

[Chairman: Mr. Bogle]

[1:55 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Welcome, ladies and gentlemen. We're very pleased that you've been able to find time in this busy time of the year to come out and join with us on this exciting and challenging process that we're involved in. In a moment I'm going to introduce the members of the committee who are here. We're then going to go around the room, and I'll ask each of you to introduce yourselves and indicate whether you're here representing a body, whether it's a municipal government or a political party or an organization, or whether you're here as a citizen. I'd like to stress that we don't want you to at all be intimidated by these microphones. Because this is a select special committee of the Legislature, there will be a copy of *Hansard* available to the public so that all of our proceedings are public and on the record. That is a requirement.

Now, having said that, we've tried very hard in our past meetings to keep the procedure as informal as possible. Basically what we'll do is we'll go through the presenters' briefs. I'll then ask if there are questions or comments from committee members. We then ask others present if they would like to comment or ask a question. So we try to keep a roundtable discussion as much as possible.

In a moment I'm going to ask Tom to lead us through some slides that we've prepared, but before doing that, let's go through our introductions first. On my immediate left, Pat Black. Pat was first elected to the Legislature this spring. She represents the constituency of Calgary-North . . .

MRS. BLACK: Foothills.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oops; Calgary-Foothills. Pardon me, Frank; I almost gave her your constituency.

She's a government member and actively involved in a number of committees at this time. On the far right, Frank Bruseker, Liberal member of the Assembly. Frank represents the constituency of Calgary-North West, and Frank was first elected this spring. Seated next to Frank is Tom Sigurdson. Tom is a New Democratic member of the Assembly, having first been elected in 1986, re-elected this spring. And next to Tom is Pam Barrett. Pam, like Tom, was elected in 1986, re-elected this spring. In addition to her other duties, Pam serves as the Whip and House leader for the New Democratic Party. There are two members of our panel who are not with us today. They are Mike Cardinal, who was first elected this spring. He's a Conservative member of the committee, and he represents the constituency of Athabasca-Lac La Biche. The other member of our panel who is not here is Stockwell Day, who serves as the vice-chairman of the committee. He's also the Whip for the government caucus. Stock was elected in 1986 and re-elected this spring. I know most of you, but for those few I don't, my name is Bob Bogle, and I'm the MLA for Taber-Warner.

Now I'm going to pause. Barry, let's start with you and work our way around the room for introductions, please.

MR. McFARLAND: Okay. I'm Barry McFarland and I'm here to present a brief on behalf of Foothills Little Bow association. It's an association of counties and MDs basically from the Bow River, south boundary of Calgary, down to the American border.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Barry.
George.

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: I'm George Wolstenholme from Nanton, and I'm just here as an interested citizen. I was involved in this in 1977 when they had it.

MR. FLITTON: Gary Flitton. I'm here to present a brief on behalf of the Champion Lions Club.

MR. TOPPING: Steve Topping. I'm here on behalf of the town of Vauxhall and the Bow River Irrigation District.

MR. INGRAHAM: Alan Ingraham, and I'm here on behalf of the county council of Vulcan. I'm the reeve.

MRS. GRANT: Catharine Grant. I'm a councillor for the town of Vulcan. I'm here on behalf of the town.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.
Mr. West.

MR. WEST: I haven't got one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's fine. We're going through introductions, sir.

MR. WEST: Bert West, of Lomond. I'm just concerned.

MR. YEE: Bill Yee, mayor of Vulcan. I'm just observing here.

MR. RUPPERT: Pete Ruppert, mayor of Lomond.

MR. HENRICKSON: Horace Henrickson. Just a concerned citizen from Lomond.

MR. HENDRICKS: Alvin Hendricks, a citizen from Lomond.

MR. SKRETTING: Roger Skretting, town of Vauxhall.

MR. HOLST: Henry Holst, mayor of Vauxhall.

MR. BROUGHTON: Omar Broughton, farmer at High River.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Omar.
Hi; we were just going through introductions.

MS KARL: Hi. Louise Karl from the *Vulcan Advocate*.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Louise, thank you. Bob Pritchard, who is at the projector, is our senior administrator for the committee. We also have Robin Wortman with us today. Pat Ledgerwood, the Chief Electoral Officer for the province, is now an *ex-officio* member of our committee. Unfortunately, he's not able to be with us today.

Let's come right to the heart of the issue, why we're here. Under our Alberta statutes we are required to go through a general redistribution after every second general election. We had redistribution in 1983-84. We had a general election, as you know, in 1986 and a general election earlier this year, 1989. Therefore, all things being equal, this past summer we would have appointed an Electoral Boundaries Commission and given them the parameters within which they would do their work and come back to the Assembly with an interim report and a set of recommended changes to take place.

As I said, if these were normal times that would have hap-

pened. There was a court case in British Columbia where an individual challenged the British Columbia government using the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as a basis and in the challenge the allegation was made that in B.C. the variance between the large, urban-populated ridings and the small-populated rural ridings was too great. Justice McLachlin heard the case and agreed that in fact there was a discrepancy, using the first section of the Charter as a basis. The individual who had taken the government to court went back to court to insist that the boundaries be changed immediately. In the second court ruling, while the judge upheld the McLachlin decision in terms of changing boundaries, Justice Meredith said that it is not proper for the courts to direct to a government when this must be done. In other words, he gave them some time. They are now in the process of doing that.

As a committee we've gone out to British Columbia to meet with their Chief Electoral Officer and both government and opposition members. We've done the same in Regina and in Winnipeg so that we can get a feel for how other provinces are dealing with this, because while the court case in British Columbia didn't directly affect what we're doing in Alberta, it has an impact on us down the road. I might also mention that Justice McLachlin was recently appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada, so she's one of the nine justices in Ottawa. So if there were ever an appeal to go that far, in all likelihood one of the judges sitting on the case would be the same judge who brought in the original decision in British Columbia.

So the reason we're here is to look at the Alberta map and what implications there are for us. You know from the letter, that I think you've all received a copy of, that at the present time out of 83 constituencies in Alberta 43 are outside what is often referred to as the plus/minus 25 percent range. Justice McLachlin reinforced the concept that there could be some variation between ridings but that it should not exceed, unless there were some very exceptional circumstances, that plus/minus 25 percent. We have 43 constituencies that are outside that range today, and Tom is going to lead us through some slides in just a moment to give a better view of where those ridings are, which are above and which are below.

Now, I want to emphasize one thing. We're here because as legislators we're committed to finding an answer to this situation. We were once asked at one of the meetings: "Well, is there really anything you can do about this, or are you just throwing your hands in the air? Is this merely a public relations exercise?" It is not a public relations exercise. We're looking for help. We're looking for input from you, and we've had some excellent suggestions made leading up to this meeting. While we have not sat down as a committee to talk about what our report should cover, we're all keeping mental notes, and there's a written transcript of what's taken place. We're keeping track so that when we do sit down to write our report, we're doing it in as thorough a way as possible.

I should mention one other thing, and that's the time line for the committee. We are to have our report submitted to the Legislature sometime during the spring sitting, so we've scheduled our meetings up to the middle of February. We believe the House may go back either late February or early March, and once we've finished the hearing process, we'll begin to do our writings. You were all asked when you came in if you would sign your name and give an address. That's so that we can mail you a copy of the report. Now, our first obligation is to present it to the House. It will be tabled in the Assembly, but as soon as it's tabled, it's our intention to mail copies out to

all those who participated or requested copies.

Just before going on to Tom, I note we have one other distinguished former colleague who has joined us: Harry Alger. Harry served as the MLA for the Highwood constituency from 1982 up to this spring. Welcome, Harry.

MR. ALGER: Thank you, Bob. This meeting was called for 2 o'clock, and I find that at 5 after it's almost over. Now, that's really, really relaxed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.
Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Okay. In the packages you've got that start with the "Dear Albertan" letter, you'll see a number of sheets in the back that have a great deal of information. They'll also be flashed, using the overhead screen. The first slide is an alphabetical listing of constituencies. You can see that what they total is well over a million and a half voters, which is what we have in our province. But when we start to put them in numerical order, you can see that our range goes from the top end in Edmonton-Whitemud at 31,536 to Cardston which has a voter population of 8,105. Just as a note, the constituency of Cardston contains inside its borders the Blood Reserve, and the Blood chose not to participate in the enumeration leading up to the last election, so their numbers are artificially low by about 1,800. So that's one of the concerns with that figure.

If you take all of the constituencies, add all of the figures together, you end up with a voter population in our province of 1.5 million-plus, living in 83 electoral divisions. If you divide the large number by the smaller number, you end up with an average of 18,685. Now, the chairman referred to the decision that was handed down by the justice of the Supreme Court of British Columbia, Justice McLachlin. She suggested that there might be a permissible variance of plus or minus 25 percent. Taking that percentage and working it into the Alberta scenario, we'd have a top end of 23,356 and a bottom end variance allowance of 14,014. Going back, then, to the slide that has them in numerical order, you can see those 43 constituencies that fall outside of the suggested variance. Those highlighted in the green are those constituencies that are above the permitted allowance, or suggested allowance. Those in the pink are below the suggested permitted allowance. Putting that onto a map of our province, you can see the highlighted area with those constituencies that have a voter population of less than the suggested recommendation. They are all rural constituencies.

The next few slides show, highlighted in green, constituencies that have voter populations above the recommended variance: Calgary, with constituencies on the periphery of the city, and Edmonton as well. You'll see that those areas are growing and growing in voter population as the cities enlarge and develop. So they're well outside the permitted variance.

Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West are two constituencies that fall within the permitted allowance, but the city of Medicine Hat is well outside the suggested number.

Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South. Prior to the 1986 election it was one constituency and had a very large voter population. In 1984 when there was a commission struck, it was recommended that the Red Deer area have two constituencies. There wasn't sufficient voter population to allow for two constituencies inside the city limits. The reddish-brown line is the city limit. The commission then went outside into Red Deer county and brought in an area and a number of voters to bump

up sufficiently the number of people required to bring it up to the permissible level so that they could have two constituencies. They're the only two constituencies in the province that have both urban and rural areas inside their constituency boundaries.

MR. PRITCHARD: St. Albert.

MR. SIGURDSON: The city of St. Albert: again a growing area well over the suggested variance for voter population.

This map, highlighted in purple, shows constituencies that have under 35 percent. The first map that we looked at that had areas highlighted was outside of the 25 percent level. These constituencies are outside the 35 percent level.

The next map has, again, a highlighted area in the south part of our province. Those constituencies have less than 50 percent of the average voter population. Just to put a figure to that, these constituencies highlighted in yellow have a voter population of under 10,000. The previous slide had a voter population of under 12,000.

These dots indicate where we're having public meetings to receive input from Albertans, people such as yourself. The next slide shows the dates and locations. You can see that we're now at December 11 and about halfway through our list. But if you like today's hearings and performance, you're more than welcome to join us in Medicine Hat tomorrow, or if you feel you want to have a period of time to recover, you can join us in February, starting on February 5 in Red Deer. These are the hearings that we have yet to go to.

You can see again what we've taken. This slide shows those constituencies that have voter populations 35 percent off the mean and where we're having the public locations. We are going into areas that potentially may have the greatest impact, given the McLachlin decision in British Columbia. So we are going into areas where there may be some boundary shift.

That's the slide presentation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Tom.

Can we just pause for a moment to see if there are any questions you have for Tom or I or anyone on the committee relative to comments I made or the slides that Tom led us through.

Yes, Harry.

MR. ALGER: Mr. Chairman, the situation in British Columbia: what possible effect does that have on Alberta and its decisions? Why was it even adhered to?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, the impact on it, Harry, is that while it doesn't have a direct impact on Alberta - it was a judgment in British Columbia - the same argument could be made in our province relative to the spread between a constituency like Frank's, which now has a voter population of almost 30,000, and Cardston, with just over 8,000. Even if you factor in the Blood Indian Reserve, you've still got a spread of 3 to 1. The feeling of the best legal minds that we've been able to pick to date is that we're vulnerable under our present legislation. Saskatchewan and Manitoba have recently gone through revisions to ensure that they are not in a vulnerable position. So it's an indirect effect. The other thing to keep in mind is that Justice McLachlin is now on the Supreme Court of Canada. Even if we did win at the local level, you can be sure it would be appealed, and the resident expert in the Supreme Court now is the same member of the justice who dealt with the British Columbia case.

MR. ALGER: Who is the complainant in Alberta's case? Why do we want these boundaries changed? You're staying ahead of the law possibly but . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before you came in, Harry, I mentioned that by our own statutes we have to go through redistribution after every second general election.

MR. ALGER: Oh, I see.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We had our last redistribution in '83-84; we had elections in '86 and '89. So had it not been for the McLachlin case, in all likelihood our Assembly this past spring would have struck or agreed to the makeup of a boundaries commission, and they'd be out doing their work right now.

MR. ALGER: Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anything anyone wishes to add to that?

MS BARRETT: Yeah, I would add one thing. It's not that this will be a test here, specifically, in the courts, but in the legal system in Canada they operate largely on a precedent basis. Because the Charter of Rights is a national constitutional element applying to all parts of the country, usually whatever precedent is set on a Charter case, it tends to have implications for people regardless of where they live in Canada, whatever provincial jurisdiction. That's just the way the system works. It doesn't mean it would have to be upheld, but chances are it would.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.
Yes, George?

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: You mentioned B.C., and you also mentioned that Saskatchewan and Manitoba have made a change. How did they handle it, and what did they do?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, in Saskatchewan they went through redistribution. All of their new ridings fall within the plus/minus 25 percent range, although in the legislation they've given the option for the two most northerly ridings, which are much larger in a geographic sense than their other ridings, to go up to a minus 50 percent range. But they're all within the plus/minus 25 percent.

In Manitoba they're much more restrictive. They're within a plus/minus 10 percent range, and all constituencies fall within that.

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: Well, did they start right from scratch again, or did they put two together and give some away, or how did . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Maybe Tom can comment on the situation in Manitoba.

MR. SIGURDSON: In Manitoba they pretty much started from scratch. They eliminated two rural constituencies, one in the southwest corner of the province and the other one in north-central. In order to come in under their 10 percent guideline, they created one constituency called Rupertsland that takes in about a quarter of the province and has a total population of 18,600, I believe. The constituency is 1,060 miles by 230 miles.

So in Manitoba they've more or less started from scratch, trying to keep some areas of community interest intact, but they certainly redrew the map.

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. There were two gentlemen who came in late. If I could get your names, please.

MR. MITCHELL: John Mitchell.

MR. CHAIRMAN: John. Thank you.

MR. CLARK: Dave Clark.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Dave.

Do you have briefs you'd like to give? Okay, fine. Well, then I think we're ready to proceed. Why don't we work our way down the table, if that's all right with everyone? Barry, we'll start with you on behalf on the Foothills Little Bow association.

MR. McFARLAND: Mr. Chairman and hon. members of the committee, the Foothills Little Bow association, representing rural residents south of Calgary to the American border and from the B.C. border to the Saskatchewan border, is concerned with the ramifications of changing the existing rural electoral boundaries. Whereas an urban MLA focuses his or her efforts for local concerns on a singular county council, a public and/or separate school board, and municipal services which are common to all, the rural MLA must address all the concerns, needs, and wishes of a multitude of hamlets, villages, and town councils, as well as the councils and residents of municipal districts, counties, and improvement districts within their areas.

The rural geographic areas are immense compared to the urban areas - and I'm sure you're aware of that - thereby requiring more time and travel. Depopulation in some areas has become as critical an issue as overcrowding is in other areas. Distance and time are very important additional factors, as they relate to common services that all Albertans wish to enjoy. Health services, as an example, are as vital to a rural Albertan as they are to an urban cousin. The approach an MLA takes to the delivery of these services may vary, and in most instances probably does vary considerably when you consider the rural outlook on the quality of life as opposed to the urban outlook.

We believe it's imperative to maintain the present ratio of 42 urban and 41 rural divisions. We feel there cannot be enough emphasis put on the agricultural, the educational, and the health needs - to name three - which may only be met with the services of the rural MLA. We support others who would suggest that should a 25 percent factor be used, the formula should first of all separate the urban from the rural, and then at this point the factor could be applied. In other words, you'd have two separate formulas at the same point in time trying to satisfy the needs of all Albertans but taking into account the definite difference in perspective that you have in a huge rural area as opposed to a smaller urban area.

The essence of this brief is that we, the rural Albertans, are equal partners with urban Albertans. Each should have representation equal to the other in order to continue the overall effective operation of our province.

We'd like to thank you for the opportunity to submit this brief. We've got copies for all of you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Barry. Questions?

MR. SIGURDSON: Barry, thanks for your presentation. I noted at the end you said "equal partners with urban Albertans." Right now urban Alberta constitutes about two-thirds of the population and takes up about 50 percent of the constituencies. You also noted in your presentation that we have overcrowding in some of the urban centres and we have rural depopulation, which concerns urban MLAs as well as rural members. But at some point, and I don't know at what point, I guess the question I want to put to you is: with continued depopulation in the rural areas and continued increase in population in the urban areas, is there some point - 40-60, which is what we're at now. Do we go to 75-25 when we start looking at a reduction in rural seats or an increase in urban seats? At what point do you start? Where's the magic line, or is there a magic line?

MR. McFARLAND: Personally, I don't know that you can set something in stone. We've seen changes coming along, as in the case of B.C. now, and maybe it's taken a long time to get to that point. But I think Alberta is capable of turning around and becoming a major exporter. If that's the case and if agriculture, as a for instance, has the opportunity to diversify into other markets, possibly with the enhancement of increased irrigation, as an example, you may find a slight turnaround in the population statistics. The thing I fear most, and I'm sure each of you in your own minds is fearful of, is that you can't look at it today to set something for tomorrow, because no matter which party's in power, you're fearful of what you may gain or what you may lose. So I think it behooves everyone to look at it from a nonpartisan point of view and look at it more in the sense of: what does everyone have to contribute? Maybe the least or the smallest player doesn't represent a proportionate number of people, but the ideas or the things that come out of that area are just as important, and I think that's where the distance or the time that it takes the rural MLA, your counterparts, to cover their jurisdictions is very important.

I notice, looking at your map here, Chinook and Little Bow. We've got five out of seven in the foothills-Little Bow area that are under the minus 50, but in order to cover, you know, the numerous hamlets and towns and villages and councils and hospital boards and recreation boards and you name it . . . I'm not detracting in any way from the people in the cities, but they have to hear these people from many more boards. You're fortunate enough, if you're from an urban area, anyways, to have to maybe account to the city council, to two major school boards. I gave you the recreation boards and so on, but if you see what I'm trying to get at, you have to get yourself out more than you do if you're in the smaller, confined area.

MR. SIGURDSON: Maybe just as a point of information, Mr. Chairman, in my constituency I've got something that's called community leagues. I've got seven of those. They're all volunteer organizations, but they operate pretty much in the same way, I suppose, that some small rural councils would in that community members get together and provide the recreation facilities. In the other area of my constituency I've got something called the North East Task Force. That task force has 10 committees that are studying everything from recreation to transportation. So while my constituency is far more compact, I think the interests are as diverse as they are anywhere in the province.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Tom, I think you could relate those community leagues to our recreation boards. They're really providing a similar kind of function, whereas the town or village council is into, albeit on a much smaller scale, the same kinds of things that the city council's involved in in yours in terms of water, sewer, garbage collection, cat and dog bylaws, and so on and so forth.

Pam.

MS BARRETT: Yes. I have a question, Barry, if you look at the map that's coloured in pink, about halfway through the package I believe it is. You make a case, and I've heard this a lot, particularly in rural Alberta although not exclusively, I should say: don't touch our boundaries because we've got geographical considerations. I don't think anybody would argue against the geographical considerations, but I do have a tough question, and that is: how do you fix this map?

What you have here are geographically enormous ridings. Look at Peace River and Fort McMurray. They fall within the 25 percent rule. Then Dunvegan, Lesser Slave Lake, Athabasca-Lac La Biche, West Yellowhead: they're really, really big. Then you come down and you go Ponoka-Rimbey, Lacombe, Innisfail, Pincher Creek-Crowsnest, Cardston, et cetera, and they're geographically much, much smaller. Are you arguing that that is fair as well?

MR. McFARLAND: No.

MS BARRETT: Okay.

MR. McFARLAND: But what I would like to point out: at the same time when you're getting up into the northern part of the province, a lot of the lands that are covered are Crown lands, and when you get down into the arable lands, there's very little. I must admit that every area has some Crown lands, but the percentage of Crown land that's uninhabited - and I don't want to use that as an argument, but . . .

MS BARRETT: No. But I think you would also acknowledge that they tend to be north of this line, okay?

MR. McFARLAND: True. Yes.

MS BARRETT: So we're really still talking about some very big ridings. You would agree, then, that some correction would be in order . . .

MR. McFARLAND: Yes.

MS BARRETT: . . . to be fair to the MLA and the constituents.

MR. McFARLAND: Yes. The geographic and trading boundaries I think are of prime importance.

MS BARRETT: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Barry.

Any other questions? Is there anyone here who would like to ask Barry a question or add to what he said?

MR. WEST: Bob, could we have it turned up just a little bit? I'm a little hard of hearing. I don't hear some things.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, why don't you come up and join us at the table? Please do. We will try to speak a little louder. If anyone else would like to come up further, please do. Okay. I'm glad you mentioned that.

MR. WEST: It's no use sitting here if we can't follow it, you know.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before we go on to George, we'll pause. Henry, would you introduce yourself? Are you here as a citizen or representing a body?

MR. DICK: Well, I was going to represent the board of a gas co-op, but I see our chairman is here. He phoned me the other day and said he wasn't going to make it. So I don't know. Have you got something to present?

MR. MITCHELL: No. You go ahead.

MR. DICK: Okay. I haven't got a written brief at all, but I wouldn't mind making a few points later on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Thanks very much. We'll move on then.

George, you're next.

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, board members. I just made these notes up. I just heard last week that there was going to be a meeting here. If I made them up in copies, you wouldn't be able to read my writing anyway. I won't bore you with a lot of figures and statistics to baffle you and so on, because I wasn't aware, as I say.

But I do have some concerns which I wish to discuss, some of which I voiced in 1977, and some of my remarks pertain to 1977, because I mention Calgary-McCall in here. Well, Calgary-McCall at that time had 38,000. Now it's down, I think, around 32,000 or 30,000 or something like that, but then it's been changed. In 1977 Jack Butler lost his Hanna-Oyen riding to major redistribution. But what I want you to remember is that this province was founded mainly on agriculture, and today agriculture is still a mainstay of our economy and the well-being of Alberta and Canada. Our agricultural produce is and will be necessary not only for local consumption but for Canada and the hungry people of the world. For this reason we need to have adequate legislative representatives to be sure that agriculture needs and the marketing of our produce are well looked after.

Representation by population is nice sounding and a noble idea. But analyze it in Alberta; it is not wise or practical. All people in Alberta are entitled to be adequately and well represented. It is much easier and quicker for the MLA to contact urban people than to contact the rural resident. In 1977 the constituency of Calgary-McCall had a population of approximately 38,000 compared with the Highwood constituency which was approximately at that time 11,000 to 12,000. Well, now it's about 16,000, I think. Andy Little, the MLA for Calgary-McCall, covered his entire constituency in the election of 1975 two and a half times. I was unable to contact all of Highwood even once, and at that time they were somewhere in the neighbourhood of 12,000. The urban population only have to dial their MLA, at no cost. The majority of Highwood had to phone long distance to their MLA or in some cases travel - and it's not a large constituency - 40 miles to visit with their MLA, or he had to go out there. It was preferable to have them

come to see the MLA, because in the time it took them to drive in and drive out, he could be dealing with a good many other problems. The number of people I contacted in any one day in 1975 at the most was 72 people, and that was in the northwest part of Okotoks where all the small acreages are. The average was 40 to 50 people. I spent a day and a half out in the Chain Lakes area and talked to 23 people. So that's to be taken into consideration.

Pam has mentioned the Athabasca-Lac La Biche constituency. Ron Tesolin was the MLA there at the time, and he spent two days on a snowmobile beyond where he could fly in by helicopter and still didn't get nearly over his constituency.

I have mentioned only circumstances with which I am familiar and can speak with authority on. So, please, let's not make any more hardships for the rural people. I mean, I don't want to sound like a bleeding heart, but there are many disadvantages. [unrecorded] I think answered it very well about the outlines of them.

I had two really good friends. Regardless of what some may say, I did have some good friends up there. They were Andy Little and Eric Musgreave. We lived in the same place up there in Edmonton, and we used to natter back and forth and have coffee and talk. They had a problem understanding the rural problems. So I invited them down to our meetings whenever we had meetings in Highwood, and they came down. I told them it was a smartening-up exercise. They admitted that there were a lot of things they didn't understand about the rurals, and neither one of those fellows was stupid or dumb.

I trust the committee will take into considerations these remarks before they make a recommendation. As I stated once before - I'll say it again - by all means let's not make it more difficult for the rural population to be heard in Edmonton.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pat first, and then Pam.

MRS. BLACK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. George, one of the things we heard from Barry and we heard from you - and I just wanted to clarify it - was that there has to be an almost equal and strong representation between urban and rural. An even representation. Do you agree with Barry that there should be a separate formula set up to determine distribution for rural and then another formula for urban distribution?

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: Well, that would be difficult to do, but it's ideal. I could see a lot of problems in it, but as I stated in here, the contact and the representation for these people who live - and I'll speak of my own constituency at that time - out west of Chain Lakes. If those people had a problem, they didn't have to phone me long distance from south of Chain Lakes, but up toward Millarville, in that area, they had to phone me by long distance. AGT is quite reasonable, but it's still out of the way. Some formula has to be worked out so that these people can have access to their MLA who, in turn, is their access to Edmonton, without the difficulty that at present I see the rural population has. I'm not belittling or trying to downgrade, because we need the cities - not any more than they need the rural, but for agricultural purposes. That's kind of beating around the bush a little bit, but I can't answer it any better way at the present without a lot of thought. But I would be interested, if I had the opportunity, to work on working out a formula, because I can see difficulties with it.

MRS. BLACK: The other question I was going to ask you. You hear a lot of people say, "What is an MLA?"

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: Uh huh.

MRS. BLACK: Do you have more of a comprehensive definition of what is a rural MLA? What does that mean to you?

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: He's the gathering functional point of all the people: the hospital boards, the school boards, the towns and villages. He's the functional point and the contact point to get it to Edmonton, whereas from my conversation with Andy and Eric I didn't find it was quite that broad a scope then. Mind you, they had a lot more, because they happened to have the big oil companies in their constituency that were on their back, and they had high-priced lawyers and so on, whereas the MLA out in the rural area has generally just got the rural people to contend with with their briefs. Does that answer your question?

MRS. BLACK: Yes. Thank you, George.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Pam.

MS BARRETT: Thanks. First of all, George, I'd mention about the RITE line. You're aware of the RITE line, are you?

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: Oh, yes.

MS BARRETT: Okay. Do you think that has helped compensate for distance in rural areas, no charge to the constituent? Do you think that's been a benefit?

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: Unless it's changed . . . Maybe Harry can answer that.

MR. ALGER: When you're in Edmonton, it helps. But out here it doesn't.

MR. WEST: The concerns are altogether different, aren't they?

MR. ALGER: We're talking about the RITE line.

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: At one time High River, 17 miles away - if people wanted to call me, they couldn't get me on the RITE line. But if I wanted to phone Edmonton or if one of the constituents wanted to talk to a minister up there, I could give him the RITE line and he could phone them. But he couldn't contact his own MLA in a good many cases.

MS BARRETT: Okay. That's changing. I forgot that that's quite a new trend for us. We are installing RITE lines, have done in many rural constituencies, and it is soon to be a universal policy, I think. That's true; I forgot that that change has happened just recently.

My other question has to do with how you would like to see boundaries drawn. Would you think that where it's necessary to draw or redraw, going along ID lines or municipal district lines or something like that would be of help? Or would you like the decision to be made primarily on the obvious: sort of who deals at what hospital, who deals at what commercial centre, that sort of thing?

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: That would be ideal, but I've worked on trying to – two school boards and two hospital boards when I was there, and that's a dog's breakfast and a dog fight to get to it. For one thing, you won't find it – although I found it in Edmonton one time when I tried to cross the river up to the northeast corner. I had to go around quite a bit. There's a space between Longview and High River where there's one place you can get across that river. You've got to go all the way around. Well, if a polling booth, for instance . . .

MS BARRETT: I know what you're talking about, yes.

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: You get the message.

MS BARRETT: Yeah. Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Any other questions? We'll move on, then, please. Thanks very much, George.

MR. FLITTON: I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to come here and make this presentation. I guess what I represent is the Champion Lions Club. There's been a lot of discussion regarding this and a lot of animosity generated with what the presumed assumption is going to be that occurs from it, so I said I would make a brief presentation on our behalf.

Mr. Chairman and committee members, thank you for being here. The goal of any elected body in a democracy must be to give the people within its jurisdiction the best and the fairest representation possible. It's just a common goal. On this point I'm sure there's little argument. However, the method by which this can best be achieved is constantly in debate; of course, that's why we're here today. You, the members of this committee, have asked us to speak, and we're here. But similar to what Barry said, what we ask of you is that you listen with all your political colours aside and with no prejudgments and that the recommendations you eventually make will result in each Albertan, whether they live in an urban or rural region of Alberta, having the fairest and the best representation in the provincial Legislature.

Let's take a look at the federal scene. There's been much debate across Canada about the method by which the regions of Canada are represented in Ottawa. As Albertans, most of us feel strongly that the present federal system places most of the power in the hands of the major population centres of this country and that the regions have an unacceptable level of control over their own political and economic futures. In other words, if it is good for Ontario and Quebec, it'll be done; if it's good for one or all of the regions of Canada, it'll be done, but only if it's also good for Ontario and Quebec. We know that the federal system, at least in our opinion, does not work and is unacceptable. So to try and correct this imbalance, the regions of this country are calling for a Triple E Senate in an effort to rectify the inequities which have occurred in the past. Federally we are asking for a system which will ensure that the regions are not dominated, a system which will allow the regions to reach their potential – and that's a very important point – a system which will reduce the animosities which are present now, and a system which will give the regions of this country a fair say in their federal government.

Federally, as a region of Canada, Alberta is asking for this now, and as a region of Alberta we are asking for no less. We're here today asking you to recognize that to have area representation determined strictly by population can obviously

lead to and result in dangerous inequities within our own provincial system. We only need to look down to Ottawa. You as a committee must recognize that an urban MLA's constituency may consist of an area as small as two miles by three miles, that he is probably dealing with one municipal government, two school boards – I've thought perhaps it was one recreation board, but you say there may be as many as six or seven groups that they're involved in in the decision-making part of it. Our MLA in this region is dealing with over 15 municipal governments between the MDs and counties and towns and villages, and that doesn't include hamlets, over four school boards – I wasn't sure if it was four or five, and within many of them there are separate schools which have their own problems, but they aren't a board as such – over a dozen recreation boards, and it takes him three hours to drive from one corner of his constituency to the other. So similar to the other arguments that were put forward, if all Albertans, their municipal governments, their education boards, their recreation boards, et cetera, are to have equal access to their MLA, then it is impossible to think this can be achieved by determining constituency size on population alone. Therefore, another formula must be developed.

We must also recognize that the needs, goals, and requirements of the urban centres and the regions of this province may be very different. To allow one to control the other can only lead to conflict in the future. We have indications that this is occurring already, where people in Calgary or Edmonton feel justified in influencing whether a dam is built in southern Alberta or a pulp mill is built in Athabasca. We here feel that the citizens of southern Alberta and the citizens of Athabasca are intelligent and educated enough to determine what is economically and environmentally acceptable for their areas and that their futures should not be unduly influenced by the urban centres of this province. Similarly, we feel that the residents of Calgary and Edmonton are intelligent and educated enough to determine what is economically or environmentally proper for their cities. Whether it be a provincially funded sewage system – in Calgary I think it was \$128 million that went in there, in addition to the LRT system in Calgary, where I think it was \$275 million of provincial money that went in there, and \$200 million on the Deerfoot Trail. Anyway, it should be that the rural regions of Alberta should not heavily influence these urban decisions. Each must be an equal partner in this province, with neither being subservient to the other.

Therefore, it is our recommendation that, with these concerns in mind, a weighted system be developed for the determination of electoral boundaries in the province of Alberta which would include in it population, constituency size, the number of municipal governments served, the number of school boards served, the number of recreation boards served, et cetera. That's something that would take a fair bit of work to take a look at – you know, how does a recreation board in Vulcan compare to a community group in Calgary? – but something along that line to recognize the variance and the time constraints each MLA has. It is our hope that this will result in a balanced provincial system with roughly an equal number of urban and rural constituencies, which will allow the urban centres and the regions to live in peaceful and tolerant coexistence and with each being ever mindful of the special needs of the other.

So while we as Albertans struggle to reform the Senate to develop a federal system which will enable the population centres and the regions of this nation to exist as equals, we ask that your committee develop a provincial electoral boundary system which will enable the urban centres and the regions of

this province to exist as equals. Let us all learn from the inequities of our federal system and the injustices which it has cultivated. We ask that you, the members of this provincial committee, ensure that it does not happen here and that each Albertan, be they urban or rural, has the fairest and best representation possible in our Legislature.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Gary.
Questions? Pam.

MS BARRETT: Gary, is there any point at which you would suggest that the representation between urban and rural divisions should not be at approximately 50-50? In terms of population shift, for instance?

MR. FLITTON: I suppose there is that argument to be made; yes, definitely. But what I would like to see is something put in place whereby – at the present time we're sitting at 60-40 or 65-35. I would think we could maybe use that as a mark in recognizing that, you know, roughly the two-thirds/one-third population factor might equate into something of a 50-50 balance of responsibility between the MLAs and the time constraints that an urban versus a rural MLA has. So what I would hope is that a system could be developed at the present time which recognizes that variance now of 65-35, and maybe we could keep somewhere near the half rural, half urban. Maybe as changes occurred in the future, yes, it would have to recognize that, and it would have to have the possibility that you would move to 45-55 and so on, recognizing that whatever formula is developed here today, because of the political system we live in, is not written in stone forever and never will be. I mean, that's why everybody else is fighting for our system.

MS BARRETT: I have one other question. Would you like to offer an opinion about the size of the rural electoral divisions in the northern part of the province compared to the central and southern parts?

MR. FLITTON: Yeah, that's what I was thinking about as you brought it up before. What my assumption would be is that, as I suggested, there be some sort of weighted system recognizing the municipal governments, villages, towns, and so on. Perhaps those areas are very deficient in towns and villages at the present time. I don't know, but . . .

MS BARRETT: No, actually. In fact, I wish Mike Cardinal were here, because he makes quite a case for his riding, Athabasca-Lac La Biche, in terms of the numbers of infrastructural agencies that he has to deal with.

Let us assume that they are about the same in any given rural division. Would you want to redress any of the imbalances you see on the map coloured in pink?

MR. FLITTON: Oh, definitely. I mean, we recognize that that has to be done. We can't leave everything as it is right now written in stone forever and ever and ever.

But the major point I'd like to make is that the animosities that have occurred in the federal system – we have to try and do whatever we can to ensure that they don't happen here, and we see them developing. Calgary is very angry because they aren't able to decide whether there's a pulp mill built in Athabasca. I don't think it's any of Calgary's business, or is very little of

their business, whether a pulp mill is built in Athabasca, at least on the environmental and the social implications of what happens in Athabasca.

I guess what I worry about is that we'll eventually get to a situation where it's all for the cities – you know, we're governed by the cities – and we become nothing more than a recreation area and a playground for the cities. We'll be viewed as: "Don't touch this; we want to come and play there next weekend. We want no environmental impacts there. We want very few provincial dollars spent there. Just keep it natural, and we'll come and enjoy it on weekends, thank you. We live in a concrete area where we've altered the environment beyond any recognition of what it was once before. That's fine for us, but don't you touch that out there." That's what I want to ensure, that some system is put in place so that inequity does not occur or does not grow beyond what it is right now.

MS BARRETT: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? Anyone else present who wishes to question or add to what Gary has said? All right. Thanks very much.

We'll go on. Steve.

MR. TOPPING: Thank you very much for the opportunity of speaking today, Mr. Chairman and other hon. members of the committee. My name is Steve Topping, councillor for the town of Vauxhall, and I also represent the Bow River Irrigation District. I've been asked to represent the town on the issues related to Bill 22, the electoral amendment Act.

The town of Vauxhall is opposed to any further enlargements or changes to the electoral boundaries in the Little Bow constituency. In 1986 provincial electoral divisions were revised, resulting in an increase in area and population for the Little Bow constituency. The communities of Cluny, Gleichen, and the Blackfoot Reserve were added to the Little Bow constituency at that time. Even with the addition of an estimated 7,000 people, the Little Bow constituency is the fourth lowest in terms of number of eligible voters per constituency in Alberta. With the implementation of the proposed 25 percent provincial factor, enlargement or elimination of the Little Bow constituency would be inevitable.

The workload of a rural MLA is much greater than that of an urban MLA. The rural MLA must liaise with a number of local governments and constituencies. Mr. Speaker must deal with two counties, three municipal districts, three towns, seven villages, and eight hamlets. Each jurisdiction contains a number of organizations such as the Lions Club, rec boards, library boards, and many others which all must be independently dealt with. The rural MLA's workload is further compounded with the traveling time required to service these local governments and organizations. Mr. Speaker has a minimum of a two-hour drive from either boundary of the Little Bow constituency.

At present the ratio of rural MLAs to urban MLAs is 42 to 41 respectively. The implementation of Bill 22 will suddenly tip the balance of power to urban. With the use of the across-the-province 25 percent formula, the minimum effects of Bill 22 I guess would be to eliminate four rural constituencies for a corresponding gain of four urban constituencies. This would alter the ratio of rural to urban, as it would be 38 to 45.

Agriculture and the oil industry are predominantly rural industries. These industries need product research for diversity and continuous effort for development of markets to increase

commodity prices. These primary industries require strong representation in the Legislature to provide a stable economy for all of Alberta.

I would like to draw your attention to the rural depopulation study of Little Bow and other areas of Alberta's south prepared by the office of Mr. Speaker. This study identifies the sociological impact depopulation has had on rural communities in southern Alberta. Small communities are experiencing rapid decline in population, loss of business, and cuts in essential services such as health and education. Farmers are losing their land due to foreclosure because of high input costs and low commodity prices. Rural populations are flocking to urban centres seeking employment.

Government must respond to problems facing rural Alberta. Equal representation in provincial government for rural constituencies must exist to ensure that these problems are addressed. The citizens of Vauxhall request that the ratio of rural MLAs to urban MLAs remain the same. The people of Vauxhall further propose that a 25 percent factor should be applied as two averages, one for rural constituencies and one for urban constituencies. Equality in government representation would be maintained without increasing the workload of a rural MLA. At this time my guess would be that the Little Bow constituency would not see changes in boundaries with the implementation of a rural/urban 25 percent formula.

I thank you for your time and consideration, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Steve.
Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Something you noted, Steve, that hasn't been noted before – at least I haven't picked up on it before – is that when you talk about rural depopulation, people flocking to the cities, when they flock to the cities they bring with them all their problems that have to be addressed. Edmonton has an unemployment rate of about 8 percent. A number of years ago in my constituency it was as high as 30 percent. Now, that's an area of concern; I have to try and make sure there is some kind of social safety net or social infrastructure there to look after the needs of those people that aren't being employed in rural Alberta as some come into the urban centres. I just wanted to point that out, because I think that when people move, whether they're moving from one rural area to another rural area or from a rural area to an urban area, they're bringing with them their problems, and in order to address those, MLAs have to have an awful lot of time to deal with them as individuals. We represent all constituents, and so the problems – they're just different, but I think if you were to add them up, you'd probably see a similar number of problems, although the problems might be different. I just wanted to point that out.

MR. TOPPING: I would suggest that problems should be addressed at the rural level, not at the urban level. What would be best would be that if there was a switch toward more urban MLAs, we'd be best represented if we maintained the status quo. In other words, the rural MLAs would be able to represent the concerns in government that we have, and these problems could be fixed on the local level rather than you dealing with the problems with depopulation after . . .

MR. SIGURDSON: People are going to move.

MR. TOPPING: Well, that's true. They see that there are

advantages in going to the urban cities. The programs are in place. More money is committed towards health, education on an individual – I shouldn't say "individual"; maybe not on an individual basis . . .

MR. SIGURDSON: On a global.

MR. TOPPING: On a global. But there are more services available on the urban scene.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.
Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: I'm one of those urban nasties that has a different viewpoint than most of you gentlemen have presented – in fact, than all of you gentlemen have presented. I've done a little number crunching for your information, and I want to share this with you and get some input from any of the four of you that have spoken so far.

If you take the 41 rural constituencies and find an average of those four, as I think you've all mentioned, the average comes to 14,200. If you go with a rural and an urban average, two separate averages, Little Bow is still 1,700 people short of coming up to the provincial average, coming up to the bottom of the 25 percent range, let alone getting to the provincial average for just the rural constituencies. So my question is: even if we implement something like that, how do we address the situation, the concern you've had, without making them any larger? I mean, every one of you has said that the MLA here, and we've heard this in many areas, has to deal with more municipal boards, county boards, school boards, hospital boards, et cetera, et cetera. How do we address those concerns, in particular in Little Bow, which is far below the 25 percent average even for an average based upon rural constituencies? I mean, we can't maintain the status quo even if we go with an urban/rural split, so what do you recommend? I mean, those are the hard numbers.

MR. TOPPING: I believe I recommended to . . . Forty-two to 41 was the number of rural to urban MLAs?

MR. BRUSEKER: Yeah.

MR. TOPPING: . . . maintain it at that. For instance, if Little Bow does not meet up to the standards, the boundaries would have to be revised to come up, I would presume, to the bottom level of the average for the rural.

MR. BRUSEKER: Going back to the B.C. case, which may or may not have relevance here, the argument put forth by the Justice there was that rather than having constituencies sort of out at the extremes, her suggestion was that everything be as close as possible. So even getting up to the 14,000 average for the rural constituencies, you'd have to add – what is it? – 5,000 voters somehow to Little Bow, and the only way to do it would be to expand the area.

The other thing that I just want to point out . . . All of you have mentioned equal representation, and I accept your points about traveling because I've traveled this south part of the province quite extensively. I want to throw out sort of my perception from the other side of the coin, talking about equal representation. Okay, if we take any three of these constituencies that are in yellow, for example, the total population of those

three constituencies, which elect three MLAs that go to the Legislature and get three votes on the floor of the Legislature whenever a vote is held – those three constituencies will get three votes. Now, my constituents get to elect one MLA, and the total population is the same. So looking at it from the other side of the coin, if you want equal and fair representation, the question I would throw out to you is: are my constituents getting equal and fair representation when they only get one vote on the floor of the Legislature and in the southern part of the province the same population will actually get three votes? That's just throwing it out from the other side of the coin.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Barry would like to respond to that.

MR. McFARLAND: If I may. It won't be from the Foothills-Little Bow perspective but from Barry McFarland the farmer's perspective.

I can empathize with you, Frank, but where your constituents can drive a block and a half and fill up a tank of gas, I can expect my farm fuel supplier to come the equivalent of from Silver Springs over to the southeast corner of Deerfoot Trail. I'm being awfully presumptuous; I don't know what percentage of people in your constituency would be, for lack of better words, wage earners. I would estimate that maybe 90 percent of the people here have a huge capital investment, maybe not one they want to be saddled with at the present time, but to some extent the gut feeling I get is that some people, myself included to some degree, actually do not like the idea that I'm represented to a lesser extent than somebody on Brian's UIC ski team. Do you get my drift?

MR. SIGURDSON: You're saying we should represent wealth?

MR. McFARLAND: No, but I do think that it has to . . . Much as huge business may lobby and dictate to any political stripe, so do people who are unfortunate enough to be on the lower end of the economy scale. These are just ordinary people trying to make a living, putting up with the geographic distance. They don't have all the amenities. They don't have Calgary water and sewer systems to look after; they're looking after their own. A lot of the costs that are incurred through all of Alberta in providing residents of Calgary or Edmonton or any urban centre with some of the amenities are borne on our own shoulders on the farm. We don't have to plow snow off all the roads in the county and we don't have to pick up kids right at the door to take them to school, but we do have to pump our own sewer and we do have to drill our own wells and on and on and on. I think there's a saw-off, and it's one that can either start fisticuffs or be compromised, and I don't know where the happy medium is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think Dave wanted to get in on the same point.

MR. CLARK: Yes. I think, you know, there are many inadequacies in the whole system, particularly talking in terms of education and health care. Because when you're talking about a person who is elected and has one voting right on any of these committees or whatever – in health care for example, locally you have an elected member of the town that represents roughly a population of 1,600, while other members elected to these boards are on the ward system and nowhere reflect that same population or representation. The school board is a murderous

one, because on our school board, for example, there are 12 trustees. You basically have one vote for a school division that might handle 40 kids; another might represent basically 1,200 kids. And we have trouble enough in our communities getting along as it is, let alone start . . . I know there are always those kinds of arguments, and I think provincially possibly a two-formula system is the fairest way to go. Because it doesn't make sense; how in heck can we compare rural Alberta to the urban centres and reflect the same kind of thinking, as from western Canada to eastern Canada? It's in the whole system.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Pam.

MS BARRETT: Yeah. What you've just said makes me ask a question though. I understand that one of the elements of the first judicial decision regarding the 25 percent rule really says – it doesn't say it in this kind of language – that you cannot make artificial distinctions or distinctions between rural and urban when it comes to a reasonable attempt at proportional representation. So my question to you or to anybody who wants is: what would you do if you went to court and went all the way to the Supreme Court and it was still decided that you couldn't make this distinction between rural and urban and still had to fall within the 25 percent rule? Because I think that's what we're really looking at here, you know, that real possibility.

MR. CLARK: May I ask how you define artificial . . .

MS BARRETT: Well, that's why I said I couldn't use the words of the decision. The decision is complicated, but it says that while it is true there are certain additional demands on a rural MLA because of geography, topography, et cetera, sparsely populated electoral divisions, there are also additional demands on urban MLAs, and in any event, at the end of the day the Charter does have the implication of approximate equality on a per vote basis. We wouldn't be here, I don't think, if it hadn't been for that decision. So what I'm asking is: can you come up with a formula that would meet the criteria of the court without specifically identifying a different formula for urban versus rural that would still satisfy your concerns? I've just asked you to join the committee, effectively.

MR. CLARK: Right. You know, this is what I hope we're supplying you with. You're the guys that have the power here to make those kinds of decisions, and I hope we're supplying the concerns and information to you in order to accomplish that.

MS BARRETT: Yes. My challenge is: let's pretend for a moment, just for the fun of it, that you can't get away with a formula that allows for a greater variation between rural ridings than between urban ridings. Let's just assume that the Alberta case went to court and that was defeated. What would you recommend in lieu of that that would still satisfy the concerns you've expressed today?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pam, in fairness, possibly we should share with those what some others have recommended in that scenario, which is an upper House.

MS BARRETT: Amongst other things, yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. Well, we've had a variety of recommendations, and I'm merely saying it has been suggested

on several occasions that if we were forced down the road and had to go to the one person, one vote concept within the guidelines as McLachlin set out and were forced to do that by the courts, then we should find some other way to protect the regional interests. If it meant an upper House with some kind of variation – and believe me, none of us have looked at that; we're not looking at another layer.

MS BARRETT: You don't want an Alberta Senate? Is that what you're saying?

MR. FLITTON: That was one of the major gists of my brief, that we don't have a second House, and I don't think it's advantageous that we have a second House. The onus falls on you people to make this system some sort of compromise that will address those inequities.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before we move on, I want to come back to Steve on one other point. It's been suggested elsewhere that one of the things the government needs to do is reaffirm its commitment to decentralizing its activities and to economic development in rural areas. Obviously, if we had more stimulation taking place, whether it was through the decentralization process – for instance, right here, the parks branch that was established in your community – or by getting more industry involved in rural areas – of course, if Mike were here, he'd be talking about how important that is in his area because of unemployment – that in itself solves part of the problem, because you're getting people in. Does that fit in with your remarks, Steve?

MR. TOPPING: Absolutely. But, unfortunately, I feel urban representation will immediately impact the rural, and I'm afraid these concerns won't get addressed. That's a problem that I guess the rural has, maybe between rural and urban the communication between the two. It's very difficult to make both sides knowledgeable so that an MLA can represent all of Alberta.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. Frank once mentioned that it would be great if we could switch places, if Frank, for instance, could spend a month or two being the MLA for Little Bow and Ray could be the MLA for Calgary-Northwest. Each would come out of it a much richer person. You'd learn some of the challenging aspects of being an MLA in each other's backyard. Unfortunately, that's not going to happen, but what we're trying to do as a committee made up of urban and rural members is get a better feel for it.

It's interesting to note that the concerns that come out at our meetings are not all black and white. In other words, when we were in Calgary, we heard some concerns about protecting regional representation, and when we were in West Yellowhead, we heard some concerns about a fairness element relative to the concepts of keeping a balance.

Frank?

MR. BRUSEKER: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

I just want to throw out a suggestion we heard, and maybe anyone could sort of give their opinion on it. One of the suggestions we heard to address the concern I put out, and perhaps address the concern we hear in the rural areas, which is equal representation for both, is that perhaps in the voting in the Legislature, rather than having one person, one vote, it

would be that when I stand up I get 30,000 votes and when Pam stands up she gets . . . How many do you have in your constituency?

MS BARRETT: Seventeen thousand.

MR. BRUSEKER: . . . seventeen thousand votes. And Bob would get 9,000 or 12,000 votes in his constituency. That way the constituencies might not need to change size, get larger or smaller.

MS BARRETT: We'd just carry different weight on the floor.

MR. BRUSEKER: We would just carry different weight on the floor. That's a suggestion that was thrown out, so I am asking for your opinion on it. What do you think about that kind of idea?

MR. CLARK: Sorry to interject again, but you know, we battled about that sort of thing at the hospital conventions for years. It's fine when you have a rural convention and that sort of thing, but when you get together – a school board's the same way – you might as well not be there. We have six votes in our hospital district, and when you go up there, you just feel "Why am I here?" because you're outweighed so badly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, let's take one more, and then we're going to move on. If Alan isn't back, Catharine, we'll go right to you.

MRS. GRANT: That's stealing his thunder.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Go ahead, Barry.

MR. McFARLAND: Frank, I guess I just reiterate what Dave said as far as the weighted ballot. I don't want to contradict anything Gary has presented, but the fear is if you pass things by a simple majority and the minority don't like it and demand a weighted ballot – I'm sure, being a former teacher, you're aware how the ASTA would work it. All it took was the cities of Calgary and Edmonton, both public and separate, to call for a weighted ballot and they can defeat anything that the rest of the province . . . It becomes one of selfishness rather than total outlook of what's best for the entire province.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.
Could we move on then? Catharine.

MRS. GRANT: I apologize for this being so short. I knew about this about 5 minutes to 12. I'm replacing someone else. I'll read what came from the town of Vulcan.

Having reviewed the issues outlining the electoral boundaries legislation, the council of the town of Vulcan offers the following comments. Being in a rural area, our concerns are much different from that of a large urban area. A rural MLA has a lot more distance to cover, several local governments within one constituency, and a major number of local organizations in each. We feel that strong consideration be given to using a 25 percent factor, one for a rural constituency and one for an urban constituency, not on a 25 percent factor based on the Alberta average. Should this factor not be initiated, it is felt that the present ratio of 42 urban and 41 rural electoral divisions should be maintained.

I will give you this copy.

Now, since I've been sitting here, I've been frantically writing up some notes of my own. I'm also on the economic development committee and the lodge committee, and I have been running into a lot of city people at various conventions and meetings, where I have met with them. One of the things we're trying for very desperately down here is diversification, trying to get industries and other things coming into our rural areas simply because our education is going down very, very badly because we're getting down so badly in population. I have welcomed with open arms anything that will come into our area. I've even said I'll take the unemployed because it will put people into our schools. We've now got to the stage where the county and the towns and villages in this area are working very closely together. We've got good co-operation, and we're finding that we are helping each other in that respect. But there's also this little problem with the cities. I'd like to put a string around the city of Calgary so it couldn't get any bigger – it could only go up, not out – so the people will come out into the rural areas, will populate those rural areas and make use of our facilities. We have an excellent hospital facility here, and we won't be able to use it until we can get those people out here. So by changing our boundaries, I'm not sure you're going to help us.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Catherine, I think what you're saying is: we've got the infrastructure in a lot of our smaller communities – the schools and the hospitals are built; we've got water and sewer systems to accommodate people – but with family size going down and depopulation, and it's been especially hard in the straight grain communities, we're sitting with a lot of empty houses and empty lots that could be filled.

MRS. GRANT: That's right. And I can see our farming areas, instead of . . . This refers back a long time ago. When I was a kid, there was a family every mile. Now you've got one family on five and six sections of land, and this is getting worse because of the farming situation. But there's always that chance of a turnaround.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And isn't it true that if you can put people in a community who are drawing a cheque once a month or once every two weeks, that helps balance the farming population where the cheques don't come in on a monthly basis, so that your business community is more stable?

MRS. GRANT: Right. That is another thing. Because of that, because you don't have those wage earners, your businesses can't survive in a small town and they can't run opposition to the cities. By the same token, Frank mentioned: how could they make a difference when they have a large population? Here again, with their having only one vote – your cities, because of their areas, probably do have the same problems, all of them, whereas if you have less and less MLAs in there to speak for the rural areas, you're going to have less and less voice and the urban areas are going to take over the strength of this. And because the urban all probably have the same problems and have a lot more voices when you get all of them together, then maybe if you're going to change this percentage around . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Questions? Pat.

MRS. BLACK: Catherine, I was going to – well, the rural one, actually. When we traveled to Victoria to talk about what had

happened in B.C., we found that in British Columbia their distribution was based on full population as opposed to Alberta, where it's based on eligible voter, and so you eliminate people under the age of 18 and those that, say, choose to not participate for religious or social purposes, whatever. Do you feel that we should change that and go to a representation factor in the full population or leave it to eligible voters?

MRS. GRANT: Full population would help your rural areas considerably when I think of some like the Hutterite colonies in our areas that have a large population who probably do not vote. But here again, I don't know whether your percentages would work out any differently, because in your urban areas you probably still have a large, large number under the age of 18 because of the number of children going to school compared to the children in rural areas. So I'd love to see you work it on that if it would work for our benefit.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just for your information, Catherine – and the first suggestion came from one or two of the opposition members on the committee – we are tonight, as a matter of fact, while in Calgary at meetings, reviewing for the first time as a committee what looking at total population rather than a list of electors would do. It's been our belief all along that that would help the rural areas because our families are a little larger. Take Cardston constituency, which comes out on the very bottom of the list. There are 1,800 people who are eligible to vote but have chosen not to be enumerated . . .

MRS. BLACK: That we know of. Right off the top.

MR. CHAIRMAN: . . . that we know of. So we're certainly looking at that.

MR. FLITTON: I think it's a good point. I know we had some polls in the last election here where the enumeration was terrible and the vote was absolutely terrible. That would eliminate that as a factor.

MS BARRETT: Well, it's a chronic problem, believe me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This committee is committed to find every possible way . . .

MS BARRETT: That's right.

MRS. BLACK: The reason I bring this up, Mr. Chairman – now, don't throw rotten oranges or apples or tomatoes at me. I'm from an urban centre as well, but my riding is one of the large ridings. Right now I probably have almost 40,000 people living in my riding, but I have about 25,000 eligible voters because I take the entire University of Calgary and the student residences, et cetera, that weren't – we had some problems there. And new districts; mine is expanding tremendously.

The other question I want to ask you, Catherine, is: do you think it's feasible, as happened in Red Deer, that you could combine an urban and rural boundary? Say you could take the northern part of Calgary – like Frank's riding and my riding, the newer areas – and push them out into a rural setting and have a counterbalance between urban and rural.

MRS. GRANT: You're probably going to run into some of the problems the towns and the villages have run into with the

county until you get somebody who gets a little vocal on them all. Then it can work, but your urban people are going to protest like mad because their views are going to be different from the rural area the same MLA is supporting. It probably could work and probably would, but when I look at Little Bow, we haven't got any city we can grab on to and take in with us.

MRS. BLACK: I was looking at Medicine Hat in particular.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah, but it's a little too far away from Little Bow.

Yes, Barry.

MR. McFARLAND: Pat, I just wondered, how effective do you feel you would be if you had 20,000 rural residents, 20,000 city residents, and the city wanted to annex a part of the rural area? If you think you have to ride the fence too often now, what would you be doing then?

MRS. BLACK: Getting out of town is what I'd be doing.

MR. McFARLAND: Catherine also raised the point of the colonies, and given 30 years at the current rate of expansion, maybe there won't be a need. I don't say that facetiously. There may not be a need to have five or seven ridings south of Calgary. There may only be a need to have one outside the cities of Lethbridge and Medicine Hat. That's not a farfetched example given that the year the Communal Property Act was repealed, one corporate church body was purchasing in excess of 160 acres a day. Now, at that rate of growth, or even a diminishing rate of growth, there may not be a need to worry about rural population, because it'll simply be a mechanism where he who pays the most gets that particular corporate vote.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Tom, and then Gary.

MR. SIGURDSON: Just to follow up under that scenario, that's the problem we've got with the voter population. That's why I think Pat raises the matter of having a global population; it's going to guarantee that regardless of who votes, there is going to be representation for a community of interest. If you end up having a corporate farm that takes in - well, I think one of the larger landowners in the Dunvegan constituency is the Bank of Montreal. But the people who reside in that area should still have the opportunity to have representation, and they're going to have it regardless of who owns the land. That's why if you have a global population determining the size of constituencies as opposed to the voter population, you're going to have representation in an area.

If people choose not to exercise their franchise, that's their right. It bothers me greatly that people sit at home and don't get out on voting day. Even with all the workers I have on voting day knocking on their doors - and every politician will tell you that you can disturb them eight, 10 times in one day, give them all the notice you can possibly give them, and still 40, 50 percent won't go out and vote. But those people still have to have representation, because when something goes wrong, they're going to call their MLA.

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: Boy, yes.

MR. FLITTON: Two or three points here quickly. I did notice the shock on your face when that comment was made, but at the

present rate of expansion . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let the record show that he's pointing at Pat, not Pam.

MR. FLITTON: . . . by the year 2030, 80 percent of the arable land in Alberta will be owned by the corporate Hutterite colonies. And that's not that far away. It's 40 years.

Another point. I get an overriding sense - and I believe there's a bit of misunderstanding here. You know, we sit here - and I can get the feeling of it, and correct me if I'm wrong - and think our interests are so special and unique, and you're saying, "Ah, they're the same in the city; these people don't understand what goes on in the city to a certain degree." But in any case, I lived in the city for 14 years and I've lived in rural Alberta the rest of my life, the city being the centre portion of that period. And the amount of time I and my neighbours are required to make in community commitment, in school commitment to achieve something close to the same level of recreational services and social services and educational services you have in the city is phenomenal, the difference that there is between my commitment and my neighbour's commitment to come close to the same level of services and things being available to my family.

You also mentioned that you're interested in the people and their problems going to Edmonton. The largest growth industry we have in our area is welfare families because our housing is down so cheap. Really, that's the only reason Champion did stay stable in its last enumeration: cheap housing, the welfare families coming to the community. I don't begrudge that. I guess they have to have a place to live, but as far as contributing members to your community, there's a very, very real impact. So it doesn't just go the other way. We have the problems coming back because our housing is cheap.

MR. SIGURDSON: Yeah.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Pam.

MS BARRETT: Oh, I see. I didn't know what your bottom-line point was. I thought you were making an equation between the economy of scale of a large population in terms of efficiency and being able to accomplish a lot more. I thought you were going to draw a different corollary than you did.

MR. FLITTON: Well, there were two different ones.

MS BARRETT: My point is unnecessary. You didn't draw the conclusion I thought you were going to.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else, or are we ready for Alan? Alan.

MR. INGRAHAM: Well, sir, I'm just about redundant if they took a vote, because I'm not going to . . . I'm going to read this anyway.

Members of the select special committee and Mr. Chairman, the council of the county of Vulcan representing the rural residents of the county have reviewed the considerations outlined in the information made available to them. Council must emphasize that they feel the boundaries should be consistent in practice at all levels. The government allowing school division boundaries to be established based on apparent economic

criteria, without recognition of other criteria such as student numbers, distances, and the unique needs of the region, provides a public perception of big government and large urban centres continuing to squeeze rural Alberta. The result is a continuing erosion of the rural way of life by imposition of large government, large business, and large urban ways on the rural areas.

We also wish to point out that rural circumstances face different problems than the urban counterpart. As a consequence, the rural representation faces different problems than the urban representation. It is clear that the distance factor is one of many that must be taken into consideration. Council also feels that if a 25 percent factor must be used, it should be based on two averages, one for rural constituencies, which includes the small towns and villages therein, and one for urban constituencies, mainly Calgary and Edmonton.

The workload of rural representatives is much greater because they must deal with the distance factor and a number of different local governments. For example, in our constituency our MLA must deal with two counties, three municipal districts, three towns, seven villages, and eight hamlets, a major number of local organizations in each of these jurisdictions, and the distance involved in meeting with each. Council agrees that the present ratio of 42 urban and 41 rural electoral divisions is appropriate and that this differential be maintained. We strongly urge the committee to recognize, one, the rural/urban differences; two, that the case is very strong for a separate formula for rural and urban constituencies; and three, that the present differential between total urban representatives and total rural representatives be maintained.

Thank you. Also, I'm submitting this on behalf of the board of education for the county of Vulcan.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Alan.

Questions of committee members?

MR. INGRAHAM: It's the same thing you've heard before.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does anyone wish to add to it?

MRS. BLACK: I would, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Go ahead, Pat.

MRS. BLACK: Alan, you keep saying that rural MLAs work harder than urban. Gee, that's not really true.

MS BARRETT: That's right.

MRS. BLACK: Even though we don't have the distance to travel, in my riding I may have, instead of one meeting in the morning in one location and one in the afternoon, as many as eight to 10 presentations in one day and deliver as many as three to four speeches. For a female, that means three to four complete changes of clothing in between there to get to them. So I'm putting a pitch in for the female MLAs as well as the poor old urbans. And we do deal with maybe two and three times the population.

I think the thing I find from your presentations so far, really across the table, is that there are differences; there are distinguishing factors between urban and rural representation. There's no question on that. I think each one of you . . . I don't know if you all compared notes ahead of time - I somehow doubt it - but you've all come across loud and clear with

that, and I appreciate that.

My other committee members - I won't get angry. I've been playing around with a weighted average formula that would factor in some of the distinguishing factors between urban and rural and keep in mind that population has to be number one, with different things such as the MDs and the school boards, et cetera, all on a weighted average basis. Actually, Gary talked about a variance allowed within those formulas. And it's difficult. The difficulty comes from . . . I'm still playing around with this formula, and before we're finished, I know I'll drive them all crazy, but I'm going to put it in. It has to be constitutionally safe. That's the argument when I ask you questions about what a representative is. There are very broad terms that have been used over the years to determine what an elected official is, what a representative is. If you can isolate or define that down into concrete, constitutionally sound terms, then it may be something that could logically and rationally be looked at and worked into a weighted average formula. And you can hold it if you were ever challenged. So those are things that I think have to be really looked at. I know, Gary, you said you were looking at that weighted average, and I think Barry did as well. I think those things are important.

I guess I wanted you to be sure that your urban MLAs are not just sitting around. We really aren't. We sometimes fly . . . I know I can go to Edmonton and back five times a week and twice on the same day to different functions. We do get around a little bit.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, thank you.

Let's go on, then, to Henry.

MR. DICK: Maybe I should introduce myself a little better. Not to brag about what I've been doing, I've been living in the Hays area. In the veteran block, there are only five out of 17 left there since 1953. I've lived all my life in this area. I've been nine years on the irrigation board. I helped organize Bow River gas co-op and was chairman for 14 years.

I'm very disturbed with what's going on in the country. In 1985, 20 farmers moved out of the Vauxhall-Hays area. I understand right now another hundred quarters or so are going to go out, and on some of these quarters there is only one family to about two quarters, so we can expect another 25, 30 people. The Hays school, for example, had 180 kids 15, 20 years ago; they've got 60 kids. We used to have 172, 175 permit holders in Hays; now we have 62. I think if you're going to change the boundaries and are not going to give the rural people proper representation, we as rural people are going to lose. I'll just give you two examples. One would be a political one. It was in the papers, so I'm going to say it. A city person in Lethbridge - I live in Lethbridge, although I've still got the farm - has a Chinook wind, and he's worried about how he's going to hang onto his golf ball. The farmer out there's got a Chinook wind, and he's worrying about his \$35,000 wheel move going down the tube.

Our political leaders march along with Gainers meat packing plant: I'm all for you. Meanwhile, two or three hog farmers that are growing 1,800 hogs a year are going broke. That's why you have to have the separation. You really do, because if you don't have that separation, the farm organizations can't even hold their own any more; there's going to be no representation. I believe that this formula that's in - as I say, we're losing about 10, and the urban areas are going to gain 10.

I don't think the Oldman River dam would have been built,

yet it's one of the most important things we as farmers seek, not because I'm going to farm anymore, but we're concerned for the future of Canada, for the future of Alberta. When you have 4 percent of the land under irrigation and they produce 20 or 60 or 50 percent of the products, you have the opposition parties saying – Mr. Decore was on *Wildrose Forum* the other day – a waste of money on irrigation rehab, the Oldman River dam. This is what he said publicly. People phoned up, and he said, "That's a waste of money."

When I see that these people could be the next leaders in the government and we're going to lose 10 or 11 members out in the country, where in hell are we going to be? What you'll have is just like these fellows here have said: you're going to have Hutterites taking over the whole thing. I have nothing against Hutterites; in fact, my religion goes way back to 1400 when they were organized, and they were right next to them. But I believe everybody should have the same right to make a living. What we're talking about is not just a right to have a say but also to have the right to make a living. If you can't make a living in the rural area, you're going to depopulate the whole thing. And what are you going to do? You've got to have equal representation to a certain point, but I think you have to make the separation between urban and rural.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Questions or comments? Anyone else wish to add to Henry's remarks? Are there any other briefs to be presented? You've got one, Omar?

MR. BROUGHTON: Yes. My name is Omar Broughton. I'm a farmer at High River. I intended to make a written submission. This came up a little too soon; I just got the letter a few days ago. But if I may take a moment here in view of the questions, I'd like to.

First of all, my thoughts and concerns are exactly as has been expressed here, and they've been expressed much better than I can express them. It seems the question is one of equal voice in the Legislature between urban and rural. I'd like to suggest, if your terms of reference – that is, the Electoral Boundaries Commission – and that charter of confusion will allow you, that you consider for purposes of this voice two factors: a density factor and a communications factor. You've given us some good information here on these charts.

By density I mean population according to . . . An MLA from Calgary-Buffalo, Calgary-McCall, Edmonton-Whitemud, or Edmonton-Belmont could go out in the street and with a loud whistle probably get a crowd of 200 or 300 together at any time. But a rural MLA faces an entirely different situation, which has been mentioned here. To a large extent we've almost been disenfranchised by circumstance. Where in the city ones you can almost measure the voter density per square foot, if you get up in Chinook or Wood Buffalo park, you're probably measuring a voter by township. In the rural areas we have no public transportation. We have very limited local telephone calling areawise. We have a postal service that's hardly worthy of the name, and we're fast losing our local meeting places – the schools, the community halls, even the auction markets – with the result that the communications factor is a very, very serious one.

So for what it's worth, and I think the question was asked here by Ms Barrett, you need a formula. I would like to humbly suggest that you consider a formula relative to density – and that

is voters or population per area, and likewise in rural areas – and then a factor for communication, because representation in the Legislature is entirely a matter of communication. If you would do that, I would hope that it would result in us maintaining some purposeful voice in the Legislature of Alberta.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Omar.

Questions or comments of Omar? Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Certainly that's one of the things we've been looking at, and with the availability of technology we're now able to type something out, ship it up to Edmonton, and it'll be there in five or six minutes, seconds perhaps. It can be answered, depending on your member or who is there, and turned around and got back to you within a half hour. Is that the kind of communication you're looking at?

MR. BROUGHTON: Yes, that's a very important factor. But the day-to-day communication between the voter and the MLA – and both ways – is the other and the more important factor that I see.

MR. SIGURDSON: Prior to being elected, I worked for Grant Notley. He had the constituency of Spirit River-Fairview, which is now called Dunvegan. The constituency office was in the north side, in Fairview, and we never saw anybody from Spirit River. It was very rare that people would travel about an hour to get from Spirit River to Fairview. Yet when Grant traveled down to Spirit River, there were all kinds of new problems that would come up. One of the things this committee has the luxury of, I suppose, is making recommendations to government and other committees that would look at office and staffing arrangements. Do you think that in sparsely populated areas rural MLAs should have a greater allowance to facilitate office, staff, and other communication projects, systems such as fax machines and computers?

MR. BROUGHTON: Yes; very, very much so. I think the establishment of the RITE system has been a great help. We all have in our homes a ready opportunity, and I think your suggestion of more local staff would fit right in with that and would certainly be a big help.

MR. SIGURDSON: Thank you.

MRS. BLACK: Thank you for your presentation. It was very good and, I think, very direct.

One of the things that comes up time and time again in our meetings is the problem with communication and the ability to have access to your MLA. Bob, it just reminded me of one of the particulars when we were in British Columbia. The way they have broken up their boundaries, it left one fellow up in the northern part, north of Campbell River, and the only way he could get around his riding was by float plane. Fortunately, the fellow who was the MLA had his own float plane and a pilot's licence. That should not be a requirement to being the MLA, but it's the only way.

When you look at some of the boundaries, you're quite right. In my riding I can probably drive from corner to corner in half an hour. I look at some of the ridings – well, Shirley McClellan's riding of Chinook; there are only two roads that go through there. You can't cut across; you've got to go all the way around.

It makes the case for a review of the difference between urban and rural, and one of the major factors is the geographical size of the riding, the road systems within the riding, and maybe rivers or bridges, et cetera. Someone mentioned a bridge. There was a fellow in . . . No. Was it in our . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Jerry Doyle?

MRS. BLACK: Yeah. They had to go over to B.C.

MR. SIGURDSON: No; that was Dunvegan.

MRS. BLACK: Oh, Dunvegan. Well, they had to go outside into B.C. to get to a polling station, because that was the only road. That was silliness.

So I think you have to be logical when you're making these boundaries. I think one of the things that has to happen is, in fact, we have to look at the geographical layout of the province. Now, in British Columbia 60 percent of the population lives in greater Vancouver. So you see the majority of the ridings down in one little corner of B.C. and then massive land masses in the middle. They'll never ever get from point A to point B. The poor MLA will never cover that. So I think the key is that if you're going to make a case, make it strong, but be specific on your case as to what you look at in the size of your ridings. Because there have to be changes somewhere along the line. We all know that. But it's a matter of looking at them and looking at them logically. We don't want people to have to have float planes or a pilot's licence to get around.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pam first.

MS BARRETT: All I would like to add to what Pat has had to say is to remind you that we are not the committee that actually redraws the boundaries. We will be presenting a report to the Legislative Assembly in the spring, and the commission will be struck thereafter. The commission, inevitably, will hold public hearings. This is a tradition in Canada, period. At that time they will have their basic instructions in terms of what principles should be observed. Then is the time that you would want to be making specific presentations on the boundaries themselves, what you want them to conform to, and that sort of thing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Henry, you had a point you wanted to make?

MR. DICK: Yeah, I'd like to maybe just correct a little. I don't think that we people here are saying you people in the cities don't have problems. You've got 45,000 voters; you've probably got them lining up at the door by the dozen.

MRS. BLACK: On some days, yes.

MR. DICK: So we're not indicating – at least, I am not.

The second thing I would like to say is that it wouldn't matter which political party you're from. If you're in the city, you have different interests than you have on the farm. It doesn't matter who it is. You can even have a brand-new party. If you're elected from the city, you have a different interest. Therefore, seeing as the rural areas are the smaller areas, there are less voters there. This stands to reason. This is what happened between the east and the west in Canada.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Anyone else any summation? Harry.

MR. ALGER: Yes. Chairman Bob, I think I'd like to ask the committee to be very thoughtful about the fact that the cities – the cities seem to be the argumentative point here – have huge councils with a mayor apiece, and that seems to be where the people go. People realize who their ward councillor is and so forth, but 90 percent of them wouldn't even know their MLA from Santa Claus. Believe it or not, they would not. Tonight I want you to just check that out when you go to your hotels and respective places like that. Walk around a little bit, and say to the guy, "What area are you from?" He'll say Calgary-North West or something like that; it's all in segments. "Who is your MLA?" He won't know. I guarantee that. But in the country he will.

Pat, you asked earlier, "What is your definition of a rural MLA?" In retrospect, the rural MLA in each constituency is the premier of that constituency. He's the number one man or woman, and depending on the problems, they come to their MLA. It's as invariable as it can be; you're serving every single person. In the cities, I very much doubt that. As George mentioned a while ago, it's kind of too bad we can't share each other's place for a little while so that we in the rural municipalities would know what you're up against. I know that you're busy. There's no question about that. There's nobody more overworked in this whole country than the MLAs of the province, city and rural. But my point is simply this. I want you to very carefully consider that the populations of these huge cities depend so much more on the council and mayor than they ever even think of the province, that in the numbers area, the formulas, if there can be a two-formula system, that would be my way of thinking of getting around it.

Has anybody suggested expanding the House at all? And I would hope they have.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. If we gave you the two extremes we've had in terms of the House – and they came within one or two days of one another?

MS BARRETT: It might have been on the same day, I think.

MR. SIGURDSON: Back to back. Two different days.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We had one that we shrink the size of the House from 83 to 70. If that were done, you'd see every rural riding amalgamated with at least one more. I can't remember how Little Bow came out on that, but I . . .

MS BARRETT: Stony Plain was the only exception.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Was Stony Plain the exception?

MS BARRETT: Yes, it was the only exception.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. But I do remember, for instance, Cardston, Pincher Creek-Crowsnest, and MacLeod would all become one riding, and up in the far north Dunvegan and Peace River would be one riding. Now, that was one brief.

Then we had a brief, and I think it was by the president of the Liberal Party, who suggested we expand the House by 10 or 11 seats, so that the expansion could occur in the two major cities.

MR. ALGER: All in the two major cities. That wouldn't be [inaudible].

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I haven't heard anyone on the committee yet advocate either of those extreme positions.

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: I hope not.

MR. ALGER: No, that's right. In the first, when you're reducing the House to 70 people, you're physically just outdoing the poor MLA in the country all together. He's got too much area to cover now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Harry.
Tom.

MR. SIGURDSON: Harry, I just wanted to challenge one thing that you said. It's good to see you again. I'm pleased to hear your voice. It's always been a friendly voice from my perspective.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Having said that . . .

MS BARRETT: You're going to take him up on the bet, are you? I'll bet you too.

MR. SIGURDSON: I would like for you to come with me into my local Co-op and watch me pick up a dozen eggs.

MS BARRETT: Yeah, and see how long it takes.

MR. SIGURDSON: And watch how long it takes for me to go into my Co-op. I now find that if I have to buy a dozen eggs or just one or two things, my wife goes in.

MR. ALGER: You send somebody else.

MS BARRETT: Absolutely.

MR. SIGURDSON: You know, because I can't get out of the store without having at least one constituent come forward.

MR. ALGER: Surely.

MR. SIGURDSON: I don't think I'm the anomaly either. MLAs are well known by a number of people, and it's usually at the most inconvenient time that the greatest problem arises.

MR. ALGER: Yes, I'm sure of that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Is there anyone else who would like to make a closing comment?

MR. FLITTON: The formula or the decision you make, as you mentioned, has got to stand up in court. So if you go to take a look at a weighted average or some sort of a system whereby half of it is population and the other half is made up of other components, it has to be, in my opinion, very well defined. It's going to be very difficult to come about. I think that's the optimum, in my opinion, in order to address the inequities that will occur in the future unless something like that - if you're going to do it under one House. If you are unable to accomplish that, to be able to recognize the variance between the

interests of the two ways of life, like it or not - I mean, we need to spend more money on another House like we need four holes in the head - 30, 40 years down the road we may find that that's the only way we're going to be able to get along. So I would think your task now is to come up with a system that will hopefully address it within the present situation so that it doesn't have to occur. If you don't get the job done now - I'm not trying to put the whole weight on your shoulders, but that's what you're getting paid for.

MS BARRETT: Oh, sure.

MR. FLITTON: The other House will . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thanks, Gary. We're all going to have a chance for closing comments.

MR. SIGURDSON: I want to just follow up on this one comment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Can you do that in your closing comment?

MS BARRETT: We're on a tight time line.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll start with you, Tom. Go ahead.

MR. SIGURDSON: Well, just a comment on that. I wish we had the decision that was handed down by Justice McLachlin, because she refers to a decision that was handed down in Alabama that said there's no historical significance; there's no community of interest; there is nothing other than strict voter population that determines the size of constituencies. That's in the court of Alabama. That's why in the American states you have representation by population to the degree that it comes down the middle of a road. If you neighbour with another house, the boundary can be your yard where there's no road. That's voting by population.

Justice McLachlin has given a variance of 25 percent and suggested that's the tolerable allowance. It's within that framework that we're trying to operate and come up with something that will allow us to recognize all of the diversity of our province. Other provinces have followed along the decision and have adopted the plus or minus 25 percent, with Manitoba going to an extreme of plus or minus 10.

Just with respect to the second House - I've made the comment before, and I've had some comments back - I would hope that when we have governments that are elected, the executive of government recognizes the fact that there is a diversity of interest and that cabinet is appointed proportionately to ensure that those interests are represented around the executive table. In our parliamentary system we don't make deals - you know, the members from South Carolina or from California trying to formulate some kind of deal on the floor of the House of Representatives. We have caucus solidarity, which is different from the United States. Decisions have input, and policy decisions are made at the executive level. I would hope that that diversity is there, and I would certainly argue that there always ought to be substantive area inside executive cabinet to ensure that rural representation is there, as opposed to getting into a second House.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Go ahead, Pat.

MRS. BLACK: I just want, first of all, to thank all of you for coming out this afternoon – it's a little chilly out there – and for your presentations. I know they were all well thought out. They came right from the heart, and that's what really counts.

We do recognize the differences and the importance of rural Alberta. You have been the backbone of the province, and I think we as urban MLAs do recognize that, and we appreciate your concerns. We maybe don't understand all of them, but we do appreciate them. If we can look at something, and if you have any further thoughts on a formula that could help us with something like that, please send them in to us. I think on the letters there's an address for Bob Pritchard, and if you can think of anything that would help our cause or case that we could use, please send it in.

Thank you very much for coming.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pam.

MS BARRETT: Ditto. Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Frank.

MR. BRUSEKER: Short and sweet. That's nice, Pam. It's a first.

MS BARRETT: It is not, my dear. It's always short.

MR. BRUSEKER: Just a couple of quick comments. I think you've all spoken very clearly and very eloquently in two ways, both in terms of the presentation and by the sheer numbers of people who have come out today. I don't want to be pessimistic, but I think given the relatively low population and the task we face, I suspect that Little Bow will change somehow. I won't make a prediction how or which way it will change, but I suspect it will change. I think I speak for the members of the committee, that we have heard your concerns and we will try to address them as best we can. Even as an urban MLA, which I am – I've lived in Calgary and Edmonton all my life. But my in-laws are on the farm, and I've heard their concerns on a firsthand basis across the supper table. I recognize the concerns and appreciate them. We, I think urban and rural MLAs both, will certainly try to address those concerns as best we can. So even though I am an urban MLA and most of us at this table are today, I think it's safe to say that it would be the last thing in my heart to want to do anything to hurt the rural Albertan way of life. So let me just say that from a personal perspective.

Thanks for coming out.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Frank.

One of the things we're going to be looking at – and we've hired a computer consultant who will be able to give us all kinds of information about the makeup of constituencies. Being one of the two rural members on the committee, I feel very strongly that you not only look at a map of Alberta and the size of the constituencies; you look at what I call the settled areas, the areas that have some people in them. You're in a constituency that is totally settled, Little Bow. Fine, there are other constituencies that may be larger in geography, but there are vast areas of land where there are virtually no people living. There are some isolated communities, but other than those isolated communities – there aren't people living on little farmsteads is what I'm saying. Your constituency's also unique in that it doesn't have any really large towns, and I don't mean that in a disparaging

way to Vulcan or to Vauxhall. But you don't have a Taber or a Brooks or a community of that size, and that adds another element to the mix you've got. So we're looking at those factors.

I want to leave you with this one positive word, because I feel very good about it: I don't think there has ever been as intensive a review by any set of legislators – and this is an all-party committee – before striking an Electoral Boundaries Commission and giving that commission its parameters. As I said in my opening comments, if these had been what we might call normal times, we would have done what we did in 1983 and what was done in 1978 and so on back. We would have gone ahead and appointed a commission, and they'd be out doing their work right now. But because of the McLachlin decision in British Columbia, all three parties in our Assembly said, "We've got to get a handle on this." The best way to do that is to go out and listen to people to get as much information as we can, and that's what we're doing.

You know, our second meeting was in Peace River, and the returning officer in Peace River gave us some advice that we haven't forgotten and we've shared. That was, "Before the boundaries commission sits down and draws lines on maps, why don't they come out and listen to us first?" Because what traditionally is done is that the commission will sit down, do their map work, give it to the Assembly, it's made public, and then they come out and hold hearings. Then you, in turn, are faced with the position where you have to convince the commission members to change what they've already done. And we all suffer from a little bit of pride of authorship. Whereas if the commission went out and listened first, then took that knowledge base back, drew their lines, submitted their interim report to the Assembly, and then came back for a second set of hearings, hopefully they would have avoided a lot of the problems.

You know, we saw that in Manitoba in spades, where a commission made up of three people, all of whom were from the city of Winnipeg, made some horrible errors in the rural areas. Now, they didn't intend to do that, but it happened. So we're trying to learn from other people's mistakes, and we're also trying to learn from the things they've done that have worked well so that we can come up with something that's going to be fair and equitable.

I conclude by echoing what others have said. Thank you so much for coming out and sharing with us your thoughts and input today. This has been very well attended. We're delighted with the number of briefs that we've received. We really thank you for the work and effort you've put into this. Thank you.

George.

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: Do you have any input into the makeup of that commission?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. Part of our terms of reference deals with the makeup of the commission.

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: And what about the boundaries? Do your terms of reference refer to the boundaries?

MS BARRETT: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You mean the lines that are drawn?

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: That will be drawn.

MS BARRETT: The commission deals with that. We do not.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We can't draw lines, but we can recommend how many constituencies there should be. We've got a wide mandate. We can go as far as urging the government to get on with decentralization and economic development. Now, that's not directly related, but it sure has a bearing in terms of what happens.

MR. WOLSTENHOLME: Do you have any information on how large the commission will be, or is that . . .

MR. SIGURDSON: It's up to us.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's up to us.

MRS. BLACK: We'll be recommending.

MS BARRETT: If you have any suggestions, just let us know. You can write in submissions right till the end of February, you know, so if you have thoughts additional to any comments you made today, just drop us a line. It'll all go on the record.

MR. WEST: I'd like to make one suggestion. Has anybody tried to figure out a ratio between acreage plus population for this representation in comparison with the city?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't think any of us have done that. There was a suggestion made today that we take a look at people per square mile and let that be part of a formula.

MR. WEST: I know at the Uniform convention here a few years ago we tried to work out a formula where population and acres would bring up our representation. I just wondered if anybody worked on that.

MR. SIGURDSON: Good. No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If anybody didn't put their name on our sheet . . . Robin?

MR. WORTMAN: I think everyone's on there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Everyone's on it? Okay. So we're able to mail a copy of our report, and if you think of anything, as Pam has said, drop us a note addressed to Bob Pritchard and we'll sure include that in our deliberations.

Thanks again.

[The committee adjourned at 4:09 p.m.]

