

[Chairman: Mr. Bogle]

[7:10 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll declare the meeting officially open, and a hearty welcome to all of you who have chosen to come out and be with us this evening. We are expecting one more committee member to be with us tonight, Pat Black.

I'd like to explain the process first of all. This is a select special committee of the Legislature. Therefore, we are required to record our proceedings, and there will be a *Hansard* available to which the public have full access. We don't want the microphones or the recording process to intimidate anyone; we've been trying to keep our meetings as informal as possible. The general procedure followed is that I'll ask someone to lead off with a presentation. Debbie, we'll use you as an example. Members of the committee will then have an opportunity to ask any questions or make comments, and then we invite questions or comments from others in the room. Once Debbie has finished with her presentation, we'll move on to Elaine and so on with others. If you'd feel more comfortable joining us at the table, please feel free to do so. The only thing we ask is that when a person is presenting a brief, they be close enough to a microphone so that we're sure everything is picked up.

I'd like to begin by introducing the members of our team who are here. Then I'm going to ask each of you to introduce yourselves and indicate if you are here representing a constituency association, a community league, or whether you're here as a citizen at large. We'll go through a brief presentation to give you some of the background as to why the committee has been struck and what our mandate is. Then we'll get right into it.

So I'd like to begin by introducing the committee members who are here at the present time. On my far right is Tom Sigurdson. Tom represents the constituency of Edmonton-Belmont. He was first elected to the Assembly in 1986 and re-elected earlier this year in 1989. He is a New Democratic member. On my immediate right is Frank Bruseker. Frank represents the Calgary-North West constituency. He was first elected to the Assembly this spring. My name is Bob Bogle, and I represent the riding of Taber-Warner.

In terms of support, the fellow who does all the work, who catches all the blame if things don't go well and gets very little credit when things do go well, is Bob Pritchard, our senior administrator. We also have Doug and Vivian with us, who are with *Hansard* and are doing the recording tonight. I've indicated that we expect Pat Black to join us momentarily, and when she comes in, I'll properly introduce her.

So if I could pause then, Debbie, we'll start with you and just work our way around the room in terms of introductions.

MS SIKARSKI: Okay. Well, I don't know if "presentation" is necessarily the correct word to use. It's more of an open letter, and if you don't mind, I'll read it because I . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before you do, could we get introductions?

MS SIKARSKI: Oh, I'm sorry. Okay. There you go. See, not paying attention here. Debbie Sikarski, Marlborough Park Community Association.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good. And you're . . .

MRS. COLLEY-URQUHART: Diane Colley-Urquhart, Calgary-Glenmore.

MRS. WARHOLM: Elaine Warholm, returning officer, Calgary-Shaw.

MR. CASWELL: My name is Doug Caswell, with the Calgary-Montrose PC Association.

MR. MYLNARSKI: Stan Mlynarski, Calgary-Montrose.

MRS. MLYNARSKI: Ila Mlynarski, Calgary-Montrose.

MR. WILKIE: Richard Wilkie, Calgary-McKnight.

MR. FOSTER: Roy Foster, Calgary-North Hill.

MRS. FOSTER: Joy Foster, returning officer for Calgary-North Hill.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good. Again, welcome to you all.

Let's deal first with why we're here. I'm going to ask Frank and Tom to go through the background to it. Before doing that, let me say that our Alberta legislation requires that after every second general election we go through a general redistribution. So our last redistribution process occurred in 1983-84. We had a general election in 1986 and another general election in 1989. So if we were following the normal procedure, during the past sitting of the Legislature we would have struck an Electoral Boundaries Commission. Traditionally the commission has been chaired by a judge, has had on it several MLAs, at least one citizen at large, and the Chief Electoral Officer. Again, if these were normal times, those individuals would be out doing their work now in terms of following the direction they had been given by the Legislature in terms of drawing the lines between constituencies.

But these aren't normal times. There was a court case in British Columbia where an individual took the British Columbia government to court and charged that their boundaries were unfair, that they did not conform with the Charter of Rights in that there was too much variation between their largest populated ridings and their rural, more sparsely populated constituencies. The case was heard by then Chief Justice McLachlin from the B.C. court. The bottom line is that Judge McLachlin ruled in favour of the plaintiff and found that the boundaries for the province were indeed in violation of the Charter of Rights. British Columbia has been working hard since that time to correct the situation. That has had an implication not only in British Columbia but in the federal House of Commons and in the other nine provinces in Canada. So we wanted to ensure that before we proceed to give directions to our electoral boundaries commission, there are certain things we should take into account.

I'd like to stop at that point and turn it over to Frank, who I think's going to lead us through some of those conditions.

MR. BRUSEKER: Have all of you had a chance to pick up one of these at the front table or maybe received them in the mail? Basically, we're going to go through this package of information. I just want to talk about the letter first of all and sort of talk about the role of our committee. Normally we would have a commission, and the commission is a group that will actually sit down with maps and pencils in hand and actually draw lines on maps. This committee is not doing that. We are at this point gathering information, and we are gathering information from what has been the status quo or what is currently the status quo

in Alberta.

We have traveled to Regina, we've traveled to Winnipeg, and we've traveled to Victoria with our committee to inquire what has happened in those cities and, therefore, in those provinces with regard to their electoral boundaries and any revisions they have made, especially in light of the court decision Mr. Bogle referred to.

So what we have to do with our committee is: once we have gathered information from as many sources as feasible, we will then be sitting down with our seven members. I don't know if Mr. Bogle mentioned that it's an all-party committee; there are representatives from all three parties that are represented in the Legislature. We will look at what our current legislation is; it's called the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. We will examine the way it is written currently. We will be looking at the implications of the British Columbia decision and what impact it may have upon Alberta, and we believe there is some impact. We will then, also in our committee, make a recommendation as to how the commission will actually be structured. In the past there were members of the Legislature who actually sat on the commission, and what we found in other provinces is that commissions in our neighbouring provinces, on both sides, in fact do not have active members of the Legislature sitting on their commission.

We will look at the maps such as you see on the wall over there. It would be nice if it was all one large map, but that makes it a little difficult to transport. But those are the current divisions as they exist in the province today. We're going to look at those. I think Tom will talk more about those in just a moment and make some recommendations for changes. Then we also have to take into account not only the size but how well we as MLAs can represent our constituents and how well our constituents can get to us when they need to.

So we have to take all those things into account, and we're taking our traveling road show right across the province. We've been as far north as High Level, and we will go, I think, as far south as Stand Off in the southern part of the province and many points in between, which Tom is going to talk about right now. So Tom's going to take us through the rest of the package with figures and maps.

MR. SIGURDSON: Also with the use of the overhead projector. As the only member of the committee currently before you who is not a teacher, I find it odd that I'm using the overhead projector.

Anyway, the first slide is the list of the constituencies in alphabetical order. You can't really tell from this slide just the range of voter population that we have throughout our province. But if you go to the next slide, you'll see that there we have it in numerical order, starting with Edmonton-Whitemud at well over 31,000 and going down to Cardston which has 8,105 voters in their constituency. Now, Cardston is a bit of an anomaly in that the Blood Indian Band, which is resident inside the boundaries of the Cardston constituency, choose to not be involved in the enumeration process. Their 1,800 members of the band would have certainly bumped the Cardston voter population up significantly. So that's the range, from 8,100 to 31,536.

What that looks like in terms of trying to find an average is that if you take all the voters in our province, add them up, you have 1.55 million-plus. Take the 83 electoral divisions, do the appropriate division, and you'll find that you have 18,000-plus voters as an average number per constituency for our province.

Now then, the McLachlin decision in British Columbia suggested that a variance of plus or minus 25 percent off the average would be acceptable to any Charter challenge, or she thought that would withstand any Charter challenge. If you take the average and add 25 percent, you get a top-end range of 23,356 and a bottom-end range of 14,014.

Moving back to the numbers in terms of order, what you find here with this slide is that we have a number of constituencies that are coloured in green. These constituencies are all 25 percent above the mean. Those highlighted in red are 25 percent below the mean. The remaining constituencies, in white, are within the acceptable range that Justice McLachlin spoke of in her decision.

Putting that onto a map of our province, what we've got here is to show you those constituencies that currently fall below the 25 percent average. You can see that a good number of rural constituencies in our province are below the 25 percent allowance that Justice McLachlin called for.

Moving on into the urban areas, you will see that this is the city of Calgary, and we have a number of areas that are highlighted in green. These constituencies are above the mean plus 25 percent. Now, again on this map and the next one with Edmonton, you'll note that those areas that are highlighted are primarily on the periphery of the city, peripheral areas that are still growing and developing with new housing projects. Their population base is still increasing.

Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West are still fine according to the McLachlin decision, so there is no problem with those two urban constituencies. The rest of the province, however, that has large urban areas were not quite as fortunate. Medicine Hat at 29,000, I believe, is well over the 25 percent top-end allowance.

Red Deer is a bit of an anomaly in that it's fine in terms of its population base, but what had to happen in the last commission is that we had to take a good chunk of the rural county of Red Deer to include it in with the municipality of Red Deer to create two constituencies. If you take a look at the reddish-brownish line, that's the outline of the boundaries of the city of Red Deer. Now, in 1983 there was only one constituency in Red Deer, and it was far too large. It had to be divided into two constituencies, but dividing just the city would have made two very small constituencies. These are the only two constituencies in the province that go out into that rural part of Alberta to bring in a sufficient number of voters to bump up the population to give them effectively the right numbers for two constituencies.

This is the map of St. Albert. Again, it is well above the plus 25 percent allowance as outlined by Justice McLachlin.

This map is of our province. The purple colour is depicting those constituencies that are 35 percent outside the proposed allowance. So you can see that while the numbers go down, there's still a large number of constituencies that are well outside that 25 percent.

This map highlights those constituencies that are outside the guidelines by 50 percent or more. So again you can see that we have five constituencies that are well below any guidelines that would be suggested by Madam Justice McLachlin.

These blue dots note where we're going to have or have had public hearings. You can see that we're certainly going to be traveling a great deal throughout our province to try and get input. We're just about at the halfway mark at this point.

These are the dates of the hearings. If you really liked tonight's presentation, we'd invite you to travel with us to Medicine Hat or Vulcan, and if we excite you in those locations,

then February promises to be a very exciting month for you as well.

Finally, what we've done is taken the map of the province, shown with the green dots the locations of the public hearings and those constituencies that are below or outside the proposed acceptable range by 35 percent. As you can see, we're trying to go into those areas that perhaps will undergo the greatest change, and I emphasize the word "perhaps" because it's this committee's responsibility to hand out guidelines to the commission. It's the commission that will be drawing the maps. However, we have to go in and hear the presentations and representations from a number of Albertans who may very well undergo some degree of change.

That, Mr. Chairman, is the slide presentation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks very much, Tom and Frank.

Any questions, first of all, on any of the material the three of us have covered with you? Yes.

MRS. WARHOLM: What I was going to say, Bob, is: are you looking to just redistribute within the total number of constituencies you have now, or are you looking to, if necessary, add within an urban setting?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's all part of the mandate of the committee. We heard a brief last evening suggesting that we reduce the number of ridings from 83 to 70. We heard a brief today suggesting we increase the number of ridings from 83 to either 93 or even 95. So we're picking up feedback from a variety of sources.

Any other questions?

We have two late arrivals. Would you kindly introduce yourselves for us?

MR. BUCHANAN: Sure. I'm Murray Buchanan from Airdrie.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Murray, thanks.

MR. CHRISTIE: Jim Christie from Trochu.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good to see you both.

You'll see as we go on that we're trying to be as informal as possible. We're about to proceed with the first presentation, by Debbie. Once that's completed, there'll be an opportunity for members of the committee to question or make comment, then you'll be given the same opportunity, and we'll move on. So please, once you've completed your presentation, if you'd like to stay and hear others, you're more than welcome to do so. If you have to slip away, that's fine. If anyone would like a coffee or a juice, they're at the back of the room.

MS SIKARSKI: First off, I'd like to thank the committee for allowing me this opportunity to voice my concerns as not only a resident of Calgary-Montrose constituency but also as a fourth-generation Albertan.

As president of Marlborough Park Community Association, I feel we've enjoyed a productive and mutually satisfying relationship with our elected representative, largely due to the reasonable size of our constituency and, as a result, the personal attention our MLA has been able to give us. I would be disappointed to see the growing sense of interest and involvement in provincial processes felt by our community be thwarted by nonessential revisions to existing boundaries.

Because the determination of electoral boundaries is open to review after every second election, there is an implied suggestion that revisions are always necessary. Would it not be wiser to affect change where it is warranted, such as in the case of the committee chaired by Justice Miller in the '70s, rather than instituting sweeping changes to the entire distribution process?

In a province that still communicates on party lines in certain areas, revisions, if any, must be made with careful consideration given to the vast differences between urban and rural life. A common argument, and one I can appreciate, is to suggest that high-tech telecommunications are no longer a thing of the future but are being incorporated into our daily lives at an ever-increasing rate. However, to justify the inaccessibility or perhaps even absence of an elected representative from his area of responsibility, both human and geographical, by assuming the average voter would have access to or even desire these forms of communication lends an ivory tower attitude to representation as we know it.

It would be a dangerously natural progression to take this line of reasoning one step further, to serve expediency by doing away with rural constituency offices altogether and making the Legislature the focal point, thus further removing government from the people not only physically but, I fear, ideologically. Surely a fundamental requirement for effective representation must involve not only a fair and reasonable knowledge of the constituents and their needs but also of the area in which they live. How is it possible for an MLA to make the best decisions concerning his constituency when collecting democratic input for those decisions becomes an ordeal of travel versus time? Is it fair to penalize rural Albertans because of population statistics that do not follow easily into neat mathematical formulas? In light of Alberta's push for Senate reform, would it not be hypocritical, at the very least, to diminish the voices and needs of the hinterland in our own province?

In closing, I suggest that maintaining the status quo is the only fair and justifiable means of ensuring that all Albertans receive the level of representation to which they're entitled.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, Debbie. Thank you. Questions? Yes, Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, I'll play the devil's advocate right off the top then. I represent the constituency of Calgary-North West. Your argument is to maintain the status quo. I represent 30,000 constituents, and if you look at the list of the ones that are ranked from largest to smallest, if you look at the three smallest constituencies - Pincher Creek-Crownsnest, Cypress-Redcliff, and Cardston - the total of those three is less than 30,000, yet they get three MLAs. The question I would put to you is: is that fair and equal representation?

MS SIKARSKI: Okay. So in other words, you don't feel that geographical limitations have any bearing on the representation that constituents may or may not receive from their MLA?

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, there's always going to be a concern in the rural areas, but there is no rural constituency that possibly can be the same size as an urban constituency simply by definition of the difference between urban and rural. So I don't think that argument is consistent or valid necessarily.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If I may. If I'm not mistaken, Debbie, you

mentioned that one possibility is to make some refinements, as was done by Justice Miller.

MS SIKARSKI: Uh huh.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So I'm not sure the suggestion was that you leave everything exactly as it is.

MS SIKARSKI: No. I just am very concerned that rural and urban ridings are treated in the same manner when obviously there are so very many fundamental differences between the two areas of government. You can almost split it into two areas of government. The way that you have to go about approaching your constituents and doing your daily business in a rural riding I'm sure is considerably different than in an urban one, time of course being one of the major factors. As I said: yes, if a change is warranted, then surely it should be effected. But why change the whole scheme of things just to feed numbers into a mathematical formula that may not be the best solution for everyone concerned? It sort of concerns me that the formula is coming first, and then we're trying to fit Alberta into the formula instead of looking at Alberta and approaching it from the other way: well, what's best for all of Alberta?

MR. BRUSEKER: So if I can paraphrase then, what I think I'm hearing you say is that maybe we should address, if I can describe it that way, the ones that are in pink and in green, and the ones that are in white we should maybe just leave well enough alone as much as possible.

MS SIKARSKI: Well, I think that unless there are obvious complaints from the MLAs who are already in urban ridings who feel they have too much to handle, I can't see why we'd go about changing any of those. But even still, addressing those areas, I think it's so important to talk to the people in those constituencies as well. I know you've highlighted a few of the areas. I know what it's like; you try to organize these things and hope for the best turnout possible, and unfortunately that's not usually what you get.

It sort of really concerns me that if this committee is making recommendations that go to the commission, which in turn go to the Assembly, obviously such a small group of people are going to be heard from – I know it's up to them to be aware of these types of things, but unfortunately that's not the way it works, and we all know it – that such a small group of people who are making their voices heard at these hearings are going to have such a devastating effect on all Albertans. Now, I don't know if you have to go to a longer time frame or how exactly you go about reaching these people and letting them know exactly what is going on and what could possibly happen without any of their input.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Maybe I can interject for just a moment. We've been attempting to distribute copies of the letter to the widest possible circulation. I think about 6,000 have gone out to date.

MR. PRITCHARD: Six thousand today, and there's another 3,000 going out in the next couple of days.

MS SIKARSKI: That's to the general public, in the mail?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we're doing all organized levels of

government: city, town, and village councils; counties, MDs, improvement districts, hospital boards, school boards, health units, libraries. Tomorrow the three of us will make a presentation to the delegates at the Alberta School Trustees' Association convention – well over 1,000 people. We've been before the Alberta rural municipalities association, we've met with the executives of the Hospital Association and the Urban Municipalities Association, and one of our members also made a presentation to the improvement districts. So we're trying to share with Albertans the challenge we have. There's a court implication which we can't ignore, but we're not blindly going ahead and saying, "Well, they did it in B.C., so we're automatically doing it here." On the other hand, we are saying "Help us." As I mentioned, we're getting some very divergent points of view, and that's fine; that's part of the mix.

Don't be discouraged by what you consider a low turnout here. We've had as many as 20, 22 people out. I think as we go on and our work becomes better known, the attendance will increase. So we're doing our best to be available.

MR. PRITCHARD: I might add, Mr. Chairman, that we're also asking for written submissions until the end of February, and we have received a number of written submissions. We're also getting a number of inquiries by phone. People are asking how they can write in and how they can respond.

MR. CHAIRMAN: One of the reasons we ask for your address is if you'd care to receive a copy of our report once it's tabled in the Assembly. Anyone who's attended our meetings, whether they speak or not, who would like a copy of the report will receive one just as soon as it's made available to our Assembly.

I'm not sure if you had anything else, Frank; and then, Tom, one more question here.

MR. BRUSEKER: Just one more question. I recognized your comment. We'd love to pack the Jubilee Auditorium and have 2,000 people sitting there waiting on every word, but we have to forge ahead, I guess.

I just want to come back, then, Debbie. You said we shouldn't maintain everything exactly as it is, yet we need to be aware of the differences between urban and rural constituencies. I wonder if you could elaborate a little bit, then, on how we might address those issues, because obviously, as the devil's advocate, I picked the two extreme ends. It's very easy when you look at the two extreme ends to say that we need to do something based upon those and leave the guys in the middle alone, so to speak. I wonder if you might have some suggestions as to how we might make it a little fairer in terms of representation. Because we do need to take into account population, but I think you make some valid points about rural constituencies being different from urban constituencies. I wonder if you might have a few ideas we could use or suggestions on how we might take those differences into account, I guess.

MS SIKARSKI: Okay. I'm not going to presume that I could suggest anything any of you haven't already thought of. You say you looked at the areas which require some juggling, and I'm just wondering, well, do they? I mean, who's complaining the loudest about these ridings being far too large in the rural areas?

MR. CHAIRMAN: If this were a normal . . .

MS SIKARSKI: Okay. And this is all based on the judgment

in B.C., in other words.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. Okay, let's set that aside. Let's assume that had not occurred. We would at this time, in all likelihood, have a boundaries commission going around the province and listening to submissions so they in turn could set some boundaries. Now, in some cases boundaries wouldn't change. In other cases there'd be change to accommodate areas where there's been very rapid growth and so on.

MS SIKARSKI: And they'd be done piecemeal as they found it was necessary.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, that's right.

MS SIKARSKI: Which is more or less all I'm suggesting. The most effective way to address this is doing it in the areas where not only the MLA but the constituents are unhappy, the judgment aside.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If I read you, you're saying, "I'm from Calgary-Montrose, my area is pretty good, and please leave us alone."

MS SIKARSKI: Yes, that about sums it up.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, that's fair enough, because that comes from different parts of the province. People say, "Look, we're doing quite fine."

MR. BRUSEKER: We've had other members from other constituencies say basically the same thing: "We're happy; leave us alone." That's a perfectly legitimate comment.

MR. SIGURDSON: Just a couple of questions. As we noted earlier, we're sort of taking a different task and different path this time. One of the things we do have to consider is the appointment of a commission. Previous commissions have been struck: seven members, normally four of which are active politicians. Would you have any thoughts or comments on whether or not there should be active politicians on the commission that redraws boundaries?

MS SIKARSKI: I most definitely feel there should be. I think for the general layman to understand what's involved in not only being an MLA but the whole procedure behind government as we know it - I don't think they could appreciate quite readily everything that's involved. I mean, who better to go to than the experts? I think probably they shouldn't all be the majority party members, of course; there should be some equal distribution, as in this committee. But I just surely feel that experts are always the best people to approach in any situation, so why would we go outside the people who are directly involved in this to look for laypeople to make these decisions? You know, certainly if one representative wanted one position on the board that of a layperson, fine, but I can't see giving it over to them a hundred percent.

MR. SIGURDSON: What other jurisdictions have done - Saskatchewan comes to mind. They had a former judge, who also happened to be a former member of the Legislature, who chaired the commission. So he had the advantage of knowing what an MLA would go through. The Chief Electoral Officer

and . . . Another judge was there?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think so.

MR. SIGURDSON: So two judges, one who was a former MLA. There was expertise on the board. If we could find that expertise, would you then change your opinion, or would you still like to see active, sitting members of the Legislature on the commission?

MS SIKARSKI: Assuming they have the time and the inclination to do something like this, I don't see why not. I think they're serving the public interest doing this just as much as they are sitting in their constituency offices or sitting in the Legislature. Things change, as we know, quite rapidly at times. Why not have people who are aware of some of the changes and are right out there in the hot seat, so to speak, in their own constituencies and can bring that knowledge forward too?

MR. SIGURDSON: One other question, Mr. Chairman, if I may, is that British Columbia and Manitoba draw their boundaries or have boundary population based on the entire population of the province, whereas we in Alberta and voters in Saskatchewan have boundaries drawn based on only voter population. That leaves about 40 percent of Albertans outside the total number. Any thoughts on whether or not we in Alberta should change to include the entire population of the province, which would include children under the age of 18, landed immigrants? It would include situations such as we have with the Blood, and it would be based on census so that even though a group of people decided not to participate in an enumeration, their constituency size wouldn't necessarily be reduced because of their lack of participation.

MS SIKARSKI: Well, there's a pro and a con to this answer, isn't there? Of course, everyone is a constituent whether they choose to vote or not and has access to their MLA. So I guess if you want to look at it from that turn, everybody has equal rights to their MLA, and I guess maybe boundaries should be determined according to their presence as well as those of the active voters.

Unfortunately, that just adds another perspective to this whole thing and makes all . . . You know, you're adding in and making these areas that are already overloaded in your opinion, or in the opinion of the B.C. court anyway, even bigger. So is that fair to the people who do choose to exercise their right to vote? They are possibly being compromised or hurt in some way by having to take into account the people who don't exercise that right yet are determining the size of their constituencies. So I wouldn't want to say yes or no on either one, because I sort of see both issues on that question.

MR. SIGURDSON: Yeah. I just want to comment on your use of the term "overloaded." Nobody has ever said that the word is "overloaded."

MS SIKARSKI: Okay, that's my term.

MR. SIGURDSON: Yeah. What the decision in British Columbia says is that there's an inequitable distribution of population between constituencies.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Questions, comments?

MR. WILKIE: Did you want me to . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: You had a question or comment?

MR. WILKIE: Yeah, it was a comment. Do you want me to move? It doesn't matter.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Go ahead. I think if you speak loudly, if you're comfortable there, go ahead.

MR. WILKIE: Okay, fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right.

MR. WILKIE: When Frank was doing the devil's advocate there, he made the comment about equal representation, and . . . Is it Debbie?

MS SIKARSKI: Uh huh.

MR. WILKIE: Debbie had made a comment that we've gone through Senate reform and each region should be treated equally. I think something to keep in mind with the Senate is that Alberta, having far less population than Ontario, would be equally represented, and I think that is something we do need to . . . I don't know if Debbie elaborated on it well enough, but just on the point about equal representation, I think we do have to take both perspectives into account.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I'm pleased you raised it. That matter has come out on several other occasions, that it's rather ironic that on one hand Alberta is the champion of the Triple E Senate concept, yet we have some people coming forward saying that our boundaries should be on a pure one person, one vote. Sometimes they refer to the United States example, where their House of Representatives is drawn on that basis, but often the presenters of that argument fail to recognize or admit that there's a balance. There's a Senate with two Senators from each state, and all but one of the states have upper Houses with regional representation. So that's a good point to keep in mind in terms of regional representation.

MR. WILKIE: Yeah, because really we don't have a second House here to balance things out, yet we don't just want to disenfranchise the people in the rural by having the urban areas shove things down their throat.

MR. SIGURDSON: I'm one of those that's in favour of the abolition of the Senate, thinking that executive government is capable of taking my representations to Ottawa at certain conferences and making our position known. I'm not sure having the second Chamber is absolutely necessary at any level of government. In the same way I would offer that the governing party, given normal circumstances, should be able to draw from parts of the province and insert into its executive committee sufficient representation from all parts of the province. Making sure the representation is there and effectively made around the cabinet table is, I think, as important in getting that perspective at the cabinet table.

MRS. COLLEY-URQUHART: Dianne Colley-Urquhart,

Calgary-Glenmore.

Just to pass two comments on the question you asked. Whether or not MLAs should be represented on a commission: I feel it is a definite conflict of interest. I think it should be nonpartisan representation. I think the opportunity is there to be motivated in an area that is not representative of the concerns of the whole electoral boundaries. So my feeling would be that it should be nonpartisan.

If we are going to follow the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, an MLA, when elected, represents all the people, not just the ones that voted and not just those that are of voting age. They represent the children and the elderly. Well, that doesn't fall into that category. They represent the new immigrants that can't vote. So that, I feel, is very discriminatory, if we don't include the total population base.

Thank you.

MRS. WARHOLM: Okay. I've got something to say about this from the working side of creating an election. Using a total population base would make the functionality of a returning officer's job impossible.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Excuse me. I think the process that's followed . . . Do you want to respond to it?

MR. SIGURDSON: Sure. Certainly.

What would happen is that your function would carry on exactly the same way. What would happen, though, is commissions that are established to redraw boundaries would draw the boundaries based on census.

MRS. WARHOLM: Okay. What do I do about ballot counts in determining what I need in order to order? I mean, there are all sorts of problems.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You'd continue to use the same system you currently use.

MRS. WARHOLM: So there would be an enumeration rather than a straight census?

MR. SIGURDSON: Oh, you bet. That wouldn't change at all.

MRS. WARHOLM: Oh, okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The only question is whether you use the larger population base in terms of the total constituency representation. But when it comes time to develop the voters' list, you would follow the same practice you now use.

MRS. WARHOLM: And in determining ballots and everything else that goes with it, it's still the same?

MR. SIGURDSON: It'd be done the based on an enumeration. Absolutely. That wouldn't change at all. It's just the boundaries.

MRS. WARHOLM: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right.

Any other . . . Yes.

MR. FOSTER: Yes. I was wondering, are there many com-

plaints from the urban people that they now are not properly represented – the population? I know the rural are really holding on to this right now, saying they want their MLA here, they want him five miles down the road, around the corner, of course. But the cities are the major contributors almost to the main part of the wealth of the province, and Calgary has only had one or two increased in the last 10 years.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, sir, that's not so. In 1975 there were 75 members in the Assembly; today there are 83. Also, since 1975 we have lost one rural seat. That was the old Hanna-Oyen seat that's now . . . Well, Hanna-Oyen disappeared and Consort disappeared, and now we've got Chinook. So what I'm saying is that the growth has occurred. There was one seat added in Lethbridge and one added in Red Deer, but Edmonton and Calgary have had the bulk of the growth since 1975 anytime we've had redistribution.

MR. FOSTER: How many increases have we had after this?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't have the specific number, but I . . .

MR. FOSTER: It's not too many.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, each time we've had redistribution since 1975, there have been additions to the metropolitan centres, and we went from 75 to 79 seats and 79 to 83. The growth has occurred in urban – you know, in the rural areas that's understood.

MR. FOSTER: What proportion of MLAs would represent the urban compared to the number of MLAs who represent the rural in Alberta?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Up until the court challenge the standard principle followed was that seven urban voters would equal four rural voters, right? So we were taking the mean figure or an average population figure for Calgary and Edmonton, and there was a plus or minus 25 percent from that. Then there was a group of constituencies called rural, and there was no plus or minus 25. But it was all based around the principle of seven votes versus four votes, and that was to give added weight for geography and distances and the number of communities and so on.

MR. BRUSEKER: In terms of the number of MLAs right now, there are 42 urban MLAs and 41 rural MLAs. That gives us a total of 83.

MR. SIGURDSON: Perhaps just to answer your very first question about whether or not urban residents or urban voters are satisfied with the representation they get, leaving party politics aside, there are times when I guess I've got a bit of an advantage, Mr. Chairman, in that I served as an executive assistant to a member of the Legislature who was from a rural riding at one point and I know the distance he had to travel. I can tell you there are days when, with my 22,000 constituents and the appointments I have and knowing I've had to book into the following day or the following week, I would be glad to have that time, because my constituents are upset that I haven't the time to give them. I have at times been overbooked just by the sheer number of constituents I have, and I'd do anything to have a two-hour drive between appointments.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Anyone else, or we're ready to move on to the next presenter?

MRS. WARHOLM: Well, I was fairly specific in my thoughts dealing with a constituency that's one of the five overloaded units. I was going to recommend that you cut down the number of electors in urban areas for the constituencies so that they at least fall within the number of electoral boundaries you have set out. Basically what I brought in was a proposal for the splitting of Calgary-Shaw and Calgary-Fish Creek in such a way that you'd create three constituencies instead of two. I can see where I can take over 8,000 people out of my constituency – about 8,800 – quite simply and just kind of slice it down the middle between that and Calgary-Fish Creek. So I was very, very specific in my presentation: rather than fighting with the whether we should or whether we shouldn't, just following the rules and regulations you'd set out in the initial part of your letter. If I could get back to you at the . . . It's fairly specific and should probably go to a boundaries commission more than anything else.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What we've suggested to others who have made specific recommendations regarding boundaries between constituencies is that we welcome your input. We will try to ensure that that is passed on to the boundaries commission when it's struck.

MRS. WARHOLM: Should I be sending that to Pat Ledgerwood as well?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I would suggest you hold it until the commission is officially struck.

MRS. WARHOLM: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He will no doubt be on the commission and then ensure that you either make a presentation in person or at least send a copy of the proposal to the commission. That way we're sure it'll be caught.

By the way, one of the suggestions that was made while we were in the far northern part of the province was: why not have the commission come out and hold hearings, even if they're limited, before they sit down and develop an interim report? In other words, the practice in the past has been that the commission, once struck, has sat down, looked at the statistics and the numbers, gone ahead and drawn lines and developed a map, and presented to the Assembly an interim report. The interim report has then been made public. People would then have a chance to look at it and see how they're affected; then the commission would go around the province and hold hearings and you'd have an opportunity to have input. Once you had your input, the commission would sit down and decide whether to adjust any of the boundaries or what and then submit their final report to the Legislature.

The suggestion was made in one part of the province: why not have the commission come out and hear us first before they draw any lines or form any conclusions? And we may be able to help. I think the general consensus – although we're nowhere near the stage of writing down recommendations, I saw a lot of heads nodding at the committee level because it seemed to make good sense.

MRS. WARHOLM: Particular when you're working an area.

With Calgary-Shaw I'm right on the city border, and as such I've got rural people who still have small acreages and farms within the constituency right up against large housing developments. As such, even in my position, I start running into different kinds of problems, and I know our MLA has the same type of problem with it. Once you start getting up into numbers like 26,000, 27,000, and 28,000, the MLAs run continually, and I think with a large population like that there's just no way, even in an urban area, you can really handle your constituency properly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Good point.

MRS. WARHOLM: And neither can the returning officer.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Any questions, Tom or Frank, for Elaine?

MR. BRUSEKER: So, Elaine, I guess basically what you're saying then, if I interpreted your comments correctly, is that you support the concept of the provincial average plus or minus 25 percent. Is that . . .

MRS. WARHOLM: I think it's much more reasonable and much more functional to handle with the types of rules and regulations that are set up in the Election Act. From my standpoint as a returning officer, once you get a constituency that starts getting too big, there are other problems that crop up that we cannot necessarily handle properly with the staff we're allowed.

MR. BRUSEKER: Yeah, because the two that you mentioned, Calgary-Fish Creek and Calgary-Shaw, are the second and sixth largest constituencies respectively in the province and . . .

MRS. WARHOLM: That's right, and I do know that Wendy Watson, who's the returning officer in Fish Creek – and you know, when you've got building continually, you're always out there surveying, trying to cut and divide, because once the boundaries commission finishes cutting and dividing, then we have the privilege of cutting and dividing up to 60, 70, 80 areas again within the unit and you start running into the same types of problems.

MR. BRUSEKER: You mean to create the polls?

MRS. WARHOLM: That's right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On this point. Do you recall how many other jurisdictions redistribute after every second election? Saskatchewan now does.

MR. BRUSEKER: Manitoba, I think, just moved to it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Did Manitoba?

MR. BRUSEKER: They didn't initially, but they have gone to it now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I guess we'd better find out, because it's been the norm in most jurisdictions not to go to general redistribution until after every 10 years.

MR. BRUSEKER: That's what Manitoba did, so I think they changed that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So your population in your growth areas becomes much more difficult to handle. In fact, some people have suggested there should be redistribution after every general election.

MR. SIGURDSON: Or examinations.

MRS. WARHOLM: Maybe an examination and small changes made here and there. I don't know whether you want a general . . .

MR. SIGURDSON: I'm just curious, Mr. Chairman. Were you the returning officer when Calgary-Fish Creek and Calgary-Shaw were one constituency?

MRS. WARHOLM: No, Wendy Watson was. But Calgary-Shaw was part of Calgary-Glenmore, and I was the returning officer of Calgary-Glenmore when it was part of Calgary-Glenmore at the time. It went up to about 27,000, 28,000 then, and that was a big constituency. But Calgary-Fish Creek has always seen growth, and now that it's split off and you've got Calgary-Shaw at that end, you've got the tremendous growth going to the south too.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thanks.
Any other questions? Yes.

MR. MLYNARSKI: Mr. Chairman, if I may comment. I really agree with your recommendation or idea that the public have some input before a commission sits and helter-skelter draws boundaries, but quite frankly it's not looking into demographics of the constituency as it is made up and quite often all they take a look at is the population total. The lines may not be jiggled properly according to the way the people within the boundary would like them to be. I'm going to dig into a specific here.

I'm sorry. I'm going to stand. I'm from Calgary-Montrose. I was involved in Calgary-McCall prior to the last redistribution. Unfortunately, we somehow missed the deadline and did not make any recommendations on how Calgary-Montrose was cut out of Calgary-McCall. What Calgary-Montrose now has is basically a residential community that makes up a certain number of population. There is a natural line, the Trans-Canada Highway, running east and west. If the boundary had run that way, it would have taken in enough of a population base to make up the numbers, plus it would give a shopping centre, industry to a certain extent, and everything else. Being MLAs, you understand that when you're going out for an election or nomination or whatever, it is nice to have some businesses to go to to do your fund-raising, whereas if you have strictly a residential community, that is very difficult. I've been involved, in a number of elections, in trying to find headquarters. When all you have is strip malls in there, there's just no place available.

Another thing with this Trans-Canada Highway, the way it ran, everything north was a very definite community that was built at the same time. Everything south was an older, established community. The way it is right now, the population is growing north only, not much to the east. The growth is to the north. The split that they made was a north/south split, and it should have been an east/west one. It would have made everything lock in together. All you have to do is move that east/west split

further north to compensate for the north growth at this point, and then you'd have a good mixture of everything in there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. WILKIE: In regard to the comment that was made over here about the growth patterns, has there been much consideration when these were done in the past as to where the growth patterns are? Or has it just been strictly: today, when we deal with the commission, the numbers are . . . But two years down the road they're going to be very different.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We've listened to people involved in past commissions, and we have more meetings coming up. One of the things they've done in the past is sit down with the chief commissioners from Calgary and Edmonton to ascertain where the growth is occurring in the cities and what they project over the next few years so they can attempt to take that into account.

Do you want to elaborate any further, Tom?

MR. SIGURDSON: It gets so specific that we know how many lots will be available to builders five years down the road by the city planning departments, and they'll be able to project what kind of housing development is going in there. Then we get information on how many people there will be per household, the kind, the cost of the community. So it's well taken into account.

MR. WILKIE: A pretty good guess anyway. Okay.

MR. CASWELL: Doug Caswell from Calgary-Montrose. As a taxpayer I appreciate the participatory democracy which a committee such as this allows. But I would also, as a taxpayer, like to urge you to take a look at any formula that allows for the adjustments required without an increase in the number of MLAs.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The tough one there, Doug, is that if we . . . I think the committee members know how painful that is. British Columbia is now increasing their House from 69 to 75, and they have a population that's about half a million more than ours. We're already at 83. We know we're between a rock and a hard place on this one. The worst case scenario, I guess, is if you wanted to stay right at 83 seats and go to a straight one person, one vote concept, we could erase 12 rural ridings and create 12 more urban ridings. That's the absolute worst case scenario.

I guess on the other side of the coin suggestions have been made to leave everything exactly as it is. We're still searching for answers. We haven't sat down to talk about what kind of recommendations might be made yet, but your point's well taken in terms of not trying to solve the problem solely by creating more seats. Although, you know, it was suggested - I think it was earlier today - looking at the number of electors in both Saskatchewan and Manitoba, where the ratio between the member and the constituents is lower than it is here. So the suggestion was made that you can look at that, but no easy solution.

MR. CASWELL: I guess one thing I'd look at for a comparison would be the city councillors versus MLAs. I'm sure all urban residents would agree that the city councillors in our major cities have basically turned those into full-time positions, and I think

probably most council persons are representing larger than Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think the MLAs from Calgary would love to have the capital in Calgary so they didn't have to ride the airbus back and forth. Frank may want to comment on that. I've heard some people talk about the number of trips they make back and forth. In that sense it's nicer to be in Calgary than it is to be in Taber-Warner, where you're that much further away. But it's a good point.

MR. SIGURDSON: It's very difficult, because regardless of where you are, your job is different. As I say, I suppose that I have an advantage having worked for a rural member, and at times I envy the private time that he had when he was traveling from point A to point B. I know that a Calgary member - hi, Dianne - is different than an Edmonton member. I know that a member that's south of Calgary representing a rural constituency south of the city is different than a rural member that represents Dunvegan or Peace River. But I think what you've got to remember, though, is that every individual that enters public life, starting with their choice to run as a candidate, brings with them a certain expertise that they're going to offer to their constituents and to their fellow members of the Legislature, and they also carry with them some baggage too. But I think that onus is then placed upon the member, not necessarily upon the boundaries of the constituency or the constituents that may or may not elect them.

MR. BRUSEKER: If I could just make a comment, Doug. I think you make a very fair comment that people will say: "Well, gee, you know, we pay taxes. We wouldn't want to add 10 MLAs to the roster and the expense that goes with having 10 more MLAs." I want to kind of tie that in with Debbie's comment earlier that maybe we should try to make as little change as possible. I think the role of our committee really is . . . Although the Supreme Court decision that occurred in B.C. was in B.C., I think that if we can't at least very clearly justify whatever changes we propose based upon some fairly clear and objective rationale, if we can't convince the public at large that we have done what is best for the citizens of the province, we may potentially face a Charter challenge here which, if it were successful, would then cause this whole process to be gone back over again. So coming back to your comment about let's not add expense, Doug, we want to do this right the first time around, which is why we've got to spend some time now and look at what we propose for changes so that we can avoid a potential Charter challenge and the court costs that go with that and then a new committee and a new commission, et cetera, et cetera, all of which cost money. So you raise a valid point.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd like to at this time officially welcome Dianne Mirosch, the MLA for Calgary-Glenmore, who is joining us.

MRS. MIROSH: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We've made a habit in the past when we're in an area and the MLA or a neighbouring MLA comes out to ask them to join us so that they can become part of the process. So welcome.

MRS. MIROSH: Sorry for being late.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anything . . . Yes.

MRS. COLLEY-URQUHART: Just two points that I want to coattail on. I don't think we should get into the comparison between MLAs and aldermen. It's just totally different. It's an irrelevant argument, from my point of view. We have a provincial perspective, and certainly they are just focused here within the city, so I disagree with that focus.

If you recommend to not make any change whatsoever, hopefully you would consider that someone like Frank, say, who represents 30,000, would have the right to have the same infrastructure surrounding him as far as support staff goes as someone in Cardston does that has 5,000 people that he represents, still having a constituency office and all of the other things that go along with an MLA representation. I think that point is really, really important.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good.
Go ahead.

MR. SIGURDSON: Just to follow up on what Frank said and what caused your comment, we've already been advised that if we sit back and choose to do nothing, there will be a challenge based on the Charter. We are fully cognizant of the fact that we've got to do a job, so there will be some recommendations made to the Legislature. What the Legislature chooses to do with those will be up to the Legislature, and the commission following that. But we're aware that . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let me deal with the broader question of support for MLAs. I'm pretty proud of what we do in Alberta based on what we've heard in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and British Columbia. I use as an example that in Manitoba there's a constituency, Churchill, which is 1,000 kilometres long. How wide is it?

MR. BRUSEKER: Miles; 1,000 miles.

MR. SIGURDSON: It's 1,060 miles by 230 miles.

MR. BRUSEKER: It's ridiculous.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's no special provision for travel . . .

MR. BRUSEKER: There are 70 miles of paved road in that constituency.

MR. CHAIRMAN: . . . for the MLA. We try to give our MLAs who represent the far northern constituencies that are more isolated - like Peace River, Fort McMurray, Lesser Slave Lake, Athabasca-Lac La Biche - a special charter privilege, if you like, so that they can get into the more isolated communities by charter aircraft. We also have a mileage program that favours rural MLAs over urban MLAs because of distance. On the other hand, we've got a program to help with mail-outs and constituency material that favours urban MLAs over rural MLAs because it's based on the number of constituents.

We've been advised at numerous meetings to take a look at the support that's provided to MLAs in terms of doing work with their constituents so that you're giving some flexibility. We saw in British Columbia last Friday an example where one

member who deals with a number of islands off Vancouver Island uses a float plane because that's the only way he can get around the islands, and he's paid car mileage. That's what he can claim for using his own float plane, so he can't even cover the price of his gas with it. They're just not yet recognizing that you've got to be flexible in terms of the special needs of your MLAs.

One thing that crosses party lines here that I've always been pleased about when we sit down in the committee is that we've had good support from urban members for programs that help those who are in the more sparsely populated rural areas and vice versa. Hopefully it will continue.

MRS. COLLEY-URQUHART: Your points are well taken, but I think as part of your mandate it would be interesting to revisit all of the points you've made as they now relate to this review that you are all doing, to these hearings, and to address them as far as electoral representation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If your name is on the list, you'll get a copy of our recommendations. I assure you that based on the response that we've had thus far, eye contact and nodding, the committee is planning to present a fairly full and comprehensive report. We're not going to deal strictly with how many seats there should be and the population variance. In fact, we've even got to the point where people have said to us, "You've got to do more to encourage some economic growth in some of the rural areas, and that in itself will help correct some of the imbalances." So we might wind up making some recommendations that go far beyond what you might normally consider within the mandate of an electoral boundaries committee.

MRS. COLLEY-URQUHART: That's good. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else?
Are you finished?

MRS. COLLEY-URQUHART: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there anything else? Is there anyone else who has a formal brief they'd like to present? [interjection] Pardon me?

MR. BUCHANAN: Just a verbal . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Verbal? Well, would you like to come up to the table and join us, please?

MR. BUCHANAN: Sure.

It's Murray Buchanan. I'm an alderman in the city of Airdrie. I'm sorry I don't have a written brief.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's no problem. We've had other . . .

MR. BUCHANAN: I found out about this fairly quickly; I wasn't aware it was on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, Murray, go ahead.

MR. BUCHANAN: The only comments I have to make . . . And I understand that because of the legal challenge that was in place in B.C., we have to look at this. I only ask that members of the committee take into consideration the number

of municipal governments that have to be dealt with in some of these ridings and the number of rural governments; i.e., MD councils and school divisions. For example, in some of these rural ridings you could have eight municipal governments, a couple of rural governments, and a couple of school divisions that you have to deal with. That takes a lot of the time of an MLA. I also recognize that that's offset by the population numbers in the city.

In looking at the numbers in the presentation I see in front of you, I don't know that there has to be anything magical about the 25 percent. As a matter of fact, if you went plus or minus 40 percent, you would need to put some ridings into Calgary and Edmonton and perhaps lose a couple of ridings, certainly in that southeast corner of the province. As long as you're cognizant of the fact, of the number of municipal governments you have to deal with versus population – and I think that's a fairly important issue to consider, because a fair degree of time . . . And I've lived in – well, I live in a city now. I sometimes forget that, but we're still a city.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The friendliest city in Alberta.

MR. BUCHANAN: The friendliest city in Alberta. Thanks, Bob.

But having lived in Calgary and now living in Airdrie, you have more governments to deal with. I see that as the difference between MLAs, and that is certainly a factor; also, the geographic area. I know that you can't put a restriction totally on geographic area, because obviously that restricts the Peace River and northern ones. The population just isn't there if you restrict it totally by geographic area, but I think you need to weigh two or three factors.

If you looked at that 40 percent variance, which I don't think is unreasonable, you'd have to decrease the number of people in about 10 ridings in the cities and you'd have to do something with about eight rural areas. I think that's reasonable. Maybe you want to look at what's a reasonable number. Maybe you want your ceiling to be 27,000. If a riding goes over 27,000 electorate, there has to be – you know, anything over that isn't serviceable. I think, in fairness, probably there are six or seven ridings here that have too much population. Frank's is one of them obviously. I think you have to look at that. But you have to balance it on the other side: the number of municipal governments, and what you can do in that area too.

That's a comment just from the municipal government side.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Murray.
Questions or comments?

MR. SIGURDSON: Just a couple, I suppose. When you talk about a variance of plus or minus 40 percent, I think you're taking us a good distance away from the McLachlin decision that talks about equitable representation. If you allow . . . You know, you can have anywhere a constituency. Just using a hundred as a mean, you could then have 60 to 140, and that, in some range, can give you 2 to 1, which I think is the problem. I think you get back into the problem that the justice tried to address in her decision. Okay? You see what I'm getting at? You could have a low-end constituency of 6,000 and a high-end constituency of 14,000, and then you're getting into 2 to 1. I just want to point out some of the problems that we as a committee have to deal with, and we are cognizant of that.

You've lived in Calgary, and now you live in Airdrie. Obvious-

ly, a positive change for you, and a lot of rural . . . [interjection] Well, no, I was thinking . . . Sorry. I might take exception to that.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Before you make any sarcastic comments down there . . .

MR. SIGURDSON: No, I wasn't being at all sarcastic. What I was going to point out was that we've had a number of submissions from people that have come in from rural Alberta and said: "Well, you know, jeez, you've got all of the services in the city. You've got hospitals. You've got doctors. You've got X. You've got Y. You've got Z." And then I know a number of people that come from urban Alberta who say: "Yeah, and if we want to go skiing, we've got to go out to the country. If we want to go fishing, we've got to go out to the country. And if we want to do other things, recreational facilities, they're out in the country as well." So there is that balance.

I'm actively involved in all of the community leagues in my constituency. I've got seven, and we're probably going to be developing an eighth and ninth very, very quickly. They're not a formal level of government. Certainly they haven't any ability to tax, but in terms of their being taxing on time, I think that if a member tries to service those community leagues, they can be equally demanding. Would you agree?

MR. BUCHANAN: Yeah. Don't misunderstand what I've said. I said that you need a balance. I'm not saying that the urban ridings can be 35,000 and yet the rural should be . . . You know, as long as they're set, then they should be allowed to stay. I'm saying you need to find a balance that takes in the fact of those other considerations. And there's no doubt that community associations take time; I understand that.

By your own statement you made some admission that because municipal governments have the issue of taxation, they have the issue of . . . I mean, just the time in terms of figuring out which grants they fall under and which ones they don't is a fairly complex issue in terms of transportation grants, recreation grants, hospital grants. There's an amount of time it takes to go through an MLA's office to sort some of that out with municipal governments that probably isn't true with community associations. But community associations are very valuable, and I know they have very strong interests at heart, including where the next school should be and where the next hospital should be, and they want to meet with their MLA too. I understand that.

That's why I'm saying I think you need to be cognizant of the balance in terms of that plus the traveling time, the distance away from Calgary or Edmonton. I think it's easier to represent ours, which is Three Hills, because the MLA can land in Calgary, than it is perhaps to represent something in the deep southwest or deep southeast or northeast, because you land and then you've got the time to get down there. You've got to drive two hours plus the 40-minute flight on the airbus.

So I think you have to be, on some of those factors – I know they don't fit into a simple formula, but I think you have to take them into consideration. That's what I'm saying, consider that balance, and 25 percent plus or minus seems to me to be a little tight around, taking in some of those considerations. That's my honest opinion, I think.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Murray.

MR. BRUSEKER: I just wanted to kind of delve into that a

little bit further. Because in all fairness, we've heard that argument that you're making from a number of individuals, both rural MLAs and mayors of small towns like High Level, for example. You know, "Please, God, don't make them any bigger, because we've got to deal with all these different levels of elected representatives." I guess I'm wondering if you have some way in the back of your mind of kind of factoring in those kinds of things into a calculation. Perhaps, as you suggest, the calculation shouldn't be just 18,000 plus or minus 25 percent, but it should be 18,000 plus also involving the number of miles, the number of municipal governments, and so on. I'm wondering how we might factor that in to be able to really come up with some kind of objective, rational way. Because we'd have to apply it not only to Three Hills, but we'd have to be able to walk into Bonnyville and say, "Okay, you have this, this, this, and this, and your population is this; therefore, your boundaries will be here."

MR. BUCHANAN: Basically, I think there is something to that. I don't know if it would stand a legal challenge, because it wasn't designed for that. But I think you'd want some ceilings that say, "That's large enough"; i.e., 27,000. And give me some freedom on that number, if you would, but I've looked at that and said, "Okay; your ceiling at 27,000." Or a geographic region ceiling, and I don't know how many square kilometres that should be, but that's another ceiling. If you're bigger than that geographically, you can't as an MLA effectively represent that. So, first of all, you take care of your concerns in terms of how many people you can effectively represent, how much geographic area you can effectively represent - i.e., however many square kilometres that may be; I don't know what that number should be - then something which says no more than 10 local governments as a ceiling; i.e., municipal councils, MD councils, and school boards, all, you know, considered as . . . So you have three or four ceilings that you hit, and once you hit that, you don't add to it, if you follow what I'm saying. So that takes care of your concerns in the urban areas. It says no more than 27,000. And I don't know if that's the right number, so please don't hold me to that.

It says no larger than this geographical area, because nobody can actually physically cover that area, or it says no more than this number of municipal governments, because again you run into problems in terms of servicing. So you've got yourself three ceilings. And you say: anything larger than that, we need to give that area another representative, be it Calgary North-West or Edmonton-Whitemud, whichever it may be. Or perhaps it's Wetaskiwin-Leduc. Wetaskiwin-Leduc has a lot of municipal governments in there. It has the two cities in it, to start with, Wetaskiwin and Leduc, right off the bat. So maybe that should be a ceiling.

This is just a suggestion: have yourself more than just one ceiling, and that will take in some of the concerns; i.e., physical number of miles to be covered, number of municipal governments to deal with, and population - just as a suggestion to give it some balance. I'm sorry I didn't have it written.

MR. BRUSEKER: No, that's fine. Thanks, Murray. I appreciate that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Murray, you're an alderman in a small but very fast-growing city.

MR. BUCHANAN: Thank you, Bob. I appreciate that.

MRS. MIROSH: And they're going to annex Calgary.

MR. BUCHANAN: No, we can't afford the debt load that would come up.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What I'm really leading up to is: you have what I might call an urban/rural constituency now.

MR. BUCHANAN: We do, yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You just referred to Wetaskiwin-Leduc as another. Your MLA, who till very recently was in cabinet - very, very busy, and not a resident of your community. Did you see a problem with the representation your electorate had in terms of a constituency that was very diverse in terms of its rural and its urban nature?

MR. BUCHANAN: Again, we had two larger centres, one in the north and one in the south. So it left the MLA trying to split between being in Three Hills at one point in time on Saturdays and also being available in Airdrie. So there are some difficulties in that, and believe me, the interests of Airdrie are quite distinct and separate from those of, say, Beiseker.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Of course.

MR. BUCHANAN: But that makes for, in some ways, a more interesting riding for the MLA. It's a little bit more representative, almost, of what we have here in this province. So I don't think that's a problem as much as saying . . . If you're going to come in add another four councils because you add four more towns, then I think you're going to have a problem, because each of those governments make appointments with the MLAs and expect to meet, in addition to the citizens, and everyone in those governments, believe it or not, expects just about as much time as the city of Calgary does. From the other side, you know, saying, "Well, if Calgary could get together with Calgary's caucus and have three or four cabinet ministers, why can't we get an appointment with the hospital minister?" whoever it is. So that's our side of it; that's the other side of it. Sometimes it's difficult to access it. It's not envy of the ability the Calgary municipal government has to access Edmonton, because we recognize the population they represent.

But it is difficult somewhat. Because for an MLA - they can't spend all their time, even though they have a city . . . I mean, take Leduc-Wetaskiwin. That MLA in Leduc-Wetaskiwin can't spend all his time just in Leduc, or just in Wetaskiwin either, even though the city is important. If they're giving all their time to Leduc, again what about the surrounding communities? I think sometimes the smaller communities are somewhat envious of Airdrie and Three Hills, because at least we know that the MLA is going to be in town every other Saturday, which has basically been the way she's handled it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions or comments from anyone else?

MR. SIGURDSON: I just might fire out an idea that I've been toying with. I think there are a number of instances where it's very difficult for people around the province to access government or their ministers or committees that work with government. You made mention of the point that it's difficult for you to see the minister of hospitals and medical care or the Minister

of Social Services. One of the things I've watched the development of in other jurisdictions is the all-party committees of the House that travel around to have input from Canadians. I've noticed it especially being used recently with unemployment insurance hearings and the GST. The committees traveled outside of Ottawa, which is almost unheard of. What would you think if the Alberta government were to strike committees and send representatives around the province to have input on the development of programs for citizens?

MR. BUCHANAN: I think that's a very valuable process. I look towards what's been done in terms of the ambulance committee and see that as a positive process. However, I'm not sure; I think it's an add-on, and it's beneficial above and beyond the fact that you still need access to your own MLA. I agree with what you're saying: that if it's an all-party tour, or if it would be something that Executive Committee sets up – i.e., cabinet ministers – that's all very, very positive. In addition, to allow people to have input into policies and decisions made in Edmonton, I think that's a valuable process.

MR. SIGURDSON: The proposal isn't at all meant to limit access to MLAs, but what it may very well do is increase your access to MLAs. For example, if you have the opportunity to make representation to an all-party committee that's going to consider hospitals and another one that's going to consider education, it may leave the opportunity for you to talk to your MLA about transportation, because your MLA will say: "Well, look; if the committee's coming through town, make your representation to the committee that's looking after this specific, and I will look after that which is not going to come through the constituency or through the community at this time."

MR. BUCHANAN: I think that's a valuable, as I say, add-on to your base-level representation and has to be offset versus the costs in doing it. It can be an expensive process above and beyond your MLAs, and I think it's great if we can see our way clear to be able to afford it and do it. I think it is a valuable addition to have that extra input, because you're looking for policy decisions.

However, when you're looking at how you should set up what one MLA can represent, you have to look at the factors which limit effective representation. I knew our riding as it stands right now wasn't going to be affected by this. I just stepped back and said, "What can an MLA effectively represent?" They can only represent so many people, so many electorate, or such a size population. They can only physically handle a certain geographic area – at least, I believe that – and I think they can only handle so many municipal governments, because sometimes we tend to be a bit of a pain. I won't say that too loud though; there'll be a city of Airdrie alderman come over and talk to us.

MRS. MIROSH: We're on tape.

MR. BUCHANAN: But we have the expectations because we feel that, obviously, a significant portion of what we do is through provincial programs and access to the provincial government. I think there are three ceilings there that you may want to factor in. It gives it some balance. I'll just step back, because as I said, we're not going to be affected by the proposal to go to 25 percent. However, I think you need to look at those other factors and weigh them in. That's just a suggestion as to how you might balance it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MRS. COLLEY-URQUHART: I just want to comment, Tom, on the last comment you raised. I don't think an all-party committee, a traveling road show that represents social services or health care really has much to do with what we're talking about here. I really don't. I would really be interested to see how it would actually work, the process of it. I think it's moving us away from the real issue of electoral boundaries and how we establish them.

Just commenting from Calgary-Glenmore, our MLA has nine community associations, six health care facilities including nursing homes, two major ethnic community centres, four school boards, and various other concentrated special interest pockets, which I think is representative of every other urban area, give or take a few hospitals or nursing homes. But for the record I just want to make that point, because that is equally as big a challenge, and I think in a lot of ways they do take on the same face as municipal governments do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: One of the things we've discussed – it won't happen; it's not workable, but it would sure be an education for all of us if we could change positions for a month or two. You know, if Dianne went down to Taber-Warner and I spent that same period of time in Calgary-Glenmore, we'd each get an education, because we all tend to think that our job is more difficult than our neighbour's job.

MRS. MIROSH: I want you to know I've done that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Where did you go?

MRS. MIROSH: I went to Onoway. Do you know where that is?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I know where Onoway is. How long were you there?

MRS. MIROSH: I was there at least an hour, and their issues were greater than mine in Calgary-Glenmore. There were more people in the room than there are here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: One of the things I'm going to comment on relative to this point: rural constituents really like to see their member. They're less inclined to use the telephone or other means. They like to be able to identify face to face. I never cease to be amazed. I'll go into the different communities for pre-session meetings, and I think I'm going flat out; I'm seeing everybody who wants to come in. But I've learned that if I take a short shopping list for my wife and go to one of the stores, invariably someone will stop me and ask another question. And sometimes it's really important.

I remember one occasion a senior asked me about a pension matter, and I realized within about three minutes that she was not receiving a supplement she was entitled to. She'd been carrying around a paper for literally months. I said: "Why didn't you come to see me? Why didn't you phone?" "I didn't want to bother you; I wanted to wait till I saw you." I've often thought, how long would she have carried that in her purse till she did see me?

I'm not suggesting that personal contact isn't important in the urban areas. I'm trying to say that when you represent people in a lot of little communities, that one-on-one contact is so

vitaly important, and that's where the time pressure comes in on a rural member. It's trying to get around to all the areas and be accessible and be available.

I remember when I first wound up in the Assembly, there were four opposition members. You know what? All four were from rural Alberta, and all four worked very hard to keep in contact with their constituents, regardless of their political affiliation. So it's an added dimension. I know there are added challenges and issues in urban areas, but that's one thing, and that adds to the time factor.

MR. BUCHANAN: If I might just make one more comment, because the question was asked. I think the committee that sits down and looks at the boundaries should not have political representation on it. I believe you should step back and put people on there, point out some of the concerns, and allow all MLAs that wish – he can make presentations to them in terms of their concerns. But allow people to sit down as much as you can – it's hard to find people who don't have some political leanings. Let's face it, if they want to be involved, they're probably involved on one side or the other, lean one way or the other, if you like. But try and get a group of people – maybe it's academia, maybe it's business – to sit down and put the challenge to them: how can you effectively represent; what are the restrictions – mins and maxes – on effective representation; i.e., mins being necessary so that you don't have a riding of 5,000 people. That's very inefficient costwise. But what should your restrictions be, and what limits it? Then have them set up what a reasonable boundary is. I think that would stand the test.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Murray, that's interesting. Of every three people who have commented on the makeup of the commission, am I right in saying that about two out of the three have suggested it be nonpartisan? About a third have said it still should have MLAs on it.

But I want to assure you, one thing we saw that we don't intend to repeat – at least I don't intend to repeat – and that's what we saw in Manitoba, where they had three members on their commission: the chief federal judge of the province; the president of the university of Manitoba; and the Chief Electoral Officer. All three were from the city of Winnipeg. And guess what happened?

MR. BUCHANAN: Oh, yeah.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There were some horrible problems in rural Manitoba. We heard stories from opposition and government MLAs about boundaries that didn't conform with rivers or other natural boundaries. They had a horrendous job in going back and trying to address some difficulties. So you need a good mix of people on the commission to ensure that all points of view are taken into account.

MR. BUCHANAN: You do. You need to get urban and rural citizen representatives or people who represent . . . Perhaps you need rural municipal government or school board representatives on that. But you need somebody who can understand the problems of how many people you can effectively represent but are looking at it from the issue of what is logical. Let's get away from the issue of, "Well, if I redistribute that riding, I lose one of the members from the other party." Not that I'm saying that would happen, but it looks that way, and perception is reality within the general populace.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good point. Anything else on this issue?

MRS. MIROSH: Mr. Chairman, if I could make a comment. Bringing this whole thing back to where you began on the different levels of government and the urban and rural difference – even at this table here we have three urban and one rural – there is a difference other than numbers. You talked about the levels of government, and you look at a constituency that has several school boards, for instance, that an MLA has to deal with, whereas in the urban area of 650,000 people we have two school boards that we deal with, other than the private schools . . .

MR. BUCHANAN: The private schools, yes.

MRS. MIROSH: . . . within the public range. I've experienced this actually just with the Alberta School Trustees' Association and the problems. It's so different, and I'm beginning to understand as an urban MLA the difference in the rural and the distance that you have to travel. It's not the numbers of people. It's the magnitude of the issue that you have to deal with. It's not people numbers. The issues are the same, and you have to move around to the different areas. So you have not only – in the rural area you have the urban issues, like you were talking about Airdrie being really urban.

MR. BUCHANAN: Yes, very much so.

MRS. MIROSH: You have an MLA who has to deal with the urban and the rural issues, apart from big urban. I think that's something we have to bring into perspective here, and it's hard to understand unless you've been there.

MR. BUCHANAN: It's very, very true. I think you have to still step back from that and say, "Well, rural's all geographic." If a rural riding is not large geographically and it doesn't have a lot of municipal governments and its population is only 9,000, then it probably should have something added to it or it should be added to somewhere else. I don't think that's unreasonable at all.

But there's more than just one way of effective representation, and I think even the people in the city ridings can see that. Perhaps you've got seven community associations, okay? One is very, very large, but it doesn't take any more time than one that is very, very small perhaps; a smaller community but their school is going to be closed because their population has been declining; they're going to lose the elementary school their children went to, and now they've got their grandchildren going. That's a big issue to them. Or perhaps it's growing. Scenic Acres, which is now coming, feel they should have a school up there, although it may not be as big as perhaps Edgemont is at this point in time, as an example, or Silver Springs is certainly a lot larger than Scenic Acres. Silver Springs Community Association may take no more or no less time than Scenic Acres, as an example. That's the urban/rural perspective, I think, right in your own constituency, and that has to be balanced.

I understand total absolute numbers mean that if, you know, 7 percent of the population wants to get to visit you once a month, then you're going to have a lot more people that want to come in your office if you've got 30,000 than if you have 7,000. Okay? But that 7 percent still have some restrictions; i.e., how far they have to travel. Plus there's the municipal government issue and how many municipal governments. I think

you have to balance all those things. It's got to be more than just one ceiling is what I'm saying. A ceiling on population is fine, but you have some other factors.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Anything else? Are there any other briefs or presentations, verbal or otherwise? Yes, Jim.

MR. CHRISTIE: I think maybe I would be prepared to give a short verbal one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, come on up. Take a chair.

MR. CHRISTIE: It may be very much re-emphasizing what was already said.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Jim's from the rural part of our riding.

MR. CHRISTIE: Bob knows I'm rural.

I appreciated very much some of the comments that were made, but this one man, one vote business worries me. We decided in Alberta that it wasn't fair, and whatever we do, we need to be fair. I really appreciated your comments, Frank, when you said, "Some type of formula that will work to be fair." You fellows are working pretty hard to develop a Triple E Senate, and if one man, one vote is the law, that should be invalid right now, not worth working for. But it's terribly important when you take a province the size of New Brunswick with less than 400,000 people and Saskatchewan with less than a million. You take the United States with California and New York with equivalent populations of Canada; take Montana or North Dakota, you know, down in the million mark. They decided a long time ago to be fair; you were entitled to the same number of representatives. That may be a bit exaggerated, but it emphasizes the point, and that's why I come back to some type of formula that would be fair. I agree; perhaps some of these constituencies - you know, you get down to less than 10,000 people. But when you take a look at the size . . . I appreciated your comment, Bob, on the help that MLAs in those areas have been given. Our constituency isn't very big in comparison to some of the constituencies, but it's pretty big in relation to some of the constituencies in Calgary. Now, I don't know in mileage how large a constituency might be here in Calgary, but I would guess maybe some of them aren't a mile square. Some of these constituencies might be 20,000 square miles.

You have accessibility. Sure, some of the urban municipalities like Lethbridge and Medicine Hat and Red Deer aren't quite as accessible as Calgary is to Edmonton, but you have the airplane coming down here every hour, and the MLAs in Edmonton - you're right where your constituents are. I think this is terribly important. I doubly emphasize, or probably triple: some type of formula to be fair. That has to be the answer.

You know, I agree with what you said, Mr. Chairman, when you said that the rural constituents count on talking to their MLA. It's pretty important. I don't know; I haven't studied the city diversities in different constituencies, but I would suggest some of them are pretty similar throughout the constituency. But you take some of these constituencies; the different fields of endeavour, the different things that need to be covered are very, very wide. I know how hard our MLA works. I know lots of times in one day she'll cover, say, at least three different

occasions in the constituency, and a lot of miles apart. As I say, our constituency is something less than a hundred miles long and probably 50 miles wide. When you take some of them that are 200 miles long and over a hundred miles wide, it worries me, because I think that whatever happens, this one man, one vote isn't fair and it won't work.

I think probably I've gone about as far as I should or could. I'm sure all of these things have been emphasized better than I can. Unfortunately, I don't hear as well as I might, and I've missed some of the things that were said. My wife says it's a convenience for me sometimes, but I would have liked to have heard what was said. So without the mikes - next time I come I'm going to buy a hearing aid.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, you just stay right where you are until we do conclude so that you can hear.

Any questions anyone would like to pose?

MR. SIGURDSON: No, I'm fine, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else?

Are there any other verbal briefs to be presented tonight or comments that anyone would like to make? Yes, go ahead.

MS SIKARSKI: When you suggested the formula and taking into consideration geographical size and commitments on the MLAs' time, whether it's the town councils or whatever, did you have something in mind, or was that just off the top of your head?

MR. BRUSEKER: No. I think I could say on behalf of the committee that we're really looking, we're really fishing. You know, it'd be very simple to just go straight arithmetic, everything plus or minus 25 percent here as an average. But we've heard that. As I said, we've heard it in High Level; we heard it in Peace River. We've heard it from a number of people, MLAs and other people. People are saying the same kind of thing. Murray sounded very firm, and I thought maybe there was some spark of imagination in the back of his brain that maybe I could spark on a bit.

MR. BUCHANAN: Well, we had three, but they haven't sat down and figured out the geographic area.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We were asked about a week and a half ago by one person who said, "Come on now; you've probably already decided what you're going to do, and you're just finishing the process." We said that we had not sat down as a committee to talk about what should be done. We're listening; we're learning. And we are. We sat and debated today with a couple of lawyers and with constitutional experts. We have more to go. We're on a learning curve. We're trying to get as much information as we can, and we think we've identified some things that sure make sense to us based on what others have said.

We've witnessed some things - I mentioned the Manitoba experience - we want to avoid, but nothing's firmed up. In fact, what we're going to do is put together a big flow chart, if you like, with headings - for instance, makeup of the Electoral Boundaries Commission - and try to indicate the different ideas that have come forward so that when we make our recommendations to the full Assembly, we've taken into account everything we've heard, not going strictly on numbers in terms of how many people came down and whether there should or should not be,

say, elected people on the committee, but trying to make sure we haven't left any stones unturned in coming up with the best possible answers.

MR. CHRISTIE: Well, I've been thinking very hard about just exactly what you said, not knowing how to put it together. It looks like maybe you don't either.

MR. BRUSEKER: You're right; you're right.

MR. CHRISTIE: But it looks like with all the expertise at hand, you know, I don't think economists would fit.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Jim, the expertise is right out here.

MR. CHRISTIE: Yeah, but you know, in order to evaluate the workload of each hamlet or village or whatever – I don't know where Airdrie stands. If it isn't a city, it's on the verge of being one.

MR. BUCHANAN: We are, Jim.

MR. CHRISTIE: Well good.

This sort of thing, you know: evaluate the workload that's out there, knowing how very valuable you people's time is. I know how very hard you work. Time is of the essence, you know, and surely somebody can put something together. As I say, the bottom line needs to be fair, and that's what you're after.

Using the federal boundaries commission, they didn't look at natural boundaries. They made a helluva mess out in our area. We made our presentation, and I wish they'd have been as receptive as you people are, as willing to listen. They had their minds made up. There was no doubt about it. They let us know that at the hearing, so I really appreciate this.

MR. BRUSEKER: Just one comment, coming back to your question, Debbie. I think the reason why you used the term "formula" is that our committee wants something that we can apply objectively, again addressing the issue of eliminating the potential for a Charter challenge. We want to say, "Here are the criteria that we used, and these criteria have been applied equally across the province." I think Murray probably put some of the best suggestions forward so far in terms of ceilings. We would have to do a lot of number crunching, I think, looking at some real specifics about very small pieces within constituencies to really come up with some evaluations.

MR. BUCHANAN: You could almost apply the same formula that you apply to population to square kilometres in the province and to number of municipal and local governments. We're not going to go more than the plus side. I think that's the cutoff, to make sure that you're not limited, that your riding isn't losing out because you've got too many people. By the same token, if you're going to go plus the average of population, you need that ceiling to be perhaps plus the same 25 percent on geographic variance and perhaps 25 percent on the number of councils, as your ceiling. The downside you can tabulate too.

MR. BRUSEKER: Maybe we'd combine several of those things together.

MRS. COLLEY-URQUHART: On an unrelated point, this hearing and the points we're discussing tonight are really not an

issue that's being discussed on the street. That's my first point.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. We know that.

MRS. COLLEY-URQUHART: From a publicity point of view it's low. My other point is that I consider it just as important as free trade or the GST or the Triple E Senate, and there was a massive, massive campaign through the public media, with television and radio. Unless I have missed those ads on television and radio – this will fundamentally change the way this province is governed. That's how important this is. We know how important it is; that's why we're here. But I think we're shortchanging Albertans by not getting the message out there and really going after the input.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We haven't used television, although we have used radio and are using radio. We're using newspapers, and we're mailing out, as I've mentioned, 6,000 of the letters. We know it's not an issue on the streets. A couple of people have said, "In fact, we weren't really that excited until we came and sat in and listened for a while and then realized that this is pretty important."

On the other hand, remember that we're doing something we've never done in Alberta before and, I don't think, any government's done before. As I mentioned in my opening comments, if these were normal times, we would have gone right into a commission and we'd be doing the same things we've done before. We wouldn't have heard that comment, from another returning officer, by the way: "Why don't you come out and listen at the hearing process before you draw your boundaries and make an interim report?"

In other words, the reason we're here is because of a B.C. court case. So we're going through a very extensive process right now of consultation and getting feedback so that when we draft the legislation that will set the parameters for our Electoral Boundaries Commission, we will have had more public input by far than anything we've experienced before and, as I said, anything we believe any other jurisdiction has done. So even though it's not a key issue on the street, we're trying to get to key decision-makers in the various communities across the province and get input from them so that when this does come down, it's been well thought out and researched as thoroughly as is possible so that, as Frank and Tom have already said, we can withstand a court challenge, if indeed that were to come, but at the same time not blindly rolling over and playing dead and saying the courts are going run this country.

You know, we've been told in some areas damn to the courts; do what you think is right, and if you're challenged, you're challenged. So we're not merely going through an exercise, sort of a show and tell. We're here to get input so we can prepare ourselves and report back to our colleagues.

MRS. WARHOLM: I was going to say that I think one of the ways you can get rid of some of the problems you have with the actual boundaries themselves when the commission is drawing them up is to sit down with people from the municipality, talk to the returning officers – you know, we're more than willing to tell you where we've got problems with our perimeters – and take that into major consideration when you do it. You know, you get stuff across the middle of heaven only knows what as the outer boundary, and trying to even find it and work it functionally in any descriptions that we use is really impossible. Then when you end up with a creek partly on one side, a few houses

and a community here, and that's in the constituency that's over here, but everything else is cut off with it, you've cut the individuals there off from their basic community, where they work and play, and where they vote.

MR. BRUSEKER: We were just talking about the advertising budget. By the time we print these and put them in an envelope and mail them, they're \$4 apiece, I think it is. And we've sent out 9,000.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Tom first.

MR. SIGURDSON: No, that's fine.

MS SIKARSKI: Just to make the comment that I don't think anyone here is really faulting this committee, you know, as far as making the public aware.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No; we didn't take it that way.

MS SIKARSKI: But why do you feel the press has no interest in this though? Why haven't the press attended any of these meetings and said, "Do you know that this is what's being discussed?"

MR. CHAIRMAN: We did have a TV crew in yesterday who filmed for a news broadcast, I think in Edmonton.

Quite frankly, it's not as much of an issue in the urban areas because you're not threatened. I think that's the bottom line. I assure you that when we go out to Hanna, the room will be full. I know it'll be full because they still have the painful scars of going through a process where they lost a riding. That happened 12 years ago, but they're still feeling the hurt.

MRS. MIROSH: Just like this lady said, we've divided a community.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It'll be interesting, you know, as time goes on. Remember, our committee was struck late in the sitting, in fact around the latter part of August. We tried to gather information and statistics, and we worked hard to get a letter, to get something out to people. So we've been sort of running, trying to get material out and say to people: here's the issue; help us. It's picking up momentum in terms of input. I guess the other concern we're always dealing with is the cost and where the balance is in terms of advertising, whether we're doing enough or not. But believe me, I think I speak for all members of the committee in saying how appreciative we are tonight in the number of people who are out, because, fine, we don't have a packed house, but we've got people who are here because they care. You've given us some ideas and some thoughts, and it's going to help us.

MR. BRUSEKER: And the people who are here by and large, let's face it, are probably the more politically active and aware. I'm not sure the average person really is all that worked up about it.

MR. BUCHANAN: Well, there's 60 or 70 percent who probably won't be affected. If you only do some tampering with the ones that are too high and the ones that are too low, there is probably 60 or 70 percent of the population, unlike GST, who aren't going to be affected. So they're not going to feel it in their

wallet.

MR. BRUSEKER: Yeah, and when you consider . . . For example, I don't know what the turnout was in your constituencies. I only got 56 percent voter turnout in my constituency in the first place, so even out of the 31,000 that I represent, only 56 percent of those actually got out and voted. I think that can be said right across the province.

MR. BUCHANAN: And their attitude is, well, what's another thousand or what's a thousand less?

MR. BRUSEKER: Yeah. "I never see the guy anyway, so it doesn't really matter." [interjection] No; even during the campaign there were a lot of times when I heard: "Oh, you're the candidate? Man, you're not just a worker? You're the candidate? You're the first person I've seen from any party anywhere, anytime, in the 10 years that I've lived here." I heard that on a number of occasions.

MR. SIGURDSON: The other thing is that we haven't a proposal. If we had a proposal, there would be more people coming in to criticize it or to offer some kind of beef or bouquet. But I'm sure that when we come up with our proposals, there'll be representations made to us that we may or may not pass on to a commission. When the commission is struck, if they have a preliminary tour of the province before they offer any interim report, they may find that there's a similar amount of interest or disinterest until they actually have maps that have electoral divisions that completely change. I think Bob is absolutely right. When we get to Hanna, there will be folk there who will come out and say, "Touch it and die." That's because they've gone through the experience, and they want to forewarn us. Everybody else in Alberta is sitting back comfortably and waiting to see what happens, and when they're touched, they'll be motivated.

MR. BUCHANAN: Well, it doesn't affect our minds.

MRS. MLYNARSKI: Frank was mentioning the voter turnout, and I think it's a good point to think about rural. When you have to drive 60 miles to go to the polls - which happens down by Oyen, okay? - I mean, there's quite a space. I don't know if it's a return trip, but I know it's somewhere around there, and your percentage turnout is definitely going to be a fair bit lower. Now, that's one indication, but if you have to go as far to see an MLA, you've got another point there. So there again it's getting back into your . . .

MR. BRUSEKER: Geographic size.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other comments? Any wrap-up comments generally?

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, you know, I think despite that we've only got 10 people out, I'm pleased we got what I think to be a pretty good turnout. I'd like to thank you all for coming out and making some suggestions. Hopefully you won't all be mad at us when we finally do write our report, but you'll get a copy.

MRS. COLLEY-URQUHART: We'll just have to come up with a formula before you do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good.

MR. BRUSEKER: Well, that would be fine. If you get a flash of inspiration, let us know.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll receive addenda to anything that's been said today, so feel free to mail it in.

Tom?

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My remarks are that the Legislative Assembly has given us a large task and a challenging task. You've not made it any easier, but then I suppose the process is that we have to make any number of considerations. But your input is important. I am hoping, somewhat facetiously I suppose, that as we go along, perhaps in Vulcan or Medicine Hat or Stand Off there'll be somebody who walks in and says, "Here's your formula." That will make our job so much easier. But it's important, I think, to take the representations that you make and that you offer and to consider those when we try and do our best in the interests of our province. Thank you for coming out.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Dianne?

MRS. MIROSH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Although I came late, I can't help but feel that all of us are going to be affected one way or another, even in Calgary, when you look at this map

and you look at the number of constituents who are going to be affected in the city of Calgary, we're talking about.

I feel that this won't generate [unrecorded] input until people realize how much this is going to affect all of us. I think we're just starting the process, and we have to go back to the people – there are a dozen in the room – and tell a dozen more. Until it affects you – as Tom said, if we were here bringing a proposal forward, then everybody can react to a proposal because it's easy to criticize. We're trying to do the process in reverse and trying to bring out a proposal that everybody has input into so that no one can come back and be extremely critical. But every single constituency, city, in the province is going to be affected one way or another, and we've got to get that message out. It's my job and my colleagues' job and our positions' job to do that, and I hope that this committee will come back again to the areas at least – I don't want to say "urban" because rural, everybody, is just as important. I think it's going to take time. We're not going to be hasty, I hope, in coming up with a conclusion, but I think we all have to digest what we've heard today and come back again and bring more people.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Again, a special thank you to all of you for taking the time to come out, share your thoughts and ideas with us. We do appreciate it. Thanks very much.

[The committee adjourned at 9:12 p.m.]