

[Chairman: Mr. Bogle]

[7:05 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm pleased to declare the meeting open, and a special welcome to those of you who have chosen to come out this evening. In a moment I'm going to introduce the members of our panel and our support team here, and then I'll ask you to introduce yourselves. But before I do that, I want to explain to you the process that's followed.

Because this is a select special committee of the Legislature, there is an official recording and thus a *Hansard* of what goes on in our meetings. Therefore, everything that's said tonight will be taped and is available to the public. Having said that, I don't want you to be intimidated by that process. We've tried to keep the meetings as informal as possible. Our whole purpose in being here is to obtain thoughts, ideas, and recommendations that you have for the process that we must recommend back to the Assembly in terms of electoral boundaries and the redistribution activities that we'll need to follow.

Possibly I could just say at the outset as well that we are now not yet at the halfway point but nearing the halfway point in our hearings. We've been going around the province giving Albertans in major centres, smaller centres, and in rural, more remote communities an opportunity to have input, and we certainly appreciate the thoughts that have come forward thus far.

Having said that, I'd like to introduce the members of our team. On my immediate right, Stockwell Day. Stockwell is the vice-chairman of this committee. He is the MLA for Red Deer-North, and he serves as the Whip for the government caucus. Next to Stockwell is Frank Bruseker. Frank is the Member for Calgary-North West. He was first elected to the Assembly this spring, and he's a member of the Liberal caucus. Seated next to Frank is Tom Sigurdson. Tom is the Member for Edmonton-Belmont. He was first elected in 1986, re-elected March 20 of this year.

To my immediate left is Pam Barrett. Pam serves the constituency of Edmonton-Highlands. She is the House leader for the Official Opposition, the New Democratic Party. Pam was first elected in 1986, re-elected earlier this year. Pat Black is the last member of the official team who is present today. Pat was elected this spring in the constituency of Calgary-Foothills. She's a very active member of the government caucus, serving on a number of committees.

We're also very pleased to have with us Mr. Pat Ledgerwood, the Chief Electoral Officer of the province. When our committee was struck, we believe it was the intent of the House leaders of the three parties not to put Pat on our committee because he was so involved in the upcoming Senate elections. But now that those elections are over, we've persuaded him to come and become part of our extended family. So a special welcome to Pat.

Bob Pritchard is the senior administrator for our team, and he tries to keep us on time and ensure that when there's a meeting in Calgary, we're all here and not up in Red Deer or Edmonton. We have Doug and Vivian who are with us from *Hansard* and are handling the recording.

Possibly I could stop for a moment and start with you, Tom, and just go down the line, if you'd indicate if you're here representing a group or a body, what your particular interest is, or if you're just here as a citizen at large, here to advise us.

MR. PARKINSON: I'm here as a citizen.

MRS. HOOGENBOOM: I'm a returning officer, so I'm

interested.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good. Len, welcome.

MR. HOOGENBOOM: I'm just here with Marie.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Mark?

MR. DUYNIS: Just a concerned citizen.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Possibly we could begin, then, by asking Pam if she'd like to give . . . I'm sorry; I asked Stock earlier - I'm getting my wires crossed already - if he'd like to make some introductory remarks, and then Frank will lead us through the slides.

MR. DAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ladies and gentlemen, we're pleased that you've come out. We know you've got some areas of interest that you want to make us aware of, and we want to hear those.

You may be aware that in Alberta the pattern or the history has been that after every second election there's been a look at the electoral boundaries and a commission to look at those and see if any adjustments need to be made. At this particular time there's some degree of expediency, I guess you could say, with the particular situation we're faced with.

In British Columbia there's been a recent case where a certain Professor Dixon - and I don't know if he's related to Gary Dickson, who's appearing tomorrow morning at 10, or not; I guess we'll find that out - challenged the electoral boundaries situation in British Columbia. British Columbia has certain anomalies, one being that there are constituencies that have two and three MLAs in the one constituency. At the particular time of the challenge, there were some wide ranges in terms of population. One of their northern constituencies had as few as 6,000 people in it, whereas one of their urban ones had upwards of 70,000 or 80,000 people. So there was a wide range in population coming from various constituencies.

So a commission was established; this is prior to the court case. The Fisher commission recommended certain things: boundary changes, et cetera. The government at that particular time did not choose to follow those, and an ensuing court challenge is what followed. Basically, Justice McLachlin said that whereas you don't have to stick 100 percent to one person, one vote . . . That hasn't been Canada's historical practice; we've evolved not from a revolution but more from responsible government, moving into our own confederation. Justice McLachlin did indicate that a variance of up to 25 percent from a provincial average would probably resist a constitutional challenge given a number of factors that would come into play. That particular decision by Justice McLachlin was not challenged at the time.

A court case followed, the Meredith case, in which there was some pressure that the government would have to immediately alter all their boundaries. That particular case ruled that in fact a Legislature could not be commanded by the courts and therefore would need to take some time to decide how to do it and would have to make that decision itself. The Legislature subsequently has basically accepted the Fisher commission report and this guideline of 25 percent variance from a provincial mean. The federal government basically works from that, with some

exceptions. Most provinces – I think six of the provinces – work with the 25 percent, again with some special-case exceptions. Given that as a guide which has been given to us – basically, a legal opinion is that that is a guide we need to follow, this 25 percent variance above or below the provincial average – we'd like you to see what that could mean in Alberta and some of the implications of that.

Frank will walk us through some figures here. On the screen over here you'll be able to get a snapshot of what the picture looks like.

MR. BRUSEKER: Thanks, Stockwell. We apologize for the slides. The overhead projector is giving us this nice blue pattern here, which will make it a little difficult to read what you see in the corners. Most of the information that we'll show you on the slides is actually contained in this letter you probably picked up at the door. So if you've had a chance to have a look at it, it may be a bit of a repeat for you, but I'll just take a moment and run through it very quickly.

In the province of Alberta we currently have 83 constituencies. This first overhead we have here simply lists the 83 constituencies alphabetically, and the number directly to the right of the name of the constituency is the number of voters on the electoral list for the past election.

This next slide, you'll notice, is arranged a little differently. At the end it has the 83 constituencies listed on it. This time, instead of alphabetical order, it lists them from the largest, which is Edmonton-Whitemud, down to the smallest, which is Cardston. Now, you'll notice the numbers range from a high of just over 31,000. Cardston has a little note beside it. The number there is 8,100, but there's a bit of an anomaly with this particular constituency in that there is the Blood Indian reservation in this particular constituency with some 1,800 members who chose not to be enumerated. So, actually, that number could be higher if they chose to become involved in the next election, which of course we hope they will. The rest of the numbers sort of fall in between.

Now, what we have done is that if you add up the total numbers on those two previous overheads, you come up with a figure of about 1.5 million electors in the province. If you divide that 1.5 million by the current 83 constituencies, you get that average figure of 18,685 electors per constituency. That's the average figure. Now, if we follow the ruling that occurred in British Columbia which suggested plus or minus 25 percent, that allows for a range from a high end, showing there, of 23,300 to a low end of just over 14,000. So that would be the acceptable range if we go with that 18,000 as an average.

This next overhead is similar to the one we just saw; it is in your package if you have it. You'll notice that we've coloured one section with what's supposed to be green and the other section with pink. The green-highlighted constituencies are all of those constituencies which are more than 25 percent above the average; in other words, 23,000 and higher. The ones that are highlighted in pink are those constituencies that are more than 25 percent below the average, so less than 14,000. The ones which are in white are the ones which fall within the range which would be acceptable of plus or minus 25 percent from the 18,000.

Putting it graphically, this is a map of Alberta. All of the constituencies that are in pink relate to the ones that were labeled in pink on the previous slide. All of these that are shown on this map, therefore, are those constituencies which are less than 25 percent below. In other words, they have popula-

tions of less than 14,000 electors. You can see that in all cases the ones that are below by more than 25 percent are rural constituencies, spread virtually from north to south and east to west across the province.

This is a map of the city of Calgary. You'll notice again some constituencies highlighted in green, and I'll show you again one of Edmonton in just a moment. All of the ones which are above the provincial average by more than 25 percent are again, without exception, in this case urban. In most instances, if you look closely at the map, you'll see that it is the peripheries of Calgary and Edmonton, which we'll put up here in just a moment – it is the constituencies around the outside that are the parts of the city which are undergoing growth. Perhaps we could have Edmonton: again, largely the ones that are on the periphery. In some cases – there's one here in the middle, Edmonton-Parkallen; we had one, Calgary-Buffalo, that is in the centre portion. But mostly on the outskirts.

This is a map showing the constituencies of Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West. The city of Lethbridge is divided into two constituencies. It is not coloured. Currently Lethbridge-West and Lethbridge-East both would fall within the plus or minus 25 percent guideline and would not require any significant redistribution under those parameters.

This is the city of Medicine Hat. All of the divisions which you see inside are polling divisions within that particular city. Medicine Hat is again well above the provincial average. I believe it has a population of somewhere around 29,000 voters, which is well above the accepted maximum of 23,000.

This is the city of Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South. You'll notice there is a reddish-brown coloured line on this particular map. Now, currently the two constituencies of Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South do fall within the accepted range of 25 percent plus or minus. Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South are a little bit unusual constituencies in that each of these constituencies is made up of a portion of the city of Red Deer plus a portion of rural land around the outside of the two to bring the average up to what was required to be acceptable at the time these constituencies were created. Currently they do fall within the guidelines though.

This is the city of St. Albert, again coloured in green and again indicating that it is above the 25 percent average.

Now, this again is a map of the province, and you'll notice that there are some constituencies here coloured in purple. Now, the reason for the purple colouration is that this map is slightly different from the one you saw coloured in pink. This map with the purple indicates that the constituencies shown are more than 35 percent away from the mean. So they are tending to be very small constituencies compared to the provincial average.

Here are five constituencies in the southern part of the province. These constituencies are more than 50 percent away from the provincial mean of 18,000. All of these constituencies have voter populations of less than 10,000 voters per constituency.

This one with the blue dots shows the locations to which our committee has traveled or will be traveling in the future. We have had a number of hearings already. Basically, we started in the north and we are working our way south, although we need to go back to Red Deer and a few places in between. But these are the places where we are going to be holding these open and public hearings.

Here is a list showing the hearings. I believe it's also the last page of your package, so you can see that we are currently near

the middle section. Calgary is location 6. We're holding a hearing tonight and another hearing tomorrow afternoon and tomorrow evening.

When we did some preliminary work in trying to identify the locations where we would go to hold our hearings - this purple map again shows the constituencies that are more than 35 percent away, in all cases below the provincial average - you can see that what we've attempted to do is to hold hearings in particular in those areas which might most be affected by redistribution in the future.

So that, I believe, is the last slide. I guess we'll pause here for a moment and ask if there are any questions about anything that I've been talking about for the last few moments. No? I guess then, Mr. Chairman, I'll turn it back over to you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Frank.

Anything any of the other committee members would like to add? Okay. Any questions for clarification? All right. Then I think we're ready to begin with the actual presentations. Tom, would you like to lead off?

MR. PARKINSON: Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I've been giving some thought to this matter of representation since I first heard this B.C. decision that representation should be pretty strictly based on population, and having thought about it, I have a number of points that I'd like to bring to your attention.

The first one is that the province is not just the legislator; it's not just the electorate. It is the whole province; it is the whole entity. As citizens we are trustees for those who do not have a vote, the children. We are trustees also for the land, for the heritage. And all of these factors I think have to be considered when you're deciding on electoral boundaries and the balance between rural and urban representation.

In Alberta we perhaps have more responsibility than people in other parts of the world because we've got clean air here; we've got water that comes to us directly as snow and rain and has not been affected by other people. That's not quite true as far as the Peace River is concerned because it flows into the province, and it presents perhaps some special problems. But we must as good citizens make sure that the drainage from the province and the air that leaves the province are the best quality that we can possibly ensure. We all remember the problems of the '50s and '60s with radioactive fallout and the way in which what people do in one part of the world affects those that live in others. I think it makes it very important that we recognize our responsibility not just to ourselves but as citizens of the country, the continent, and in fact of the whole world.

In Alberta very few people are 100 percent rural or 100 percent urban. By that I mean that the people who farm or live in the country for other reasons come into the cities to do their shopping. The people who live in the cities go to the country for skiing, boating, hunting, fishing, sightseeing: various recreational pastimes. So we have to recognize that metropolitan, urban, rural, and wilderness Alberta aren't independent. Because of this I think it would be ideal if every riding could contain some part of each of these elements, but in practice I realize that that is not possible. But I think it should be possible for a great many of the ridings to contain part of the metropolitan area, part of the rural fringe, and perhaps some of the smaller towns living within it so that the MLA is going to be able to represent all three viewpoints in his or her person.

Municipalities have joint interests. Things like water supplies

and waste and sewage disposal overlap from one municipality to another. In setting legislation to determine how these matters should be handled, how disputes should be resolved, I think it would be very helpful if the members in the Legislature had direct experience both of the urban and rural aspect of the problem, because it's a combined problem. It's not one to which there's a simple, single answer.

Many of the MLAs also have to co-operate with neighbours beyond the boundaries of Alberta: people in B.C., Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories; also, there is Montana. Because just as urban municipal boundaries are man-made and not cast in stone and there's not a complete change in everything that happens as you walk over the boundary, so this is true of interprovincial and international boundaries.

I think in Lloydminster we see how some of these problems have been addressed on a largely co-operative basis. Similarly, the concerns of the people in the Northwest Territories regarding the possible pollution of the Slave River show that we in Alberta have to make quite sure that we inform the people beyond our borders of what we're proposing and how we're proposing to do it, so that any criticism that comes from them is based on an accurate knowledge of what is really proposed rather than perhaps scare tactics, perhaps rumours, perhaps press reports which are not completely accurate. A few years ago there was a suggestion of power development on the Slave River, and I think at that time the PR with the people living in Fort Smith and the surrounding areas was very well handled. The current situation certainly is not seen to be as well handled by the people in the Northwest Territories.

If you will accept my sort of general thesis that representation should be for the whole of the province and that the river basins, the forests, the wilderness, and wildlife areas are all part of the trust, then I think we have to accept that every MLA is also responsible for the entire province and that the number of voters in the riding, while important, is not the only consideration in arranging riding boundaries. I think that if those of you on the committee and those you represent in the Legislature could find some way of striking a balance between the representation of the land and the representation of the voters within it, it would be something that could be supported by all Albertans. If this could be agreed to, even if it required a clause in the legislation along the lines of the notwithstanding clause used by Quebec in their language law, I think we could have an Alberta pattern of representation for Alberta and Albertans, and I think we would all benefit from it.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much, Tom.
Any questions for Tom, panel members?

MS BARRETT: I find your presentation quite interesting, but I think one question has been begged, and mine to you is then: do you believe it is important for this committee to attempt to conform to the results of the McLachlin decision in the face of the Charter that implies, at any rate, one person, one vote or representation by population?

MR. PARKINSON: I think it would be a mistake to go by representation by population, because we have certain problems that are going to outlast the present time. We have to make sure that we do keep an eye on the future. If you have an area with high fertility, a large proportion of unrepresented people, then for the next reallocation of boundaries the population could

change quite dramatically. I think also that if the parties could agree on one hand about the need to represent population but on the other that for an MLA to be effective, that MLA must have access to and be accessible to the people he or she represents, the natural traffic patterns within the province could restrict the population in certain definable areas which should be represented by themselves.

MS BARRETT: I understand your argument, but perhaps I could ask you to respond to a specific question here. Is there a target of variance that you believe would be appropriate and would yet allow for the type of balancing between interests that you're arguing for? Is the 25 percent rule too restrictive, as far as you're concerned?

MR. PARKINSON: I don't think it should be accepted as graven in stone. I think as a target it is probably a not unreasonable one, but I think there might be some areas of the province where it should be overruled for other valid social reasons.

MS BARRETT: Including physical/geographical?

MR. PARKINSON: Yes.

MS BARRETT: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else?

MR. SIGURDSON: Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you. In some jurisdictions they have representation by population that includes all of the population and not just voter populations. Children and landed immigrants are certainly included in the census and, therefore, the division of the constituency boundaries. I take it that you would be in favour of such an inclusion in the Alberta decision.

MR. PARKINSON: I think it's probably one of the things that should certainly be considered by the Electoral Boundaries Commission. I think it's an important consideration. I'm not sure that it's overwhelming. I think the important thing is that we recognize the development of Alberta from a rural province to a now rather concentrated metropolitan province. But because so many of the people in the metropolitan areas have interests in the rural areas, I think many metropolitan citizens would be happy to see the rural areas have some favoured status in terms of representation. I'm not going to suggest that we have plural voting, where somebody who has a country cottage or goes to a summer camp should have an extra vote in that area. On the other hand, I think we should recognize that in reality there are a lot of people who live in the city but have interests in the country and on those country problems might well be approaching a representative from the country rather than their metropolitan representative.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? Are there any questions or comments from any of our guests tonight? All right; we'll move on. Thanks very much for your presentation.

Mark.

MR. DUYNIS: Thank you. Mr. Chairman and committee members, my name is Mark Duynis. I'm a resident of Calgary living in the community of Abbeydale, which is in northeast Calgary. I'd like to thank the committee for providing this opportunity for public hearings and citizen submissions. The areas that I would like to comment on are of considerable concern to me, and I would appreciate your consideration.

My present concerns as an active and interested community member whose activities cover several areas of the local community - I've had the opportunity to review the introductory letter and explanation that the committee has put forward - include the second option, which is outlined in the letter, based on setting the boundaries through a percentage formula. It seems extremely hard on the rural constituencies. I believe that rural Alberta will be deprived of its right to equal and/or effective representation. Even as an urban resident it appears obvious this formula is unequal for rural Alberta. I'm especially concerned about the economic impact of this option, based on the ever increasing number of industrial opportunities being created in rural Alberta. These companies, their employees, and the local residents of these areas will be contributing to our provincial economy financially, yet with respect to representation and legislative impact they'll be shortchanged. This could or would cause division and dissent, in my opinion. I believe that the MLAs with rural constituencies under that formula would be unable to cover their constituencies adequately or as they are now.

Western Canada and especially Alberta has lobbied long and hard for equal and effective representation by region, not population, on a national basis. I believe that applies on a provincial basis as well. We are beginning to make headway with Senate reform, and to adopt an electoral boundary policy such as this would show a lack of unity and consensus on our part. I believe our current system, with consideration given to the discrepancy percentage, is fair and acceptable. To make any changes would reduce this fairness. I am strongly opposed to the representation by population concept and support the urban/rural equality position.

Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mark.

Questions.

MRS. BLACK: Mark, you live in an urban setting and, obviously, in an urban riding. Do you feel that there are enough distinguishing factors between the urban and rural settings and the type of representation that's required that there should be two formulae put in place, one to deal with urban and one to deal with rural settings?

MR. DUYNIS: Yeah. I hadn't considered that, but I could imagine where that option would work quite well, primarily based that they're equal. The prime concern would be that the number of urban constituencies was equal to the rural constituencies. Within those, when we're setting the boundaries, once we're setting the urban boundaries, those rules could be different than the rules applied to the rural boundaries.

MRS. BLACK: Well, maybe what I'm thinking of: within the rural setting allow a 25 percent variance based on a different mean than what's in the urban setting. Do you feel that is

justifiable because of the differences in geography and demographics of urban as opposed to rural?

MR. DUYNIS: I think so. Yeah, I think that . . .

MRS. BLACK: I kind of got that feeling from your . . . Is that what you're getting at in your presentation?

MR. DUYNIS: Yeah. I believe that would work. I think there are advantages there.

MS BARRETT: I have two questions. One, are you saying ignore the Charter of Rights completely and be prepared to face a challenge?

MR. DUYNIS: No. I think we'd certainly have to consider the Charter of Rights in this policy setting, but I don't think it's cast in stone. We have to consider and make leeway or protect ourselves for any legal battles, but I don't agree with that concept totally. I don't think that's the only factor that comes into play.

MS BARRETT: Okay. The second question I have is: if you . . . Do you have this package?

MR. DUYNIS: Yeah.

MS BARRETT: Okay. If you go to the map that's got some ridings shown in pink, what you will see is that on average what happens is that you have these really physically enormous ridings in the north. That would be true in the pink ones as well as the white ones. The white ones, of course, don't have a problem if we assume the 25 percent rule. They would fall within that variation. These ones would fall outside of that and below the 25 percent on the low side. Now, are you suggesting that there's no adjustment you would make to this map at all?

MR. DUYNIS: No. I probably could have worded that a little differently. After seeing some of the charts and the explanations this evening, there are some at the extreme low end of that that I imagine could have some different factors made for their consideration. Those five or four or whatever it was that had less than 10,000 voters: I think an exception could be made there. But on the whole, I don't think we should be tied into those numbers so strictly, the 23,000 on the high end and the 18,000 on the low end.

MRS. BLACK: May I ask one more question, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We've got others. I'll come back, okay, Pat? It wasn't on this specific point was it? No. All right.
Stock.

MR. DAY: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Mark, do you have rural blood in your background?

MR. DUYNIS: I guess you could say that, yeah.

MR. DAY: The reason I asked that is we've had meetings in rural settings and urban settings. If you're in a rural setting, most of the presentations are very strongly on the lines of, "The urbans have got enough representation; we don't want to lose any." In the urban setting they're very strongly along the lines

of, "The rural has enough; we don't want to lose any in the urban." Yours and I guess to a degree Mr. Parkinson's are reflecting that there is maybe some room for mutual consideration here.

I appreciate that particular approach, but it raises some questions. You talked about our western Canadian concern about regional representation, suggesting maybe we're being inconsistent by not allowing it in the province. Are you suggesting, like, a provincial Senate? Is that the type of thing you're saying, a bicameral House, or are you saying just be careful how you adjust these?

MR. DUYNIS: Yeah, I guess to some degree it would be in the form of a Triple E Senate, or an equal, effective Senate. But in consideration of that, I'm also willing to leave it at let's be careful about how we divide up the rural ridings.

MR. DAY: You mentioned in your opening remarks community involvement, associations, things like that.

MR. DUYNIS: Yeah. I'm the vice-president of Abbeydale Community Association.

MR. DAY: So it's a community league then.

MR. DUYNIS: Yeah.

MR. DAY: I don't know if this is a fair comment, but in terms of access for concerns you've had as a community league, is your MLA accessible in terms of their time? I'm not asking about their performance, just in terms of their time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mark, before you answer, don't worry about it, because we're going to ask the same question when we're in Red Deer about the MLA for Red Deer-North.

MR. DUYNIS: Yeah, reasonably, I would say. I mean, he has a schedule that if we are interested in his involvement, we have to work around that. I realize that.

MR. DAY: Right.

MR. DUYNIS: But reasonably accessible, yeah.

MR. DAY: You're feeling for the rural areas, yet you're a city dweller. Is that something you find yourself - we're not drawing a survey here, but you're involved in the community league. You're talking with people all the time in your community. Do you think there's a strong, single-minded "maintain urban power; forget about rural," or do you think you're reflecting a common concern for rural also?

MR. DUYNIS: I hope I'm reflecting a common concern. I don't know that I am. I think even closer to city cores there might be that objection that we encourage more urban activity than rural. But I hope my opinion is more prevalent than it seems to be.

MR. DAY: Good. Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, Frank, and then Tom.

MR. BRUSEKER: Maybe if I can paraphrase what I hear you saying: comparing the urban and rural ones is really not very

fair, and we shouldn't look at that relationship so much as perhaps comparing the rurals to the rurals and the urbans to the urbans. Have I sort of got the gist?

MR. DUYNIS: Yeah. That probably didn't come out in the presentation as well as I might have liked it to, but after the fact I think that could be applied, that there are different rules for the two.

MR. BRUSEKER: Okay. Just comparing all of the rural ones – actually, comparing all of the rurals to themselves and all of the urban ones to themselves, even within those two different pockets, shall we say, there's quite a discrepancy, almost 2 to 1 in terms of voter population. For example, within the urban ones Edmonton-Whitemud is the largest, with over 30,000, and Edmonton-Norwood is the smallest, with 15,000. If we were to look at comparing those two urban ones – and the same applies, too, by the way, for the rural constituencies. Stony Plain is the largest rural, with over 22,000, and then some of the smaller ones are less than 10,000. So we've got about a 2 to 1 comparison. If we were to sort of follow up on what I think I was hearing Pat say, that we should have perhaps two ratios, do you think it would be fair to compare all of the rural constituencies and say, okay, all of the rural ones have to come close to this average, and a separate number, all of the urban ones, have to come to another average. Would that be a fair way of tackling your concerns?

MR. DUYNIS: I would think so. I would suggest that it might be. I don't know that it would be completely fair in every case, and I wouldn't like that we'd be restricted by certain numbers; you know, to the nth, that it has to be this or nothing. I would like to see that we could make exceptions in the extreme cases that are below averages or above averages in the urban cases. The key that I would emphasize before we set rules for rural or urban is that there's an equality between the way it is now, with the numbers 41 and 42, I believe they are now.

MR. BRUSEKER: Forty-two urban and 41 rural, like it is now.

MR. DUYNIS: Yeah. I mean that's as close to being equal as we can. I think that's essential.

MR. BRUSEKER: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.
Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mark, I'm certainly aware of the different communities of interest that are diverse in our province. I mean, you go from one end of the province to the other and you'll find different interests. You go from the inner city to suburban areas; you find different areas of interest. You've got a major change. You've pointed out the fact that we've gone from pretty much an agrarian society to an industrialized society. Certainly the population shifts show that. We now have approximately two-thirds of Albertans living in urban settings, one-third living in rural settings, yet as you well note, we have pretty much a 50-50 split on the representation basis between urban and rural. Trends indicate that we're going to continue having a shift to a more urbanized society. At what point would you lessen rural representation? Is there a figure? You know, 25 percent . . .

MR. DUYNIS: No, not that I had considered. Perhaps I didn't realize that the urban population base was two-thirds of the provincial total, and I would guess at that level we're approaching levels where we should consider reducing rural representation. However, my concern in reducing those rural representations at this point, and the way the population stands as it does, is that we'd be alienating a lot of rural constituents. I think that in some of the cases pointed out, some of these constituents might have difficulty as it is in reaching their MLAs or having access to government members, and I think to decrease their representation would make that that much worse.

MR. SIGURDSON: I just want to follow up. You say decreasing their representation. I guess what I want to try and do is define "access," because now, today, we have modern technology that allows me in a matter of seconds to fax a letter from Calgary to anywhere in the province by facsimile and get a response, if the MLA is indeed interested in my concern, shortly, within a matter of a few hours. Is that sufficient? Are we talking about that kind of representation? Is that enough access?

MR. DUYNIS: I believe so. Maybe more important than access is the actual representation they feel they're provided with as far as voting goes, that kind of thing, within the Legislative Assembly. They might feel shortchanged if they had any less than they have now.

MR. SIGURDSON: There are probably a number of Progressive Conservatives and Liberals in my constituency who feel shortchanged by the way I vote in the Legislature. So I only offer that out, that there are people who aren't going to be satisfied with the kind of representation they have from their MLA based on party politics.

MR. DUYNIS: That's true.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.
Pat, you want to get back in?

MRS. BLACK: Yes. I only had one question for Mark. As you know, our maps and numbers shown in the presentation are by eligible voters not by population, so in some ridings – like in the Cardston riding there was an Indian reservation that chose not to participate in the enumeration and the election itself. So they're not included. And there are people who are here on a landed immigrant basis who will eventually be voters, if they so choose, who are not included in our numbers. Do you feel that we should be dealing with representation based on eligible voters or on the broader picture of the full population?

MR. DUYNIS: I would suggest that it should be eligible voters. At any given time if that changed, that would be reflected. If they became eligible voters, then I believe they would be included in that group.

MRS. BLACK: Okay. Because I was thinking that in some ridings there are special groups, say religious groups, that don't participate, yet they still need the representation of an MLA.

MR. DUYNIS: Uh huh.

MRS. BLACK: Yet they would not be included in the overall

count for distribution as it presently stands. When we were out in British Columbia and chatting with the people, they took into account their entire population, which of course brought their representation up much higher. Their average riding, I believe, was about 38,000 people, not voters but people. There has been some discussion as to whether you're there to represent the people or to represent those that chose to be enumerated.

MR. DUYNIS: Yeah. I understand.

MRS. BLACK: So there's a question back and forth as to what it is for, and I was just wondering if you had an opinion on that.

MR. DUYNIS: I understand. Again, I guess my prime concern would be for the eligible voters. If someone for choices of their own chose not to be an eligible voter, then I would leave it to them to find sources of representation. You know, I wouldn't expect the MLAs to be responsible for making themselves terribly available for that particular group.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Pat, did you have any questions?

MR. LEDGERWOOD: No, thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions from anyone else here for Mark?

MR. PARKINSON: Mr. Chairman, not a question but a comment, a little more support, perhaps, for the idea of giving the rural ridings some extra weighting. Most of their voters are long-term members of the community, whereas if you were to do a survey in the city, a very high proportion are relatively mobile. In my particular riding I think this is perhaps carried to an extreme. But in general the urban voters do tend to move from time to time, certainly far more frequently than those in the rural areas, where many of them are tied to the land and have been tied to the same land for several generations.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. We'll move on.
Roly, you joined us a bit late, but welcome.

MR. THOMAS: I do apologize.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, that's fine. No problem at all. I think you can sense by the discussion that we are conducting this in a very informal way. We invite you now to proceed with your presentation.

MR. THOMAS: Thank you. What I have brought actually, and it has been given to you, is something I've spent some time on today, looking at one particular concept. The main thrust of what I have to say is the fact that I believe in the importance of the individual franchise – one person, one vote – and every vote should have an equal opportunity. I suppose the ideal concept – but fairly obviously the political system doesn't configure to this – is the proportional representation concept. It's a recognition that that obviously can't be achieved, but at least we should strive to get to a point which is as close to this as is practicable.

In what you've had handed out to you I rather did it in a backhanded way and put my remarks in at the end rather than at the beginning. You have two pages of charts, and what I've

done there is show what the divisions are by the 1985 Act and what the constituencies are, the number of MLAs that are represented, being 83 in total. The revision – this is a concept, so I mean this isn't cast in stone, which obviously expedites, I guess, and recognizes the 85 divisions but also recognizes the adjacent divisions to all of them in actual fact, inasmuch that the prime problem recognized is the fact that there is overrepresentation in the rural areas to compare with the urban areas. So what I've done there is just do an exercise which shows how a greater equality can be brought in by either combining one with another or three or four rural constituencies, and from that you will see that the number of seats, as it were, can be reduced for the rural areas but also giving them then a compatible density of representation that is possible with the urban areas.

So I took the concept, first of all, of the 18,000 average for the 83 seats in the 1.6 million eligible voting population, and in the option that was quoted in your lead-in letter, to consider possibly 25 percent below or above that average level as being an acceptable improvement. Well, I think the fact that in the odd case you'll get a minimum and a maximum means there's a 50 percent difference between the smallest and the largest, which I think is very unfair. So, okay; is there any better way?

Fortuitously this came out in a way which provided an easy combination of certain areas to give a far more rational presentation on the representation basis. Coincidentally, it means as well, too, that as far as the large urban areas like Calgary and Edmonton are concerned, it doesn't necessarily imply that there should be any change in Edmonton but suggests that a greater equality could be gained by having another seat in Calgary, so that increased from 18 to 19 seats.

In total, then, if you combine these, and the range between the smallest and the largest by this comparison is exceedingly small, to compare with the 25 percent, plus or minus – I guess I say it on page 3 somewhere; I think it's in the second paragraph. "In the revised relationship of the same total electorate of [1.5 million] to 70 electoral divisions . . ." This is what I reduce it to. So in actual fact to maybe combat the 33.5 percent increase you had, I've taken 16.7 percent of that out. That's just by the way, but that's how the figure's worked out. But at least it gives a fairer representation by population. I'm considering the present one, obviously, and the range that is possible there, and even with the 25 percent, plus or minus.

So basically the submission is that we can easily undertake a change in the system by combining adjacent rural areas to give them the numbers they should have to equate, say, to the urban areas. And I certainly don't give any benefit over and above the individual vote to anyone living in the urban area to compare with the rural area or vice versa.

So that's the nature of my presentation. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Questions? Pam.

MS BARRETT: I'll start with a comment. You did your homework. I couldn't believe it when I looked inside and saw this. Oh, my God, he did the whole map here. You're the first person so far to come in with a redrawn map, so I'm impressed.

MR. THOMAS: Without necessarily changing it, because I stuck to the old configuration essentially, and combined.

MS BARRETT: No, I realize that. It's just that you are the first person to come to our hearings to actually come with a

well-conceived or mapped out notion of how you would redo things. One of the first ones I looked at here was Peace River/Dunvegan, which you suggest to combine. Now, maybe you know more about the demographics of those two ridings than do I, but I must say I wonder – would that be physically possible, to represent an area that big?

MR. THOMAS: Well, quite frankly, I don't think that even compares with some of the other areas like Fort McMurray in geographical area.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, if could interject for a moment. One of the factors the committee will be looking at in some detail relates to settled areas versus total landmass, because when you look at Fort McMurray, for instance, we have the city of Fort McMurray, we have a ribbon of development below Fort McMurray following the railway, and then you have a big hop skip over to Fort Chip in the far north.

MR. THOMAS: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Whereas Dunvegan – using it as an example – there's a lot of settlement in the southern part of the constituency where there are a number of smaller communities and hamlets. So they're really very different kinds of areas.

MS BARRETT: I appreciate that. My understanding – and believe me, I'm no authority; I've only been north a few times – is that there's farming almost up to this line right here in both the Peace River and Dunvegan areas. Is that correct?

MR. THOMAS: Uh huh.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It follows a ribbon up in here.

MS BARRETT: Yeah. So if that's the case . . . I mean, what I'm asking you is actually a question in principle. I just happened to use this one as an example. I see that you have pursued equality of vote in your delineations. Would you under any circumstances see a variation off that target to accommodate extraordinary geographic needs?

MR. THOMAS: Oh, I think so. Without question that has to be. You know, it's practicable to combine some, perhaps to make adjustments to make it more equal, something which is more convenient to do. But I thought, looking at it from the concept of the 85 boundaries, that this was one approach which could give us a better concept than the plus or minus 25 percent.

MS BARRETT: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay? Anyone else? Yes, Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you. I, too, very much appreciate the presentation that you make.
You've taken the voter population only.

MR. THOMAS: Yes.

MR. SIGURDSON: One of the concerns I have – again, it was pointed out earlier – is that there are a number of people that are not at all represented in our province.

MR. THOMAS: Small indeed, though. Yes.

MR. SIGURDSON: Landed immigrants . . .

MR. THOMAS: I was one myself.

MR. SIGURDSON: Yeah. And school children.

MR. THOMAS: Yes.

MR. SIGURDSON: They're a great concern of mine. I'm advised – if I remember the figures correctly from the last Electoral Boundaries Commission – that the voting population only makes up about 60 percent . . .

MR. LEDGERWOOD: Two-thirds.

MR. SIGURDSON: Two-thirds of the population of the province. I'm one of those who happens to believe that I represent those under 18 as well as those over 18. I'm taking that into consideration. I know you've got a very equitable distribution of population; you've reduced the number of seats. But I would like to ask the question: if the numbers were to increase, say, by another third in terms of census or total population by representation, would you increase the numbers of MLAs, or would you try and keep it at your 70?

MR. THOMAS: Well, this is the option, you see, as much that the 70 relates, I guess, to distribution of 22,000 per MLA. Certainly that can change inasmuch that anytime we look at this is a point in time, and five years hence, 10 years hence, things could be conceivably different, inasmuch now we're coming back to the situation in Calgary where there is a population coming into the city, having sort of in the downturn lost a lot. You know, at one time, I guess in late '79-80, we were getting about 3,000 a month in. Now a lot of those have left, but again the economy of the city is such that there are more people sort of encouraged to come back now by what is happening in Calgary. So the county position is going to change. When I first came to live in this part of the world, everyone I spoke to was from Saskatchewan. So there's quite a substantial rural influence even in Calgary, I guess, from people from the other side of the border.

MR. SIGURDSON: One other question, if I might just follow up, Mr. Chairman, is that one of the presentations we heard earlier was that we shouldn't have either an electoral boundaries committee or commission after every second election but we should have an Electoral Boundaries Commission after every election to consider population shifts. Would you . . .

MR. THOMAS: I would support that.

MR. SIGURDSON: You would?

MR. THOMAS: Yes.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pam would like to get in a supplementary on this very point.

MS BARRETT: Yes. In fact, Tom took the question out of my

mouth. I would like to ask the other two gentlemen at the table the same question. Do you have a view on how often electoral boundaries should be reviewed?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Maybe before answering I'll give you the background to what happens in Canada. A number of jurisdictions go in a 10-year period. There's one, or maybe more than one, that doesn't have any set term and goes in a rather erratic way. We are now – is it right, Pat? – one of two provinces that go after every second general election. Saskatchewan modeled their legislation after ours.

MR. LEDGERWOOD: There are several that have a set time; there are several that have no set time. It's at the discretion of the government in power at the time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. PARKINSON: Mr. Chairman, under our parliamentary system we could have three elections in one year. I think if you're going to have it after every election or after every second election, there should be some proviso that in circumstances where several elections take place in a very short space of time, we don't have all this administrative brouhaha.

I think one of the major problems here is that an election takes so long. I never cease to be amazed that in Britain they can call a general election and have the new House sitting in 21 or 22 days, whereas a provincial election takes longer than that, and a federal election seems to take forever.

I think every second election, with the proviso that it's not less than every five years . . .

MR. THOMAS: That's right.

MR. PARKINSON: . . . or not less often than every 10 years would be perfectly reasonable.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. DUYNS: I would have to agree. I think every election would be great, but under the condition that we had more than one election within a calendar year, I think that would be redundant. I think it could be every second election with provision for the fact that it's no more than four years or whatever a term may be.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Stock next, and then Frank.

MR. DAY: Mr. Thomas, I appreciate the work you've done. I notice you said that actually you didn't redraw the maps; you combined the numbers.

MR. THOMAS: Yes, although I happen to have suggested boundary modifications to correct any imbalance that there might be there.

MR. DAY: I appreciate the work and the time it's obviously taken to do that. It helps just to get a picture of some of the possibilities.

Actually, Pam touched on the first area in terms of – just as a for instance, Peace River and Dunvegan would be one gigantic constituency.

MR. THOMAS: It would.

MR. DAY: No question about it. Tom has alluded to the fact that with technology today, if you were situated in Peace River and there were a few people scattered in the northernmost regions of the constituency of Peace River, you can phone.

MR. THOMAS: Of course.

MR. DAY: Now, that's not an optimum, but that is a possibility. So technology is on the side of covering distance.

I wonder if you could reflect back, and this is as an example. You suggested combining West-Yellowhead, Whitecourt, Barrhead.

MR. THOMAS: Uh huh.

MR. DAY: The extremes of those constituencies would stretch slightly over half the width of the province.

MR. THOMAS: But I've suggested two MLAs as well, you see, to take it from the three.

MR. DAY: Okay. So your split north and south would be your suggestion rather than east and west, I'm gathering from that.

MR. THOMAS: More than likely, yes – well, you know, depending on the geography, I guess, and the distribution of the townships and what have you that you have there. I think one would have to examine it and see where the logical split would be. I've made assumptions here. I don't necessarily know all these areas that I've made these projected suggestions for. But no; I think it should be open to some sort of adjustment to suit the sensibility of it, really.

MR. DAY: Yeah. Going back to your suggestion on Dunvegan/Peace River. Now, if you're not dealing with one or two constituents out in the hinterland who want a phone call but, in fact, may be in the southernmost reaches of Dunvegan, there's a community group, and in the upper regions of what is now the Peace River constituency there's a constituency group, you're talking about a day out of the life of the MLA to meet commitments in both of those . . .

MR. THOMAS: Oh, indeed.

MR. DAY: . . . whereas, of course, in Edmonton, Red Deer, or Calgary, you're talking about an hour out of the life.

MR. THOMAS: Well, I wouldn't think, you know, that that situation would be altogether different from the worst case that you've got now in any location.

MR. DAY: The suggestion has been – what we've heard in the rural end is that the present difficulties would be magnified, and I wondered if you'd factored that into the equation.

MR. THOMAS: No. I've just gone strictly on the convenience of the layout of the 85 setup, and related it to that. I've tried to put logical things together, but they may well be illogical due to – in certain areas anyway – some disproportionate layout as far as the area is concerned.

MR. DAY: Yeah. I appreciate the work you've done. That will be helpful. Thank you.

MR. THOMAS: I wanted to learn something about it myself.

MR. DAY: Yes, it's a learning curve for sure. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Frank?

MR. BRUSEKER: Thank you, Mr. Thomas. I just want to echo the comments; it's a good quick study that you've done here.

I wanted to address your comments about the two urban areas, in particular Edmonton and Calgary. You say basically we should just take them, take the total population, and divide by 17 or 19 as appropriate. The question I have for you is – and you kind of alluded to it a little bit. Calgary, for example. I represent the northwest corner, Calgary-North West: the Hawkwood-Silver Springs area, which has undergone and presumably will continue to undergo some significant growth.

MR. THOMAS: Indeed.

MR. BRUSEKER: Since we will probably – maybe I'll take a guess. At least we currently have redistribution after every second election. When the new boundaries are established, should we make some allowance in creating the distribution as to what the projected populations will be?

MR. THOMAS: No question; yes. You've got to look ahead. There's a limit to what you can perhaps do, but no, you have to anticipate that up to a point. But again, if we get this reviewed every five years, I think it can be remedied in that time. I certainly know that part of the world that you represent. It's ever changing. It's going farther up Nose Hill all the time.

MR. BRUSEKER: Yes. So what you're saying, though, is that perhaps with more frequent re-evaluation of the boundaries we can keep the constituencies much closer together in terms of size.

MR. THOMAS: But also anticipating that what can happen inasmuch that they are areas that are developing, and therefore you'd make allowance so that perhaps now the representation would be one MLA for every 18,000 as opposed to the average being 22,000.

MR. BRUSEKER: I see. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Tom?

MR. SIGURDSON: No, I didn't . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pat? Pam.

MS BARRETT: I have one more. Again it would be to all three. I don't believe I heard any of you refer to the composition of the Electoral Boundaries Commission itself.

I can describe to you – for instance, in British Columbia it consisted of a designate of the Premier, a designate of the Leader of the Opposition, and the Chief Electoral Officer. In Manitoba it consisted of appointments of the Chief Justice, the president of the University of Manitoba, and the CEO. I can't

remember what it was in Saskatchewan. If anybody remembers they could pipe up.

In any event, do any of you have an opinion? We can recommend how the commission itself is structured, who sits on it. Have you any recommendations?

MR. DAY: Just to interject, Pam. In Saskatchewan it was a justice, the Chief Electoral Officer, but I can't recall a third party.

MR. PRITCHARD: Was it the president of the university?

MS BARRETT: No, that was Manitoba.

MR. THOMAS: I think the problem in the past has been one of preferences for purely political reasons. If anyone could do anything about the people who were to make the recommendation as to how the distribution should be, it should be relatively impartial and certainly professional, without question.

A case that comes to mind, being an engineer I guess, is in the early days of the development of the railways, in England anyway. Every company that was set up had a different gauge for their tracks. In the ultimate there had to be a standardization, and of course all the people they involved in that were people like the astronomer royal or the Attorney General and people who didn't know the first thing about that sort of system or the potential of that system. They arrived at the four foot eight and a half gauge because that was apparently the proven distance or gauge between the wheels of a Roman chariot. So it would be quite out of the question that it would – and it has limited the industry, of course, to this present time: the wrong decision at that time.

MR. PARKINSON: I would simply say that I think it would be a good idea not to use a judge. From everything I hear, the law courts are backed up to goodness knows when. Judges seem to be appointed to commissions left, right, and centre and, therefore, distracted from their primary work. Surely there are other people around the province who could be considered suitably impartial.

MR. DUYNIS: I would just suggest that any elected members that are members of the committee, that it be ensured that there is an equal number from each group so there is no claim of impartiality. I would suggest that the Chief Electoral Officer should be a member, and there should be room in there, I guess, for other nonpartisan citizens. Again I would agree that judges are not probably a great example.

MS BARRETT: Okay, great. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else?

Well, if there are no other questions, on behalf of the committee I'd like to thank each of you very sincerely for taking the time to put together your briefs to come and share your time with us tonight. It's appreciated. I mean that very sincerely.

We started this process up in High Level and had two people come out, the mayor and the town manager. Keep in mind that they only had three days' notice. But we found that a very delightful experience. The mayor was able to share with us some of the unique challenges they have in the far northern part of the province, where to get to the nearest large town, Peace River, requires a three-hour drive for him. There isn't a hearing

we've had where we haven't heard something new, where we haven't been given some new challenges or new ideas. That doesn't necessarily make our job any easier, but it certainly helps in getting an understanding for this issue.

So again, our special thanks to each of you for coming out tonight and being with us.

MR. THOMAS: My pleasure.

MR. PARKINSON: Thanks very much.

[The committee adjourned at 8:20 p.m.]

