and kings. We also notice in her historical review that when cities fail, as cities like Rome and Athens in their time, then so also do the empires they fostered. I'm sure we need to have many years of debate over cause and effect there, but I'm tending to accept her sequence of events.

So for Miss Jacobs the very seeds – if you'll allow the pun there, the double entendre – of agriculture were a product of clustered settlements, as were methods of animal husbandry. Along with talismen and local natural resources, these foodstuffs were part of the first trader's saddlebag or knapsack of commodities as he trekked about the heart of Europe or other parts of the world where cities were developing and trading.

So with abiding conviction I perceive that for Alberta, indeed the whole of Canada, new attention must turn to the role of our cities in our economic well-being now and in the future. I think if there is a premise, and a strong premise deeply believed in, it is that we in Alberta now, in fact in all of Canada, must look to our cities much more intelligently in terms of their economic power as generators of the economy of today and the future. I'd refer you to a fascinating true parable, written again by Jacobs in her more recent book. Incidentally, she's been authoring since 1963 to 1984, so she's spent some years on this subject. She looks at cities essentially as bases of economy. She's looking at economies. She's not looking at street design and prettying up like we did in Strathcona or other places and towns in Alberta or the world. She's really looking at them as the engines of economy.

She recounts the story or experience of Uruguay from 1900, the turn of the century, till about 1960 when it was in complete collapse. It's a very interesting parable for us to review here in Alberta or in Canada as a whole, being an economy largely based on natural resource extraction and exportation. So I refer you to that story, where Uruguay went from great wealth to extreme poverty and political chaos because it had no real trading cities. It had Montevideo as a marvelous city and a great place to live in, but it lived off resources too long. The resources lost their markets, changed their value, whatever. You can read the story for all the details. But the fact of the matter

is that when those commodities collapsed, there was no strong city with diversification and trading strength to pick up the slack and keep the economy going, and Uruguay collapsed.

Well, we can learn from this, and I think we ought to be paying more attention to our metropolitan centres, as big or as small as they are. I mean, they are not by any means world-class or world-size cities. We might think they're pretty classy, but they're not world-size like New York, London, Rome, et cetera. We need to look to our metropolitan centres of Calgary and Edmonton to find ways and means to enhance their trade domestically – and when I say domestically, I mean internal within the province and internal within the country – and internationally. That means trade in hard goods, not oil and gas and pulp and paper but manufactured, upgraded commodities. It's never been easy, but if we don't do it, life is going to be awfully tough when the resource picture changes.

Modern technology since the tractor has continued to depopulate the countryside, and this was historically true through long periods of time even before the tractor. I just thought I'd plug in at the tractor point because that's around the turn of the century. It has continued to depopulate the countryside, not viciously but really to the advantage of those in the countryside. As new technologies and farm technologies are developed by the cities, they're exported to the countryside and that releases people from the countryside to come to the cities and fill jobs in the expanding city. So it's not a bad or evil cycle. We need to recognize it, though, and acknowledge it. What has happened, because this is the very reason why we are here today, is that this has created a considerable discrepancy over time between the representation of rural and urban voters. I just managed quickly to get through some numbers which Bob was kind enough to give me last night in some material and found that Cardston, I believe, is the smallest riding with 8,105 voters and Edmonton-Whitemud the largest with 31,536. So this makes a Cardston vote worth three and a half times the Edmonton-Whitemud vote in value. From the numbers I was able to derive, in a gross voter list of 1.5 million distributed to 83 seats the normative district would be 18,685 voters. Well, voters to population runs about 66 of the population. So when we say rep by pop, I'm never quite sure whether in the days of King John and the charter they really meant voting pop on the electoral list, or if they meant the whole pop. But there you are. Take whichever numbers you would choose. Throughout this study, and I'm sure through your studies, you are taking "pop" to mean numbers of persons on the electoral list, the voter list.

So anyhow, in Alberta the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act in 1980 decreed the following balance. Now, there may be a later document. I haven't had time to get through absolutely everything, so I'm not sure if this is the very latest. There might be some revisions to the Act since 1980, and I think there are. So at the time this decree was made, one really wonders on what basis. I'm sure it had validity, but there's no explanation. It seems to be kind of an a priori pick out of the air. I noticed that in B.C., in their work, it seems also to be a kind of an a priori thing pulled out of the air. No explanation of a basis as to why it should be 75 seats or why it should be whatever it is. Anyway, we have this decree: 43 urban electoral districts and 36 rural.

The composition was to be identified as Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge, and the seven small cities. That was the urban composition. The rural is all other somehow divided by boundaries, but all other. Well, in reflection of the true role and function of cities, to me the inclusion of the nine urbanized

districts is really of serious, questionable validity. Even while they are urbanized in housing form, I see these communities as essentially supply centres to rural regions. They do not perform full city functions in the sense of major trade, major manufacture, major commerce, and major industry. I see them really as rural-oriented with rural interests and as cities really performing as towns, if defined in what I see as functional economic and sociological terms.

Well, if this argument can be substantiated, we in fact have a province more out of balance than sections 11 and 12(1) would suggest – that's the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, which you are familiar with – and the picture is a little more thus: 32 urban districts and 45 rural districts. Now, I mean, we can keep juggling around numbers, and I know that there are justifications for almost any new juggle you make. We seem to be trying to display here a sense of balance where they're trying to pretend that there's any superabsolute authority about any set of numbers on the subject. But it would seem to me that the balance is really a little more out than was supposed by the decree back here of 4,336. It that the new one? Oh, okay – 1984. All right. That'll reduce this shift a bit, but the idea, I think, or the concept still holds.

So numerically, therefore, there are two metropolitan districts which are our major trading centres and primary economic generators and are seriously underrepresented if a tally is made of the gross rural voters with 45 representatives and the gross urban voters, which I calculated at 3 this morning at around 780,865, not having any real, reliable pop data to go with. Anyway, they're represented with 32 representatives. This makes the average urban voters per constituency 24,000 and average rural voters per constituency 17,000.

The two consequent concerns that arise from these numbers, accurate or slightly inaccurate or whatever in fact the real numbers may be – in philosophical terms I see the consequences as this: the imbalance in the value of the urban vote ranges on the extreme from 3 to 1 over to an average imbalance of 3 to 2. Without doubt – and I think this is one of the cruxes that I felt years ago in Quebec – Alberta and British Columbia subscribe to the same fundamental concept that each elector's vote shall count equally toward the election of their representative in the House regardless of what district in which they place that vote. So, okay. This is not so under present conditions. Well, we've gone through a lot just to get to this position which we all know is true, but it has to be stated, I guess.

Two, and this is really my perception, where I feel that I'm adding a bit to the fundamental rights and principles of democracy: the second implication of imbalanced representation is the potential for distortion of policy on crucial issues of economic diversification and trade, education – which happens fundamentally in the cities in its biggest sense, in a way – and technological development, which also is especially a city function.

Oops. This shouldn't be "Ratification." I missed that. This should be "Rectification" or something. Sorry about that, if you're following along there.

Rectification can be approached by – well, two mechanisms at least. I mean there are other much more esoteric – at least for us they'd be esoteric because they'd be such large changes, you know, in the styles of Europe, with populist kinds of mechanisms for counting votes and naming who gets elected, et cetera. Well, I think they'd be great to have, but I just don't think they're within the realm of realization for us in North America. I don't think we'll get that far out of step, particularly in little Alberta.

So I see two real possibilities: the direct increase in the number of urban seats, or expansion of the rural boundaries to take in greater voter population. The more likely resolve, I'm sure, which we're all going to approach, is a boundary adjustment in some cases and new seats in others.

Perhaps a last word on matter of principle. To come within a 20 percent variance allowance, the Alberta voter population of 1.5 million would be represented thus in a 93-seat House: with an average of 16,675 voters, plus 20 percent would give a maximum of 20,010, and the minus would give 13,340. The resultant largest gross variance would be 6,670.

Now, let me indicate that these heroic numbers just worked out to try and demonstrate a set of concepts as much as – I'm not arguing that it ought to be that number or that we ought to have a 93-seat House. In an 83-seat House and a 25 percent variance the resultant representation is 18,685 or maximum 22,422. I presume you're all following, so I don't have to be that . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Gerry, excuse me; I think you've got a typing error there. Where it says 20 percent, it should be 25. You've got your average.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: Oh, here. Oh, jeez. I wonder if my numbers did that, too, last night. Twenty, 25 . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think your numbers are right.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: My numbers are right? Sorry. I didn't even notice that this morning. Okay.

MR. BRUSEKER: I think the numbers represent a 20 percent variance. I think the typing error is up at the top line. This should say "20" right here.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: Oh, this is 20. Somewhere I should have . . . Didn't I do a 25? Well, one of these ought to be 25. I think this . . .

MS BARRETT: No, your numbers would indicate that in an 83-seat House with a 20 percent variance, the range would be as shown: 22,422 or 14,948. That's based on 20 percent.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: All right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So the intent is 20 percent, not 25.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: My intent is to go to 20 percent.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: Oh, yeah. This is what I did. Okay. Thanks, Bob.

While it's true that the conventional wisdom across Canada has accepted the 25 percent variance guideline, even that number develops a sizable gross variance of 7,474 voters in Alberta. The federal actual is 10 percent according to a personal referent from political science that I was talking to yesterday. I don't have any data for that other than this personal comment. Does anybody know if that is so?

MS BARRETT: It's 25 percent, actually.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah, we understand it's 25.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: The actual?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Very close to 25 in Alberta.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: No, sorry. This is the federal; I'm talking about the federal government . . . Oh, you mean the federal in Alberta? I'm sorry.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Yes. You go from Macleod, which is around 66,000, to several in Calgary which are over 100,000.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: Okay. Then I misconstrued that comment that somebody made to me yesterday. I must have. I had a little note scribbled, and that's the way it seemed to read. So you'll just have to scratch that as not true.

A larger Alberta House of 93 seats: I don't feel it's cumbersome. It provides more hands and brain power for committee work. It could provide for smaller constituencies, in numbers not in area if it was applied to some of the urban segments, and I think ideally it helps to open the door to urban candidates who might otherwise be unable to afford the campaign costs of heavily populated districts in the cities. I'm sure you all know that my background is municipal. At one time, in 1974, ward 2 had 109,000 voters in it, and it was a whole strip that went north-south down the city, right through here. I mean, how does somebody with no money approach 109,000 voters in an urban setting like this, where you have to buy the *Journal* to reach those people because there's no local medium, et cetera? I'm sure you all, being pretty political, would know these aspects. And I think they're important. If we can make office-seeking more open to a wider range of people in the society, I think we've done democracy a service and done governance a service.

Okay. So much to substantiate some reasons for going in that direction, increasing the number of seats. In rural districts, as the Fisher document pointed out - I was delighted to have that last night, really, and to see what they've done, also to see that the darn thing is only about three pages long. That was the neatest part; you know, they didn't take 400 pages to tell you something. In rural districts new technologies in transportation and communication - keeping in touch over these large territories - is really so much different from what it was in 1905. I mean, gosh, I could have faxed this thing over here and not even come, you know. I'm sure you would have missed me, and I would have missed you all, but that's the way things can be done. Well, aside from those kinds of comments - and these were some that I've noted yesterday in conversation with one of my buddies, and I was happy to see them noted in the Fisher report - a rebalancing and modernizing of travel expenses and staffing expenses and these kinds of allocations can augment and improve people contact and service contact of our representative people.

Also, I have to recall for myself, keep reminding myself, that the MLA situation is a bit different from people in municipal councils throughout the province, because they meet usually every couple of weeks through the year. The MLA structure: at least you have two sittings - sometimes we haven't even had that much - in a year. And that's four to six weeks. So you have three months at maximum out of the year when you're pinned down here and away from the constituency, and those are spread out. So the time in between you've got lots of chance to do customer service, client service, and be here and do commit-

tee work, et cetera.

I'm getting smiles here.

MS BARRETT: Customer service: that's great; that's really good.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: That just came to me. Well, it's my marketing background.

Well, this statement for you all is submitted to the committee on this day. It sets out the parameters of my concerns. These concerns, with your permission, may be expanded and fleshed out with supporting and augmenting detail before the committee's final closing. Karen suggested that that's apparently allowable, and if so I'd be happy to carry on and do a little more work on this for you.

I do thank you for this opportunity to participate and to make some contribution. I do believe firmly that your deliberations strike at the very root of our most treasured democratic parliamentary traditions, which certainly started with King John.

I thank you all.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Questions from the committee members first.

MS BARRETT: Thanks. Gerry, what a remarkable paper, written overnight. I just can't believe it. That's great.

I would like to ask what your preference is in terms of the size of the Assembly. I mean, I see that you hint at a combination of remedies to fix the numerical imbalances, but what size of the Assembly would you personally think would be the appropriate number?

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: I don't understand the idea of any limit. As long as the group is a manageable group with a chairman that can control it, I suppose that's one way to look at it. I mean, some governments control Assemblies of 290 seats or 500 seats. The United Nations is a massive Assembly, and it seems to be managed and controlled and its committee work gets done. So I don't quite see . . .

MS BARRETT: All right; let me ask you in a different direction then.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: All you'd have to do - you know, we'd have to build a Legislature big enough to hold them. There are practical parameters to the thing. You have to get a place where they can meet and handle all that, and the cost of democracy goes up with every seat you add, because you've got to have the staffing and the travel and the space and blah, blah. It costs a great deal.

MS BARRETT: Okay. Ideally, how many voters or population should an individual, in your opinion, attempt to represent and do the job properly, at the provincial level?

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: I really like a number that's not over 20,000. I mean, these are not scientifically derived numbers; they're what I feel. Twenty thousand or 25,000 at the outset. I go down to 20,000 because I know it's very difficult here to get rural ones up to 20,000 unless you take, you know, Edmonton, Calgary, and all the rest of Alberta in one riding, figuratively speaking.

So, yeah, if you go at it that way, then the House number does

get delimited. I would say 20,000 is a nice number to be in touch with, to raise money from and for without having to collect it from major developers and their friends, and be a neighbourhood candidate. If a rural person tends to be a neighbourhood candidate even though he might have 85,000 square miles to cover, he's still in a different kind of psychological frame in relationship to his people he's canvassing and door-knocking than the urban guy where all relationships are absolutely secondary and they're strangers.

MS BARRETT: Good point. Thanks.

MR. BRUSEKER: Gerry, I want to ask you a little bit about . . . In your paper here you did a little number crunching for us, talking about the 20 percent variance, and in the federal scene and British Columbia there's been some allusion to a 25 percent variance. When we make recommendations in terms of establishing some variance, what is your feeling on the size of variance? Should we try to restrict the size of variance as much as possible to 20 percent or 15 or even 10 percent? What's your feeling on the variance allowable between the maximum largest and the minimum smallest, I guess? You talked about 20 percent.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: I argue for 20 percent. I really do. I think 25 gets us out too far.

MR. BRUSEKER: What about 15 percent then? Or would that be getting too small in there?

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: It's probably not manageable. I don't know. I mean, you people have all the staff who can crunch up these numbers and do all the combinations and permutations, but I would imagine that to get back down from 25 or so to 10 is really not going to be very workable in terms of the size of the boundary areas and so on. I think if we can push backwards to 20 percent, that's probably within reason. The goal, of course, is zero, isn't it? A true goal of equality is zero. So we've still got quite a margin of - not error, but a margin of inequality. I suppose you could call that the inequality quotient.

MR. BRUSEKER: All right. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Stock.

MR. DAY: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Gerry, I appreciate the presentation, and not being here just when you started, if I ask you a question you've already covered, just tell me you've already covered it, and we won't put everybody through this. I can read it in *Hansard*.

But just in a broad way the issue of cities being the generator for wealth can be a two-edged sword in terms of - you could look at the Soviet Union historically, with massive cities and yet the inability to generate wealth, more because of their economic system and, it could even be argued, because they overlooked the needs of agriculture and the agricultural community basically giving up because they felt their needs weren't being addressed. You can carry that back to first to third century Rome; same thing. Massive cities: Rome, Carthage, Corinth. Agriculture failing dismally because the agricultural community felt neglected by the needs of the city; therefore, there was a giving up. So it swings both ways.

But I'm wondering, I missed - in your assumption on page 3:

The picture is more thus:

32 urban . . .

45 rural . . .

And you talk about the nine urban districts. Are those just your figures? This is your perspective?

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: Page 3?

MR. DAY: Page 3. What you're saying is that you don't regard the nine - what we call Lethbridge and the small cities you don't regard as true urban districts?

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: I describe them above very briefly. But no, I think they're not cities in terms of functions that cities, real cities, do for an economy and essentially are rural-servicing regional-district towns.

MR. DAY: To help me - and just living in one of these what I used to think was a city . . .

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: Well, I mean it's statistically called a city. I don't want to get into some funny semantic . . .

MR. DAY: I'm just honestly curious as to, in helping us assess urban . . .

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: . . . operation, but functionally and sociologically and economically they are not cities.

MR. DAY: Yeah, what are those functions?

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: To generate, manufacture, and trade essentially; and to be the retainers and the generators of technological change and innovation; retainers of education and the producers of education: all the richness and abundance of vitality in life and growth, et cetera. It's not to say that small towns don't have life and vitality, but they're different from cities. They are not cities. I mean, Red Deer and New York have a few differences.

MR. DAY: Thank goodness.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: Yes, a bunch of them.

MR. DAY: I would think that . . .

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: But the thing is that nations or areas that succeed - and they tend in the end to become nations for one reason or another historically through time - have been built around the successful cities.

MR. DAY: Well, that issue I've touched on. I'm saying that out of honest interest. I wanted to see what your description of city functions was. So when we go to these what I used to think were cities, I'll be interested to hear from their manufacturers, educators, and retainers of technology as far as what they perceive as the function of their city.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: I imagine they haven't thought very much about it. They're pretty happy to be in business making something, selling something, and surviving. I don't imagine they really think about these functions though.

MR. DAY: It could be a matter of perspective too. I think of the rural MLA who had the note in his office saying, "I need to see you immediately." He followed the directions: down the highway five miles, on the gravel road three miles, onto the cow path 500 yards, get out of your car – and he's doing all this as he's reading the directions – go down the footpath to the river, grab the vine, swing over the creek, come up to my house. As he approaches the house, there's a note on the door that says: "Sorry, gone to the country for the weekend."

So it's a matter of perspective too, but . . .

MS BARRETT: Where did you get this?

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: Lovely story.

MR. DAY: I think we'll find it's a matter of perspective.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: Not only that, it's on the record.

MR. DAY: Well, I wanted to get a definition from you of what you felt were city functions. I appreciate your definition. I'm not saying I agree with it, but I do appreciate it.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: Well, this is a quick paper, done, you know, to . . .

MR. DAY: Yes. Thanks. That's good.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Chairman, might I just interrupt?

I'm afraid, committee members and visitors, that I must leave for a west-end appointment which I won't make on time unless I leave now. So I'm not being rude.

Jim, it was very nice to see you again, and thank you very much for putting so much work into your presentation, Gerry.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: Oh, you're welcome.

MS BARRETT: See you next time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pat, do you have any questions or comments? Jim? Okay.

One question I have, Gerry: would you make any exception for a large, sparsely populated, remote area?

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: Oh, yeah. I think there'd have to be, just as Fisher discovered. There'd just have to be some bendings.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: We have to live with the real world. We can't live in a statistical perfection.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So a case could be made for a constituency to be outside of the acceptable limit of 20 percent, plus or minus, but you'd have to give substantial reasons for that?

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: Yes, and I think the reasons are going to be there for us, the same as they were for him in trying to consider their northern regions. Really scarcely populated regions could be north or south, except for us they're always north. So agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Any other questions or comments? All right.

Thank you very much.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: Thank you all.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You're welcome to stay if you'd like. We've got one brief to read into the record from Deborah Miller.

If you'd like to hand out copies, Bob, and read that into the record, please. Then we've got a small bit of business to deal with before we conclude today.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: Well, it depends on whether you're in camera or in open.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, we're not in camera.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: Okay.

MR. PRITCHARD: To read into the record a submission from Deborah A. Miller, 2000 Oxford Tower, Edmonton Centre, Edmonton:

Mr. Bogle, Chairman

Dear Sir:

Re: Committee Hearings

I was advised yesterday that the Committee was meeting to discuss the question of the present electoral boundaries. I am unable to appear before the [committee], but I am writing this letter to provide you with my comments with respect to the present boundaries.

It is my view that each vote should have equal weight and that the Committee should look toward establishing a target whereby all ridings would contain the mean average number of voters. I happened to see a recent article in The Edmonton Journal which indicated that there were 31,000 voters in the Whitemud Riding, while Cardston only had 8,000 voters. This strikes me as fundamentally unfair to a true democratic system. Of course there would be exceptional circumstances where there would necessarily have to be a deviation from the mean average, however, it is my view that this question should be looked at very seriously and where the Committee decides to deviate radically from the mean average, that such exceptional circumstances be outlined and justified by the Committee.

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to express my opinion.

Yours truly,

Signed in writer's absence

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Any questions or comments?

MR. BRUSEKER: Somebody's not here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I know. That's why I said "comments."

All right. Well, that concludes the briefs to be presented this morning.

Moving to other business. Frank, I don't think you were present when we discussed the presentation to the improvement districts meeting, which is being held in Jasper Monday of next week.

MR. BRUSEKER: No. Karen did contact me, however, and I just said it wouldn't be feasible.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's not possible for you to go? All right. At the moment Mike Cardinal is the only member of our committee. The process we've been following is to schedule hearings and meetings of the committee one week and then allow the following week for other constituency business and activities and legislative business. This is following one of our off-weeks, and all members have commitments on the Monday. Mike is able to break away from a commitment providing we can fly him in and fly him back out. The question was whether or not anyone else was available so the plane could take two people rather than one. So we're making those arrangements to get Mike in.

The improvement districts are an important body along with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and the Municipal Districts and Counties and cover the province – the improvement districts, of course – covering some of the more sparsely populated areas, so we wanted an opportunity to speak directly to individuals at the local level through this convention. Mike will be presenting the same presentation that we've given to the MDs and Cs and that we will be giving to the Alberta school trustees.

What other business do we have?

MR. PRITCHARD: Actually, that was it for today.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Let's just quickly review next week. We have . . .

MR. PRITCHARD: Victoria.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Prior to that some members are meeting with a group on the same day. Is that the Hospital Association?

MR. DAY: November 23. I think it's Pam Barrett and myself.

MR. PRITCHARD: Yes.

MR. DAY: And Mike is doing the table at AUMA. Is that right?

MR. PRITCHARD: Yes, on the following day – one on the 22nd and one on the 23rd, for an hour each.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Then we have our meetings on Friday in Victoria to review the Fisher commission, the McLachlin decision, the Meredith decision, and the action being taken by the Assembly.

MR. PRITCHARD: Right. And our Thursday evening meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thursday evening. That's once we arrive . . .

MR. PRITCHARD: . . . in Victoria.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. PRITCHARD: We're going to set the place for that meeting, and we'll be advising everybody where it is. It was originally going to be in the Hotel Grand Pacific, but we'll be having it somewhere else because it's their anniversary and it will be too noisy.

MR. DAY: Will it be too noisy?

MR. PRITCHARD: They've told us it will be noisy.

MR. DAY: Oh. I thought you said we will be too noisy.

MR. PRITCHARD: No.

MR. DAY: We're getting along quite well as a group, I thought.

MR. PRITCHARD: They may have heard of us.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could we revert back for a moment, Gerry, to a question? It's a question that was posed to Jim Heron earlier, and the idea has surfaced at several of our hearings: the concept of joint urban/rural ridings where you would have spokes in a wheel or a pie, the smaller part of the pie being the urban area and going out. Do you have any thoughts on that relative to your presentation?

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: I started to think about it yesterday, and I really haven't made a resolve in my mind. I mean, that's . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: You weren't here. One of the reasons we asked Jim is because he served as an MLA for a constituency that butted up against a metropolitan city, so there were a lot of acreage owners he dealt with. Just to paraphrase his comments, he wasn't that keen on the idea. He felt the interests of the two groups are quite different and that they'd have difficulty.

Stock represents . . .

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: On the other hand, in my experience, trying to represent the downtown of Edmonton municipally, which is a mix and blend of everything, it certainly was even more particularly so when it was a vertical strip from north to south. If you're making judgments in the best interests of the city as a whole, or the area as a whole – you know, the province, the city, Alberta, the country, whatever. If you're really making those choices from the principle of best interests overall, you should be able to sort that out as a person. It won't be easy, because sometimes you'll fall on one side of some group and on the other side of another group, et cetera. You know, if personkind were made perfect, I suppose there wouldn't be any difficulty, but we're not that perfect, so it is tough.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, Stockwell represents an urban/rural riding now, Red Deer-North, and that was interesting, the exchange that came up yesterday.

MR. DAY: Well, personally, I find it exciting to be able to deal with distinctly rural issues in what is 90 percent an urban riding. On the other hand, it is very taxing on the time to keep up with, you know, the Grain Commission and the fertilizer program and the other things for a few constituents when the majority are urban interests – dealing with a lot of social agencies on urban issues: manufacturing, effluent, all those kinds of things. So I try. I think I'm serving the constituents in a way with which they're pleased, but it's taxing, it really is, to plug into all the urban issues and the rural ones.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: Gee, that makes me recall, and I

would absolutely agree, having tried at one time in the '70s when environment issues were quite high. I was very much involved, I'm sure as many of you know, in the city, the river valley, freeways – or no freeways – rapid transit, et cetera: that whole network of urban questions. Then at the same time, because of other information that came by on the environment, I got thrust into concerns about the soil, soil preservation in organic agriculture. So I began trying to build a network of contacts on that subject across Alberta, and they spread into Saskatchewan. After about a year of trying this, I just couldn't keep up, for the very reason you say. It's not that I was divided on the issues; the issues to me were the environment, and they were the same, but it was just the energy of trying to keep in touch with that many different organizations, different crowds of people. I eventually dropped the soils and stuck with the urban. And I've always regretted that. I hope I'll find time in the next little while to go back and try to save some soils.

MR. DAY: I find you draw on your colleagues a lot more than going to one – your colleagues who are living right in the middle, their entirety is rural issues. You can draw from them and say, you know, "Explain this to me." It's personally challenging and enjoyable, but it's also . . .

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: It's exhausting.

MR. DAY: Yeah, taxing.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: I think the single vision, the single-purposed person is less – well, I shouldn't say the person is that way, but the single-functioning person is not as full and enriched a person. It would be wonderful if you could do all these things.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. Frank once put forward a suggestion that it would be nice if we could do some kind of a twinning arrangement between urban and rural. We'd all get a better understanding. If Frank could become the MLA for Taber-Warner for six months and I became the MLA for Calgary-North West, we'd each go through a terrific learning experience about the other's role and the kinds of issues that constituents and city council and the community associations bring. That would be the learning process on my side, and Frank would be dealing with agricultural issues, villages and small towns and the concerns they have. You know, that's part of an exchange of ideas.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: I don't think it's an unthinkable concept, either. You know, we do have job sharing to some degree in the culture now, and so job trading or a part-share idea – I think it's well worth trying to think through and research a little bit.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. Thank you.
Any closing comments anyone?

MR. BRUSEKER: Thanks for coming out, Gerry. I appreciate the effort on short notice.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're going to have soup and sandwiches in a few moments. If you'd like to join us, you're more than welcome.

MR. DAY: Mr. Chairman, that was a question, actually. Gerry,

you are somewhat pressed for time. Just for our feedback. The advertising and things like that: was it sufficient, do you think? Are people not being well enough informed? What can we do to improve that?

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: Well, actually I didn't hear about it. Somebody brought me this letter the day before yesterday, dropped it off, and that was the first I'd heard about it. I hadn't seen it advertised or broadcast at all, and I'm a pretty good – I read the *Globe and Mail* and the *Journal* every day.

MR. DAY: And in spite of that you feel well informed? Just being facetious.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: Neat shot – not at me.

MR. DAY: We're trying to evaluate if we're reaching people with our ads, and I know you felt pressed for time. I think the ones last night also felt pressed for time.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: At the same time, it's a subject that I would have triggered to right away because, as I said in my opening remarks, it's a subject I've been kind of keen about for a number of decades.

MR. DAY: Yeah. We might have to evaluate how we're communicating. There are limits, you know. We can't have a million-dollar advertising budget, yet we do want to feel we're reaching people and giving them the opportunity.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: Yeah. Well, here goes the old marketing man; I can't stay away from these questions. Have you tried special, direct-mail lists to organizations and institutions and things?

MR. DAY: Yeah, we definitely have.

MR. CHAIRMAN: About 3,000 to date have gone out.

MR. PRITCHARD: And we have lists we'll be mailing out to about 12,000 across the province – this package you're holding, actually.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Municipal councils, hospital boards, school boards, health units, all registered constituency associations . . .

MR. PRITCHARD: Tourism boards.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're trying to reach every possible interest group.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: I mean, it's pretty dry stuff. It's hard to make it a very exciting issue.

MR. DAY: Right. If you could advertise it differently . . .

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: It's not the same as a new oil well or a new pulp mill.

MR. DAY: Yeah. If you could advertise, you know, "Potential Civil War, Constituents Outraged," or something, that would get attention. But it is difficult through normal government advertising to alert people to the implications.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thanks very much.

MR. GERRY WRIGHT: You're welcome. Thank you all.

MR. DAY: Thanks, Gerry.

[The committee adjourned at 11:50 a.m.]